

## Popular summary

The challenges of protecting natural resources, land, water, local languages and ways of life are at the very heart of the history of Indigenous communities in Mexico and other parts of the world. These struggles for linguistic and cultural continuity, control of natural resources, environmental justice and sustainability continue today and will extend into the future. While many patterns of community defense and ecological resilience have been developed over centuries, Indigenous peoples are also facing entirely new threats and must adapt their resistance strategies and forms of action. The project aims to elucidate and understand the mechanisms that condition these strategies, including the relationship between forms of Indigenous agency and socio-cultural, linguistic, economic and environmental-climatic factors. The project combines methods appropriate to history (environmental history, microhistory, spatial history), socio-cultural, environmental and linguistic anthropology, legal dimensions of environmental protection, and decolonial research paradigms. The research focuses on the role of linguistic-cultural vitality in supporting community-level resilience and agency in taking collective action for environmental justice in several geographic, linguistic and cultural contexts in Mexico: in the Otomi (yühmu) Ixtenco community in Tlaxcala, in the Ahuacatlán and San Felipe Tepatlán municipalities in the Sierra Norte de Puebla inhabited by Totonac and Nahua communities; and in the Otomi (hñähñu) San Pablito (Nvite) community in the Pahuatlán municipality, also in mountains of the state of Puebla. Our main hypothesis is that the vitality of Indigenous language and local culture, as well as strong ethnic identification, are associated with higher levels of social and environmental resilience, reflected in successful and sustained struggles for environmental justice. In other words, the team will investigate how ancestral language use and cultural continuity have influenced and keep influencing the environmental action (including legal struggles) driven by local communities in the past and present. This will enable us to better understand what factors support the struggle against external environmental threats, including those adverse climatic, political, social and economic factors that can limit access to fundamental resources such as clean water, forests and communal land. The project also aims to stimulate equitable exchanges between scientists, Indigenous experts and local communities to mutually enrich and share knowledge, support heritage languages, transfer local ecological knowledge, strengthen ethnic identity and a sense of belonging and well-being. The results can be useful for sustaining and fostering effective strategies for fighting for environmental justice, preserving linguistic-cultural diversity and for sustainable development of the participating Indigenous communities, as well as for other communities facing similar challenges.