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Waiting for Tindaya: Modern ruins and indigenous futures in Fuerteventura

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Abstract
Since the mid-1990s, the mountain of Tindaya (Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, Spain) has been in limbo. Despite being listed as a Natural and Cultural Asset by virtue of its environmental singularity and indigenous engravings, the conservation plans have never been implemented. Instead, the state institutions designated it as the location for artist Eduardo Chillida's *Monument to Tolerance* (a huge, bare cubic cave to be dug in its interior) – a controversial project that remains suspended, neither in construction nor abandoned. To complicate matters, the mountain also features three quarries, and speculation over the mining rights associated with them resulted in a long series of trials and appeals. Tindaya is therefore a site of truncated futures, fragments of which are still to be found in and around the mountain. This article works with these material traces as a way of activating the mountain's role in a plurality of strategies of anticipation, from the economic and cultural superabundance ascribed to Chillida's project by the state to the indigenous rituals and offerings that took place in the mountain. It is argued that Tindaya stands today as an unintended monument to the ruins of a modernity envisaged in the language of economic development and artistic abstraction, but also represents the possibility of enacting other, minoritarian futures, connected to the poorly understood indigenous lifeworlds attached to the mountain and its surroundings. The critique of the former is accompanied by the cultivation of the latter through an exercise in speculative ethnography.

Keywords
Eduardo Chillida, fiction, indigenous heritage, progress, speculative methods

Introduction

The village of Tindaya (Fuerteventura, Canary Islands; population: 510) is home to an extraordinary concatenation of truncated futures. Upon entering the village, one finds the

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Casa Alta Museum, sited in a restored manor house and dedicated to artist Eduardo Chillida's grand project for the mountain of Tindaya: a huge cubic cave to be hollowed from within, connected to the outside by two vertical shafts and an entry tunnel. Models, drawings and 3-D simulations visualise the *Monument to Tolerance*, described in the texts that punctuate the exhibition as the pinnacle of Chillida's work *and* a turning point for the island's development. Omitted is the fact that the Monument dates back to the mid-1990s and has neither been built nor abandoned – it remains suspended, entangled in a complex controversy surrounding the right to intervene in a mountain that is also a protected natural environment, a listed archaeological site and a mining resource.

A few hundred metres away from the Museum is Bar María, an establishment frequented by older locals and occasional tourists. Among the items decorating the walls there are five posters made by environmental activists in response to Chillida's project. Slightly faded after more than two decades, they introduce Tindaya's natural and cultural 'value' to the general public. A key focus of the posters is the mountain's exceptional archaeological remains – most notably the hundreds of foot-shaped engravings that marked Tindaya as a ritual centre and sacred site for the indigenous population of the island, the Mahos. The posters argue that, while it is officially protected, Tindaya's pre-Spanish heritage remains understudied and under threat, both by Chillida's proposed Monument and by the mountain's several quarries. A case is made that a sustainable future for Fuerteventura hinges on Tindaya's 'proper' conservation, including the recognition of its indigenous significance and the immediate ceasing of all mining activity.

Continuing northbound on the same road, with the mountain itself now dominating the view, one finds a menhir-shaped slab of Tindaya hidden behind outgrown palm trees on an unassuming traffic island. On closer inspection, the object reveals itself as the municipality's homage to Eduardo Chillida. The plaque at the bottom, dated 2003, thanks the artist for his 'grandiose contribution to art and culture, and for the international exposure it has given to the village thanks to his Monument'. This somewhat premature celebration is complemented by Chillida's undaunted statement, chiselled on the stone: 'I do not know about races or colours, I only know that the horizon is the homeland of all men.'

This strange sequence of mediated encounters with Tindaya culminates at the end of the same road. Here, the walls of an abandoned football pitch frame the view of the mountain, its straight lines echoing the scars left by the now empty quarries. Standing on the harsh gravel pitch, I would think of the young men who played football on it, their scabbed knees and footprints now replaced by tyre tracks and traces of 360º spins. I could not help but picture the scene in my head: the quad bikes and their riders enveloped in dust, exhaust fumes and engine noise – an image of nihilist abandon that seemed the perfect counterpoint to the grand futures once imagined for Tindaya (see Image sequence 1).

The traces of Tindaya's various 'former futures' (Koselleck, 2004) – projected in relation to mining, modernist art, or heritage preservation – constitute the point of departure for this article. I activate these material remains in order to empirically engage with the politics of progress; to understand how ideas of linear time, endless growth and inexorable advancement have shaped the relationship between people, indigeneity and land. I argue that Tindaya stands today as an unintended monument to the ruins of a modernity envisaged in the language of monumental art and development, and at the same time represents the possibility of cultivating an alternative futurity that reactivates the

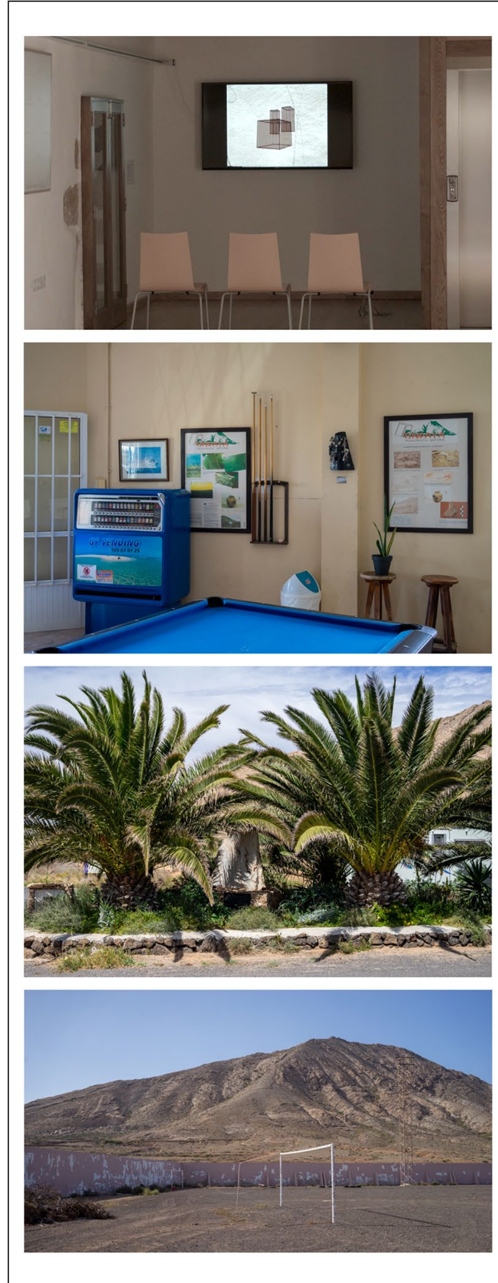

Image sequence 1. Encounters with Tindaya.

lifeworlds once attached to the mountain and its surroundings – an indigenous future *after and against progress*.

The mountain of Tindaya has played an important role in the prosperous futures envisaged by the state in Fuerteventura, first through mining, then tourism and art. These visions of progress relied on unimpeded access to land-as-resource as much as they did on the effacement of indigenous history. The inevitability of future progress was shaped, sustained and legitimised by a range of technologies of anticipation such as forecasting, modelling or predicting. The critique of this orientation towards time and land is by now well-established (Scott, 1998). I will also briefly engage in it below, but my ultimate goal is rather to experiment with the possibility of imagining an alternative scenario, one that excavates the truncated histories of the Mahos in order to put indigenous afterlives at the centre of the island's future. 'If we are to think beyond the self-devouring growth drive', Julie Livingston writes, 'then we must open those repositories of the imagination – the before, the against, and the besides – that have been or are now being crushed by it' (2019, p. 9). Hence, the article moves from a critical analysis of the already existing to the cultivation of the what-if; from the indicative to the subjunctive. I engage in a speculative exercise that seeks to nurture more tentative and inventive forms of thinking with indigenous heritage. In so doing, I join several others who have reclaimed speculation as a useful sensibility for the social sciences, as we engage in the urgent task of imagining futures otherwise (Benjamin, 2016; Haraway, 2013; Rao et al., 2014; Wilkie et al., 2017). Following a practice well-established in fine art, design and architecture (Dunne & Raby, 2013), I argue that speculative methods can help shift the discussion around indigenous heritage in the Canary Islands by asking unlikely questions, envisaging improbable futures, and encouraging unforeseen desires.

Drawing from fieldwork conducted in 2016–17,[1] this article mobilises ethnographic insight to creatively engage with a plausible alter-future for Tindaya, one existing after, and in tension with, the dominant progress-oriented imagination. I call the result 'ethno-speculation', a practice whose purpose is the *empirically-grounded cultivation of the otherwise*. If ethnography may be described as the study of social relations through social relations, the kind of speculative ethnography I am interested in fostering here involves the additional gesture of creatively reconfiguring said relations. The point of doing so is to enlist ethnographic insight in the task of fostering new possibles and disturbing the so-called inevitable (see Collins, 2018). As Juan Francisco Salazar has argued, speculation and ethnography can be considered complementary practices, capable of enriching one another in a 'future-facing cultural inquiry that enables research to follow forked directions, to both respond and anticipate phenomena that may not simply be held, observed and acted upon' (2017, p. 154). Like Salazar, I am interested in developing inventive modes of ethnographic practice that engage with 'possibility and potentiality, not just actuality'.

As I expand on below, any discussion of indigenous matters in the Canary Islands is confronted with the fact that the arrival of European colonisers in the fifteenth century resulted in the annihilation of the indigenous population. The resulting discontinuity between the past, the present and the future of indigeneity in the archipelago constitutes a formidable challenge – but also the very condition of possibility for envisaging new and alternative scenarios, crafted from a sense of care and responsibility towards these destroyed lifeworlds. In Tindaya, the Mahos constitute an absent presence mediated by archaeologists and activists, tangible only in the form of traces, remains and hauntings.

Accordingly, I have directed my ethno-speculative efforts towards reimagining their place in the island's heritage policy. As a practice that curates and animates an inherited history, that attempts to negotiate its spectres, heritage provided an obvious stage to craft alternative articulations between the past and the future of indigeneity.

A prosperous future, suspended

The Canary Islands is a volcanic archipelago located off the West coast of Africa. It has been a Spanish territory ever since it was colonised by the Crown of Castile during the fifteenth century. At that point in time, all seven islands were inhabited by groups of Amazigh descent, collectively referred to as Guanches, that had settled in the Canaries probably around the beginning of the Common Era. Indigenous lifeworlds did not survive the multiple forms of colonial violence that ensued: their social, economic and religious practices were forbidden in the name of Christianity and civilisation, and those who resisted – as well as many who did not – were killed or enslaved (Adhikari, 2017). In the case of Fuerteventura, the indigenous population, the Mahos, saw their semi-nomadic way of life organised around common land and freely roaming livestock replaced by the imposition of crop agriculture, private property and forced labour.

Soon after the conquest, the archipelago became an ideal periphery for colonial experiments, starting with slavery and the plantation economy (Fernández-Armesto, 1982). Over time, other forms of extractivism such as cash crops, free trades areas or more recently mass tourism were implemented. Fuerteventura – the driest and windiest of the islands – played a singular role in this process. Much less fertile than the rest of the Canaries and subject to the permanent threat of fatal droughts, it was favoured as a military outpost. It was not until the 1960s, still under Franco's dictatorship, that the island started its transformation into a tourist destination with the construction of the first hotels, the airport and the water desalination plant. Fuerteventura's entry into the mass tourism circuit meant the inauguration of a brand-new official future for the island: a new age of progress, prosperity and modernity. It is hard to overestimate the impact this vision was to have: in 1980, the first year for which there are data, approximately 62,000 foreign tourist arrivals were registered, in an island with 30,000 inhabitants. Ten years later, there were approximately 320,000 foreign tourist arrivals and 49,000 inhabitants. By 2000, these figures had increased to 1.3 million and 63,000, respectively. In 2008, the year of the economic crash, tourist arrivals neared 1.5 million and the population passed 100,000.[2] These numbers provide only a glimpse of the speed and intensity of the transformation; they were accompanied by an equally frantic development of the island's real estate and infrastructures. To be sure, Fuerteventura's metamorphosis echoed a process taking place in Spain at large. Tourism and property development became the country's economic pillars once it joined the European Economic Community in 1986 (López & Rodríguez, 2011). An era of developmental paroxysm followed, fuelled by foreign investment and punctuated by global events such as the Barcelona Olympics, Seville's Universal Exhibition or the inauguration of the Guggenheim-Bilbao.

It was in this context that, in 1996, the island and regional governments decided to adopt Eduardo Chillida's *Monument to Tolerance* as a flagship project. An encounter with the sensibility of that era is made possible at the Casa Alta Museum mentioned

in the introduction. Within the museum, the arrival of the Monument is imminent and its realisation as inevitable as the benefits it will bring to the island. The text panels, the audio clips, the artist statements are all delivered exactly as they were in the 1990s – their prophecy only betrayed by subtle signs such as the anachronistic texture of the digitalised videotapes. Chillida's cubic void is presented as Fuerteventura's ticket to developing a more 'prestigious' and 'sustainable' form of tourism. Indeed, the exhibition makes the argument that the project 'sets the standard' for how to intervene in a protected site. According to the official narrative, the Monument does not interfere with the indigenous engravings, since the former is located in the interior of the mountain and the latter on its surface. Furthermore, the monumental scale and transcendental aspirations of Chillida's project would add a contemporary spin to Tindaya's ancient sacredness.

In my conversations with those responsible for commissioning Chillida's Monument it quickly became apparent that the aspiration to partake in this new wave of development was a key component of their elation with the project. If everyone else was doing it, why couldn't they? If Lanzarote (the closest of the Canary Islands) had been able to successfully turn artist César Manrique's interventions in the landscape into a tourist package, why wouldn't they succeed with Chillida's Monument? Even if the model of culture-as-resource was somewhat dated, a high official told me, it could still work; in any case, it was a matter of 'sovereignty', of exercising his generation's right to 'mark the territory' just like the Mahos had done back in the day. The construction of this grand Monument by an artist of such reputation was Fuerteventura's chance to shift gears and become a top destination for land art. Why not profit from the land – he added – one of the few resources they did have? I needed to understand that the Monument was an *investment*, not an expenditure; that it would bring with it progress and a cascade of opportunities.

The state officials' persistent optimism regarding Chillida's Monument sits oddly with its actual fate. Soon after it was declared a 'project of general interest for the region' in 1996 – a designation that carried with it access to large amounts of public funds – the Monument got entangled in a series of legal disputes. Faced with two companies that held mining rights in Tindaya, the regional government made a deal: it bought off one of them and made the other a partner in the project, thereby linking their mining rights to the construction of the Monument. This resulted in the incorporation of PMMT, a public-private company owned in equal parts by Cabo Verde Inc. and the Canary Islands Government. Paradoxically, it was precisely this instrument, designed to expedite the Monument's construction, that became largely responsible for its indefinite suspension and the closure of the quarries. The valuation and trading of the mining rights, the partnership agreement and the contract underpinning the construction of the Monument were all taken to court by activists, prompting a series of trials and appeals that have stalled the project to this date (see Marrero-Guillamón, 2021). The evidence released in the trials shows how the grand futures for Fuerteventura attached to Chillida's Monument were entangled with rather pedestrian practices of speculation with and trading of the mining rights. So much so, that the financialisation of future prosperity resulted in the truncation of its very foundation, the construction of the Monument.

Standing on the ruins of progress

While the plans for the Monument crumbled, the relentless pursuit of progress through development continued elsewhere on the island: new hotels and apartment complexes mushroomed along the coastline, new roads inaugurated, large areas rezoned and earmarked for development. The island was booming, but would soon bust. The 2008 financial crash quickly revealed the shaky foundations of the model: the real estate market collapsed, construction work came to a halt, tourism declined, thousands of workers lost their jobs. The scars of two decades' intense development followed by a sudden interruption were present everywhere on the island at the time I conducted fieldwork (2016–17). The crisis may have been officially over by then, but whatever direction I drove in, whichever locality I visited, I would encounter abandoned buildings, unfinished structures, or faded billboards selling homes that never were (see Image sequence 2).

This may be one of the reasons why I was drawn to the abandoned football pitch in Tindaya, why I thought its rusty net-less goals, lightless floodlights and derelict changing rooms offered a privileged standpoint on the mountain. Ruins confront us with the 'lingering remains of the past in the present' (Carse & Kneas, 2019, p. 20), as well as past conceptions of the future, or 'futures past' (Koselleck, 2004). As Walter Benjamin (2002) famously argued, modern ruins are negative forms capable of disrupting the 'dream world' of modernity and revealing its destructive force. Tindaya's football pitch was certainly a reminder of the shortcomings of the state's vision of progress; but more importantly, these humble ruins evoked the many others that punctuated the island's landscape. Standing on it I felt as if the suspension of Chillida's Monument resonated with a larger condition affecting the island, one of interruption and waiting. This was a perception amplified by the way in which politicians I spoke to talked about their expectation of a future improvement in conditions, after which their plans could resume (presumably in very similar, if not identical terms as before). Despite the proliferation of ruins, the lure of progress, understood quantitatively as the development of infrastructures, the creation of jobs and so on, remained as powerful as ever – even in the face of ecological meltdown.

As an abstraction that has become policy, modern progress relies as much on *promise* as it does on *erasure*; progress is 'always more than just a category: it is an operation of exclusion that has always already taken place' (Alonso, 1998, p. 20). Its linear temporality involves not only an endless progression of domination over space, but also necessitates the effacement of other temporalities, of other forms of attachment to time (and space). It constitutes 'a single diachronic line in which non-European peoples, modes of coexistence, forms of knowledge, and even parts of the Earth were regarded, like the myths and stories by which they lived, as inhabiting Europe's past' (Savransky, 2021, p. 273). This is certainly the case when it comes to indigenous heritage and lifeworlds in the Canary Islands, systematically reduced to anecdotal evidence of an era not only past but surpassed; that is, proof of the self-fulfilling prophecy of progress. In my conversations with politicians and civil servants during fieldwork, a sort of fear of regression, of 'becoming savages again', seemed to be a trigger response to any critique of progress.[3] What was I suggesting, going back to living in caves and off the goats? Did I even know the hardness of life on the island before the arrival of modern infrastructures? People had

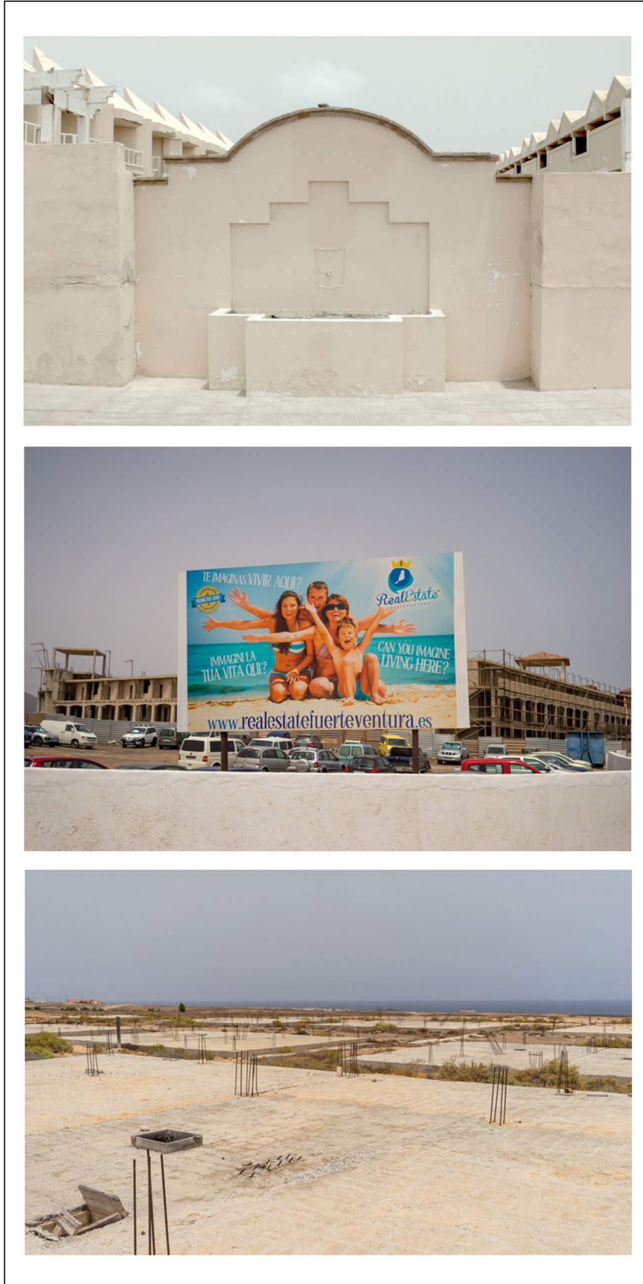

Image sequence 2. Progress in ruins.

starved, or else had to migrate in dire circumstances. It was all very well for academics such as myself to entertain primitivist fantasies, but they had been elected by the people to deliver more opportunities, not fewer.

But perhaps the question is less one of regression than of derailment. That is, of extricating our political imagination of the future from the narrow confines of progress, development, growth, etc. The analogy of a derailment seems appropriate to me, as it points at both the existence of a seemingly inexorable path and the violence associated with deviating from it. Such is the risk involved in parting ways with progress. Such is the risk associated to formulating another future for Tindaya, imagined from the ruins of futures past and with the traces of indigenous lifeworlds still available to us.

Indigenous futures

As Tindaya's monumental futures were being imagined, inflated and traded, the activist posters that decorate Bar María are a humble inscription of some of the ways in which a much less visible task, that of making sense of the indigenous lifeworlds attached to the mountain, was also underway. The posters were part of a public campaign aimed at disseminating archaeological research and gathering support for the abandonment of Chillida's project and the 'full protection' of the mountain. In effect, the state's unveiling of Chillida's project had acted as a catalyst for a sustained series of events, talks, guided visits, direct actions, publications and legal actions aimed at 'saving' Tindaya. Led by a very small group of committed activists grouped under the umbrella of the Tindaya Mountain Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora Montaña Tindaya*), this was a task of great difficulty, on account of how little the general public knew or cared about Tindaya. Colonial violence did not only efface the indigenous population of the archipelago; it also translated into centuries of institutional disregard for indigenous heritage which displaced the latter to the margins of public life (Farrujia, 2013). Archaeologists and activists have often remarked that this may be because indigenous heritage raises uncomfortable questions for the image of the islands that has been successfully marketed; it brings to the fore their connection with the Amazigh cultures of Northern Africa, the history of Spanish colonialism, as well as the undisturbed continuity of the elites and the extractive economies they have favoured.

The activists' goal of 'Saving Tindaya', therefore, went beyond protecting a mountain – it meant challenging established notions of modern progress and cultivating the idea that the traces of indigenous lifeworlds may indeed constitute a form of valuable heritage. The regional state's cultural heritage policy has systematically favoured post-conquest practices and forms: generous funding, for instance, has been allocated to the restoration of colonial architecture, including military and religious buildings and the homes of the elite. In other words, large amounts of public funds have been used to preserve, and celebrate, the (often private) patrimony of those directly responsible for colonial power and violence. Moreover, these structures have been projected onto the future as valuable tourist attractions.

The story of Tindaya's engravings is telling in its contrast. They were (re)discovered in 1979; until then, Tindaya was just another mountain where goats roamed, where cereal was grown, where partridges were hunted. Although local folk knew about the 'marks' at the top of the mountain, they did not make much of them. It took a young amateur archaeologist, Pedro Carreño, to notify the authorities about the existence of hundreds of foot-shaped petroglyphs to kickstart institutional and professional interest in Tindaya.

Following preliminary studies that confirmed the importance of the findings, the mountain was listed as a Historic Monument and therefore legally 'protected'. But the Department of Culture did not commission the further studies required for the delimitation and conservation of the site until much later.[4] In fact, it took 40 years since the re-discovery of the engravings for an official excavation to be funded or permitted, and for any signalling to appear on the mountain.

The current interpretation of the engravings, and of the pre-colonial practices associated to Tindaya more generally, highlights the mountain's centrality for indigenous life and cosmovision. Archaeologist María Antonia Perera describes it as the religious epicentre of the Mahos, evidenced by the sheer concentration of foot-shaped carvings, unseen anywhere else on the island, the remains of meeting places around the mountain, as well as the latter's distinct and commanding presence in the surrounding landscape. Indeed, this type of engravings was also used by Amazigh populations in Northern Africa to sacralise certain spaces and is interpreted as a collective expression linked to ritualistic practices. In the case of Tindaya, Perera et al. (1996) have argued that the fact that 80% of the engravings point towards the West, more specifically to the Winter Solstice's sunset, which takes place right before the rain season starts, may be an indication of a shamanic rain ritual. Maho society was largely dependent on these seasonal rains for survival, and their proto-religious practices are well-documented in the historical archive.

What if this patchy, tentative knowledge about the Mahos was redeployed as a line of flight for the imagination of a future for Tindaya after progress? What would taking care of Tindaya's heritage look like, if the latter were understood as the task of looking after untold histories and cultivating (im)possible futures? I believe speculative methods can be a useful tool in this regard. As Carin Kuoni (2014, p. 11) writes, speculation is a methodology that facilitates the 'awareness that things could be different', that fosters the imaginary as a 'realm of the simultaneous presence of multiple temporalities or conditions' – that offers, in short, a framework for harvesting a politics of the otherwise. The purpose of so doing would not be to suggest how things *should* be, but rather how they *could* be, and what this fictional future scenario may reveal about our present horizons – 'to unsettle the present rather than predict the future' (Clark, cited in Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 99). My aim in the remainder of the article is to mobilise ethnographic and archaeological insight to disrupt what passes as 'normal', 'possible' or 'commonsensical' in Tindaya. To craft an alternative scenario – an ethno-speculation – which may provide a platform for reimagining a politics of heritage after (and against) progress.

During fieldwork, I was often told that Tindaya was 'special'. I met someone who had, on several occasions, spent the night laying on it, looking at the stars and letting his body feel the rock underneath. A young man told me he climbed to the top every January 1st, as a personal cleansing ritual marking the start of a new cycle. A hunter described experiencing the most beautiful sunsets from the mountaintop, sitting on the rocks where his ancestors had once sat. A tour guide nonchalantly confirmed Tindaya's sacredness, as attested by her and her clients' feelings when visiting it. I was also told the story of the camel that once appeared inexplicably at the top of the mountain, surely the work of witches. Or that of the fireballs that used to come down the mountain slope, possibly sparks produced by rockfalls.

My own relationship with Tindaya tangibly shifted once I was able to see the engravings myself. It was a clear full moon night. In the dark, the mountain's hard rock became a sturdy, slightly slippery surface. But when the archaeologist leading us told us to gather around her and turned on her flashlight pointing at the floor, the harsh shadows revealed an astonishing series of foot-shaped engravings. She took us to several spots, each revealing an ever more impressive collection of shapes. Guided by her, we experienced what I can only describe as the aura of these inscriptions – the strong sensation that their rudimentary form carried with it the vibrations of something much more powerful and yet elusive (see Image sequence 3).

Finding ways of hosting and encouraging the bundle of affect linked to Tindaya I encountered during fieldwork, including my own, became an important concern in the process of developing the ethno-speculative experiment below. In this regard, I found inspiration and encouragement in a recent body of work devoted to 'indigenous futures' (Lempert, 2018; Raheja, 2017). The aforementioned challenge of thinking with indigeneity in the Canaries, in the absence of an indigenous people, made this strand of speculative, decolonial work particularly relevant. I shared with it an interest in creatively nurturing indigenous futurity, thereby dismantling the dominant association between indigenous lifeworlds and the past – and its corollary, the fantasy of their disappearance (Dillon, 2012). Cultivating indigenous futures, for these authors, involves the refusal of settler frameworks that fossilise indigeneity (Simpson, 2017) as well as the pursuit of narratives of 'survivance' as opposed to mere survival (Vizenor, 2008). As Turtle Mountain Chippewa scholar Danika Medak-Saltzman puts it:

> Indigenous futurisms, like Afrofuturisms and other similar movements, provide authors, readers, filmmakers, audiences, and our communities with opportunities to explore beyond what is and what has been and moves us toward imagining, creating, and manifesting a variety of possibilities that better represent our understandings of, our place in, and our responsibilities to this world and to those yet to come. (2017, p. 143)

The annihilation of Fuerteventura's Mahos cannot be mitigated, but placing their traces at the centre of the reimagination of the future may help to interrupt their mummification as mere indexes of the past. I see experimenting with ethno-speculative scenarios as one way – among many others needed – to foster indigenous futurities in a context in which the latter are radically absent from public life. What follows in the next section is a short ethnography of the future, of another future – one which reshuffles and rearranges the elements I have analysed so far. To be clear, I do not intend to resuscitate the Mahos, but rather to conjure unprescribed afterlives for their traces; to imagine the possibility of a world in which their ghosts have a place (see Tsing et al., 2017).

Waiting for Tindaya: An ethno-speculation

Few could imagine that the enactment of the Local Sovereignty Act would have such profound impact in Tindaya. It was widely known that the Act was tailored to the interests of big landowners and developers, who relentlessly lobbied for 'unleashing the full potential' of local government after the Big Crash. In addition to complete autonomy in

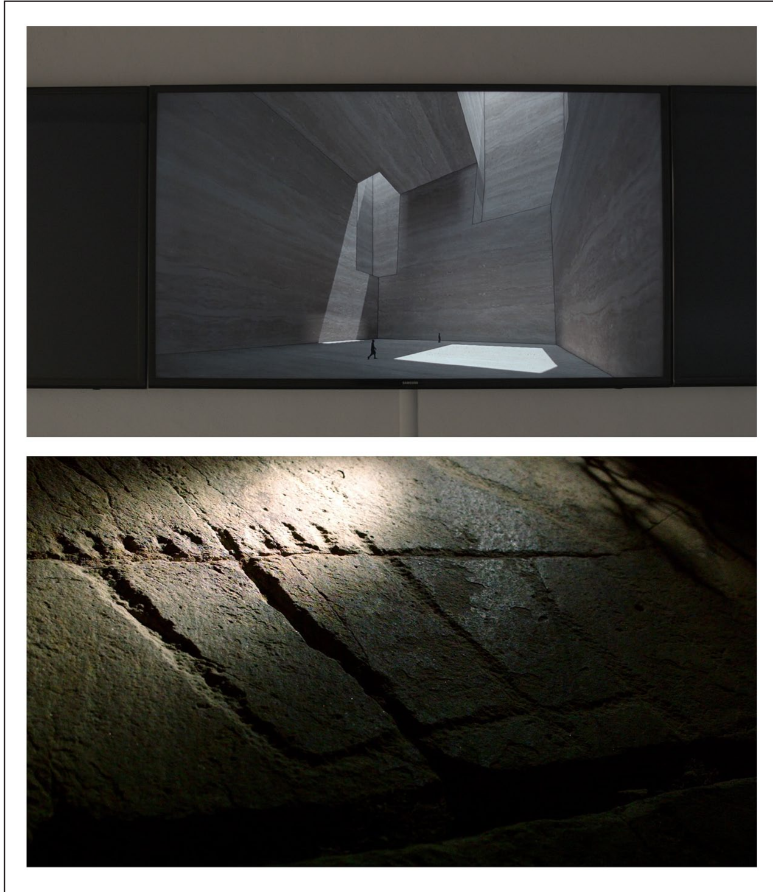

Image sequence 3. Monumental pasts/Indigenous futures.

most realms other than defence, this meant using 'developmental cost-effectiveness' analysis to 'optimise' municipal boundaries. Fuerteventura, for instance, was divided into two local authorities as a result of the Act: the Coast, whose territory was deemed highly profitable, and the Interior, whose area was 100% classified as 'cost-ineffective'. The Coast went on to become a sort of vanguard for the tourist industry: attracted by zero tax policies, developers flocked in, offering every imaginable experience, catering to every market segment. It was a lucrative if highly unequal model – apart from endemically unstable and ecologically damaging.

The Interior, in contrast, was faced with economic collapse at first. Population decreased, investors and creditors stayed away, infrastructures decayed. Only then things started to change. A wave of grassroots 'repossession', 'rewiring' and 'repurposing' actions paved the way for the eventual success of the Slow Party, an eclectic offshoot of the environmental movement. The party's motto, 'living and dying otherwise', translated into ambitious experiments in food and energy harvesting, economic degrowth, school

curricula and heritage policy. Somewhat paradoxically, many of these initiatives were ultimately funded by the Coast's huge energy needs, which had created a profitable market for the Interior's surplus.

In Tindaya, the Interior's Department for Sovereign Futures found the ideal site to nurture a growing interest in indigenous heritage, particularly among schoolchildren. The result of decades of collaboration with archaeologists, schools and residents are apparent from the moment one sets foot in the village. 'Welcome to Maho land', says the sign at the entrance. Behind it, surrounded by solar panels, stands the Tibiabín & Tamonante Lab. Sited in what used to be the Casa Alta Museum and named after the Maho priestesses, the Lab was conceived as a public resource and a working space. It makes available a huge archive of material related to indigenous lifeworlds, from colonial records to contemporary archaeo-astronomic and DNA analysis. Rather than favouring a particular interpretation, however, the Lab rather encourages their proliferation. The space is almost always busy with researchers and children working and playing with the materials. Contradictory, speculative and eccentric engagements with the Mahos are pursued without apparent hierarchy, and often replaced by new ones. One installation, for instance, turned the colonial archive inside out, as it were, through a series of decentring interventions: documents were tactically redacted and/or annotated, the narrative of discovery retold from an imagined indigenous witness, and the colonial language of progress and civilisation unmade from the point of view of the crops forced onto inhospitable soil. The Lab's work with schoolchildren has resulted in some of its most compelling speculative excursions, including wild accounts of the lives and aspirations of young Mahos and their goats, affirmatively post-humanist in tone and scope.

The Lab's youthful energy is also tangible in the village's social centre, Bar María. Here, locally harvested food is prepared in the cooking school, meetings of all kinds take place in the Free Association rooms, and children roam free in the Reclaim Play/Ground that occupies the backyard. In the main space, a small exhibition entitled Waiting for Tindaya inconspicuously hangs on the walls. It offers a loose account of the controversy that surrounded the mountain at the turn of the century, when it was almost emptied out in the name of a 'Monument to Tolerance'. Interviews with the protagonists and a selection of documents provide candid insight into how ideas of 'progress' and 'development' were used to efface indigenous heritage and restrict the possibility of alternative futures. To avoid the risk of forgetting this episode, the village council decided that rather than destroying the materials associated to the *Monument to Tolerance* it was best to let them decay naturally. And so the Old Football Pitch – locally known as the Cemetery – was repurposed as a decommissioned art park of sorts. The old municipality's homage to Eduardo Chillida; the models, drawings, films and simulations used to promote the Monument; samples of the 1,650 metres of rock that were extracted during the test drillings; and even an old helicopter that was used during the latter can all be found there, in various stages of ruination.

Although tourism is not encouraged in the Interior, the area does attract a small but steady number of visitors. Tindaya in particular has become relatively well-known and respected in heritage circles. Following a thorough archaeological campaign, several indigenous structures were excavated at the base of the mountain: the remains of meeting and dwelling spaces were restored, and supplemented by a number of interactive

materials addressing the Mahos's cultural, social, economic and religious life. Similarly to the Lab, the purpose of these digital materials is not to provide a fossil-like window into the past, but rather to facilitate learning from indigenous lifeworlds. Hence, rain rituals, common-land rules, cheese making or polygamy are explored as 'infrastructures for living', partially connected to contemporary concerns.

As for the mountain itself, the heritage plan established that the best way to care for and protect its dormant sacredness was to designate it a restricted site. It can only be accessed a few days every year (on the Winter Solstice and in relation to other solar and lunar events), at night, in small guided groups and for a minimum of five hours. The visit is entirely analogue, and all forms of image capture are forbidden too. Somewhat contentious at first, deemed excessive by some, these measures turned out to be rather uncontroversial in the end. The astonished eyes of those who return from the mountaintop, their haunted tales, the new forms of veneration that have sprouted since – they all seem to have done the work of silencing critics.

Walking around Tindaya, one is left with the impression that people there have allowed themselves to be affected by the traces of the Mahos, that they have learned to live in the company of spectres.

Coda

Arguably, the suspension of the state's grand plans for Tindaya has resulted in an impasse with unique analytic and political affordances. The inevitability and linearity of 'progress' has cracked. Ruins have flourished. Indigenous heritage has emerged as a matter of public concern. By moving from critique onto speculation, I have aimed to inhabit this interstice and contribute to envisaging an alternative future for Tindaya – to cultivate other possibles using and rearranging insight gained through ethnography.

It was not difficult, during fieldwork, to entertain the idea of the Monument never being built. Less easy was to picture a more affirmative scenario in which the distinction between 'indigenous pasts' and 'modern futures' was reshuffled, or rather upended – in fact, as I crafted the scenario above, I could only imagine it following an undetermined catastrophic event ('the Big Crash') and existing in tension with a reverse utopia (the Interior/Coast antagonism). To a large extent, my ethno-speculation was constructed as a game of inversions between the buried and the excavated, the preserved and the ruined, the valued and the disposable. Quite literally, I attempted to project indigeneity into the future – as a condition of the land, and a collective resource for the cultivation of the otherwise – and conversely to treat today's modern progress as a relic of the past.

There is no doubt that the result is a fraught, perhaps even dangerous exercise. Does it make sense to reclaim indigeneity in a context where an indigenous people no longer exists as such? Doesn't the speculative method risk speaking for (absent) others? What are the politics of composing such heritage utopia in an academic text, as opposed to in the public domain? These are good questions; they point at tensions that were central to the writing of this article – and for which I only have partial answers. I would argue that the absence of the Mahos/Guanches as a living people, together with the indisputable presence of their traces, create the conditions – and constitute the very

challenge – for inventive approaches to indigenous heritage. I therefore think of the vignette above as an opening, as an invitation to the task of collectively envisaging and creating new horizons of possibility for Tindaya. As Vyjayanthi Venuturupalli Rao puts it (2014, p. 24): 'The speculative moment – in which a new world is envisioned and striven for – is therefore the moment in which radical change is possible, but only through the enactment of a "space of reception," as yet unborn.' Sharing and discussing drafts of this article – including at the *After Progress* seminar series – provided a tentative beginning for such conversation. My interlocutors' concerns regarding the purpose of imagining a 'heritage utopia' or the politics of situating myself in a God-like position; their doubts about the public reach of such exercise; but also the associations it triggered and the pedagogical potential they saw in it were all hugely enriching and became part of each re-draft. The usefulness of the exercise, as I see it, may reside precisely in discussing its limitations or shortcomings – for identifying these is another way of composing the otherwise.

My hope remains that staging an alternative future after and against 'progress', and offering it up for discussion, may generate what Chris Moffat calls an 'untimely interference', that is, 'a sense of responsibility to that which is not present, whose corporeal existence has been extinguished' (2019, p. 2). Encouraging the proliferation of afterlives for the Guanches/Mahos may be one way to disturb the homogeneous time of modernity and think instead of 'endings that are not over' (Gordon, cited in Moffat, 2019, p. 6). In other words, taking care and responsibility for these ghosts can contribute to interrupting the linearity of progress and pluralising/complicating the relationship between indigenous pasts, present and futures (Rifkin, 2017). I am certainly aware that extricating Tindaya from the futures currently envisaged by the state is a colossal task that cannot be possibly resolved by speculative exercises. And yet, I would argue that the latter constitute a helpful complement to critique when it comes to disrupting the 'problem-space of the normal, the probable and the plausible' and cultivating 'the eruption of what, from the standpoint of the impasse of the present seems, in all likelihood, to be impossible' (Savransky et al., 2017, p. 7).

Ash Watson (2021) has recently reflected on the increasing interest in using fiction and creative writing in sociology. Compared to traditional scholarship, 'sociological fiction' can provide a more engaging interface with the public, a more welcoming platform for collaboration with research participants, and a richer engagement with sensory and embodied forms of knowledge. I certainly agree, and welcome the ways in which using fictional forms contributes to expanding what we understand by empirical qualitative research. My argument for ethno-speculation adds an explicit interest in the disruptive affordances of speculative fiction, i.e. its capacity to challenge narratives of inevitability and experiment with different possibilities. As Ruha Benjamin (2016) argues, it is a matter of studying the world empirically and reflecting on it speculatively, so that we may expand our visions of what is possible and encourage situated alternatives – daring to imagine an otherwise is arguably part of the task of bringing it about.

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Notes

1. As of December 2021, the plans for the protection and dissemination of the mountain's environment and indigenous heritage remain a work in progress and Chillida's Monument – while no longer a priority for the island's current coalition government – still remains 'in the books'.
2. All figures calculated from the Regional Government's publicly available data (Instituto Canario de Estadística [ISTAC], 2019).
3. This paragraph (and the article more generally) draws generously from discussions that took place during the *After Progress: Modernity in Ruins* seminar series organised by Martin Savransky and Craig Lundy in 2019. I thank the conveners, speakers and attendees for creating such a stimulating environment.
4. Their inaction stands in contrast to the proactivity of the Ministry of Industry and Energy, which during that period granted the mining concessions that underpinned the quarries.

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