Relational Conservation Territories:

Racialized Property Regimes, Negotiated Rights and Environmental Management in the *Selva Misionera*

Elizabeth C. Shoffner

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2023

Reading Committee:

Victoria Lawson, Chair

Jose Antonio Lucero

Megan Ybarra

Benjamin Gardner

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Department of Geography

University of Washington

Abstract

Relational Conservation Territories:

Racialized Property Regimes, Negotiated Rights and Environmental Management in the *Selva Misionera*

Elizabeth C. Shoffner

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Victoria Lawson

Department of Geography

This dissertation examines the intersection of the often-unrealized rights of Latin America's 'territorial turn' and the shifting political economy of Misiones, Argentina, as the *selva misionera* subtropical forest is revalorized as an object of conservation. I analyze the making of conservation territories through an ethnography of 'Lote 8', a nearly 4000-hectare lot in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, purchased for conservation and titled to three Mbya Guarani communities following over a decade of struggle for their land. First, I explore how Lote 8 is produced and stabilized as a discursive object through a multi-scalar network of actors, institutions, and infrastructures, which extract political, social and material value through its representation. Then, I trace the relationship among property, indigeneity and the *selva* though the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve in the early 1990s, the dispute over Lote 8 between the Mbya Guarani and a logging company at the turn of the century, and the negotiated conservation land purchase and titling agreement. I show how claims to 'conservation citizenship' produce new spaces to contest histories of racialized dispossession and negotiate rights otherwise foreclosed through legal avenues, as

conservation networks become an audience for the enunciation of rights claims and a non-state arbiter of the recognition of Indigenous communities. Problematically however, where rights claims made to the state require legibility of land as Indigenous territory, recognition by conservation actors requires that Indigenous communities demonstrate their legitimacy as conservation subjects, making 'negotiated rights' contingent, imbricated with the political economy of conservation and always susceptible to being undermined. Finally, I examine the effects of (re)producing the *selva misionera* as an object of environmental management in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and its area of influence. I show how provincial parks are socially produced through the embodied labor of park rangers, which extends through (b)ordering practices for managing the overlapping borderlands of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and the national border with Brazil. I argue that accessing land titles through conservation entangles Indigenous rights with environmental management as it operates as a mode of extending settler colonial territorial control through the everyday enactment of conservation territories.

I dedicate this dissertation to three generations of my family who made it possible:

To my mother, my anchor, who supported me to become whoever and however I chose, and who read many iterations of work in progress and provided feedback on all my grant applications on incredibly tight timelines.

To my brother, my most brilliant interlocutor, who encouraged and challenged my ideas, and who insisted I go to graduate school, because “one of us should have health insurance”.

To my son, my joy, who opens me to the world and makes it new again, and who slept on my lap for his first few months of life while I wrote and edited, ensuring I finished.

Acknowledgements

All intellectual work is the product of the relationships, conversations, challenges and inspirations through which it is built. This dissertation had many collaborators along the way.

I first traveled to Misiones during the floods of June, 2014, with Nico Castrilli*, compañero de muchas aventuras,* hitching north from Buenos Aires with barely enough money to pay the entry fee to Iguazú National Park. Successive travels, equally scrappy, and the friendships and political commitments we built in the region, irrevocably shaped our life trajectories and made this research possible. *Gracias Nico.*

My time at the University of Washington brought me into conversation with many incredible scholars, more than I can possibly name or acknowledge. Thank you to everyone who has shaped my thinking.

During dissertation fieldwork, friendships with Jennifer Porter, Maggie Wilson and Lauren Drakopulos sustained me through discovery as well as exhaustion and loneliness, with many hours of audio messages capturing my lived experiences and reflections more than my own field notes. I am so grateful. Coll de Lima Hutchison and Cecilia Salinas shared insights from their dissertation fieldwork at crucial moments that helped clarify my analysis. Thank you both for your encouragement. Daiana and Calixto accompanied me to Lote 8 as Mbya Guarani interpreters, providing company and insight in addition to brilliant translation. *Ha'evete.*

To maintain anonymity, I cannot individually thank the many wonderful people who participated in this research, generously sharing their stories, lives and archives. I have made every attempt to honor the complexity of the worlds you shared with me. Know that every one of you is held in my heart.

Estoy agradecida a lxs integrantes del grupo de Lecturas 4eva y la inspiración de nuestros diálogos abigarrados. Especialmente a Natalia Pérez, Fernanda Rojas Marchini, y Belén Noroña, quienes pensaban conmigo, compartían los retos y alegrías a la distancia, y me sostuvieron en los momentos que más me dudaba. También agradezco a Diana Ojeda, quien me apoyó incondicionalmente como intelectual y madre soltera durante mi ultimo año como estudiante, mostrándome siempre cómo se construye la geografía feminista en la práctica.

In addition to the truest friendship I have known, Maggie Wilson brought joy, comfort and

accountability to many hours of shared writing time in Suzzallo Library. Caitlin Alcorn and Fer Rojas Marchini shared many productive Zoom writing sessions, making distance and isolation a little more bearable. Skye Naslund offered thoughtful advice and made incredible maps as I prepared to defend.

My committee, Vicky Lawson, Tony Lucero, Megan Ybarra, Ben Gardner, and Ileana Rodríguez-Silva provided insightful critiques that challenged my thinking and improved my writing. Thank you all for learning with me. Vicky Lawson, in particular, saw me through many years of scholarly development in ways that kept my values, politics and identity intact (if molded by the experience). Thank you, Vicky, for accepting the challenge of being my advisor, and seeing me through to graduation even past your retirement.

Materially, research for this dissertation was funded by an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, a Chester Fritz Fellowship from the Graduate School at the University of Washington, Howard Martin Funds from the University of Washington Department of Geography and the Clyde Snow Fund, through the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program at the University of Washington. Writing was supported by a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies and a Summer Dissertation Fellowship from the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington.

Research and writing of this dissertation began on Guarani territory, in Misiones, Argentina and Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and continued on Coast Salish lands, on Bainbridge Island and Seattle, Washington. My life and work have been produced through the colonial histories and presents of Argentina, Canada and the United States, where myself and my ancestors have lived as uninvited guests; I am indebted to the Nations whose homelands have been my home as I strive to critically engage these realities.

My family, to whom I dedicate this dissertation, made everything possible.

Any errors, omissions, or equivocations are completely my own.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Alianza - *Alianza Multicultural Publico y Privada para el Manejo Sostenible de Lote 8* / Multicultural Public-Private Partnership for the Sustainable Management of Lote 8

AMIRBY - *Área de Manejo Integral Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí* / Integral Management Area of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve

ANP - *Áreas Naturales Protegidas* / Natural Protected Areas

INAI - *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indigenas* / National Institute of Indigenous Affairs

ISSP - *Instituto Superior de San Pedro* /Superior Institute of San Pedro

MEyRNR - *Minsterio de Ecología y Recursos Naturales Renovables* / Ministry of Ecology y Renewable Natural Resources of the Province of Misiones (Also referred to in the text as the Ministry of Ecology)

RBY - *Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí* / Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (Also referred to in the text as Yabotí)

UNAM - *Universidad Nacional de Misiones* / National University of Misiones

VSA - *Vida Silvestre Argentina*

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2012, three Mbya Guarani[1] communities in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, a logging company, a British conservation land trust, and the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of the Province of Misiones, Argentina reached a landmark agreement. The land trust, represented locally by an Argentine NGO, agreed to purchase 'Lote 8', a nearly 4000-hectare lot of *selva paranaense*[2] subtropical forest, from the logging company, titling the majority of the land to the three communities, with a consensus on explicit rules for its conservation. After over a decade of legal struggle at the provincial level, the intervention of the national legislature, and an international media campaign, the Mbya Guarani would finally receive titles to land that all parties acknowledged as rightfully Guarani[3] territory. The case was acclaimed as a success for conservation and Indigenous rights, moreover, one resolved through negotiation and dialogue.

Yet, before reaching this agreement, the Mbya Guarani had been denied property rights to this land by the justice system, even after asserting them under international law and the provisions of Argentina's revised constitution, and the land had nearly been sold for conservation outright, despite acknowledgement of the Mbya land claim. How was it that even with legal protections for Indigenous land in Argentina and the communities' rights to participate in the management of natural resources, the land claim was only resolved with the intervention of a foreign NGO, purchasing land for conservation?

The particular and unique reality of Lote 8 is situated in and speaks to two broad trends: the so-called "territorial turn" (Offen, 2003) in Latin America and the rising centrality of conservation in the political economy of Misiones. The "territorial turn" references a wave of legal reforms across Latin America,

[1] In this text Mbya words follow Guarani, rather than Spanish orthography, with stressed ultimate syllables without accent marks, e.g. Mbya Guarani, not Mbyá Guaraní. Direct quotes originally in Spanish of documents or interviews with research participants follow Spanish orthography, including of transliterations.

[2] The *selva paranaense* ecoregion is inland Atlantic Forest.

[3] The Mbya Guarani are the predominant but not the only Indigenous Guarani subgroup in Misiones (see Rola, 2016 and Grünberg, 2008). Throughout this text, I use Mbya Guarani or Mbya to refer specifically to the Mbya Guarani, usually but not always in reference to the specific communities involved in Lote 8; I use Guarani as the broader, more inclusive term where appropriate. According to Salinas (2016) there are thirteen Guarani communities in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, eleven Mbya and two Ava Chiripa; Gomez (2019) refers to a total of fourteen communities in Yabotí, and during the time I conducted fieldwork I believe that number had expanded slightly.

beginning in the 1990s, which in many cases, including Argentina's, involved constitutional reforms and provisions for distinct rights for Indigenous[4] and, in some states, Afro-descendant communities. Importantly, the territorial turn created new legal avenues for these communities to make claims to collective territory and collective titling of land (Asher, 2009; Bryan, 2012; Offen, 2003). In Misiones, Argentina this same period was marked by a partial shift from extraction to conservation and a revalorization of the standing '*selva misionera*' subtropical forest, as the *selva paranaense* of Misones is known. This included the creation of the nation's first provincial Ministry of Ecology[5] in 1984, the creation of the provincial system of protected natural areas in 1992 (Ley XVI - Nº 29) and a gradual expansion of the number of provincial parks, and the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve in 1993 (Ley XVI - Nº 33). Currently, over a third of the land in the province is designated in some category of protected area. Increasingly, across the last two decades, conservation has taken place through more neoliberal[6] forms of conservation, both within state spaces though project-based funding from NGOs and international cooperation, and with the creation of private reserves and ecotourism projects.

This dissertation examines the making of conservation territories, animated by the guiding question: How does the 'territorial turn' intersect with conservation in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve?

---

[4] A discussion of debates around the boundaries of indigeneity (see, for example, De la Cadena & Starn 2007) and the spatial and historical trayectories of the Guarani in Misiones are beyond the scope of this dissertation. As evidenced in the archival documentation discussed in Chapter 3, the two Mbya Guarani communities at the center of the struggles over Lote 8, where I conducted research, consistently asserted themselves as iIndigenous/aboriginal communities. All three communities to which the land was titled obtained registered juridical personhood as Indigenous communities with state authorities.

[5] The Ministry of Ecology of Misiones has had various names and included various other administrative areas, including tourism. The Ministry of Ecology is currently the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources (MEyRNR).

[6] Drawing from the work of David Harvey (2005) Heynen, et al (2007) suggest that neoliberalism's "imperative" is "to expand opportunities for capital investment and accumulation by reworking state-market-civil society relations to allow for the stretching and deepening of commodity production, circulation, and exchange" (10); this, inevitably, is accompanied by the reworking of socio-environmental relations. Neoliberalization with respect to the environment often connotes the privatization, marketization or commodification of nature, such as in market-based initiatives for environmental governance; payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes are a classic example. However, neoliberalism also involves the decentralization of governance and the internationalization, NGOization, and devolution to civil society of various aspects of care, social inclusion, and other state functions; the rise of private conservation reserves, competitive, grant-based funding for projects within provincial parks, and various kinds of public-private conservation initiatives in Misiones are examples of this. For a discussion of neoliberalism and conservation, see special issues in Conservation and Society (2007) Antipode (2010) and Current Conservation (2010). Ojeda (2007) and Gardner (2016) provide excellent studies of contested territorial and subjectification processes in relation to neoliberal conservation and ecotourism.

Through an ethnographic exploration of Lote 8, I ask:

How is 'Lote 8' relationally produced?

What is the relationship among property, environmental management and Mbya Guarani territory in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve that produces land titling through conservation, and to what effects?

What are the power relations negotiated and territorialized through conservation of the *selva misionera*?

Figure 1: Map of Argentina highlighting the Province of Misiones
Map elaborated by Skye Naslund

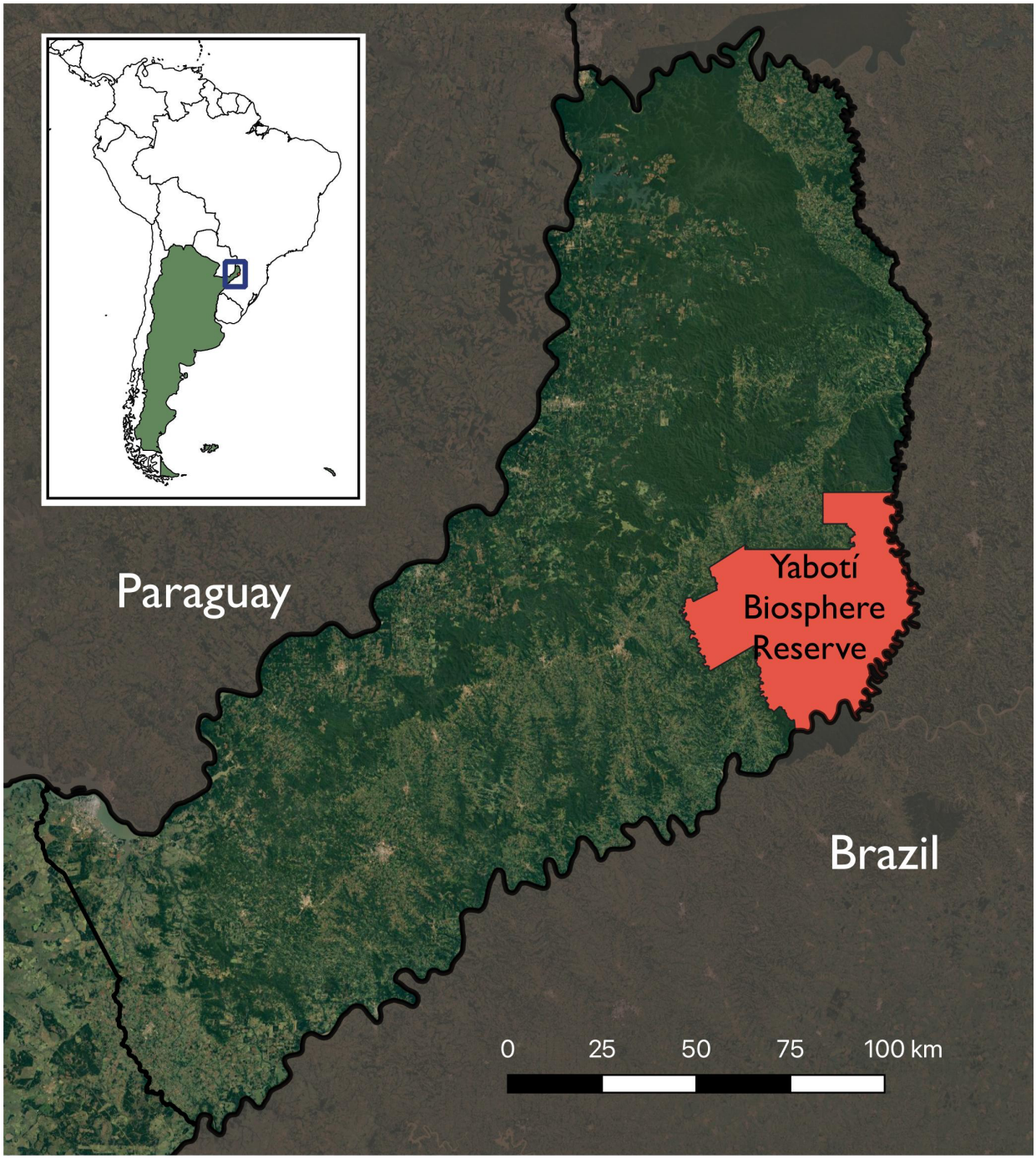

Figure 2: Map of Misiones highlighting the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve
Map elaborated by Skye Naslund

1.1 Making relational conservation territories

In Central-Eastern Misiones, in and around the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (see Figures 1 and 2), conservation is a multi-faceted and contested political project which solidifies as a governance regime—perhaps only temporarily or partially—through which rights claims are realized and subjects are produced. I refer to the configurations of socio-environmental relations, materializing in space, which are shaped by or articulated through conservation as *conservation territories*. Lote 8 is one—or many—such conservation territory.

In his effort to "decolonise" the concept of territory and reconcile Anglophone and Latin American scholarship, Halvorsen (2018) defines territory as "the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects" (791)[7]. This, he argues, occurs simultaneously from 'above', (for instance, by the state) and from 'below' (for instance, through grassroots organization), through "overlapping and entangled" processes. Thinking with other scholars working to bridge Anglo and Latin American geographic thought, I understand territory not (only) in terms of state sovereignty over space, as commonly conceptualized in Anglophone literature (e.g. Elden 2013; Agnew 1994), but assembled through everyday practices (Baletti, 2012; Correia, 2019), in line with the work of many Brazilian geographers focused on socio-territorial movements (e.g. Haesbaert, 2020; Porto Gonçalves, 2002). Territory as an assemblage suggests a convergence of diverse elements in a network of contingent relations, which are selected, ordered and "stratified" through power relations, and discourses, but which can also be disrupted, rearranged, and assembled differently, a process sometimes referred to as deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haesbaert, 2013; Painter, 2010). As Halvorsen (2018) notes, territories are multiple and "entangled", what Haesbaert (2013, 2004) refers to as "multi-territoriality" (*multiterritorialidad*), in the sense of networked territories (*territorio-red*). Correia (2019) invokes the concepts of multiterritoriality and "territorial assemblage" to describe simultaneous processes of making and contesting territory (territoriality) in the Paraguay-Brazil borderlands after the Aché community of Kue Tuvy won collective land titles, stressing that

[7] "Decolonization" as Tuck and Yang (2012) reiterate, is "not a metaphor", making it perhaps not the most appropriate term for conceptual reflections on territory. Nonetheless, Halvorsen's project is nuanced and commendable, in that he is doing theoretically what he argues contestatory projects in Latin America are doing materially—disrupting hegemonic practices of making territory.

titling and efforts to assemble Indigenous territory must be situated within longer histories and processes of Indigenous dispossession and consider the "unexpected consequences of land restitution" (12).

Throughout this dissertation, I situate the dynamic reconfiguration of Lote 8 as a conservation territory, or territorial assemblage, through "negotiated rights" at the intersection of the racialized property regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, which have absented the Guarani and reiterated or legitimized histories of dispossession, and the "unexpected consequences" of the entanglement of these rights—before, during, and after titling—with environmental management. At this intersection, there are overlapping conservation territories produced—and contested—through and with Lote 8, as it is assembled, ordered and stabilized, de- and reterritorrialized.

I qualify conservation territories as *relational* to highlight their relational qualities in a few registers.[8] Following Massey's (2005) arguments about space*,* as I show throughout this dissertation, conservation territories are the product of interrelations at multiple scales, they are heterogenous and multiple, and they are always-in-process. Conservation territories are brought into being and stabilized through and with the production of subjectivities and identities, and, as I will discuss, this produces new sites and spaces for the articulation and negotiation of rights claims. Furthermore, I take a feminist *methodological* approach to the making of territory, arguing that, given the particularities of Lote 8 as a conservation territory produced through a network of multi-scalar relationships, as I engaged and shaped those relationships, I was also enrolled in the territorialization of Lote 8—its becoming territory. For some of my interlocutors, to speak of *territory* was to suggest the place-based relationships through which life and culture were reproduced (Escobar 2008). Lote 8, as Mbya Guarani territory, is also situated and produced through reciprocal relations among humans, other-than-humans, land, ancestors—what Native scholars refer to as Indigenous relationality (Daigle, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2016; Smith 2012; Todd, 2016). As Omushkegowuk Cree scholar Michelle Daigle (2016) argues, "relational geographies of resurgence" are practiced as "everyday geographies" of self-determination; Mbya practices of being on the land are also at stake in the making of Lote 8 as a relational conservation territory.

[8] Notably, in much Latin American scholarship on territory (e.g. Haesbaert 2013), relationality is already implicit in the concept of territory.

In the disputed production of Lote 8 as a conservation territory that I trace, territory/*territorio* was never a singular term; its deployment indexed a collective claim within a changing legal landscape, an Indigenous relationship to land perceived as the "other" to private property, and everyday socio-environmental practices. In the following section, I discuss the "territorial turn" and its limits, the context for the unrealized legal rights sought by the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8 through the provincial justice and national legislative systems.

1.2 Rights, recognition and the territorial turn

Critiques of the "territorial turn" (Offen 2003) suggest that the territorial rights for Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in Latin America, part of new legal frameworks of multicultural inclusion in the 1990s, have serious limitations. They point to the uneven translation of territory into property (Anthias, 2019) and the new barriers to sovereignty on titled land (Correia, 2019). The translation of Indigenous territory through processes of property-making restructures and fixes spatial relations while forcing them into compatibility with the boundaries of existing non-Indigenous property, a dynamic Penelope Anthias describes as the "disjuncture between the cartographic promise of indigenous territories and the legal-material outcomes of propertisation" (2019, p 269). Correia (2019) argues that this expansion of rights of the territorial turn, while sometimes resulting in property titles for Indigenous communities, does not fundamentally alter colonial power relations; thus, communities face new challenges to sovereignty within the land that has been titled to them, as their rights to land must be continuously maintained. Fundamentally, they show that "inclusion" and the ability to assert territorial rights within and to the state do not disrupt colonial power relations, and may reproduce them in new forms (Hale, 2002; Hale, 2005), reifying the colonial state. Titling land to Indigenous communities has been part of the agenda of institutions like the United Nations and the World Bank, which scholars have argued is due both to the importance of protecting certain Indigenous land/knowledge from development and the ravages of neoliberal capitalism *and* protecting neoliberal capitalism from the potential threat of protest by affected communities (Anthias, 2018; Anthias and Radcliffe, 2013; Bryan, 2012; Hale 2005). As Bryan has argued, "[t]he territorial turn describes a renewed effort to make space governable through the recognition of rights" (Bryan, 2012, p. 217).

But what does it mean to make space governable through rights? Critical engagement with 'multicultural' rights and recognition have focused on the ways they both require and exclude Indigenous difference (Bryan, 2012; Engle, 2010; Hale, 2005), neutralizing the threat posed by "radical difference" to colonial states and relations (de la Cadena, 2015). Dene political scientist Glen Coulthard (2014) argues that the shift from assimilationist policies in the settler state of Canada (and in settler colonial contexts more broadly) to a politics of recognition (of Indigenous difference, rights, and sovereignty) ultimately strengthens the (asymmetrical) relationship between Indigenous communities and settler states and reproduces the colonial/patriarchal/racist state. State power, he suggests, is not only negative/disciplinary, but also productive of Indigenous subjects whose identities and subjectivities are shaped in relation to the legalistic procedures of rights and recognition. Accessing multicultural rights requires that Indigenous communities be legibly *different* and authentic (Povinelli, 2002), included within the neoliberal state where "difference" is an asset. Multicultural rights, therefore, work to make difference governable (Hale, 2002; Hale, 2005).

Much of the discussion of the making of land claims permitted by the inclusive laws of the territorial turn center "rights" in relation to the state and the law (e.g. Asher, 2009; Correia, 2019; di Giminiani, 2018), even while acknowledging the tremendous role played by nongovernmental organizations and corporations in this process of governance (Anthias, 2018; Bryan, 2012; Offen, 2003). As I show in Chapter 3, the specific limits of the very localized bureaucratic processes by which Indigenous communities enact land claims through the law are important to shaping how they are engaged *beyond* the state. Yet where states provide the political frameworks for territorial recognition without providing the material resources or legal steps for expropriation, "*cajoneando*"[9] the process in endless cycles of bureaucracy (Salinas, 2016) this crucial step can be much more easily resolved through the private capital of conservation organizations in transactions with landowners. Broadening the understanding of the mechanisms of accessing rights inevitably broadens how we understand territoriality. As Anthias argued in the case of Bolivia "transnational companies and international financial institutions preceded the Bolivian state in recognizing indigenous land rights in Bolivia. From the outset, indigenous land rights surpassed the arena of indigenous-state relations,

[9] A cajón is a desk drawer, to "cajonear" is to indefinitely delay a petition or process through the temporalities of state bureaucracy (Salinas 2016; Salinas 2020)

demonstrating the power of non-state actors in governing territory." (2018, p 48). Anthias & Radcliffe (2013) suggest that land titling for Indigenous communities is an "ethno-environmental fix" predicated on the convergence on ethnodevelopment and environmentalist agendas. As a result, they argue that titling is bound up with environmental governmentality, producing "not-quite-neoliberal natures". While the disciplining and production of subjects through environmental management regimes has been widely discussed in political ecology (Agarwal 2005, West 2006, Fletcher 2010; Fletcher 2017), when the 'territorial turn' is understood to include conservation actors, "environmentality" becomes a crucial aspect of how rights are produced *and* made legible.

1.3 Racialized property regimes and negotiated rights

The racialization of difference is a key aspect of the legal reforms of the territorial turn and the making of legible subjects of multicultural rights. Scholars have engaged communities' creative resistance to these projects of racialized boundary-making, as well as their strategic deployment as examples of governmentality ("the conduct of conduct") and its subversion through counter-conducts (Baletti, 2012; Nepomuceno et al, 2019; Noroña, 2021). While I explore the making of conservation territories as relational assemblages, in Chapter 3, I also point to a distinct deployment of the concept of territory: territory as a racialized framing of Indigenous property relations that others Indigenous communities—whether to politically progressive or reactionary ends. Fernanda Rojas Marchini (2022) uses the term "Eco Nullius" to describe the Chilean state's use of a form of *terra nullius* within environmental management which ignores and absents Indigenous environmental practices, relations, ontologies, and intellectual production (and therefore the possibility of Indigenous conservation), securing Chilean state's jurisdiction over land. Eco nullius is aptly applied to the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, where Indigenous presence was discursively absented and Indigenous land claims were negated through ideas of "semi-nomadic" impermanence, allowing for the continuation of resource regimes of extraction under the rubrics of sustainable development. The property regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve upon which environmental management frameworks rely are grounded in "racial regimes of ownership" (Bhandar 2018) which, as their founding condition negated Guarani presence, and therefore, existing—if non-transparent—

property relations on the land. Robert Nichols' (2020) concept of 'recursive dispossession' (wherein commodification through property-making and land theft are simultaneous) is useful for understanding why a land purchase through a conservation land trust which resulted in land titles for the Mbya—an apparent success for material decolonization—is a relevant site for interrogating processes of dispossession. Recursive dispossession—the fact that property had come into existence only through dispossession—meant that it was impossible for the Mbya Guarani to assert a *preexisting* right to property through the law, despite claiming ancestral "possession as owners" that predated that of the title-holding company.

. Negotiated rights erupt in the midst of this trajectory of racialized property regimes to disrupt their exclusions and the impossibility of realizing Indigenous collective property rights through the law, and yet are continuous with it, through imaginaries of a racialized indigeneity-in-nature as the legitimate subject of conservation 'recognition'. Rather than theorizing the rights of the 'territorial turn' exclusively through human rights discourses, liberalism and "governability", I use the term 'negotiated rights' to refer to a more open-ended process of rights-making. The effective arbitration of land rights and 'recognition' beyond the state expands the multi-scalar network of political-economic relations in which 'rights' are situated. In cases like Lote 8, the political economy of rights quickly becomes entangled with the political economy of conservation, as land rights are feasible when the land—and the presence of people on the land—is perceived as a good conservation investment. In Lote 8, legal rights at the international and national scale were frequently indexed as the justification for land claims, and ultimately, land titles, both in the negotiations leading up to the land purchase, and in the spaces of representation beyond the embodied production of territory by Mbya Guarani communities. The naming of "rights", whether internationally recognized Indigenous rights or constitutional rights, became a discursive anchor for land claims resolved outside the law. It was not that non-governmental organizations had supplanted the state to independently confer rights, but rather that the audience to whom rights were enunciated had shifted, because recognition of those rights—and the material consequences of recognition, collective titles—was negotiable beyond the state.

1.4 The conservation-extraction frontier and settler colonialism in Central-Eastern Misiones

The dispossession of the Guarani was and is integral to the making of Misiones as a territory and its inclusion in the Argentine nation, as land in what became Misiones could only become property by rendering it *terra nullius,* willfully invisibilizing the Mbya and other Indigenous Guarani communities[10]. This colonial negation of Indigenous presence and personhood created the conditions for wholesale territorial dispossession by the state*,* while Misiones was still a frontier territory under the jurisdiction of Corrientes (1827-1882), before the consolidation of Argentina as a nation. The rapid sale of massive lots of this "empty" land by Corrientes, mostly to owners in Buenos Aires, in anticipation of the incorporation of Misiones as federal territory gave birth to the property regimes of the *latifundios* of Central Eastern Misiones (Salamanca 2012; Salinas 2016). This was followed by both planned settlement (state and private colonization) and 'spontaneous' colonization via Southern Brazil, by a mix of Europeans and their descendants (Eidt 1971; Salinas 2016). These processes of colonization were extended by smallholders occupying state (fiscal) land during the 1970s, and occupying irregular private lands in the 1990s, undergoing subsequent regularization by the state through the 2004 provincial law of *Arraigo y Colonización* /Settlement and Colonization (Bidaseca 2012).

In 1993 the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve was created, encompassing a large swath of *selva* in Central-Eastern Misiones, Argentina, along the Brazilian border (see Figures 1 and 2). According to official publications of the Ministry of Ecology, Yabotí is 236,313 hectares[11] distributed across 119 lots. Mostly composed of large lots of private property owned and managed for the extraction of native timber, Yabotí contains two provincial parks which represent the core conservation areas of the Reserve: *Esmeralda*, significant in size (31,619ha) but scarcely accessible, and *Moconá* (999ha)*,* a popular tourist site known for the unique "falls" which run perpendicular to the Río Uruguay along a fault line (see Figure 3). Historically a profitable source for resource extraction (yerba, timber), the *selva* in much of Central-Eastern Misiones outside Yabotí has been supplanted by plantation forestry or input-intensive tobacco grown by small

[10] In the case of Lote 8 in particular, documents from the legal archive, produced around the turn of this century, claimed that the Mbya Guarani had continuously occupied Lote 8 for at least the preceding 180 years.

[11] Other publications cite a larger area, with disparities attributed to a lack of ground-truthing in the creation, mapping and management of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (Salinas 2016).

farmers (embedded in exploitative corporate relations) among other monocultures (tea, *yerba mate*) and subsistence farming by *colonos* (settlers, generally small-scale agriculturalists). The deforestation of much of the *selva paranaense* ecoregion in Paraguay and Brazil, and particularly the replacement of the forest ecosystem with extensive soy agriculture, has heightened the national and international concern with conserving the remaining *selva* in Misiones.

While I use both the terms environmental management and conservation frequently throughout this dissertation, they are not interchangeable. In the context of this work, I understand environmental management as a scientific-economic biopolitical regime of human-environment relations premised on selectively making live *and* taking life, while extracting forms of value from both[12]. In the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and environs, conservation is one manifestation of environmental management, sometimes accompanied by the selective eradication of non-native species and the propagation of desirable, endangered native species, as occurs in the Araucaria Provincial Park, in San Pedro. But the managed extraction of certain high value native timber species in accordance with criteria for tree size and frequency of logging, with the requirement for management plans for each individual lot, in the name of "sustainable" forestry is equally a manifestation of environmental management. Conservation in and around Yabotí generates political power and investments in ecotourism, private conservation, research, and grant-funded "projects" within state conservation land; while extractive logging remains central to the regional economy.

The processes of frontier making through extractivism and the land claims of poor settlers are both essential to solidifying the settler state in the borderlands of Central-Eastern Misiones. Simultaneously, conservation of the *selva* comes into being through the production of the frontier, framed as a response to colonization and extraction, while these processes of dispossession ostensibly disappear through the domestication of spaces and subjects within the proper order of (colonial) conservation, as described in Chapter 4. Scholarship addressing new regimes of 'environmentality' and conservation governance in Misiones acknowledge their relationship to local histories of resource extraction (Gomez & Ferrero 2011), but fail to name their embeddedness within the ongoing colonial processes which are explicitly spatial

[12] For a discussion of Foucauldian biopolitics as an analytical framework for conservation, see Biermann and Anderson 2017.

projects of territorial occupation within a resource frontier. Problematically, therefore, in these accounts the constant unfolding of colonial spatial relations are taken for granted, with poor non-indigenous *colonos* (settlers) and the Mbya understood as marginalized by the *same* dynamics of extraction/conservation. Thus, this scholarship has addressed the case study of Lote 8 through its trajectory of conflict and negotiation as a trajectory in which "new political actors" assert themselves in terms of the environment (Papalia 2012; Ferrero 2020), echoing work in environmentality on the making conservation subjects. But to see the Mbya as emergent political actors takes colonial relations—and their spatiality—as a given, while also ignoring the history of Guarani political struggles throughout the region. Rather than focusing on the articulation of *agency* across scales, as these scholars have done, in Chapter 2, I examine how Lote 8 is constituted *as an ontological object* across scales*,* revealing instead the claims non-Indigenous actors and institutions assert through Lote 8. With a critical awareness of colonial relations as starting point for the analysis, it becomes clear how processes of territorial occupation—and the discourses which surround them, have absented the Mbya, only to allow for their later inclusion vis-a-vis the 1990s era of accentuated neoliberalism/multicultural rights/the territorial turn—simultaneous with the history of biodiversity conservation in Misiones.

In part, this dissertation is critically responding to this absenting of colonial relations achieved through discursive production of the Mbya as "local communities" or "stakeholders" in both practical and academic approaches to conservation dynamics in the region. Building on Shannon Speed's (2017) argument that we understand and theorize Latin American states as settler states, and recent work that draws from the frameworks of settler colonialism to interrogate processes in Latin America (Loperena, 2017; Mollett, 2020, Ybarra, 2017; Zaragocín 2019), I expand discussions of settler colonialism in Latin America through an examination of the borderlands of Central-Eastern Misiones, Argentina and the case study of Lote 8. Argentina's genocidal wars, promotion of European immigration/colonization and assimilation through education have been integral to the national project and offer clear parallels to those of more frequently theorized settler states. However, the project of nation-building has much variation across Argentina, requiring a more nuanced and situated analysis which incorporates other frameworks for understanding colonial relations in Latin America, with attention to their intersection with diverse processes

of race-making and racialization. Asking spatial questions about colonial relations grounded in the specificity of Central-Eastern Misiones requires tracing the institutional and bureaucratic sites and mundane practices through which territorial acquisition/dispossession is produced.Rather than a singular or ossified structure of colonialism, I conceptualize colonial relations in Central-Eastern Misiones as a colonial formation, which exhibits aspects of multiple configurations of colonial power, in different moments or in different situations. This includes settler colonialism, as well as internal colonialism (Gonzalez Casanova 1965, 2003; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010) and "coloniality" (Quijano 1999), both frameworks that critique the perpetuation of Eurocentric hierarchies and structures of domination which racialize and devalue the bodies, epistemologies, and world-making practices of Indigenous communities, long after the end of formal colonization.

In drawing from settler colonialism as a framework, I do not seek to transpose understandings of colonial relations often centered in the analysis of Anglo settler states[13] and colonial processes, but rather, attend to colonial relations as they are deployed, enacted, and manifested spatially. Settler colonialism is most essentially a territorial project (Wolfe 2006; Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014): its analysis requires the consideration of the dispossession of Indigenous land (and sovereignty over land) as *fundamentally different and ontologically distinct* from other kinds of material extraction and dispossession, not only because the "elimination of the native" is inherent to settler territorial control, but because of the world-making practices, knowledge systems, and reciprocal relationships with more than human kin which are grounded in place-based relationships and which are disrupted through displacement (Pasternak 2017; Mollett 2014). Settler colonialism is useful as a framework because by centering *territory*, obviates the problematic conflations of political economy where both land/forest-dependent *colonos* and the Mbya Guarani are rendered equivalent through their marginalization by capitalism. In this work, I refer to settler colonialism to describe both the processes of land theft, and attempts to "eliminate" the Guarani and replace them with settlers, as well as settler assertions of control over territory (settler colonial territoriality) that diminish Guarani jurisdiction over land. I use the more capacious descriptor "colonialism" to refer to colonial

[13] Israel/Palestine being, of course, a key departure from this.

relations that exhibit aspects of settler colonialism and internal colonialism, for instance, as the hierarchies of epistemic racism within conservation imaginaries become material through conservation practice.

Scholars have addressed the exclusions of both Mbya and *colono* communities generated in the creation and management of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (Ferrero 2005, Salinas 2016), pointing particularly to the creation of the Integral Management Area of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (AMIRBY) in 2005 as a pivotal shift in mechanisms for inclusion within conservation (Ferrero 2020). Rather than addressing this linear progress narrative of evolving environmental management frameworks, I am interested in the imbrication of environmental management and property regimes as mutually reinforcing systems which operate to produce the languages of legibility—and legitimacy—through which Indigenous land claims within the newly valorized subtropical forest must be made.

Figure 3: View of the Uruguay River, dividing Argentina from Brazil, from Lote 8 (photograph by author)

1.5 Thinking from Lote 8

As the following chapters will illustrate, the central case study of this dissertation, 'Lote 8', is by no means a representative case: it is a wholly unique convergence of neoliberal conservation and Indigenous territorial struggles. Materially, Lote 8 designates a 3901[14]-hectare lot of *selva* (subtropical forest) in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, located along the Río Uruguay (Uruguay River), just as it leaves Brazil and joins with the Arroyo Pepirí Guazú to form the river border between Argentina and Brazil (see Figure 3). The lot's unusual shape is determined by Arroyo Yabotí Guazú to the west, Arroyo Pepirí Guazú to the east, the Río Uruguay to the south, with Lote 7(a/b) to the north, and the 999-hectare Moconá Provincial Park to the southwest. Although the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve was conceived to permit the continuation of extractive logging in privately owned lots, due to these geographic features, Lote 8 and several other lots just to the north had remained relatively inaccessible to mechanized logging. In the late 1990s, the leaders of the two Mbya Guarani communities situated in the lot began to denounce logging in the area. Following over a decade of struggle, these communities, and another which had since relocated to the lot, reached the agreement for collective land titles described in the opening of this chapter.

The 2012 agreement for the purchase[15] of Lote 8 by a British land trust and negotiated titling process was hailed as a model of inter-ethnic alliance-building and collaboration (Jimenez Perez 2013). In the agreement (*Acuerdo Marco*) in which the terms of purchase and titling were stipulated, the 3901 hectares of Lote 8 were divided into four smaller lots: 3203 hectares titled directly to the three Mbya Guarani communities as collective property, 10 hectares titled to the local conservation NGO which represented the British land trust, 415 hectares in *condominio*, or shared ownership between this NGO and the Mbya

[14] 3901 hectares is the measurement according to the agreements for the purchase and titling, as well as documents associated with the Conservation Plan, presumably after the lot had been measured for subdivision. Other sources state that Lote 8 is 3964 hectares.

[15] Some research participants referred to this as a donation; I use the language of purchase to specify the distinction between a purchasing entity (the British conservation land trust which tendered payment for the Lote 8) and those to whom the purchased land was titled: an Argentine NGO and the three Mbya communities. I believe this is a critical distinction, as the purchasing itself was enabled by donations within the institutional machinery of international neoliberal conservation (in the Global North) and its investments for the preservation of planetary futures (in the Global South), complete with the ongoing circulation of representations and spectacles of endangered forest and equally endangered indigeneity.

communities[16], and 202 hectares which were retained by the logging company, Moconá Sociedad Anónima (Moconá S.A.) which previously held title to the lot. Through this agreement, a *Publico y Privada para el Manejo Sostenible de Lote 8 /* Multicultural Public-Private Partnership for Sustainable Management of Lote 8 (hereafter, *Alianza)* was constituted, comprised of the Ministry of Ecology, Mocona S.A, the land trust, represented by the Argentine NGO, and the three Mbya communities, with the anticipation of coordinated, consensus-based planning for the lot among the four parts of the *Alianza.* In effect, an international conservation initiative had produced land titles for the Mbya Guarani, provided payment for land from which the logging company could no longer extract timber, and resolved an intractable problem for the Ministry of Ecology which had threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve.

The ostensible "uniqueness" of Lote 8 at the convergence of these distinct interests is what makes it so illustrative for understanding the subtle processes shaping the 'territorial turn' in the context of a broader revalorization of the *selva misionera* as an object of environmental management. While Lote 8 is unique, it is also representative of broader trends which produce the conditions of possibility such that 'recognition' and land restitution is mediated but not resolved by the state, and, increasingly, territorial access, if not land rights, are negotiated through private conservation initiatives. Unlike similar cases of conservation interventions in Mbya Guarani territory[17], a diverse, multi-scalar set of actors converge through the production of 'Lote 8': individual and institutional; international, national, provincial, and local; conservationist, *indigenista*[18], and bureaucratic, human and more-than-human. The trajectory of conflicts which led to the solidification of 'Lote 8' as a notorious site/event (including the Mbya communities' dispute with the logging company, the conservation land purchase and claims of 'bioprospecting', and the conflict over an access road to the lot) have been central to the making/unmaking of the environmental management regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (Ferrero 2020), as specific moments of conflict

[16] Interviewees involved in the process explained to me that despite this agreement, it was not possible to create a *condominio* in shared ownership between Indigenous communities and another actor, due to the stipulations for Indigenous land in the Constitution. Thus, I was told, the land intended for the *condominio* had also been titled directly to the communities.

[17] For discussion, see Salinas 2020.

[18] *Indigenista* organizations—non-Indigenous organizations which address and advocate for issues facing Indigenous communities (e.g. land struggles and dispossession)—have been an important part of the political landscape of Indigenous rights across much of Latin America.

created political and social pressures for the reorganization of both management frameworks and the institutions associated with them. Thus, when I refer to 'Lote 8', I am referring not to the 3901 hectares of subtropical forest within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, measured, mapped, subdivided and registered as property in the province of Misiones, but rather to the seemingly transparent and singular object ('Lote 8') produced and stabilized by the frictional relations and translations through which these many actors are entangled, as I explain further in Chapter 2. The networked production of Lote 8 provides insight into the logics of these actors and institutions, and the bureaucratic, subjective and quotidian processes of Indigenous dispossession, as well as the new but constrained spaces for contesting colonial relations, as I explore in Chapters 3 and 4.

In the case of Lote 8, the 'recognition' of Mbya land rights and their concrete material resolution in the form of collective property titles was realized not through the state, but through the intervention of both local and international conservation NGOs. As the *selva misionera* becomes a site of investment for conservation, and indigeneity (as spectacle) is enrolled to produce value for this investment (Igoe 2017; Tsing 2005), neoliberal conservation and neoliberal multiculturalism overlap not only temporally, but functionally in Misiones: conservation NGOs become the guarantors of Indigenous rights through their negotiated investment in environmental futures. This production of value through representations of indigeneity does not only entail the direct production of economic value—for instance, representations that are used to elicit funds from donors—it also involves the incorporation and deployment of these representations to legitimate the work of conservation actors, bolstering a particular imaginary and project of conservation. Thus, if the territorial turn and multicultural rights regimes reify the state and colonial power relations, I sought to understand the power relations inherent to a territorial turn which operates in tandem with but beyond the state, by granting territorial rights to 'deserving' Indigenous environmental subjects through investments in conservation.

Across the three empirical chapters of this dissertation, I make several arguments. First, conservation territories are relationally produced and stabilized through a contested network of power relations which constrains certain pathways, while opening others. Second, the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization which remake the territorial assemblage of Lote 8 contain

sedimented colonial histories, such that the Mbya Guarani are situated as conservation subjects in relation to a persistent racialization of the relationship between indigeneity and property. Finally, the kind of conservation investment in Indigenous land which produces 'Lote 8' as a conservation territory has two major effects. The first is a solidification of colonial property regimes based on the historic and ongoing theft of Indigenous land, which obscures and legitimizes the operation of racialized dispossession through the process of 'returning' land to the Mbya as collectively titled property. The second effect of the land purchase is the reconfiguration of the perceived audience for the articulation of rights, with conservation a potential avenue—perhaps the most viable avenue—for the expansion of land rights and land access. When Indigenous communities are "recognized" as the bearers of rights not by the state, but by NGOs, in their role as environmental stewards, the legitimacy of land claims can be subject to constant scrutiny. As a corollary to my second argument, I suggest that shaping Indigenous rights and the requirements for indigenous authenticity and legibility through environmentality reifies not only the colonial state, but settler colonial territorial relations, more broadly, as environmental management becomes a new form of asserting and articulating settler colonial territoriality In the production of conservation territories, rights are rendered conditional in relation to conservation logics.

These arguments in no way detract from the persistent and resolute struggles of the Mbya communities at the center of this research to obtain secure land tenure—and their success in doing so. Rather, I seek to illuminate the ways these struggles have been channeled and constrained by legal infrastructures, land policies, environmental imaginaries, and conservation practices, situated within what Sarah Hunt (2014) describes as a "colonialscape". According to Hunt, a colonialscape is "a way of seeing that naturalizes the relations of domination and dehumanization inherent in colonial relations" (p.7); colonialscapes are both material and representational. I situate the 'recognition' of the land rights of the Mbya Guarani through conservation within the broader colonialscape of conservation territories produced through everyday practices of environmental management. Yet, simultaneously, there are other conservation territories being produced as the ascension of conservation as a governance framework creates spaces to assert Mbya Guarani agency and ontologies and critique the racialized exclusions at the intesection of property and environmental management regimes.

1.6 Chapter outline and overview of the dissertation

This dissertation proceeds through three empirical chapters, which, though independent, are also interlocking explorations of the production of relational conservation territories across a multi-scalar network, through time, and in space.

Chapter 2, *Ethnographic Encounters with a Dissonant Network*, explores the entanglements of my methodology and case study, mapping the multi-scalar constellation of actors, institutions, infrastructures and the relationships among them which produce and stabilize Lote 8 as an object and site of intervention. While 'Lote 8' is narrated as a single site, a place named according to a cadastral designation of property lines within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, it is not naturally, but rather socially constituted and evoked as a lot of subtropical forest, a site of dispute and conservation investment, within the more expansive *selva* and territory of the Mbya Guarani communities to whom it is titled. In this chapter, I follow the elusive process of ethnographic "access" through which I engaged the network which produces and stabilizes Lote 8 as a discursive object from which political, social and material value can be extracted through its representation as something unique and exemplary—in different ways to different groups. One consequence is the production of power relations in which the Mbya Guarani are scaled out of self-representation, as Lote 8 is spoken for and represented in international networks of conservation funding and humans rights discourse. Through my research, I came to inhabit the frictional points of translation which connect these different actors, institutions and practices—where what 'Lote 8' is and does remains contested—as I investigated how power operates across the different points of contact in this multi-scalar network. Inevitably, I was enrolled in the process of translating—and negotiating power through translation—throughout my research, and in its narration here. In Chapter 2, I am therefore also arguing for a new understanding of the process of territoriality in which, as a researcher, I actively and ineluctably participated in the relational production of Lote 8.

In Chapter 3, *Property Regimes, Conservation and Indigeneity: Assembling the Selva in Mbya Guarani Territory* I interrogate the intersection of environmental management with racialized property regimes through three configurations of the relationship among property, indigeneity and the *selva:* i) the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve in the early 1990s, ii) the dispute over Lote 8 between the Mbya

and the logging company at the turn of the century, and iii) the negotiated conservation land purchase and titling agreement, finalized in 2012. The eventual resolution of Mbya land claims through conservation was preceded (and in fact, made possible) by multiple, iterative instances of recursive dispossession (Nichols 2020) in which land was repeatedly emptied discursively of Guarani presence in order to become property. Not only were the Guarani absented in the parceling and sale of large lots titled to absentee owners in Central Eastern Misiones in the late nineteenth century, they were absented again in the making of the environmental management regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve a century later, which reified these property relations. It is this existing property framework within which the new rights regimes of multicultural inclusion of the 'territorial turn', beginning with the 1994 constitutional reform in Argentina, must be accommodated. Accessing "rights" therefore requires specific processes of making land claims legible to the state in order to counter and contest liberal property regimes *from within their own legal logics.* As I show, while the Mbya communities of Lote 8 could make claims to land as distinct subjects of rights under constitutional and international law, ultimately those claims were *evaluated* under civil law on the same plane as property owners whose ownership had been legally consolidated through the logics of *terra nullius.* Nevertheless, the Mbya also navigated these constrained spaces of agency and disputed the structures of dispossession, refusing the ontologies of capitalist productivity and quantifiable land, and utilizing the spaces created by conservation governance to contest their exclusion and claim rights.

After over a decade of struggle by the Mbya Guarani, the negotiation of the purchase of Lote 8 for conservation shifted the struggle for land rights to a new arena. Yet with the purchase, colonial property—and all the processes of racialized dispossession that had produced it—were assumed as resolved with payment to the prior owner and collective property titles for the "legitimate" owners, the Mbya Guarani. In this process, legibility of *land* as Indigenous territory was no longer a requirement for obtaining rights from the state, rather, it is *people* who must be legible and legitimate as conservation subjects (of rights). However, the land purchase was only possible because of the processes of dispossession and deforestation which created the conditions for *this particular land* to be a desirable site of investment on the global conservation land market—which now includes the presence of the Mbya as land stewards. Contrary to the prevailing discourses surrounding Lote 8, in which the shift in pathways to land rights from the state

to NGO investment is perceived as a novel rupture, I demonstrate that it relies on the same persistent racialization of the relationship between property and indigeneity that had previously excluded the Mbya. I argue that the conservation land purchase continues to produce and obtain value from racialized difference while stabilizing the colonial property regime itself, by insulating it from the challenge posed by Indigenous claims to territory.

The negotiation of Mbya land claims through conservation contributes to a situation where even Mbya land rights consolidated through property titles must be socially sustained by performances of 'traditional' environmental practices. In the process, the ontologies and embodied practices of conservation and environmental management actors shape the field against which the legitimacy of Indigenous land rights predicated on environmental stewardship are measured. In Chapter 4, *Conservation: (Re)producing the Selva Misionera*, I examine the making of conservation property, conservation subjectivities, and (settler) state borders, demonstrating how they operate to exert territorial control over titled Indigenous land, and within Mbya Guarani territory more broadly. Latin America's 'territorial turn' is simultaneous with a turn to conservation in Misiones, and the new environmentality, epitomized by land rights through conservation in Misiones, is embedded with the settler state's evolving relationship to the conservation-extraction resource frontier. While Chapter 3 focuses on how the *selva* is assembled through the relationship among the forest, property and indigeneity in successive territorializations over time, this chapter shows (some of) the components that socially (re)produce these relationships in particular spaces and through particular practices. A recent conflict over a *camino* (access road) to Lote 8 evidences dominant conservation imaginaries and practices at multiple scales which together produce conservation territories. Key conservation practices in the production of conservation territories include the social production of provincial parks through the embodied labor of park rangers and their extension in the (b)ordering practices for managing the overlapping borderlands of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and the national border with Brazil. The conflict over the camino highlights the unanticipated afterlives of titling through conservation: it is the quotidian and banal production of these conservation territories which shapes the specific contours of their intersection with Lote 8 as titled Indigenous land, such that the performance of environmental stewardship—as judged by non-Indigenous conservation actors—can become a measure of legitimate land claims.

Chapter 4 thus describes and analyzes the worlds and world-making practices within which Indigenous land rights acquired through conservation become situated. Through examining these spatial practices, I argue that environmental management is a new form of settler colonial territorial control which operates through the everyday embodied labor of conservation actors and the production of conservation imaginaries.

In **Chapter 5**, I conclude by engaging the major contributions of the dissertation and pointing to the insights of the project as a whole.

Chapter 2: Ethnographic Encounters with a Dissonant Network

During preliminary fieldwork in July and August of 2017, I participated in three memorable events. The first, in El Soberbio, Misiones, Argentina, was a gathering in protest of an access road through Moconá Provincial Park to "Lote 8", the majority of which had been titled to three Mbya Guarani communities. The second, five hundred kilometers away in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, was a meeting between Mbya Guarani leaders of a *retomada,* or Indigenous land reoccupation, and various state and federal institutions. The third, over eleven hundred kilometers from both of the first two situations, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was an informational meeting I had arranged with the small Argentine NGO responsible for conservation planning[19] in Lote 8.

In all three events, I was struck by how non-indigenous frameworks for environmental management were used to define the parameters of appropriate Mbya Guarani practices as the basis for legitimate land claims. In El Soberbio, as further detailed in Chapter 4, the articulation of a desire for an access road to Lote 8 by the Mbya communities was seen by local environmentalists as proof that the communities were being taken advantage of in the pursuit of elite ecotourism investments that would purportedly damage the very ecosystem from which the Mbya obtain food and medicine. In Porto Alegre, Brazilian officials repeatedly questioned the environmental impacts of the *retomada*. How many families were there, and given kinship ties, were these numbers really stable? What about the impact of clearing the forest for homes and gardens? If ceded land, would the Mbya respect its boundaries? In Buenos Aires, conservationists echoed almost identical concerns in the context of Lote 8, yet, as I understood it at that time, conservation in Lote 8 was a collaborative effort, product of the *Alianza Multicultural* / Multicultural Partnership created with the purchase and subdivision of Lote 8 among the three Mbya Guarani communities, the UK-based conservation land trust (represented locally by an environmental NGO) that had obtained donations to purchase the land, and the original landowner who had retained a portion for ecotourism development.

[19] This included the conservation planning documents required by the Ley de Bosques Nativos (Native Forests Law), which had been completed in 2014 and 2015, as well as the intention of further engagement with the Mbya in various conservation-oriented initiatives.

Initially I had traveled to Misiones to investigate how biodiversity conservation had been enrolled in movements against the construction of new hydroelectric dams on the Uruguay River separating Brazil and Argentina. Taken individually, participation in the first two events were simply by-products of time, place, and personal connections; both were interesting, but neither, at the time, seemed particularly relevant. Yet with their juxtaposition in the course of preliminary research, the political ontology of environmental management snapped into view. Blaser (2009) describes political ontology as both the politics of world-making and the study of conflicts between different but entangled worlds; in Misiones, I was interested in the world-making project of 'conserving' and managing the *selva paranaense* subtropical forest, and the encounter between distinct socionatural worlds, hierarchized by colonial relations, as Mbya Guarani forest practices were engaged by and translated into Western scientific conservation frameworks. Ultimately, I wanted to understand whether and how settler colonial territorial control was extended through the regulation of Mbya environmental knowledge and practices (rather than through direct land theft). Furthermore, I wanted to understand whether and to what degree the encounter with incommensurate epistemologies transformed the ontological frameworks and subjectivities of the Western conservationists negotiating and enacting conservation in Lote 8.

It was for this reason that I arranged the meeting in Buenos Aires in my final days of preliminary fieldwork, in the hopes of understanding what the Alianza's collaborative conservation frameworks entailed. I was warmly received by the members of the small conservation NGO, who kindly shared the *Acuerdo Marco* / Framework Agreement for Lote 8 and Addenda, both from 2012, through which the agreement for titling had been resolved among the various parts, as well as maps and a report on land cover and vegetation that had been prepared for Lote 8. They explained that conservation work with the Mbya communities was still pending, a work in progress, but they expressed enthusiasm when I described my interest in the collaboration, and seemed pleased with my request to accompany the process when I returned for fieldwork the following year.

This chapter explores the entanglement of my ethnographic methodology with the network of dissonant relationships, translations and understandings which, I argue, stabilize 'Lote 8' as both a conservation project and a transformative event of territorial conflict resolution through titling. I use the term

dissonance to point to the disharmonious, out-of-phase quality of these partial encounters. I blend the narration of the case with the narration of the research process as an introductory mapping of the production of Lote 8 as a material and discursive object, represented and spoken for throughout fieldwork, with the recognition that my own research both contributed to and disrupted the making of "Lote 8", as I navigated and inhabited the frictional interstices of the network which produces it. As such, my methodology not only situates the empirics of my research—how particular data was produced through particular methods—it was inevitably situated in these empirics. The process I was studying actively shaped how I could study it—and how it could even come to be understood as an object of study. The most trying and drawn-out aspects of the research process, especially questions of access and consent, therefore became crucial data in their own right, and not simply precursors to data collection. Throughout this chapter, as I demonstrate how Lote 8 is relationally produced through a dissonant network, I am also arguing for a new understanding of the process of territoriality in which I, as a researcher, actively and ineluctably participated in the relational production of Lote 8.

While narrated as a singular site (or site/event), Lote 8 has been produced through and productive of a series of conflicts, leaving a significant paper trail, and, in particular, a public record and diverse private archives retained by individuals and non-governmental organizations. It is this fragmented archive that I partially (re)constructed during fieldwork. In addition to its renarration through the record collected and then reassembled in my constructed archive, Lote 8 is also an object of collective memory. As a site, event, or symbol, it was mentioned spontaneously in interview after interview with disparate actors, many of whom were seemingly unrelated to the concrete events which surround the case. Lote 8 was narrated by more than one group of actors through conflicts that themselves were understood to have consolidated collective subjects and identities, such as the coalescence of a neo-rural environmentalism in El Soberbio and the surrounding area through the annual Festival del Yaboty following the conflict over the *camino* discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, interrogating the processes by which Lote 8 is stabilized as an ontological object also provides access to these processes of relational subject-making.

Importantly, this dissertation is not an ethnography of Mbya Guarani worlds; it is also not an ethnography of the encounter between Mbya and *jurua (*non-indigenous) worlds (e.g. Hutchinson, 2014;

Soares, 2012), although that had been my initial intention. Extensive fieldwork revealed that the 'collaboration' which I had hoped to examine was largely speculative or anticipatory, rather than material. While the success of the titling process of 'Lote 8' is often described as one of collaboration and mutual understanding (Jimenez Perez, 2013; Martinez and Garcia, 2013), by the time of my fieldwork the Alianza had effectively become defunct,[20] and what was understood or described as collaboration was in fact happening in distant and disparate spaces between actors with few moments of interaction. This was not only the case between the Mbya Guarani communities living in Lote 8 and the various non-indigenous actors and institutions who spoke of and for the process though which these communities had obtained land titles, but also among these actors and institutions themselves. What I had imagined as a relational ethnography of translation in the concrete encounter of doing collaborative conservation became a multi-sited ethnography which traced translation through dissonance in and across the multi-scalar network which produces Lote 8. Tracing this network required a methodological reorientation, where data I had imagined I was collecting in response to my initial framing of the project spoke to a previously unarticulated research question, and new modes of engaging data, principally from archival sources, gained unexpected centrality as evidence of processes of translation that could not be directly observed.

While in the field, I often felt I was simply in the condensation trail of a flight long past, somehow trying to discern the material nature of the airplane from the rearranged molecules of vapor around me. Frustrated with having missed an elusive 'event' or the 'encounter' in which translation would reveal itself, I realized only later that what this rearrangement *could* explain was the nature of the atmosphere itself. What I was observing and engaging in the research process was the everyday transformation of Indigenous rights regimes through conservation and environmental management, and the otherwise invisible effects of this transformation.

[20] Various explanations for the effective dissolution of the Alianza and the ongoing work of dialogue were offered to me by individuals associated with the distinct institutions involved in the Acuerdo Marco / Framework Agreement, including the conflict over the access road, the Ministry of Ecology's appropriation of the titling process, sidelining the conservation NGOs, and the role of the logging company's representative in the federal government, etc.

2.1 Producing data in the field and in the archive

Through my research, I sought to answer the question: How does the 'territorial turn' intersect with conservation in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve? In order to answer this question, I focused on three dimensions: power relations across the multi-scalar network producing Lote 8; power relations through time, as environmental management in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve articulates with racialized property regimes; and power relations in space, as conservation is territorialized through embodied labor.

As this chapter makes clear, tracing the multi-scalar network of Lote 8 occurred through the ethnographic process of 'accessing' Lote 8 itself. In order to understand the relationship between environmental management and racialized property regimes in Yabotí over time, subject of Chapter 3, I deepened my understanding of this network through archival materials and interviews. In order to understand the effects of the entanglements of territorial turn with neoliberal conservation in Lote 8, I conducted interviews and participant observation with conservation actors and environmentalists. While originally I planned to research the conservation of the *selva paranaense* as a baseline for understanding the transformation of conservation through translation and encounter, ultimately, this data permitted insight into the afterlives of titling in conservation spaces and subjects, in light of the conflicts over the contentious access road to Lote 8, subject of Chapter 4.

In total, I conducted seventeen months of ethnographic research between June 2017 and February 2020. In 2017, I completed preliminary research during two months in Misiones, Argentina and Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, identifying the process of translation I intended to study and making necessary contacts. From August 2018 to February 2020 I conducted the bulk of my ethnographic and archival research, with a few periods occupied by other activities, principally, co-directing a study abroad program in Buenos Aires. As part of ethnographic data collection, I conducted participant observation in provincial parks; in visits to the provincial Ministry of Ecology and the office of the Integral Management Area of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (AMIRBY[21]); at activities at the Instituto Superior de San Pedro (ISSP), where future park rangers

[21] For simplicity, relevant institution names appear in English, with the Spanish acronyms by which they are known in parentheses; these are used interchangeably in the text thereafter. To preserve the unique forms of expression of research participants, all direct quotes appear in their original language, followed by translation by the author.

are educated; at local cultural and environmentalist events; with relevant conservation and *indigenista* NGOs in Misiones and in Buenos Aires; and with the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8.

I conducted 45 formal, semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews, in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Mbya Guarani[22] with a diverse set 42 of conservation actors and individuals involved in the histories of struggle of Lote 8. Interview participants included park rangers, forestry engineers, NGO employees, owners of private conservation reserves, environmental activists, and Mbya Guarani leaders, primarily identified through purposive and snowball sampling. I also held scores of informal discussions and unstructured ethnographic interviews with similarly positioned actors during participant observation. These spontaneous conversations with individuals who, for various reasons, could not be interviewed formally, as well as extended conversations with individuals who I had or would interview, provided nuance or details often uncaptured in my formal interviews.

Lastly, I analyzed texts selected from an assembled archive constructed over the course of fieldwork which includes approximately ten thousand legal, management, and advocacy documents. As noted above, this turn to archival data occurred once I realized that the process of translation in the "encounter" which I had intended to study ethnographically was in fact ephemeral and usually atemporal, yet these intersections and translations were often visible within or across archival data. Sources for my assembled archive ranged from personal and institutional digital archives of individuals and NGOs involved in conflicts within Yabotí and Lote 8 specifically, two boxes of papers housed with the *indigenista* organization which constituted the legal archive of the two Mbya Guarani communities at the center of the struggle over Lote 8, a digital archive of the Area de Manejo Integral de la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí (AMIRBY) maintained by an individual with a longstanding leadership role within AMIRBY, and the archives of the Areas Naturales Protegidas (ANP) sector of the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of Misiones (hereafter, MEyRNR or Ministry of Ecology). In constructing this archive, I personally sought out and assembled documents through a material snowball sampling, of sorts, which required both

[22] As I only speak very basic Mbya, conversations in Mbya communities took place in Portuguese or Spanish, and more in-depth conversations in the communities of were translated, initially by members of the *indigenista* organization I accompanied on my first two visits, and later by the two Mbya interpreters with whom I worked.

my own knowledge of the existence of these documents (or potential sources of documents) and access to them, often granted through personal requests once trust had been established with institutions or individuals. There was a great deal of variation in the source archives from which my own archive was assembled, and more often than not, access was granted selectively to some portion of the materials: for instance, certain "sensitive" documents were removed from the physical legal archive of Lote 8, or individual gatekeepers of different digital archives shared certain sets of documents but not others. Very few of the documents were acquired through formal channels, and even institutional archives, such as that of ANP,[23] were surprisingly chaotic, partial, with little organization in what was included, why, or how it was organized. After skimming through all the documents I collected to assess relevance, I read, indexed, and analyzed about 640 documents. While polyvocal, I am aware that this archive, and my engagement with it, nonetheless produces and reproduces silences and makes visible particular narratives of 'what happened'. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot clarifies,

> "Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*) the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance)" (1995, 26)

With the specific archive I assembled, the partiality of 'what happened' inevitably tends towards engagements with certain institutions: the legal, legislative, and administrative apparatus which imagines and regulates Indigenous land rights and conservation of the *selva*. Thus, the *sources* of my archive are structured through modes of documentation premised on legibility, often to and for state bureaucracy, whether through forestry management plans or correspondence over legal strategy. *Archives* were compiled through the discretionary and sometimes aleatory inclusion and organization of these documents by individuals and institutions, and then, in the assembly of my own archive, through my knowledge of and access to these source archives and the judgement of the individuals providing access as to what I might be of use to me or what I should (and should not) be permitted to use. With so many silences inherent to

[23] From the ANP archive of the Ministry of Ecology, I copied all of the documents in the folder for the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, as well as all the files for the three provincial parks within the RBY: Esmeralda, Moconá, and Ca'a Yari. In theory, much of the material relevant to the Biosphere Reserve should be housed with the office of AMIRBY in San Pedro, however, they did not have an accessible material archive.

the process of assembling this archive, it is impossible to for me to identify and cohesively trace its silences and absences, yet I am aware of the limits of the narratives produced through my analysis.

As a process of meaning-making with ethnographic as well as archival data, I conducted inductive analysis through both coding and an annotation system. Ethnographic field notes and field reports which synthesized participant observation data provided the initial insights for analysis, including the broadest category of emergent themes which structured this dissertation into chapters: dissonance, property, and conservation, and many of the organizational subheadings within them. Drawing from grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990) my emergent themes from ethnographic data were elaborated and refined through open and axial coding across field notes, interview transcripts, and archival data. I transcribed or partially transcribed interviews in NVivo; archival data in many cases were hand-scanned (image-based) digital files; many files that could not be converted to text (readable pdf) were coded artisanally through an annotation system of open coding and analyzed within the context of the emergent themes across the broader dataset. Ultimately, given the volume of data, analysis emerged organically in the process of immersion in interview and archival data once emergent themes had been established, rather than through the formal coding categories, which primarily served as an indexing system.

As illustrated throughout this dissertation, Lote 8 has been the focus of much well-publicized controversy and public debate in Misiones. To anonymize Lote 8 as a case study would require abstracting it completely from its geographic and social situatedness within the region and province, while the specific case could ultimately still be deduced through citations of academic literature in which it appears. Furthermore, the surviving Mbya leader of the two who had led the struggle for the land claim insisted to me that his story not be anonymized, as, he explained, this would prevent others from knowing it was true and learning from what had happened. I have therefore preserved the “name” and details of the case study site, while anonymizing all individuals, including those who expressed a desire to be named, in order to better ensure the anonymity of those who did not, and to avoid entangling Mbya leaders in critiques based on my situated representation of their words, as has occurred previously with Lote 8. Given that I have chosen not to anonymize the case in its entirety, the specific organizations involved could inevitably be ascertained through my descriptions, however, I have chosen not to name them simply to avoid them

becoming searchable terms within this text, at the recommendation of other researchers navigating similar situations of partial anonymity. The names of places and public institutions have been retained, as has the function of unnamed public officials acting in their public capacity.

2.2 Accounting for positionality in spaces of environmental management

As many scholars have argued, data are situated (Haraway 1988) and produced, rather than collected (Law 2004); they do not exist independently of the researcher, out there, in 'the field' waiting to be discovered, but rather, it is the researcher's engagement with the field that brings these data into being, whether through immersion in the lifeworlds conceived as the ethnographic 'object', through interactions with interview subjects, or through the assembly and selection of archival materials, as discussed above. My own positionality, not as a categorical location among axes of difference, but following Nagar and Swarr (2010), how I was situated relationally by and with others, in different ways under different circumstances, was therefore an integral aspect of the production of data.

Among other things, I am a foreign born, non-Indigenous Argentine national raised in the United States; previous to conducting this research I had lived several years in Buenos Aires and Rosario as an adult, and traveled widely throughout Argentina. I have a complex relationship to my own *argentinidad,* rooted as much in my own fractured family history as in the reality reflected back to me that I am never quite from, and never quite belong to, the places I have known as home. Like other transnational Latinx and Latin American decolonial feminists, my embodied experience, critical theorization and, thus inevitably the data produced through my research are shaped by movement across the hemisphere (Zaragocín 2021; Alvarez 2014). While I allowed my identity to remain somewhat opaque while living in San Pedro, with research participants, I made every effort to clarify my identity and, as relevant, the purpose of my research. However, without a context for my existence I often found who I was narrated back to me in odd, incorrect ways that spoke to the power relations through which I was perceived as a body and as an individual, as well as the speaker's perceptions of 'inside' and 'outside'. For instance, several park rangers I interviewed asked me how old I had been when I moved to the United States, locating me as a returned Argentine 'insider'. The Mbya elder who was my central interlocutor within Lote 8 never seemed quite certain that I

wasn't from Brazil, nor was I certain how to insistently clarify and make meaningful that I was from the United States, when Corrientes, one province south, was more foreign than Brazil.

While my position as a Northern academic might have theoretically imbued me with authority in the uneven power relations of research, my gender, age, and unshakeable but partial Argentine-ness rendered me neither outsider nor privileged in many of my research relationships, particularly in the hyper-masculinized, biologized spaces of conservation. In interviews with conservation authorities and government officials, largely middle-aged men, I was frequently treated, sometimes condescendingly, as though I knew nothing about the subject at hand. Intentional or not, I often felt like I was perceived as a young, fairly harmless, probably not very bright female student with no life experience and no contextual knowledge. This dynamic meant that context with which I was already quite familiar was sometimes explained to me ad nauseam during the course of the interviews; other times it simply meant that these men would tell me whatever they wanted to tell me without seemingly paying attention to my questions, authoritatively dismissive of my probes or insistence on further details. Mirroring the experiences described by Salinas (2016), in the gendered and racialized spaces of authority in environmental management in Misiones, while others were always introduced or referred to by the title connoting their education level (Guardaparque, for park rangers who had completed the degree in San Pedro, Licenciado, for those with a bachelor's, Doctor, for lawyers, etc), despite several degrees I was 'la chica' (just within earshot) or 'señorita' but never Magister. While I was generally treated with respect and genuine curiosity by park rangers stationed "*en terreno*" in provincial parks, this was not typical of my interactions with those working in environmental management in other spaces in Misiones, who would often deploy subtle tactics of hierarchization, like those described above. As with Mbya land claims, the institutional opacity and bureaucracy of the Ministry of Ecology, and the Area de Manejo Integral de la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí in particular, was heightened by institutional control over temporalities (Salinas 2020), "cajoneando" (Salinas 2016) indefinitely my requests to conduct participant observation in Yabotí with the authorities who monitored logging, despite repeated follow-ups at the Ministry's offices in San Pedro and Posadas, chasing down an eternal paper trail, multiple dinner invitations from the official whose responsibility it ultimately was to approve the request...et cetera.

However, being gendered and sexualized in the field did not only shape institutional access or the tone of interviews; there was a very real level of risk to carrying out the work I was earning a living, via grants, to complete. One older environmentalist I had traveled to interview offered that I could sleep in his bed—I politely declined, but it was a day or two into my visit before I realized he hadn't offered it to me vacant. He was a crucial interlocutor, but as I waited several days for him to allow me to interview him as planned, the stress of constant, seemingly benign comments of admiration about my body and personality became so aggravating that I cried whenever I was alone. As a feminist researcher I have a commitment to reciprocity with research subjects, but the extractive relationship in interviews could flow both directions; I realized I was often exchanging data for the pleasure of my presence and undivided attention. In another instance, while traveling with two higher-ranking male park rangers and another researcher, a young woman from Brazil we were treated as vulnerable and 'unprepared' for wilderness, sitting uncomfortably in the back seat of a truck while our hosts made sexist jokes. Although the park rangers I stayed with in provincial parks were all respectful, I was often staying alone with two men, miles from anyone else, with the knowledge that at least one female park ranger had been raped while on duty with her colleagues—as a woman on duty in one park reminded me during my stay. As with many women, queer and trans people, as an embodied researcher I bring with me previous experiences of assault, sexual violence and unwanted advances to the field, and the constant reminders of assault *as a possibility* loomed in the background of many encounters and conversations, while subtle objectification became an exhausting subtext and background to everyday ethnographic work, focused through the intimacies of data collection, as a more acute version of moving through the *machismo* of everyday life in San Pedro. To navigate harassment or its near edges in fieldwork interactions inevitably also shapes data[24]: I found myself constantly attempting to neutralize threats by being agreeable without being desirable, performing the non-threatening researcher in ways that conformed to the expectations, noted above, about my capabilities. This meant that I often did not push male interviewees I perceived as more powerful (politically, physically, or situationally) on their

[24] I am grateful to the important work in anthropology on sexual violence in ethnographic fieldwork, particularly the stories of survivors (e.g. Schneider 2020); while I was *not* assaulted, to elide the stress of navigating the field as a gendered and sexualized body replicates masculinist notions of the ethnographer and reiterates a gendered individualization of risk in the field (Schneider 2020; Huang et al 2018).

answers or assert myself when disrespected or humiliated during participant observation. Over time, I found I had incorporated this tactic into my research persona to such a degree that I performed the non-threatening researcher even when not directly assessing or navigating risk. I was always, always, a woman in the field, positioned by others and by my own self-awareness, no matter who or what I was engaging as a researcher.

In the next section of this chapter, I explore 'access', 'consent' and my positionality in relation to the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8, as situated by the network of institutional relationships and situations producing Lote 8 as a site and event.

2.3 Negotiating access and consent

This project was initially conceptualized as an investigation of the territorial and subjectifying effects of inter-epistemic encounters in the contact zone of collaborative conservation (Sundberg 2006), and was transformed through fieldwork into a study of the territorial and subjectifying effects of conservation and environmental management regimes as they intersect with Latin America's 'territorial turn' and multi-cultural rights regimes, specifically, land rights for Indigenous communities. I had planned to conduct research in two phases, in order to illuminate how colonial power relations operate through the *practices* of negotiating decolonial, land back initiatives through conservation, as well as the potential for transformation in conservation practice and conservation subjects through these negotiations and translations. While effectively temporally overlapping, the first phase consisted of content analysis of documents related to the conservation of the *selva paranaense* and interviews with those involved (park rangers, educators, public officials), while the second was envisioned as ethnographic fieldwork accompanying the work of the conservation NGO in Lote 8, and in conservation planning meetings in Buenos Aires. Yet, as I became further immersed in research, it became evident that interrogating the process that brought "Lote 8" into being as a case, or site--and its effects, once it circulated as an object to be spoken for and of—could elucidate the broader power relations in which Lote 8 was situated.

In this section, I narrate the fraught process of my attempts to obtain ethnographic "access" to Lote 8 as a collaborative project, only to find myself repeatedly and inadvertently caught up in creating the

encounter I wished to observe, positioned in the dissonant spaces between the nodes of the network which produce Lote 8. As part of this discussion, I trace my own navigation of power relations as a researcher situated and positioned in the field. While not an exhaustive chronology, this ethnographic account of access demonstrates the many sites of friction in the networked production of Lote 8, even as these sites of friction become the connective nodes that stabilize the *idea* of Lote 8, producing material and discursive value for those enabled to speak for it.

2.3.1 Arriving to 'the field'

On September 19, 2018, I arrived in San Pedro, Misiones, where I would live for the duration of fieldwork, until February 2020. Quite literally the end of the bus line from Buenos Aires, and, at that time, the last town along the paved portion of Route 14, San Pedro is the administrative head of the department of the same name. San Pedro remains a "frontier" town embedded in extractive logging and surrounded by colonias. The department is known as one of poorest in the province of Misiones, leading to the provision of inadequate basic services. The tap water was infamously not potable,[25] and those who could afford it had water delivered. Power outages and water cuts, often for full days, occurred frequently with the heavy subtropical rains. Within the region, the town of San Pedro itself had a fame for break-ins and robberies[26], as I realized from the many comments from interview subjects when I would travel to other areas. San Pedro had initially been included in my research itinerary for the purposes of collecting data at the Instituto Superior de San Pedro, which offers a nationally accepted university degree for those training to be park rangers, through the School of Forestry of the National University of Misiones (UNAM) located in the larger city of El Dorado. San Pedro is also home to the office of the Area de Manejo Integral de la Reserva de Biosfera Yaboty (AMIRBY), a local office of the Ministry of Ecology which administers environmental management for Yabotí. I had planned to move to El Soberbio, a small town with a significant transplant porteño population, located on the Brazilian border on the Uruguay River along the touristic Route 2 that

[25] Both newcomers and long–term residents told me that the water was not potable (*no se puede tomar*). Within ten days of being in San Pedro, I began to have an allergic reaction, presumably to drinking and bathing in tap water, with hives covering my entire body and difficulty breathing, after which I, too, switched to bottled water.

[26] This was not just rumor; nearly every student I befriended from the ISSP, as obvious outsiders to San Pedro, had experienced a break-in.

leads to Moconá Provincial Park, but despite its limited infrastructure, San Pedro's central location within the province, importance for local conservation administration, and pleasant climate relative to cities along the river borders, convinced me to remain.

San Pedro was a difficult place to live socially as well as materially. As a thirty-something, then childless single woman and outsider living in a small town where I was otherwise unconnected, I was not always transparent about my identity, as the already apparent aspects of who I was, as an aberration from local norms, drew enough unwanted attention. Many people in the town simply assumed I was studying to be a park ranger, as there was little else to explain my presence in San Pedro.[27] Even the kind family behind whose house I rented a small cabin for most of my fieldwork were never entirely clear on who I was; though I explained I was a student from the United States, inevitably my *porteño* accent and trips to Buenos Aires situated me otherwise. While central to fieldwork, San Pedro itself was not "the field" I was observing as a participant observer, yet my time there, largely solitary and often occupied with the basic necessities of everyday life, inevitably conditioned my research, and, importantly, my understanding of life in the region, removed, to a large degree, from the networks of neo-rural *porteño* transplants that might have been my closest "peers".

2.3.2 Introducing Lote 8

As noted in the preceding chapter, the agreement which specified the terms of the purchase of Lote 8 and subdivision of the lot for titling established an *Alianza Multicultural Publico y Privado /* Multicultural Public-Private Partnership (hereafter, Alianza) comprised of four parts: the logging company, which retained 202 hectares when the remainder of the lot was sold, the local conservation NGO which represents the British land trust, and to which 10 of the 3901 hectares were titled, the provincial Ministry of Ecology, and the three Mbya Guarani tekoa to which the majority of the land was titled. But there are actually three

[27] Though it offered a certain protection, association with students from the ISSP did not exactly make me any more welcome in San Pedro. Once I had been unable to print a bus ticket because everywhere to print was closed for the siesta, and when I arrived to the bus terminal and asked if the person attending for that company could print the ticket I had bought online, she became angry with me and told me, much to my amusement, that we "were all the same", disorganized and disrespectful.

conservation NGOs involved in Lote 8, which operate (and intersect) at multiple scales: the British conservation land trust, based in England, which purchased the land in 2012, and which continues to provide money to the other organizations for conservation work associated with the purchase; the Buenos Aires–based NGO with whom the land trust partnered in the purchase; and the conservation organization with which I was already acquainted, which currently owns no property within Lote 8 and does not form part of the *Alianza*, but was designated the task of creating the Conservation Plan (Management Plan) and Operative Plan, as required by the provincial Ministry of Ecology and the national *Ley de Bosques Nativos*, in coordination with a Forestry Engineer based in Misiones. Because of the work of conservation planning, it was this last NGO which ostensibly maintained the most consistent relationship with 'Lote 8' as it was imagined as a conservation project.

After several unsuccessful attempts in August and September 2018 to arrange another meeting with the small Buenos Aires based NGO involved in the Conservation Plan while they were moving offices, I reached out to the two contacts they had provided me: a French anthropology PhD student and the Forestry Engineer. The anthropologist updated me on the role of the NGO in Lote 8 and the meetings they had organized over the previous months with the Mbya Guarani communities, as they worked on a (ultimately unfunded) proposal for a UNDP "small donations" development project focused on environmental conservation, involving the fair trade sale of Mbya crafts as "ecologically responsible" products of the selva. He had been brought into the project through personal connections with the president of the NGO as something of a token anthropologist, imagined necessary to the project, although his own research was focused on the urban Toba (Qom) community in Buenos Aires. His intention was to spend a more extensive period of time with the Mbya communities of Lote 8 before returning to France; when I asked if I could join him, he suggested I speak with a member of the *indigenista*[28] organization, which effectively serves as the gatekeeper and translator for the communities of Lote 8.[29] This organization, the

[28] Following Mario Blaser (2010) I use the term *indigenista* as a descriptor for Indigenous rights organizations run by non-indigenous people; as there is effectively only one organization of this nature in the province, the term indigenista is not typically employed; instead the organization is referred to by name.

[29] The perceptions, by actors within the network, of the role of other organizations and individuals in producing Lote 8 are important to tracing inter-institutional frictions, relational and discursive. Whether or not it is the indigenista organization's intentions to act as a filter for access to Lote 8, for many reasons that become obvious over the course

provincial chapter of a national Indigenous rights organization associated with the Catholic Church, had a long history of accompanying territorial disputes involving Mbya communities in Misiones; Lote 8 featured centrally in this organizational history. In the land struggle with the logging company and the negotiated land purchase, they had provided translation, logistical and legal support, and acted as an advisor, intermediary and representative of the Mbya communities' interests.

Once in San Pedro, I arranged a meeting with the Forestry Engineer, who taught at the ISSP. He had a long trajectory of involvement with Lote 8, dating back to his time working in the Provincial Ministry of Ecology in 2000; at the request of the communities he was directly in charge of both the Conservation Plan and the Operative Plan (which effectuates the Conservation Plan). In our meeting at the ISSP, he renarrated the history of Lote 8 and the *Alianza*, offered to put me in touch with *indigenista* organization, and was more than willing to have me accompany the process of conservation work Lote 8, which he characterized as an important example of how conservation could be reconceptualized to respect Indigenous territory[30].

On October 5th, 2018 I met with two key representatives of the *indigenista* organization. Contrary to the framings of the project through conservation that I had previously heard, they repeatedly framed the process of Lote 8 as one of a territorial dispute resolved through collective property titles and therefore, ultimately "closed" rather than ongoing (barring the resolution of the conflict over the access road discussed in chapter 4). They seemed confused when I mentioned the Conservation Plan, despite the fact that the community meetings in June and July with the conservation NGO, the Forestry Engineer, and the French anthropologist had supposedly included discussions of the Plan Operativo as well as the proposed "conservation-as-development" (West 2006) project involving Mbya crafts. Although they were initially reticent to open the door to yet another academic, they offered to organize my first visit to Lote 8 in November, and I agreed to begin taking intensive classes in Mbya Guarani with another member of the organization.

---

of this chapter, they were. In fact, one of my interviewees from an NGO involved in the purchase of Lote 8 described them as the *representative* of the communities, the middleman through which the Mbya were accessed.

[30] In my time in the field, he was the only "conservation" actor for whom this was a clear priority.

On October 17th, I had a second meeting with the Forestry Engineer to specifically discuss "conservation" in Lote 8 and the relationship between (conservation) property and (Mbya) territory in this process. He explained the various institutional relationships, legal parameters and flows of capital that structure the "co-management" of conservation in Lote 8 and provided me with copies of the Conservation Plan and Operative Plan. As he had been in conversations with the French anthropologist about returning to Lote 8 in mid-November to discuss moving forward with the implementation of the Conservation Plan, and I had spoken with the anthropologist about visiting Lote 8 together, we agreed to organize a trip among the three of us. I suggested that perhaps it would be best for me to present myself to the communities independently, through the *indigenista* organization, if possible, and he laughed and said, well, just join whichever trip happens first! However, on November 12th, I received a voice message from the French anthropologist explaining that the forestry engineer had changed his mind about including me in their trip to Lote 8, given the sensitivity of the process of the Conservation Plan and their positions as subcontracted employees of the local NGO involved in conservation planning—which in turn had been contracted by the local representative of the British land trust who had made the purchase. When I followed up with the Forestry Engineer by email, he explained that he was working on coordinating the next steps for the technical work on the Management Plan for Lote 8, but reiterated that due to his position, and that of the NGO, as actors "external" to the *Alianza* (which, he explained, was not currently functioning), he was concerned about creating conflict with the Guarani communities by bringing another person into the process, and suggested that I instead travel with the *indigenista* organization, as a "legitimate actor" within the Alianza.

In late November I was contacted by the French anthropologist about effectively "replacing" him in his relationship with the conservation NGO. He and the Forestry Engineer had been unable to take the planned visit to Lote 8, and he informed me that the Forestry Engineer, for personal reasons, was no longer willing to take trips "to the field" but would continue working in an advisory capacity with respect to the conservation planning. As my remaining time in the field would make evident, with this the NGO had lost a crucial local actor involved in Lote 8, and the work of conservation planning effectively ceased. The anthropologist suggested that I explain my interest in the process to the NGO, emphasizing my experience

with Mbya communities, and send them my CV. I explained to him that in no way was I an expert in Mbya language or culture; I was studying Mbya and recently I had been involved in supporting the territorial struggles of a few Mbya communities in Brazil, but this was political, not "academic" work. I wrote the NGO a polite email that didn't overstate my credentials, and asked to meet with them when in Buenos Aires mid–December...yet again receiving no reply. When I arrived to Buenos Aires a few weeks later I called their office and, insisting on my limited time frame, we arranged a meeting for the next day.

Once in their office, I was surprised to find I was already considered "inside" of the process. When I asked exactly what they expected of our relationship (given that no one seemed to remember me from the year before), they told me it was up to me to propose how I would like to collaborate, yet clearly had some expectations of what my role would be as an "anthropologist"; they seemed particularly pleased that I had a fluid relationship with the *indigenista* organization. Given that the *Alianza* created during the process of the land purchase and titling has ceased to function, the NGO hoped to be able to redevelop the relationship with the communities of Lote 8. Apparently, they imagined this as the work of an ethnographer, and were more than willing to fund all the site visits I would make on their behalf. The work of revisiting conservation planning with the communities had apparently been pending for several years, however, continued funding from the land trust and other sources was dependent on a demonstrated need for that money to promote conservation in Lote 8. In our first meeting, they articulated two main issues they would like to better understand to be able to work with the communities of Lote 8. The first was the perception of the Mbya of the property titles, and how or if this has changed their relationship with their environment, particularly to cross–border illegal poaching. The second issue was how the NGO could "help" the Mbya communities; in NGO terms, a desire to better understand what they could propose as fundable projects (to the UNDP, etc.) that the communities would be interested in.

As part of the Native Forests Law, there were also funds available to landowners for conservation work. Because of the complexities of the process of titling land collectively, the logging company Moconá Sociedad Anónima, owned by the Laharrague family, still held the title for all of Lote 8 (nearly 4000 hectares) when the conservation planning documents were created during 2012-2014. The land was collectively titled to the three Mbya Guarani communities and registered in 2015, thus, it was explained to me, the money for

conservation from the national government associated the Native Forests Law was allocated to Moconá S.A.. When I asked about the new round of funding which the Mbya communities were entitled to apply for directly, the president of the NGO responded "*Si dan los fondos a las comunidades, quedamos afuera* / if they give the funds to the communities, we'll be excluded [from the funds]".

After this meeting I was torn: I had institutional access and approval to the participate in the *process* I had come to study, but suddenly it seemed that *I* was expected to be the one doing the translation between the frameworks of Western science and property regimes and Mbya world–making practices. Even after a follow-up meeting in which I clarified the nature of my research, I remained wary of how my presence as a researcher would be "claimed" by the conservation organization the ways in ways that might potentially disrupt how I was relationally situated within the conservation process and in relation the Mbya communities I had yet to request permission to conduct research with. Furthermore, I was concerned that my presence might legitimate an extractive relationship between the communities of Lote 8 and the NGOs with regard to national and international flows of conservation funding.

2.3.3 Enrollment in the "veneer of consent[31]"

The summer and fall of 2019 proceeded with a series of frustrated attempts at both physical and processual access to conservation work in Lote 8. Since our meeting in early October, I had planned to visit Lote 8 for the first time with the indigenista organization. However, for various reasons (the rain, busy schedules on their part, the rain, other urgent matters, the rain) they had not gone to Lote 8 since I arrived in Misiones, despite insisting on their desire to do so. Whenever I returned to the issue of going there by some other means to present myself to the community and begin the work there, I was told that they will be taking me…soon.

On the other hand, my relationship the conservation NGO which had initially invited me to participate in the conservation processes of Lote 8 put me in an awkward position. They had not been actively involved in Lote 8 since the French anthropologist left in December, but they were interested in

[31] I owe this turn of phrase to Megan Ybarra.

applying for funds through the TICCA program[32] for a conservation project in Lote 8, similar to one for which they had not received funds the previous year. I followed up with them in early March to confirm their consent for data collection in accompanying this process, and, as requested, reviewed the previous year's proposal and the current call, writing the following in response:

> *… he revisado en detalle tanto el proyecto propuesto el año pasado y la nueva convocatoria, estoy segura que la propuesta anterior entraría en esta convocatoria, hasta incluso simplificándola. El proyecto anterior cumple con todas las características de proyectos elegibles! […] entiendo que la propuesta tendría que partir de la(s) comunidad(es) […] aunque [NGO] podría ser la organización solicitante, si las comunidades quieren y no están en condiciones de solicitar por si mismas los fondos. Se supone que ya están (o estarán) en contacto con [la organización indigenista] acerca de eso.*
>
> …I've reviewed in detail the project proposed lat year, as well as the new call for proposals, and I am sure that the previous proposal would enter in this call, including simplifying it. The previous project meets all the characteristics of eligible projects! […] I understand that the proposal has to initiate from the communities […] although could be the organization that applies, if the communities so desire and are not in conditions to request the funds themselves. I assume that you are already (or will be) in touch with [the *indigenista* organization] with respect to this.

After not receiving a response, I called them ten days later to follow up about the institutional permissions I had requested and to find out about the status of the TICCA application. The person I spoke with confirmed that I could collect data as part of the process of working with their organization, and asked if I had organized to go to Lote 8 with the *indigenista* organization. I told her I was working on it, and she explained that in order for them to apply for the TICCA, they would need a letter from the communities; she told me she could draft something for me if necessary, and that the NGO was happy to pay for a vehicle to access the area (knowing, of course, that I would still need to go with someone who the communities trusted in order to formally present myself). I asked if the *indigenista* organization knew about the TICCA application, and whether or not I could mention it to them, and she said yes, but that I didn't need to tell them everything about it. Since I assumed that the NGO would in fact be communicating with the *indigenista* organization about the project, I respected this request, mentioning the TICCA application and the letter of

[32] Proyectos para mejorar la gobernanza y fortalecer las capacidades locales para la gestión sostenible de la biodiversidad y la conservación de los territorios y las áreas conservadas por los pueblos indígenas y comunidades locales (TICCA) en Argentina (PPD/FMAM/PNUD / "Projects to improve the governance and strengthen local capacities for the sustainable management of biodiversity and the conservation of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous nations and local communities in Argentina"

approval to those I would be traveling with. When she later followed up with me by email a few weeks before the TICCA application was due and just before (yet another) planned visit to Lote 8, I suggested that since I was traveling at the invitation of the *indigenista* organization and the trust of the communities was in part a function of arriving with them, it was important for the NGO to communicate with the *indigenista* organization about the letter and their plans. I was acutely aware that the TICCA funds (which, with some political connections, chances were good that the NGO would receive) might in fact create, if artificially, the exact circumstances I had come to study in Lote 8. But it seemed ethically questionable to push for the creation of these circumstances in order to study them without having some assurance that this was actually what the various communities of Lote 8 would want. Despite my email response and a few unreturned phone calls, I didn't hear from them further about it; the deadline for the TICCA applications passed (and I let it).

2.3.4 Introductions and mediated relationships of consent

On June 11th, 2019 I finally traveled to Lote 8 with the *indigenista* organization. This was their first visit in a year; the last time was when they went with members of the conservation NGO and the French anthropologist who I had "replaced". As we entered Yabotí, the clay road was bumpy but clearly received frequent logging traffic, and was open enough to be dry from the prior week's rains. A while later we crossed the Puente de los Lopez, and shortly thereafter, as we continued up a hill, to our left we passed a small, handpainted sign that said "Aldea Kury". My travel companions from commented with surprise at the sign, suggesting that the park rangers must have been "messing" with the community; Kury is led by a *cacique* known for his rejection of intervention by organizations of the Church (i.e. the *indigenista* organization), the state, and proximity to the "corrupting" influence of settler culture generally.[33] As we continued along the path we said hello to a Mbya man who explained that the road was untraversable; apparently the provincial

[33] In Buenos Aires over lunch with a member of the *indigenista* organization a few weeks later some nuance was added to this commentary: this cacique's opposition to identity documents and formal registration of the community (critical to making claims to the state) and lack of support for nearby land titling in the case of Lote 8 was criticized in light of the fact that the community lives within state land (P.P. Esmeralda). According to this interlocutor, rather than being an alternative vision for Mbya futures *beyond* state recognition, Kury had accommodated itself safely within government land.

health team had made it as far as the school[34] and turned around. We eventually reached the end of the dirt road, entering what was still vaguely recognizable as a path through the selva, overgrown by tall grass and dense *tacuara*.

Over the course of the next six or seven hours we hacked our way with machetes through 8km of selva to allow the truck to pass, finally reaching the community at sundown. Though our slow passage could be heard from a distance, our arrival was greeted with some wonder. After introductions to the small community we were offered what remained of dinner: *ycho* (grubs associated with the pindó palm), mandioca, and a flour made of toasted corn and peanuts ground together. After eating, we were invited into the *opy* for mate around the fire. The conversation, mostly in Mbya, with some Portuguese and spatterings of Spanish, was full of silence. The mate, with Brazilian *yerba*, made round after round, as the members of the *indigenista* organization and community members caught up on the events of the year.

The next morning the conversation around the fire in the *opy*[35] continued, and it was time to introduce myself, with the pressure from my traveling companions that we needed to begin our return by 10am. Though several other researchers have worked in Lote 8 previously, out of shyness I struggled to explain myself concisely and coherently; in this void, my companions from the organization stepped in to explain me (and my work) in relation to conservation, contrasting my interest in Mbya socionatural relations to the (negatively imbued) description of the "conservation" of the provincial park rangers. I found it strange to be located, by contrast, in this way, a contrast that spoke to and situated me in relation to the ongoing conflict over the access road, discussed in Chapter 4. As I gathered courage, I explained my connection to the conservation NGO and asked the chief permission, separately, to work with the community on their understanding of conservation and the selva, and, if they desired it, act as a bridge with the NGO if there were conservation related initiatives the community would like support on. He was happy to receive me as a researcher, but he did not directly respond to the involvement of the conservation NGO; attentive to this tension, I didn't press the matter.

[34] The "school" was a wooden cabin; it did not function as a school, but its construction (apparently funded by a fly-by-night donor), and the possibility of its use as a (state) school, was a source of some controversy among the communities of Lote 8, who had differing visions of Mbya futures.

[35] The house of prayer and residence of the opygua, or spiritual leader

Our return ascent, on the trail we had cut over the course of seven hours the day before, took a mere 45 minutes. As we drove, members of the *indigenista* organization filmed the path and narrated the difficulties of access to the community, still embroiled in the dispute over the access road. After passing the school, we crossed the stream where two Mbya women were scrubbing clothes. The person in the passenger seat snapped a few photos, the bright clothes framed by the dark *selva* and its reflection in the water. The women looked up, and we said hello from the truck. While the *indigenista* organization has a long history with the Mbya communities of Misiones, it was clear that the photographer and the women did not know one another. In the context of their role in Mbya territorial struggles, I mused at the objectification of Mbya life in these photos, what they represented, what they authorized.

In my interactions with the organization, and in accompanying their interactions in a few different Mbya communities, I have noted the logics of authenticity which discursively produce "good" and "bad" Mbya. Good Mbya maintain cultural traditions and organize with others in territorial struggles; bad Mbya have problems with alcohol, are manipulative or can be manipulated, ask for handouts instead of working for things, etc. (Of course, the discourse that recognizes/produces "bad" Mbya approximates that which recognizes/names/produces the racialized poor of Argentina, as well as racist anti-Indigenous discourses more broadly.) These categories of being Mbya are constructed in direct relation to *indigenista* organization's purpose of supporting Indigenous *rights* and, specifically, territorial struggles, providing legal support, translation, and help in negotiations. One key site of the organization's work are the *capacitationes,* where representatives from Mbya communities, hosted by the organization, come together to work collectively on understanding their legal rights. While meeting a real need, these *capacitaciones* are also a space of translation where the problem facing the Mbya (the struggle for territory) is given a solution (rights, property) the means to which is law. Another researcher who had worked with the organization commented that although the *indigenista* organization does not proselytize religiously (despite their affiliation with the Catholic Church), they do "proselytize the law" (Coll de Lima Hutchison, 2019, personal correspondence). By privileging of the law and accessing rights granted through the law, as explored in Chapter 3, the (settler) state is recentered and its (colonial) existence legitimized, as Indigenous scholars have noted (Coulthard 2014, Simpson 2014). This translation reproduces the *indigenista* organization as an institution, both

rendering it essential and structuring the territorial struggles it exists to support, perhaps foreclosing alternative possibilities beyond rights and recognition.[36]

In his discussion of *indigenista* organizations in Paraguay, Mario Blaser (2010) describes the evolution of two distinct stances: integrationist and critical. Critical *indigenistas*, as he describes, support Indigenous cultures as distinct, coexisting along dominant (colonial) cultures, rather than viewing them as a disappearing past to be integrated into modernity. These organizations, like the *indigenista* organization working in Misiones, are embedded in and dependent on international networks of funding and Indigenous rights discourses. While the *indigenista* organization I traveled with had truly accompanied the struggle of the communities of Lote 8 and was respected and appreciated by the Mbya leaders in this struggle, the organization also had a stake in how Lote 8 was represented, and consumed, as a successful territorial struggle, particularly as the struggle of "traditional" Mbya communities.

2.3.5 Researching from Lote 8

In total, I visited the Mbya communities at the center of the land claim for 'Lote 8' five times: in June 2019, in October 2019, in November 2019, in December 2019 and in February 2020. I was always based at the oldest community in Lote 8, conducting research there and in the other community that was initially been part of the land struggle, though I visited the other communities[37], intentionally or in passage, on my hike in. The first two trips were organized with the *indigenista* organization, which had accompanied the Mbya Guarani communities through the land struggle, as translators, legal advisors, and advocates. On each of these two visits, we stayed one night. The first visit, recounted above, I went alone with three members of the organization; the second trip included a filmmaker hired to 'document' and represent the conservation practices of the Mbya for the NGO in the UK who had "purchased and donated" Lote 8[38] to

[36] For example, the critique of the cacique of Kur-y (see footnote above) for not supporting the titling process of Lote 8 and opposing the *camino,* and a broader delegitimization of this communities' decisions/strategy for continued existence, could be read through this translation, which rendered it legible in particular ways.

[37] As noted elsewhere, while there were five Mbya Guarani communities (*tekoa*) located in Lote 8 during the time I conducted fieldwork, only three of these had been involved in the titling process.

[38] This was explicitly his mission, according to his comments to me during our time in Lote 8 and our prior meeting in Buenos Aires in the offices of the local conservation NGO, discussed in the following chapter.

the Mbya: this trip was largely focused on introducing him to the leaders of each of the three communities who had been involved in the titling process, and obtaining their permission, vis-a-vis the translation efforts of the *indigenista* organization, to film. The third trip was organized between myself and the filmmaker, through the same *indigenista* organization, and I was accompanied by a Mbya interpreter, Daiana from another community close to where I was living in San Pedro. On this third visit, the three of us were dropped off on a Monday and picked up on a Friday in Lote 8 by a member of the *indigenista* organization. The final two visits, about a week each, I arranged myself, traveling with a Mbya interpreter (Daiana in the first instance, and a man who had previously been chief of their community, in the second). On each occasion, we traveled by bus to Moconá Provincial Park and then hiked the 15km through the selva, along a combination of roads and footpaths, to the community where we planned to stay.

My arrival, no matter how unanticipated, was always the treated the same: a formal greeting (*Aguyjevete*), mate,[39] and a discussion of my business there. Typically I (or myself and the group I travelled with) brought food so as not to burden the host community where we stayed[40]. However, on my fourth visit, the chief commented politely that when I came to visit, I could contribute, or not contribute—it didn't matter; his wife later mentioned the lack of warm blankets, so on my next and what would be my final visit, I brought as many blankets as I could carry, in appreciation of the hospitality I received.

Although consent to conduct research was granted in my initial visit to Lote 8, this consent was constantly renegotiated, in and throughout each visit. The initial consent for research had been partially translated and mediated through the *indigenista* organization, and when I returned with the filmmaker, there was some confusion as to whether my work and his were part of the same project. In fact, the filming of the documentary and the events surrounding it was the closest I would come to the initial process of translation I had imagined ethnographic research to entail. Consent itself was therefore a kind of dissonant practice, already situated in the networks producing Lote 8, and I was always concerned by the apparent lack of clarity over who exactly I was,[41] what exactly I belonged to, and what I returned to. My explanations, too,

[39] A hot caffeinated beverage, traditionally Guarani, made of the leaves of the yerba mate (Ilex paraguariensis) tree.

[40] This was not only the case in visiting Mbya communities; I also generally bought food or contributed to an *asado* (barbeque) when invited to visit park rangers stationed in a provincial park.

[41] My name, Elizabeth, is impossible to pronounce, and my name in Spanish, Eli, is pronounced like "he" in Portuguese,

required situating in a world of meaning that could make them relevant. Consent in Lote 8, as ever, was an ethically fraught process, and I was haunted by the constant specter of extractive research and the weight of conducting accountable research when accountability and reciprocity remained unclear or externally defined, particularly by the *indigenista* organization or the conservation NGO.

The necessity of working with interpreters inevitably shaped my conversations in Lote 8, as any Mbya interpreter was also a relative, enmeshed in their own web of relationships, and a welcome guest, bringing news of those relationships; though my research was the reason for the visit, in many ways I became simply an accessory to the interpreter's visit. Importantly, the positionality of the interpreter I brought had a tremendous effect on how I was positioned as a researcher, and the conversations that we participated in together. While I was more comfortable traveling with a female interpreter, this tended to gender access overall, as we were situated with the women in day to day activities and conversations. My final visit with a male interpreter with a certain status and wealth of knowledge of Mbya stories and traditions dramatically changed the tone of the conversations. This was exemplified by a comment the chief made to the interpreter, in my presence, the day before we left, which the interpreter relayed to me in this way:

> *Dice que está contento con nuestra visita, porque es la primera vez que habla así de los dioses. Y los dioses van a estar contentos también, sabiendo que estamos hablando de ellos.*
>
> He says he is content with our visit, because this was the first time he had spoken this way of the gods, and that the gods were going to be content as well, knowing that we are talking about them.

Though elders humored my requests for interviews, these happened when and for as long as they deemed appropriate; unlike the work of the filmmaker, whose requests to stage certain activities to be filmed often took precedence over other activities, my visits as a researcher were always subordinate to the relationships I brought with me and the rhythm of the day.

In her monograph, *Grounded Authority*, Shiri Pasternak (2018) describes a methodology of "flipping the terms of recognition" as a non-Indigenous researcher. To "flip the terms of recognition" is to shift research frameworks from terms of "recognition" based on the unequal power relations between Indigenous

---

making it incongruent as a name. After forgetting my unpronouncable name and constantly referring to me in the third person, the chief's wife eventually decided on an appropriate nickname, Tata-i (little fire) which I began to use in addition to my name when introducing myself socially.

communities and settler states to one where settlers seek recognition from Indigenous communities. Throughout my visits to Lote 8, I worked to understand consent through the inverted power relations of a flipped recognition. In one interview, on my third visit, the chief became annoyed at my questions about the process of mapping the territory, explaining, through the interpreter, that this issue was already resolved, and he didn't see any point in me bringing it up, and promptly ended our conversation. I was mortified, unsure which boundary I had overstepped, what question I should not have asked, or how I had offended. Yet later he offered to continue the conversation, so we did.

While the chief knew that I had been involved in Mbya Guarani *retomadas*, or land reoccupations, in Brazil, including one led by a man I was told was his cousin, it was on my fourth visit that these relationships became part of how I was known, when a visitor arrived from Brazil from a community in the south of Rio Grande do Sul, adjacent to one I had visited with members of a *retomada*. As the visitor and I discussed people we both knew, something seemed to shift in how I was perceived: I was situated not only in relation to my own accounts of who I was; I was verifiably known by others. As de Leeuw, Cameron and Greenwood (2012) have argued:

> a) the relationships at stake in participatory, community-based research (and, indeed, all forms of research) include not just those developed "in the field" between researchers and research subjects, but also the network of relationships through which researchers are themselves constituted; b) friendship is one such form of relationship through which research and researchers are experienced, known, evaluated, and critically interrogated; and c) working to decolonize geographic thought and practice requires nurturing forms of relational accountability, including not just the relations and spaces through which research is formally evaluated or circulated, but also the multiple ways in which researchers and research subjects are known, seen, and made.

My arrival to full social recognition within the communities of Lote 8 occurred just before I left. On a Saturday in early February, 2020, a long-awaited party was held in one of the communities of Lote 8. The young women I knew insisted I attend, but only after they selected appropriate 'party' clothing, frowning at my practical research garb. Under a full moon in the *oka* of Kapi'i Yvate, along the Río Uruguay, I danced *forró* barefoot until the early morning, leading the women and following the occasional man who mustered the courage to dance with the party's only outsider. I fell asleep in the *mburuvicha*'s single-room house, on a cot shared by two small children, amidst at least twenty other revelers. On my return to the Tekoa Yma, the chief and his wife grinned and laughed at my tired face when I joined them in the shade for mate.

2.3.6 Representing performances of conservation

In October 2019 I spent five days with a documentary filmmaker hired by the purchasing NGO on a visit to the communities included in the conservation titling agreement. The filming would purportedly document Mbya conservation practices to publicly legitimate the titling process to donors, and, at least in theory, might be used to gather additional donations to purchase more land. As an inadvertent intermediary between the *indigenista* organization and the conservation organizations, I was partially responsible for arranging this shared visit, yet, once there, found myself in an awkward position, renegotiating my relationships with community members I had known for some time through the assumption that I was working with the filmmaker. This came to a head one afternoon, after the filmmaker agreed to let me accompany him while he filmed an elder discussing plants in a recent clearing. As we walked to the clearing, he told us both that this would be an "ethnobotanical walk", in which the elder would explain to me, the notebook-carrying "researcher" the uses of species we encountered. I felt uncomfortable, but since the elder assented eagerly and I assumed I would simply be a passive party, taking notes on anything but medicinal plant knowledge as we walked, I continued with the two men. Yet once filming began, circumstances changed dramatically. The filmmaker would prompt me, repeatedly, in Spanish: "ask what this is" "ask what they use this for" while the elder, whose Spanish was very limited, waited for me to ask the question in Portuguese, responding in a mix of Portuguese and Mbya Guarani. I realized that I had somehow not only become the translator, but that I had been coerced and cajoled into participating in a performance of expert knowledge—both the elder's and mine—which was deeply unethical.

After the filming ended and we returned to the central community space the documentary filmmaker told me, "*Tengo unas ideas para tu entrevista* / I have some ideas for your interview." I told him I wasn't an expert to be interviewed about Mbya conservation practices, and I hadn't even analyzed data on the adjacent subject I was researching. He insisted, citing the importance of my institutional association to provide legitimacy. He told me "*Podés decir algo corto. Como, 'es sorprendente la biodiversidad de la selva en estas comunidades'* / You can just say something short. Say, it's surprising the biodiversity of the forest in these communities". I told him, again, that this was simply not my area of expertise, and that I wasn't comfortable figuring as an expert, to which he told me that it was my duty, as a researcher, to give back to

these communities by appearing in (his) documentary.

A year later, I followed up with the conservation NGO requesting to view the documentary, concerned after hearing from a colleague who had seen it before its release that I appeared in a few scenes. My request was denied, and to my confusion the email exchange turned quite strident. After rejecting my request, the former president of the organization ended his final email to me,

> *Por mi parte el tema queda cerrado aquí y casualmente la semana próxima voy a la ONU (Ginebra, donde estoy ahora) para informar sobre Las Comunidades Guarani de Lote 8 y su devenir desde que son propietarios de sus tierras y les comunicaré que apenas este disponible, [la ONG] les hará llegar el link del film sobre las Comunidades mencionadas […]*
>
> For my part the issue ends here and as it happens next week I'm going to the UN (Geneva, where I am now) to inform [them] about *The Guarani Communities of Lote 8 and their evolution since being owners of their land* and I will communicate to them that as soon as it is available, [the NGO] will send them the link to the film about the aforementioned communities.

Given this conservation NGO's scant contact with the Mbya communities of Lote 8, and the fact that the precise reality the UN was being informed of was one which the NGO had asked me to gather information on (which I had not yet done) in the course of my ethnographic fieldwork, I was surprised by his claim to representational authority. The filmmaker, who wrote me separately, chastised me for my insistence on seeing the documentary before its release, insinuating that by doing so, I was jeopardizing Mbya territory by threatening the process by which additional land might be purchased by the land trust and titled to the communities. Notably, once the film was released on the land trust's website, there was no mention of the possibility, which circulated while I was in the field and had been the land trust's intention a decade earlier, of additional conservation investment in Misiones with the purchase of the lots adjacent to Lote 8. In fact, the text that accompanies the film's release framed on Lote 8 as a success, where the threatened Mbya culture was conserved alongside the *selva*, ending with a congratulatory, "…supporters [of the land trust] like you can find much to be proud of in this story…We look forward to delivering new wins for Indigenous peoples together!" (World Land Trust, 2021)

Though I paid a high price with the conservation NGO for insisting against my inclusion, the ethnobotanical walk was thankfully not included in the documentary. Yet this moment of being enrolled as an expert who could be made responsible for translating performances of conservation in order to legitimate

the titling process elucidated the representational practices at work as “Lote 8” circulated—and was made to circulate—within distant spaces of conservation and human rights. Effectively, the Mbya communities of Lote 8 had been scaled out of self-representation, through a scaling up the representation of Lote 8 to international spaces of elite access of donor audiences.

The narrative of my own “access” to Lote 8 highlights the temporal and spatial disjunctures that produce Lote 8, which my research—and my role as a researcher—was often expected to bridge. While many people were talking about Lote 8--from the London or Buenos Aires conservation NGO, as they planned for the funding cycles associated with the *Ley de Bosques Nativos* or UNDP; from the *indigenista* organization as they coordinate the monthly *aty* (Guarani assemblies) or hold *capacitaciones* within the framework of the revised Constitution which recognizes Indigenous pre-existence and national law 26.160 on Indigenous territory; from the week-long *guardias* of park rangers in Moconá Provincial Park, adjacent to Lote 8--they were not always talking to one another. Even as Lote 8 was stabilized as an object of intervention, what Lote 8 produced, as a conservation project, as a successful territorial claim, as a “foreign” land purchase, varied depending on how each actor was situated in the network of relationships with respect to others; Lote 8 was never solid, but was multiply assembled, disassembled and reassembled through dissonance.

2.4 A pandemic and obligations unfulfilled

As this chapter has illustrated, understanding neoliberal conservation’s mediation of the ‘territorial turn’ and its consequences required conducting a multi-sited ethnography of negotiation and translation, articulated through a network—evidenced as much in archival traces as in interactions in the field—rather than an encounter. Lote 8, as an exemplary site to study this process, was both a site of *struggle* for Mbya Guarani *territory* and a conservation *land purchase* donated for *stewardship* by the Mbya. Lote 8 remains a contact zone in the sense employed by Pratt (1995) and Sundberg (2006), where marginalized Mbya Guarani communities engage with [the coloniality of] conservation, potentially reworking and resignifying it. Yet, as seen in fieldwork, it was not only conservation that underwent a process of translation through collaboration—‘Lote 8’ was itself being translated by institutions and actors authorized to represent it

beyond Mbya territory at multiple scales, as they interfaced across a network of dissonant relations and narrations. As a researcher, I was also produced through this network of relations, and I am also a translator of 'Lote 8'.

In closing the chapter, I want to acknowledge the tremendous impact of the covid-19 pandemic, and its effects on ethical and accountable research practices. Although when I left Argentina there remained research tasks related to environmental management which had been rendered impossible by the temporalities of state bureaucracy (such as participant observation in Yabotí with the forestry sector of AMIRBY), for the most part, by the end of fieldwork the research process had reached a natural closure, in terms of data and research relationships. However, it was just as I was leaving that my relationships with the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8 were finally becoming more established.

It was only in my final visit to Lote 8 in early February 2020, days before my departure for the United States, that it was explicitly suggested that I stay longer, that I *should* stay longer, both for my own benefit—my limited comprehension and speaking skills in Mbya were never going to improve, I was chided, unless I stayed for at least a month—and in order to better appreciate everyday life. Up until this point, I had been very cautious not to overstay my welcome, aware that I only was the most recent of a parade of researchers to pass through Lote 8 in the last decade. The Mbya elders and community leaders had already patiently answered the questions it had occurred to me to ask about the land struggle and titling process, and as my initial intention had been to conduct participant observation with the Mbya communities in the context of their indefinitely delayed engagement by conservationists, I was wary of shifting into a mode of ethnography that inadvertently rendered the Mbya an object of study. But I assented, eager to imagine myself integrated in daily routines, without my heavy anxieties about extracting elusive data for an unwieldy and fragmented project, and promised to return in June, or September at the latest.

Already on the battery-operated radio which picked up a local radio station from Brazil, preparations were being discussed for containing the novel coronavirus. It was scarcely notable. Bare feet on the dry red clay, sitting in the sparse noon shade with the jungle on every side, it was impossible for me to imagine my absence for even a few months, even as I tried to feel it, grieve it, to sense leaving and the obligations of accountability and reciprocity that would accompany me. The absoluteness of the physical distance that

would separate these worlds in only a matter of weeks, when quarantine began, still remains incomprehensible to me in a bodily sense, so accustomed to being *myself* divided even as I move between Argentina and the United States.

I could not anticipate what this distance would mean, in terms of the story I could, should, and would choose to tell. Distance, too, became part of my methodology; returning to Lote 8 to share my research with the elders I interviewed and others in the community remains an unfulfilled obligation. For this reason, I have not included direct quotes from interviews conducted in Mbya Guarani with the assistance of an interpreter, since I have been unable to transcribe the Mbya and review the translations with my interlocutors; I rely instead on field notes of conversations in which I participated directly, especially those where stories or explanations had occurred repeatedly and I feel confident in my understanding of the knowledge being shared. Due to my inability to return, present my work and confer about my analysis, I have limited my representation of Mbya worlds, as it is not my intention to rely on an 'othered' indigeneity to demonstrate radical difference (de la Cadena 2015) or provide insights about ontological plurality.[42] As is the case with many Indigenous groups, the Mbya have been overstudied and are represented a wealth of bachelor's, master's, and dissertation theses. In this dissertation, I also have chosen not to rely on anthropological literature (as a form of academic translation) to *explain* Mbya worlds but rather rely, as much as possible, on Mbya theorizations of their own reality from Lote 8, whether through the archive or through the conversations I had with the three elders who had participated in the land struggle. I recognize, of course, that these sites of self-representation, particularly in the archive, are embedded in colonial histories and bureaucracies and crisscrossed with colonial encounters. In engaging these self-representations, I am not interested in positioning the Mbya communities of Lote 8 as authentic or inauthentic in relation to some lost past (as is often risked when explaining their reality and historical trajectory through anthropological literature) but rather, to situate their very particular struggle. I remain excruciatingly conscious of the limited Mbya voices in this dissertation and the ways this could be perceived as an inadvertent recentering of settler narratives and structures, as has been a frequent critique of settler

[42] Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd (2016) provides a cogent critique of the "ontological turn's" appropriative reliance on Indigenous theory.

colonial studies (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel 2014). Without the possibility of return, I have navigated my own understanding of the consent I was given and limiting myself when I have any doubts. I recognize that in many ways, despite my best intentions, I remained opaque as a researcher during my time in Lote 8, making ethical representation nearly impossible; this awareness has shaped and limited what became data within this dissertation.

As I said my goodbyes in February 2020, I assured everyone that I would be back in a few months, that I would learn to speak properly. I joked that I hoped that there would be plenty of coatí to eat. My heart ached, and I told the chief with tears in my eyes that I was sad to leave. I was conscious of the weight of my responsibility as a researcher, having been entrusted the story of the struggle for Lote 8 and permission to tell it, but I felt completely at a loss for words, of either promises or gratitude, and could only say how sad I was to go. Almost as a reminder of my superfluousness, the chief shrugged, and told me, in Portuguese, but then you'll come back, and here it will be same, and, in Mbya, *tape porã*[43].

[43] A salutation in parting; a simple literal translation would be "good path".

Chapter 3: Property Regimes, Conservation and Indigeneity: Assembling the *Selva* in Mbya Guarani Territory

September 2019

On a sunny day in early spring, a few weeks before returning to Misiones, I met with a conservation biologist and a documentary filmmaker in the office of a small Argentine biodiversity conservation NGO, on the top floor of a beautiful building in downtown Buenos Aires. The filmmaker had been hired to document "Lote 8", located over 1100 kilometers away, as a conservation success. Both the filmmaker and the conservation biologist, whose NGO was affiliated with the conservation planning process, expressed reservations about the conservation practices of the Mbya Guarani, to whom 83% of the nearly 4000-hectare lot within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve had been titled. The conservation biologist suggested that the land purchased for conservation "*debería haberse unido a la reserva provincial* / should have become part of the provincial reserve [Moconá Provincial Park], while the filmmaker, concerned with the "*capacidad de carga* / carrying capacity" of the forest for human inhabitants, suggested that it was necessary to determine a baseline for biodiversity in the lot, because "*primero hay que ver que funciona la conservación* / first it's necessary to verify that conservation is functioning".

Yet the documentary, I was told, would demonstrate "*la perspectiva de las comunidades sobre conservación* / the perspective of the communities on conservation" so that the international NGO would "*comprenda que hizo una buena inversión* / understand it had made a good investment". As this documentary would ostensibly be part of a campaign to generate donations to the NGO for further conservation land purchases, this evidence of a "good investment" in conservation by the communities would theoretically encourage future conservation investment by the organization in the adjacent lots the communities claimed, still under legal dispute. Nonetheless, both men were adamant that they did not want any land purchased in the future to be directly titled to the communities--titling the land as Guarani territory was perceived as antithetical to conservation.[44] Thus, while it was very clear that the

[44] Although in this conversation the alternatives were not made explicit, the land trust typically operates by titling land to local NGOs; in other conversations with the conservationist present in this conversation, the creation of the reserve for management by the National Park System had been suggested as another option.

dissemination and circulation of Mbya performances of conservation--visually composed and narrated for an international audience—could be generative for conservation initiatives, it might not necessarily be generative for the consolidation of Mbya territory.

February 2020

Following the filming for the documentary in November, I returned to Lote 8 for two more visits. After several days in conversation with the elder who had become my central Mbya interlocutor, during what the covid-19 pandemic would unexpectedly render my final visit, he told me that he's often asked himself why students (like myself) come to ask him about the struggle (*lucha*) for Lote 8. This political and spiritual leader explained that he had won his struggle, while others have been struggling for much longer; he named the example of the leader of a Mbya community to the southwest, far from Yabotí. As with every visit and renegotiation of consent for my research, I explained that it was the particularity of Lote 8 that interested me: it involved a land *purchase,* made possible because of the physical location of the disputed lots in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, their proximity to Moconá Provincial Park, and the interest of the conservation organization in preserving a biodiversity corridor. He reflected on this, and told me that at the time of the agreement and land purchase, he was told that if he took care of the land *(si cuidaba bien*), they[45] would buy the other lots[46].

As my September conversation in Buenos Aires indicated, at the time there remained quite a bit of ambiguity about—and interest in—the future of conservation investment in these disputed lots. Yet the elder's concern was also situated within the longer narrative trajectory in which he had repeatedly recounted

[45] This "they" referenced, contextually, those who had been part of the original purchase and titling, presumably, the conservation NGOs.

[46] In an earlier visit, the same elder narrated a similar idea more elaborately in a conversation in Mbya. He told me that when the land was purchased, the CEO of the conservation land trust (who he referred to by name) explained that he would be checking to see that the communities were conserving; he might not come to visit, but he, or his son, would fly over in an airplane and observe the forest. And if the Mbya were conserving the land, then the land trust would buy the other lots for them. Despite the narrator's prescient anticipation of the surveillance made possible by conservation monitoring via satellite imagery, the details of his story clearly don't align with the material reality of the actors involved. Yet it was striking to me that on more than one occasion, there was a narrative linkage between adequately meeting the conservation standards of the purchasing organization and the possibility of the remainder of the disputed land being collectively titled to the Mbya. This became more concerning as I observed the filming of the documentary, in which Mbya community members performed "traditional" activities for the camera (making impromptu traps for fish and animals, thatching the roof of a building), purely for demonstration, to be observed and assessed in relation to organization's conservation goals.

his experience of the land struggle to me over the course of several interviews and many informal conversations. The story always began with a visit from a representative of the logging company—the first moment in which the communities learned of an "owner" of this land, I was told. In the elder's story, this representative had offered 150 hectares to each community, which he said he had accepted, on the condition that the man return the following day with the titles to this land. Once, chuckling, the elder told me he wasn't sure what had put the idea of land titles in his head. But the man never returned, he would exclaim, and so he decided to fight for the land. He would laugh and shake his head, surmising that maybe if the man had come back with titles, maybe if he had kept his promise, they wouldn't have fought for (and won) the titles to the land.

This story was often confusing to me: it was narrated repeatedly, yet I couldn't locate the event in the archive itself, nor make sense of it in relation to other moments of negotiation in which small portions of land were offered to the communities, a phenomena which had also occurred in an early phase of the process that would ultimate lead to conservation land purchase and communitarian land titles. Despite my efforts to triangulate a chronology of events, I realized that the elder's narration of betrayal as the inception of struggle, as he himself wryly suggested, was far more important to understanding his story.[47] The elder's story of the struggle over the land, recounted to me in the context of the ongoing genocidal project of settler colonialism's voracious territoriality, was one in which promises were repeatedly made but not kept with respect to land titles. But rather than a commentary on collective loss in the face of the disingenuousness of "*los blancos*" in the history of good faith negotiations, these broken promises were used to define the patient and persistent struggle for land within the elder's narrative. This struggle, though "won" *(ganado),* resurfaced in the present, as my questions about conservation and land titling served as a reminder, not of a fully resolved past, but of a yet unsettled claim.

[47] Drawing on the work of scholars of genocide and memory, anthropologist Victoria Sanford (2009) emphasizes trauma as a disruption of what is known or understood, where memory functions most essentially to recall this disruption, rather than the minor "facts" of the disruptive moment. Sanford cautions against the scholarly need for order in the face of the fundamental disordering experienced by survivors of trauma and genocidal violence; in survivors' storytelling, the factual details sometimes matter less than the interruption provided by the events described. I do not intend to compare the genocide committed in Guatemala, subject of Sanford's research, with the (sometimes) slow violence of dispossession, displacement and containment experienced by Guarani communities across the region. Rather, I wish to simply mark the disruptive violence (and its resignification through struggle) of the logging company's first incursions into the Mbya communities of Lote 8.

These two conversations—one while sitting at a conference table in Buenos Aires, another on low benches gathered in the sparse afternoon shade of summer in Misiones—situate the competing visions and desires for conservation, Mbya Guarani land struggles, and titled property which were actualized in Lote 8 in two deeply divergent worlds, entangled through processes of racialized dispossession and international circuits of capital. These conversations were, in many ways, the conclusion, without resolution, of the story my research excavates.

In this chapter, I trace two overlapping phenomena across the last three decades: the intersection of colonial property regimes with the racialization of property relations, and the processes of resource-making within the political economies of conservation. The expansion of specific legal rights for Indigenous communities in Argentina, beginning with the 1994 constitutional reform and situated with the regional 'territorial turn', coincided with an economic and political shift in the province of Misiones, as the *selva misionera* subtropical forest, historically a profitable source of native timber and other forest products, was increasingly valued as an object of biodiversity conservation by the provincial government, international cooperation entities, non-governmental organizations, and environmentalists. This revalorization of the materiality of the *selva* as an object of conservation, rather than extraction, produced it as the new "product" of Misiones, embedded in the neoliberal dynamics of international conservation imperatives, bringing both local and international conservation, ecotourism, and research investment. Thus, what the *selva* is and does for Misiones has been materially, discursively and legally reworked as it is assembled as a resource differently, at the same time as claims to the *selva* are being differently articulated through recently enshrined legal rights and politics of recognition.

While in Chapter 2 I analyze how "Lote 8" is stabilized as a project and interruptive 'event' through a multi-scalar network of actors and institutions, in this chapter, I center Lote 8 as a physical, material space situated within a settler colonial property matrix and the superimposed environmental management frameworks of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve. The discursive production of "Lote 8", as a spatially delimited lot defined by cadastral boundaries within a larger expanse of *selva*, was often periodized by non-

Indigenous research[48] participants through a series of conflicts over the course of the last twenty years. This periodization through conflict that so many of my interviews referenced by indexing "Lote 8" involved successive rearticulations of the relationship between property and Indigenous territorial rights within an evolving trajectory of conservation anxieties. I center the physical space of Lote 8 through these conflicts in order to understand the entangled operation of racialized property regimes and conservation, taking inspiration from Tusing's (2021) "life story of a land lot" to narrate this eventful history through a single site. This narrow empirical focus allows me to trace the threads of continuity which bind distinct historical moments individually situated within the expansion of state conservation, frameworks for the recognition of Indigenous rights within Latin America's 'territorial turn', and neoliberal, 'community-based' conservation, showing how the racial logics of property are not only integral to each of these moments individually, but also structure the relationships among them.

After situating this chapter at the intersection of racialized property regimes and ethnoterritorial rights, I trace the relationship among property, indigeneity and the *selva* through three key moments. In the first empirical section, I discuss the colonial logics of *terra nullius* within environmental management and conservation planning with the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve. In the second empirical section, I examine the attempts of two Mbya Guarani communities and their legal team to secure Indigenous land rights and ethnoterritoral recognition through the state apparatus in the legal dispute over Lote 8 and portions of adjacent lots between the communities and the logging company of the formal landowner. Finally, in the third empirical section, I explore the (conservation) politics of recognition at work in the negotiated purchase of Lote 8, with the recognition of Mbya land rights—through the recognition of the Mbya as land stewards—by conservation NGOs, rather than through formal legal channels.

I argue that the successive reterritorialization of the relationship among property, indigeneity and the forest through each of these configurations reinforces rather than dismantles the colonial property matrix

[48] Though the emphasis within this periodization varied, these interlocuters included members of the *indigenista* organization which had supported the two Mbya communities in the original claim and those consulted in the process as legal or ecological experts, members of the three NGOs involved in the conservation land purchase and titling, as well as members of the provincial government, environmental activists, and provincial park guards with varying degrees of proximity to the case.

of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, *even as* the Mbya Guarani make significant gains in terms of rights, recognition and land tenure. As the *selva* shifts from a resource of extraction to a resource of conservation, claims *to* the *selva* made through indigeneity must undergo a concomitant shift, inextricably intertwining their legitimacy with appropriate and 'authentic' environmental stewardship in ways that are ultimately productive for the *selva* as conservation resource. In other words, I suggest that a racialized indigeneity in relation to land is not only productive for conservation investment, which extracts both discursive and material value from 'nature' and a subsumed 'indigeneity', 'conserved' with 'nature': as the opening vignette suggests and this chapter demonstrates, 'indigeneity' must *continue* to produce for conservation in order for Indigenous land rights obtained through conservation to maintain their legitimacy. This is not to discount the decided and unwavering dedication to struggle narrated by the Mbya elder in the second vignette which opened this chapter, nor the affective and material significance of land titles for the Mbya, a theme to which I return in the conclusion. Yet while the land purchase and titling of Lote 8 through the intervention of the international conservation land trust was celebrated as a unique example of collaboration and a fundamental shift in frameworks for environmental management (or alternately, vilified as a private investment), this "shift" was supported by and continuous with the racialization of the relationship between indigeneity and property which pervaded the previous configurations through which the selva was assembled. As this chapter demonstrates, these racialized understandings of property relations which operate to both exclude and (selectively) include Mbya Guarani land claims were discursively shaped by conservation imaginaries, conservation planning documents, and the organizing institutions of environmental management within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, as well as by the legal system—and legal strategies—of making Indigenous land claims to the state, and further reinforced through the language of 'territory' used by social movements and *indigenista* organizations throughout the ethnoterritorial rights of the region's 'territorial turn' (Anthias 2018; Bryan 2009; Asher 2009). It is this diffuse and sometimes subtle racialization of the Mbya Guarani through environmental relations that continually situate them outside of property, yet inextricably enmeshed with it.

While I include material from interviews and ethnographic field notes, in this chapter, I draw primarily on archival materials to construct my argument. These include documents obtained through the

physical and digital archives of the Ministry of Ecology, the legal archives of the dispute over Lote 8 and Lote 7 compiled by the indigenista organization that accompanied the process over the last 23 years, and the documents provided by a local conservation NGO involved with the process of conservation negotiation for the purpose of Lote 8 and subsequent conservation planning. As discussed in the previous chapter, I recognize the ontological limits of this archival material and my constructed archive writ large. In particular, this archive occludes Mbya voices and worlds through their translation by the legal, ethnobotanical, and conservation 'experts' who represented various aspects of Mbya practices and relationships to land to various state systems and bureaucracies. Yet the archive is also an intricate registry of what is imagined possible within environmental management regimes that legitimate Mbya exclusion, within the law as property is disputed, and within conservation negotiations as titles are exchanged for stewardship. As such, I draw from the archive to make an argument about these constricted possibilities, and the relationships between them, without precluding what escapes the history (and present) imaginable within these limits, including the everyday enactments of Mbya Guarani resurgence from Lote 8 as collectively titled land.

3.1 Race and property in "legal geographies of liminality"

Property has been amply studied as a technique of colonial governance and Indigenous dispossession (e.g. Blomley 2003; Anthias 2019; Nichols 2020). Suggesting that much of this work has elided the co-constitution of property and race, Brenda Bhandar argues that "legal forms of property ownership and the modern racial subject are articulated and realized in conjunction with one [an]other" (5), constituting a "racial regime of ownership" which justifies the appropriation of Indigenous land and persists in Indigenous rights litigation and case law in Canada and other settler states. She discusses how Indigenous people and communities are racialized outside of property by settler colonial governance through definitions of "use" and "improvement"; this racialization of Indigenous difference is reiterated in forms of aboriginal title "defined overwhelmingly by a notion of culture firmly separated from modern economies of ownership" (67). In Misiones, environmental governance and management regimes are complicit in the racialization of the relationship between property and indigeneity. As I demonstrate in this chapter, environmental governance relies on and crystallizes racialized property regimes, while dis-placing

Indigenous subjects by rendering their relationships to land 'territorial' through conceptualizations of "use", which depict them as (potentially) ideal conservation subjects while they remain (inherently) outside of property. This racialized exclusion from property builds on histories of enclosure and territorial reduction at the agrarian-extraction-conservation frontier of Central-Eastern Misiones, longstanding processes of "displacement-in-place"[49] which, as Mollett (2014) describes, "takes the form of constraints on livelihoods and cultural practices and as a result 'displaces futures' " (30). In her study of the intersection of development imaginaries and the tourist consumption of Garifuna culture in Honduras, she shows that this "displacement-in-place" occurs concomitantly with the importance of place in producing forms of value which can also be appropriated. Similarly, in the case of Lote 8, while Mbya Guarani livelihoods and futures are constrained by logging and displaced by insufficient access to land, their presence on the land is essential to racialized depictions of the Mbya Guarani as "guardians of the forest" within conservation networks and imaginaries, and, as I explore in Chapter 4, the discursive requirement that they remain authentic and "traditional" in order to merit rights to the selva[50].

Intersecting with the racialization of indigeneity through environmental management and conservation imaginaries that displace-in-place while extracting value from place, in the legal spaces of land claims, Mbya Guarani communities are racialized as unique subject of rights at the same time as these rights are obviated through civil law and legal precedence. Correia (2018) describes these tense interstitial spaces produced through the law as the "legal geographies of liminality". They arise as the processes of making Indigenous land claims within the new rights frameworks of the territorial turn result in "legal struggles that simultaneously include and exclude [Indigenous communities] from their legal rights" (75). He asserts that these exclusions are actively produced through the application of the law, when legally recognized rights for Indigenous communities are denied through the legal means available to access rights or through the bureaucratic spaces of the everyday implementation of rights. Salinas (2020) argues that in

[49] This is similar to Nixon's (2013) "displacement without moving", discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

[50] Salinas (2020) further explores the tension between requirements for authenticity and assimilation in capitalist productivity—both abstracted from colonialism and dispossession—for Mbya Guarani land claimants in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve.

Misiones, this liminality is produced in part through a control over temporalities. Through a case study of the land claim of a Mbya Guarani community on the other side of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, she suggests that land claims are indefinitely suspended by attributing distinct temporalities to Mbya Guarani communities. Drawing from the work of Gorosito Kramer, she explains that situating the Mbya as belonging to a temporality distinct from dominant Argentine/Misionera society relies on discourses of the Mbya as nomadic hunter-gathers, and late arrivers to the "empty lands" of Misiones, whose *selva* was ostensibly first populated by intrepid Euro-descendant pioneers. As I demonstrate, these discourses inform how the rights of the Mbya, as Indigenous communities, are enfolded and ultimately negated through the property laws of Argentina's Civil Code.

Yet, importantly, the communities that reside in Lote 8 did *not* remain in these legal geographies of liminality. Through struggle and negotiation, they were able to access their constitutional right to land titled to them as inalienable, communitarian property following the intervention of the conservation land trust which purchased and simultaneously donated Lote 8. Thus, it was through a foreign conservation investment, rather than through the resolution of the legal liminality of the land claim, that racialized Indigenous difference was incorporated into the existing property regime of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve. In an ethnographic account of the land claim of a Mapuche community in Southern Chile, Di Giminiani (2018) describes "property and documentation" as "privileged languages" of political claims within neoliberalism (21). He suggests that:

> On the one hand, land claims challenge and potentially subvert the boundaries of existing political imagination concerning the right to difference. On the other, in the public arena and in the more circumscribed spaces of state governance, the threatening difference inherent to land claims can be resignified and incorporated within existing boundaries of political imagination (20)

In the case of Lote 8, it is neoliberal conservation that resolves this tension. Conservation stabilizes the colonial property regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve in the face of the threat posed by radical Indigenous difference and rights claims which might otherwise destabilize the foundational property categories of the law.

3.2 Mapping-into-being the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve

The Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (RBY) in was created —some might say imposed— in 1993 over a property matrix of very large private lots in Central-Eastern Misiones, many of which were titled to a few powerful families--this itself a product of the particular settler colonial histories of the province (Salamanca 2012; Eidt 1971). The Biosphere Reserve was designed to conserve one the few remaining swaths of *selva paranaense* subtropical forest in the region, and according to official accounts measures 236,313 hectares. Yabotí was envisioned as a value-add for "sustainably managed" native forestry and an economically viable option for maintaining the native selva in the heyday of UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" program[51] (Ferrero 2005; Salinas 2016).

One story repeated by several interviewees[52] was that Argentina's president at the time, Carlos Menem, infamous for the privatization and neoliberalization of the country in the 90s, needed a project to present at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Its announcement catapulted the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve from proposal to site of management without a clear consensus among state institutions, landowners, or inhabitants of the designated area (Mbya Guarani communities and *colonos*) about the creation of the Biosphere Reserve or the terms of the new management categories. RBY was designed, according to Salinas (2016), "*en gabinete*" or behind closed doors, in meetings between politicians and landowners who would continue extractive logging of native timber under the auspices of the new Reserve category, freed from municipal taxes.

Tellingly, provincial law XVI Nº33 (formerly Nº 3041/1993) which designates Yabotí as a "natural reserve", begins with a four-page list of lots, their location (department, municipality, parcel) and size, followed by a few brief articles which mention applicable laws for protected areas, the exclusion of these lots from local property taxes, and concludes,

> *El Poder Ejecutivo a través del Ministerio de Ecología y Recursos Naturales Renovables implementará un programa de manejo para el área, que responda al concepto de Desarrollo Sustentable y a normas técnicas para las diferentes actividades a realizar.*

The Executive Branch, via the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources will

[51] The Yabotí Biosphere Reserve was recognized by UNESCO in 1995.
[52] Celicia Salinas (2016) cites similar explanations for the genesis of Yabotí from an interviewee.

implement a management program for the area, which corresponds to the concept of Sustainable Development and to technical norms for the different activities to be conducted.

The creation law for Yabotí makes no mention of the types of activities that fall within the rubric of Sustainable Development, nor its imagined beneficiaries. Those involved in the creation and administration of the RBY, as well as two property owners whose titled land had become part of the RBY, explained to me that it was the pattern of large lots at the edge of the expanding agricultural frontier that made this area of Central-Eastern Misiones apt for the conservation and management of a substantial area of *selva*, unlike many areas elsewhere in the province where land use is comprised of a patchwork of small lots and smallholder claims partially converted to agriculture. Whatever the logics of property implicit in these conservation imaginaries, through the catalogue of abstracted space bundled together under the name of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, property is already both assumed and resolved, the relational conditions of its production disappearing from view as plots summarized in a table—with neither corresponding coordinates nor a map—legible only in relation to a cadastral register not easily accessed by the public. Thus, the creation of Yabotí calcifies the existing settler colonial property matrix by making it the prerequisite for frameworks of environmental management. Mapping-into-being Yabotí is itself a form of (colonial) storytelling (Blaser 2010) and 'worlding' (Haraway, 2016), a powerful, authorized ordering of spatial relationships which territorializes colonial relations while naturalizing the processes of dispossession which are their fundamental conditions of possibility (Anthias 2018; Bryan 2009)

While colonial property relations were naturalized, strikingly absent from the creation of Yabotí was any acknowledgement of the *selva* as Mbya Guarani territory, though at the time of the creation of the Biosphere Reserve at least some of the Mbya communities within Yabotí had already been established there. Instead, Mbya communities were depicted as spatially unfixed, temporary inhabitants of a "habitat".

When I interviewed a government official who participated in the design of the Biosphere Reserve, he claimed that the *specific* Mbya communities which now live in Yabotí arrived *after* the creation of the Biosphere Reserve, while he admitted that there may have been communities in the area previously, in some vague historical past. Waving his hand to describe the relocation of communities, he suggested that

Mbya presence in Yabotí was merely transitory:[53]

> *Bueno, en esa época no había comunidades guaraníes. No. Lo que pasa es que las comunidades guaraníes son—son, este, digamos, están acá, después están acá, después están acá, van cambiando, digamos, de lugar. Ahora hay, ahora hay, pero en esa época, en ese momento no había. No quiere decir que no hubo antes, ellos son itinerantes, van cambiando…*
>
> Well, at that time there were no Guaraní communities. No. What happens is that the Guaraní communities are…are…let's say, they are here, later they are here, they change location. Now there are [Guaraní communities], now there are, but at that time, in that moment there weren't. Which isn't to say there weren't communities before, they are itinerant, they relocate.

When I pressed him further on how he knew this, he suggested that himself and other forestry engineers who had overseen logging prior to the establishment of the Biosphere Reserve knew this because *were intimately familiar with the territory:*

> *Bueno porque nosotros conocemos todo el territorio. Estamos permanentemente…porque eran propiedades que se explotaban, muchas de ellas, y uno sabe bien donde están las comunidades, va, camina. Está permanentemente…circulando.*
>
> Well, because we know the entire territory. We are permanently…because they were properties that were exploited [for timber], many of them, and one knows exactly where the communities are, one goes, walks. One is permanently…circulating.

While factually, as evidenced in archival data discussed below, this engineer's narrative operates to legitimate the mapping-into-being of Yabotí by these bureaucratic actors and the authoritative knowledge about the managed forest that they produce, while undermining Mbya claims to place.

This narrative erasure was affirmed by a park ranger who had participated in the management of Yabotí since 2006, with the creation of the *Comité de Gestión*/Management Committee. In almost direct contrast to the explanation of the official above, she told me,

> *En el informe de creación de Yabotí, nombra las comunidades--como se dice cuando de mueven?—son nómadas. Nómadas. Entonces que no...Y como la selva es muy tupida, no había una forma de mantener una comunicación o relación. Entonces eso es, había un hueco grande en el terreno. Porque las comunidades no son nómadas […] No es una forma constante, de decir, hoy les encuentro, mañana no.*
>
> In the creation report of Yabotí, the communities are called—what is it called when they move?—

[53] Ferrero (2005, 67), attributes a similar quote to Carlos Perticarari, who is widely acknowledged as the designer of the original proposal for Yabotí.

> they are nomadic. Nomadic. So there wasn't...and since the selva is very dense, there wasn't a way to maintain communication or a relationship [with the communities]. So this was, there was a big hole in the [knowledge of] the terrain. Because the communities aren't nomadic. […] Not in a constant way, which is to say, today I can find them, tomorrow I can't.

This assertion of 'nomadism' deterritorialized Mbya Guarani presence in order to reterritorialize it through conservation planning, environmental management and the organization of Yabotí through colonial property regimes.

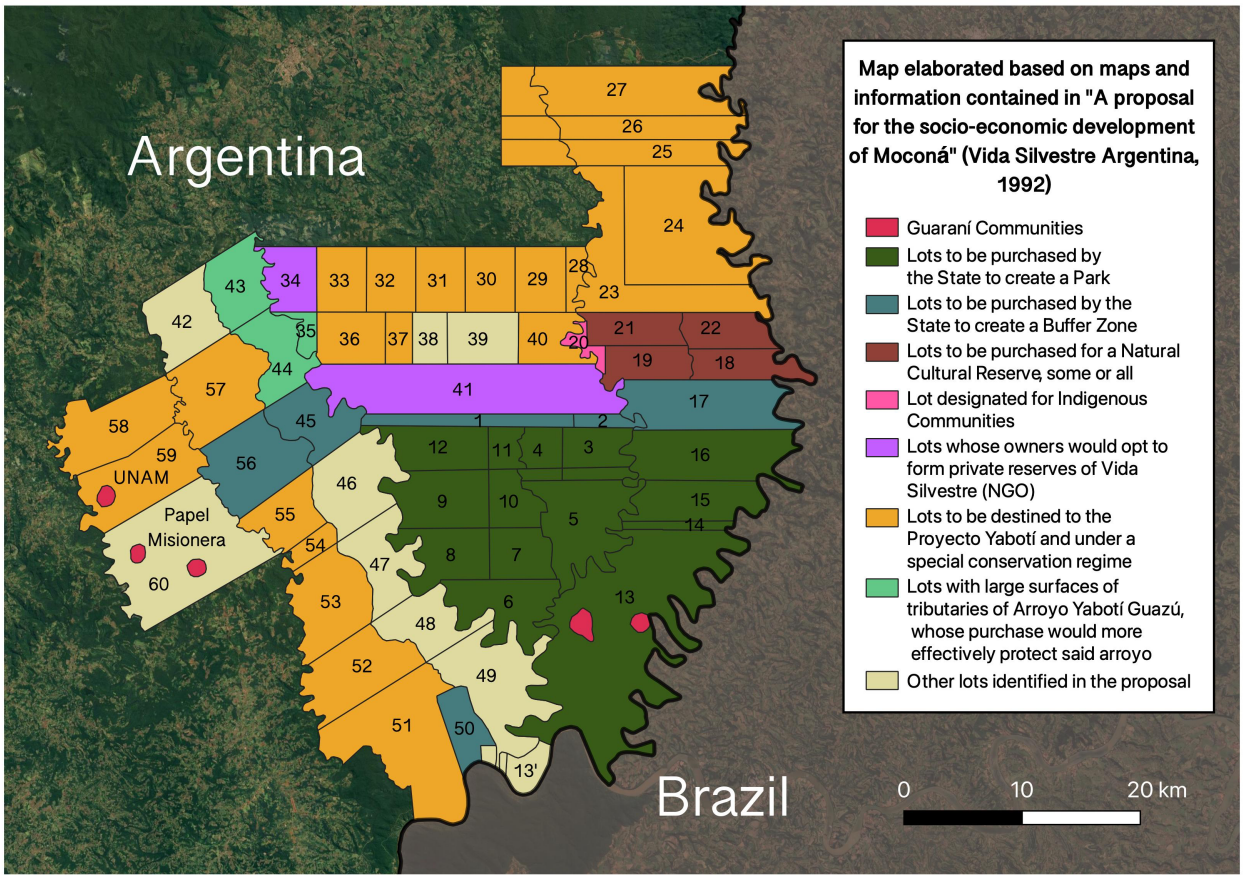

Figure 4: Map elaborated based on maps and information contained in "A proposal for the socio-economic development of Moconá" (Vida Silvestre Argentina, 1992)
Map elaborated by Skye Naslund

A 1992 proposal[54] authored by the NGO Vida Silvestre Argentina (VSA) and archived at the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources, expands the original concept for the creation of the Yabotí

[54] *Una propuesta para el desarrollo socio-económico de la zona de Moconá, abarcando parte de los departamentos de San Pedro y Guaraní mediante la promoción del turismo y la protección de áreas naturales. /* A proposal for the socio-economic development of Moconá, covering part of the departments of San Pedro and Guarani through the promotion of tourism and the protection of natural areas.

Biosphere Reserve, referred to in the text as the "Plan Perticarari".[55] The VSA document proposes the expansion of Moconá Provincial Park by relocating existing Indigenous communities situated in Lote 13 (which in later maps includes Lote 8) in the southeast corner of Yabotí, just to the north of Moconá, in order to create a "natural and cultural reserve" area, separate from the areas designated for conservation and timber extraction (see Figure 4). In a section on the "*Población Indígena* / Indigenous Population" the proposal argues:

> *La significativa ampliación del Parque Provincial del Moconá y la creación de una zona de amortiguación, posiblemente base y parte de una futura Reserva de Biosfera, ayudará a la supervivencia de las comunidades indígenas viviendo ahora en tierras privadas tanto en el Departamento Guaraní como en el de San Pedro. Mayoritariamente ignoradas hasta ahora y ignorado también la ventaja que gozaban al vivir dentro de una superficie boscosa de grandes dimensiones que indirectamente o directamente les beneficiaba por el continuo flujo de fauna silvestre que aprovechan, llega el momento de tomarlo en cuenta. Al ampliar el Parque del Moconá sería conveniente invitar al grupo o grupos indígenas (ver croquis adjunto) viviendo en el Lote 13 al trasladarse más al norte. Será en su beneficio, pues la ampliación del Parque con el lote 13 y otros, asegurará un espacio libre de ocupación humana que favorecerá la reproducción de las especies faunísticas. Así las comunidades indígenas se beneficiarán de un flujo continuado de vida animal que garantizarán hasta cierta medida la preservación de sus culturas ancestrales.*
>
> The significant amplification of Moconá Provincial Park and the creation of a buffer zone, possibly the base for and part of a future Biosphere Reserve, would support the survival of the indigenous communities now living in private lands in the Guarani and San Pedro Departments.[56] For the most part [they've been] ignored until now, as has the advantage they've enjoyed by living within a large forested area which indirectly or directly benefited them through the continuous flow of wild animals which they hunt; it is now time to take this into consideration. With the expansion of Moconá Provincial Park, it would be advisable to invite the indigenous group or groups living in Lote 13 to move further north. It would be to their benefit, as the expansion of the Park with Lote 13 and others, would ensure a space free of human occupation that would favor the reproduction of wild animals. That way, the Indigenous communities will benefit from the continuous flow of animal life which will guarantee up to a point the preservation of their ancestral cultures[57].

[55] The "Plan Perticarari" was not available in the MEyRNR archive, nor that of AMIRBY, nor were any other original planning documents for Yabotí available, despite my repeated requests for these materials. While these archives were at best haphazardly organized, this substantial gap in publicly available documentation reflects Salinas's (2016) discussion of the design of Yabotí "*en gabinete*" or in a closed meeting of political negotiation.

[56] An administrative subdivision, similar to a county.

[57] In the conflict over the camino discussed in the following chapter, I heard this exact argument repeated over twenty-five years later: the preservation of Moconá Provincial Park as a virgin ecosystem (i.e. without the *camino*) would allow for the reproduction of the plants and animals and thus benefit the Mbya, assuming a directionality in the flow of biodiversity from Moconá to Lote 8.

While ostensibly framed through concern for the survival of the Indigenous communities, the proposal's language seems to suggest that the Mbya, living "ignored" in private land that they are able to benefit from, are undeserving of their territories, rendered interlopers rather than pre-existing inhabitants of *selva* they have shaped through managed use, relationships, and co-becoming. The proposal's justification for the "invitation" to relocate hinges on a conceptualization of the "preservation" of Mbya "ancestral culture" through enabling the continued reliance on bushmeat as a food source. By doing this, environmental management imaginaries translate relationships into things, dis-placing place-based relationships and the spiritual practices which are integral to Mbya lifeways. The Mbya are situated as an otherwise disappearing remnant of the past, "surviving" in the present, yet incongruous with the private property regime superimposed over—and further constricting—their land use practices. Racializing Mbya Guarani communities outside of contemporary property relations through the dual operation of these spatial and temporal logics works to negate their ongoing relationships to land and the legitimacy of their land claims, which, if taken seriously, would fundamentally disrupt both property and environmental management regimes.

The spatial logics of this proposal are made concrete in the following section, titled "*Asentamientos indigenas* /Indigenous settlements":

> *Si los indigenas [sic] presentes en el Lote 13 se trasladarían a los Lotes 19 o 21, contiguas a la 20 (sic) que supuestamente ya está designado para ellos, o al 18 y 20, dejando el lote 17 como zona de amortiguación junto con los lotes 1, 2 y 45, solamente faltaría designar el lote 56 como zona de amortiguación para conectar toda el area [sic] del Parque con los lotes 59 y 60 adonde sus respectivos dueños, UNAM y Papel Misionero seguramente incluirán las comunidades allí presentes dentro de su propia propuesta para la zona del Proyecto Yabotí.*
>
> If the indigenous people present in Lot 13 would move to Lots 19 or 21, contiguous with [Lot] 20 which supposedly is already designated for them, or to 18 and 20, leaving Lot 17 as a buffer zone together with lots 1, 2, and 45, all that would be left is to designate lot 56 as a buffer zone in order to connect the whole area of the Park [Esmeralda] with lots 59 and 60 where their respective owners, UNAM and Papel Misionero surely will include the communities present there within their own proposal for the area of the Yabotí Project.

And later, in a section titled “Posible unificación de la Nación Guaraní / Possible Unification of the Guarani Nation”:[58]

> *En vista de la propuesta 5 -1 sería posible gestionar con el grupo indígena en el lote 60 su traslado al norte del lote 17 donde tendrán la posibilidad, importante para ellos de radicarse sobre la frontera, al igual que el grupo radicado en el lote 13.*
>
> In light of the proposal 5-1 [which discusses lot 60, owned by Papel Misionera, and its possible sale to the Nation for designation as a national park] it would be possible to organize with the indigenous group located in Lote 60 their relocation to the north of Lote 17, where they will have the possibility, important for them to settle near the border, as with the group settled in Lote 13.

The document goes on to detail, from the perspective of a central figure in the National Parks Administration, the priority lots for purchase or expropriation for the creation of a Provincial Park, ceding only Lote 20 to the category of Natural-Cultural Reserve, “*debido a la presencia actual de familias aborigenes y a la existencia de una reserva con este fin* / due to the current presence of aboriginal families and the existence of a reserve with this goal”. From an acknowledged presence distributed across the yet-to-be-concretized Biosphere Reserve, the Mbya are literally mapped into a corner based on the high conservation value of their lands for environmentalists at a pivotal moment in the expansion of the provincial reserve and park system of Misiones. The proposal’s distant, God’s eye spatial apportioning of uses renders the selva singular and continuous, differentiated only by permitted activities, while the Mbya are deemed without specific knowledge of and relations with the actually particular and variable selva.

[58] The *Guarani Retã* (“Guarani Country” would be a loose translation), produced in 2008 and reedited in 2016 as the Mapa Guarani Continental through a collaboration among several NGOs, government and academic institutions, and Guarani communities, maps the location of Guarani Indigenous communities throughout Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay (Grünberg 2008; Rola 2016). As the maps meticulously depict, the Guarani (a collective identity comprised of multiple ethno-linguistic groups, among which are the Mbya) are present across this multi-national region in hundreds of communities. Furthermore, this presence is not static, but incorporates significant connectivity and mobility of and among communities as noted by Salamanca (2012) and, of course, the Guarani themselves. In my own research, many of the elder Mbya leaders I met in Southern Brazil were born in Argentina or Paraguay, while others in Argentina had spent significant time in communities in Brazil. Thus, this proposal for the spatial organization of what would become Yabotí in no way “unites” the Guarani Nation, but rather, attempts to objectify and spatially *condense* Guarani territorial occupation for non-Indigenous ends, negating (while supposedly acknowledging) the existing territorial and relational spatial practices of the Guarani.

The cartographic storytelling-into-being of Yabotí is therefore underwritten by the territorial erasure of the Indigenous Mbya Guarani inhabitants through the broad characterization of these communities as "semi-nomadic" with two seemingly contradictory arguments. On the one hand, rendered as "semi-nomadic" communities, the Mbya could not legitimately make claims to specific portions of the selva such as that parceled up to become Yabotí, and, on the other, ethnocentric (and racist) interpretations of Mbya patterns of movement and shifting use allow non-Indigenous conservationists to perceive Mbya communities as relocatable within the selva according to the desired zoning patterns of environmental management.

Through the creation of Yabotí, settler environmentalism relegitimates the settler property matrix through the mapping of layered ordering of uses, from conservation to sustainable extraction, writing out Mbya land claims even while acknowledging their presence. While the relocation of Mbya communities detailed in the VSA proposal were never implemented, their spatial logics persisted through subsequent iterations of conservation planning. According to the 1999 management plan for Moconá Provincial Park, at the time, the regional office of the National Parks system had proposed the purchase or expropriation of two lots (together constituting 33,322 hectares) to the east of Esmeralda Provincial Park for the creation of a national park that would connect the two provincial parks. Although the management plan includes no maps or lot numbers, based on the description of the location and the area it comprises, at a minimum the proposed purchase would include the Lote 13 from the VSA plan, home to the communities whose trajectory of struggle is the central case study of this dissertation.

The great irony in the prioritization of "Lote 13" (now Lotes 5, 6, 7, 8, and additional lots to the north, see Figure 5) for conservation as a biodiversity corridor between Esmeralda and Moconá Provincial Parks in successive conservation proposals is that Esmeralda was created in 1997 from land was expropriated from a logging company by the province in 1992, and Moconá was donated in 1969 by a major landowner of lots in what would become Yabotí, and whose family remains a central figure in the timber industry throughout Misiones. What made "Lote 13" valuable as conservation land, in the assessment of the authors of the proposals reference above, was determined by these serendipitous circumstances in the later half of the 20th century, despite continuous Mbya presence in that specific lot for approximately two centuries, according to legal documents presented on behalf of the communities in the early 2000s. In other words,

non-indigenous property and its fortuitous conversion into state conservation land, coupled with the area's inaccessibility to mechanized logging, rendered Lote 13 a site for the materialization of conservation desires which would later be negotiated by the communities themselves in their ongoing struggles to maintain their land.

The invisibilization *and* deterritorialized inclusion of the Mbya Guarani within the early creation and management frameworks for Yabotí was foundational to discursively situating Mbya relationships to space, territory, and ultimately the properties through which the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve had been conceptualized. In other words, environmental management imaginaries of conserving the *selva* through sustainably managed extraction of native timber both relied on and reinforced the settler and extractive cartographies of dispossession that were their conditions of possibility. In the following section, I trace the articulation of Mbya land struggles within Yabotí through their engagement with the evolving legal frameworks for Indigenous rights, recognition, and territorial demarcation in Argentina.

3.3 Reconfiguring through rights

"Yo si tuviera que hacer un reclamo hoy, no lo haría como reconocimiento de propiedad. Parece que, esa era la herramienta cognitiva que teníamos nosotros en ese momento, todos hemos hecho distintos procesos, creo que eso restriegue mucho el derecho de las comunidades indígenas, hay que hablar de territorios, empezar hablar de territorios, porque está muy ligado al concepto de autonomía."

If I had to make a claim today, I wouldn't do it as recognition of property. It seems like that was the cognitive tool that we had at that moment , we've all had distinct processes, I think that this restricts the rights of the Indigenous communities a lot, you have to speak of territories, begin to speak of territories, because it's very tied to the concept of autonomy.

> Indigenous rights lawyer and legal advisor to the Mbya Guarani communities in the struggle over Lote 8; interviewed January, 2020

In 1994, Argentina underwent a process of constitutional reform. Included within the reformed constitution, article 75 specifically recognizes the ethnic and cultural preexistence of "Argentine Indigenous

nations".[59] Almost a decade earlier, national law Nº 23.302[60] (1985), which created the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INAI), provided that body with the responsibility of allocating public lands to Indigenous communities and, if necessary, proposing the expropriation of private lands[61]. However, as the *indigenista* lawyer cited above explained to me, laws like 23.302, whose directives were ostensibly reframed by the reformed constitution, did not recognize Indigenous communities as owners (*titulares*) of their ancestral territories "*si no, que el Estado se coloca en un rol de adjudicar de dar, ceder* / but rather, the State puts itself in a role of adjudicating, giving, ceding." While he acknowledged that "this tension persists", the reformed constitution created a legal basis for arguing that the territorial claims of Indigenous communities in Argentina preexist the imposition of property regimes and legal subdivision of their lands through the processes of colonization.

In this section, I trace how articulations of Mbya Guarani relationships with land and claims to territory are deployed and reconfigured through appeals to evolving legal frameworks of rights. While storytelling-into-being the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve was predicated on deterritorializing Mbya spatial practices so as to reterritorialize them through environmental management categories of land use situated

---

[59] The text of the 1994 (reformed) Constitution, art 75 inc 17 states that it is the *National Congress's responsibility* to:

"Reconocer la preexistencia étnica y cultural de los pueblos indígenas argentinos.

Garantizar el respeto a su identidad y el derecho a una educación bilingüe e intercultural; reconocer la personería jurídica de sus comunidades, y la posesión y propiedad comunitarias de las tierras que tradicionalmente ocupan; y regular la entrega de otras aptas y suficientes para el desarrollo humano; ninguna de ellas será enajenable, transmisible ni susceptible de gravámenes o embargos*. Asegurar su participación en la gestión referida a sus recursos naturales y a los demás intereses que los afecten. Las provincias pueden ejercer concurrentemente estas atribuciones. /* Recognize the ethnic and cultural preexistence of Argentine Indigenous nations. Guarantee respect for their identity and a bilingual and intercultural education; recognize the juridical personhood of their communities and the possession and communitarian property of the land that they traditionally occupy; and regularize the granting of others which are apt and sufficient for human development; none of these [lands] will be alienable, transmissible, nor susceptible to encumbrances or embargos. Assure their participation in the management related to their natural resources and other interests which affect them. The provinces may concurrently exercise these powers.*"*

Though a more thorough interrogation of the 'politics of recognition' (Coulthard 2014, Simpson 2014) in Argentina is beyond the purview of this dissertation), as is clear in this text, 'inclusion' presumes the Republic as guarantor of rights, subordinating any claims to Indigenous territorial jurisdiction to that of the Argentine Nation; a dynamic of recognition common throughout Latin America.This was crucial to the court's determination of disputed property rights to Lote 8.

[60] Full text available at: http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/20000-24999/23790/texact.htm

[61] The final sentence of law 23.302, article 8 "Si fuese necesario la autoridad de aplicación propondrá la expropiación de tierras de propiedad privada al Poder Ejecutivo, el que promoverá ante el Congreso Nacional las leyes necesarias. / If it is necessary, the authority of application [INAI] will propose the expropriation of lands of private property to the Executive Branch, which will promote before Congress the necessary laws."

within a colonial property matrix, asserting land claims through the judicial and legislative processes and the folders and files of state bureaucracy required an opposing move: producing a legible and credible claim to land through the emplacement of Mbya presence within (and relationship to) the forest. As I will show, the disjunctures of this legal process required a reification of Indigenous peoples as fundamentally distinct subjects of rights under international law and the 1994 Constitution. Yet simultaneously, it also required them to dispute property rights in relation to the categories of civil law as equivalent subjects of rights to the non-indigenous property owners who had benefitted from their dispossession.

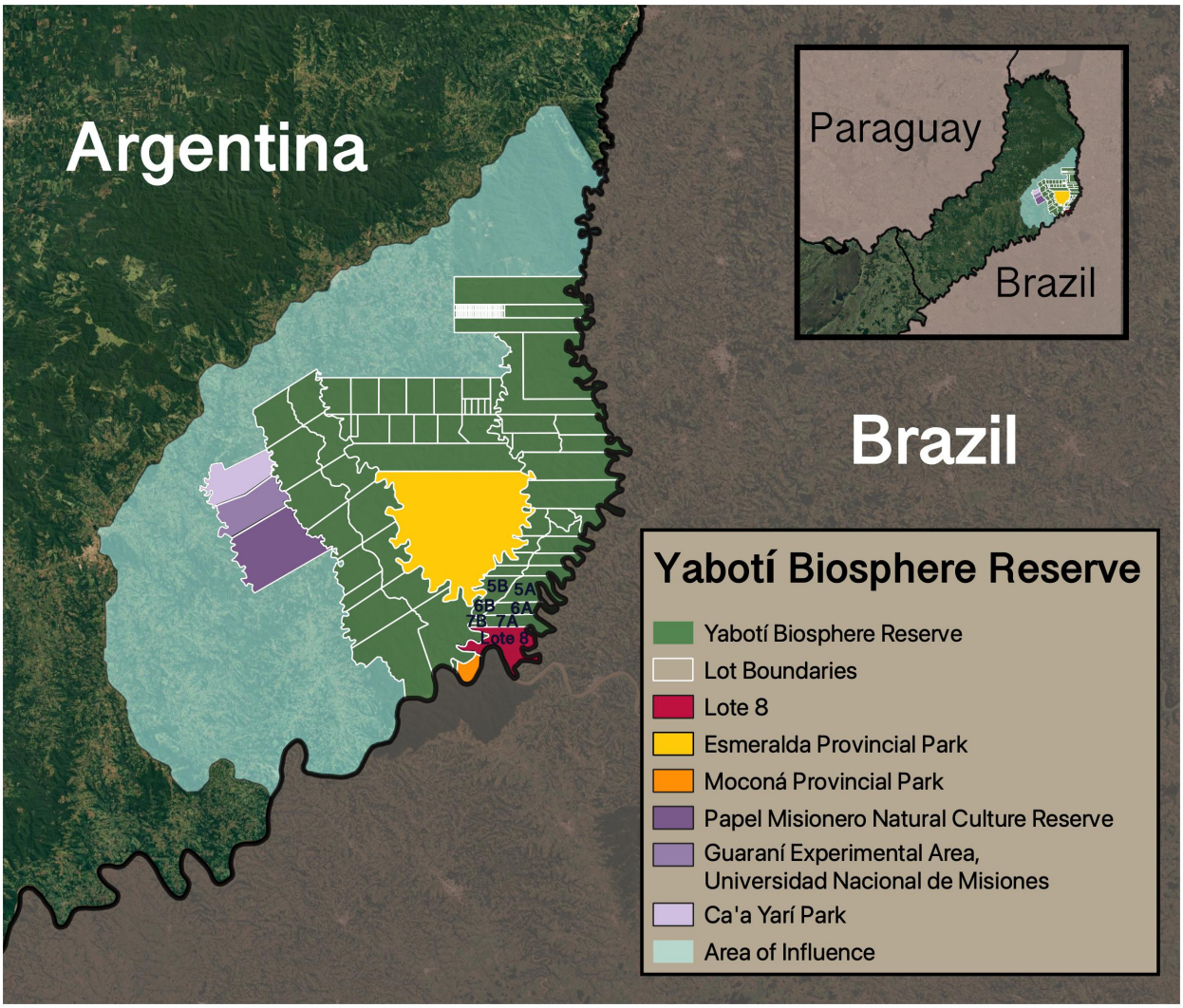

Figure 5: Map of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve
Map elaborated by Skye Naslund

3.3.1 Constructing constitutional claims to property

In the late 1990s, the construction of a bridge over the Arroyo Yabotí Guazú facilitated timber extraction in areas of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve that had previously been inaccessible to mechanized logging. These were precisely the lands that were home to the same communities whose "relocation" was advised in the VSA proposal for the zoning of Yabotí, and the area proposed for expropriation by the National Park system, as the absence of large-scale extraction had made this land especially desirable for conservation, as detailed in the previous section.

Beginning in 1999, these Mbya Guarani communities filed formal complaints with the police over the logging within their lands, but to no avail. Given the urgency of the situation, the legal team representing the two Mbya Guarani communities then living within Lote 8 filed a "measure of no innovation" to prohibit timber extraction in the area affecting the communities, citing their constitutional right to "participate in the management of natural resources within their territories". Though this measure was initially granted by a provincial judge, the logging company, Moconá S.A., appealed the decision, and the protective measure was subsequently revoked.

The Mbya communities then worked with a legal team to pursue a strategy of recovering possession and claiming property rights to Lote 8 *specifically*, based on article 75 of the 1994 constitution, International Labor Organization Accord 169 (ILO 169), the Civil Code of Argentina, and other national and provincial laws. An internal memo prepared by the legal team (dated October 8, 1999) described the juridical strategy as follows:

> *El fundamento que es el derecho que invoca la comunidad en ese caso [la medida de no innovar] no es el de propiedad…sino el* ***derecho que otorgan la Constitución Nacional y el Convenio 169 a proteger los recursos naturales de su habitat y participar en las decisiones que se tomen al respeto*** *[…] Sin embargo, si no se resuelva la cuestión de* ***fondo peligra la permanencia de la comunidad en ese lugar, por esa razón es necesario iniciar un juicio de prescripción adquisitiva de dominio para que el Juez reconozca en los indígenas la propiedad de las tierras que tradicionalmente ocupan****. Otra acción que hay que llevar adelante en e[l] plano judicial es una* ***acción de nulidad del título de la empresa****, ya que dicho título se obtuvo en un juicio de prescripción adquisitivo que se realizó sin conocimiento de la comunidad, siendo que - según lo que disponen las leyes - debió darse oportunidad a la comunidad de defender judicialmente su posición.*

> The justification, which is the right which the community invokes in this case [the measure of no innovation] is not that of property, but the **right granted by the National Constitution and [ILO] Accord 169 to protect the natural resources of their habitat and participate in the decisions which are taken with respect to them** […] Nonetheless, if the root issue is not resolved, **it puts the continued occupancy of the community in that place at risk, for that reason it is necessary to begin a court case for acquisitive prescription**[62] **of ownership in order that the Judge recognizes in the Indigenous people the ownership of the lands they traditionally occupy.** Another action which should be carried out in the judicial plane is an **action of nullity of the title of the [logging] company**, since said title was obtained through a case of acquisitive prescription realized without the knowledge of the community, given that - according to the law - the community should have the right to legally defend its position. *(bold in original)*

In other words, the legal team's strategy revolved around two central rights: the right of the Mbya Guarani to participate in the management of resources on their traditional lands, *a right specific to Indigenous peoples*, protected by the Constitution and ILO 169, and, the property rights laid out in the Civil Code, universally applicable in Argentina[63]. It was the strategy of disputing *property* rights, contesting those of the company on the same terms as they had been solidified (as equivalent, rather than distinct subjects), that offered the glimmer of a permanent solution for the Mbya communities, despite the legal team's acknowledgement that their potential for success was limited by "*el poder de la empresa y el racismo de los jueces* / the power of the company and the racism of the judges".

In April 2000, an *Interdicto de recobrar la posesión y medida cautelar* / Interdiction to regain possession and preventative measure, filed by the legal representative of the two Mbya Guarani communities living within Lote 8, argued against the process of "*despojo parcial…con violencia* / violent dispossession" carried out by the logging company owned by the titleholder and erstwhile landowner of Lote 8. The interdiction asked the judge to restore full and pacific possession to the two Mbya Guarani communities which, residing in their ancestral lands, the document sustained, had publicly, pacifically and continuously possessed Lote 8 for more than a century, "*ejerciendo todos los actos de señorío y dominio conforme a sus propias pautas culturales* / exercising all the acts of dominion and ownership according to their own cultural patterns", and whose possession had never been disputed, constituting "*posesión a título*

---

[62] Acquisitive prescription is the right to ownership of land based on possession over time (a specified period or "time immemorial"), also known as usucaption or positive prescription; essentially the same as the common law principle of adverse possession.

[63] The only distinction for the Mbya Guarani was that the right to property they disputed was communitarian, and therefore inalienable, as laid out in article 75 inciso 17 of the Constitution.

de dueños" / possession as owners" by the two communities.

Another document[64] directed to a (presumably provincial) judge by the leader of one of these communities and the same lawyer, on behalf of the community, went even further, proposing the "acción adquisitiva de dominio por usucapión…respecto al inmueble que a título de dueño poseemos los integrantes de la comunidad aborigen…" / acquisitive action of ownership based on usucaption of the property which the members of the aboriginal community…possess as owners." The document's objective was "*Que en efecto, con esta presentación se promueve la declaración judicial de una titularidad dominial, ejercida de forma publica, pacifica e ininterrumpida, por lo menos desde el año 1964* / That in effect, this presentation prompts the judicial declaration of titled ownership, exercised publicly, peacefully and without interruption, since at least 1964".

The system of property relations in Argentina, derived from Roman law and formalized in Chapter 4 of the Civil Code[65], *Derechos Reales*, distinguishes between various forms of relationship to an object; relevant here are ownership (*dominio perfecto*), possession and tenancy. Possession and tenancy are power relations of agency over a thing that do not depend on ownership. Possession is defined as an individual's exercise of de facto power over a thing, acting as the owner (*titular*), of a property right (*derecho real*), whether or not they actually are, while tenancy is an individual's exercise of de facto power over a thing, while acting as a representative of the possessor. Thus, possession is constituted through power over an object without acknowledging ownership by another party, while a tenant does not act as owner or possessor. Importantly, Article 2239 states:

> *Un título válido no da la posesión o tenencia misma, sino un derecho a requerir el poder sobre la cosa. El que no tiene sino un derecho a la posesión o a la tenencia no puede tomarla; debe demandarla por las vías legales.*
>
> A valid title does not give possession or tenancy in and of itself, but rather the right to [legally] summon power over the thing. One who does not have [possession or tenancy] but rather the right to possession or tenancy cannot take it; [but] should demand it through legal means.

[64] n.d. but contextually, c. 2000/2001

[65] Full text available at: http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/235000-239999/235975/norma.htm#24

Crucially, a legal owner who possesses a land title without effective, material possession of the property does not automatically have the right to enact possession of that property, and, according to the Civil Code, cannot take possession of the property by force: such an act legally constitutes dispossession (*despojo*), and the possessor has the right to reclaim possession under the law if so unlawfully dispossessed. Furthermore, as evidenced in the legal archive of Lote 8, a possessor can assert the right to *property* through *usucaption*, a legal term for the acquisition of rights of ownership based on the uninterrupted, public, and peaceful possession of a property. While the "*interdicto de recobrar la possession*" argued for the restitution of possession to the Mbya communities as legitimate and de facto owners, the "*acción adquisitiva de dominio por usucapión*" asserted a right to property *through* ancestral possession, suggesting that, in accordance with article 75 of the constitution, the communities' rights pre-existed that of Moconá S.A., the logging company belonging to the Laharrague family, based in Buenos Aires, which owns huge tracts of land within Misiones.

The construction of the Mbya Guarani communities as subjects of ethnoterritorial rights — as distinct subjects of rights whose pre-existence as Indigenous peoples affirmed their claim to ancestral possession— therefore *supported* appeals to the property rights of the Civil Code in which the company and the communities were categorically the same kinds of subjects of rights before the law. However, in the case of Lote 8, Indigenous possession grounded in pre-existence did *not* translate into a legitimate claim to property rights before the law.

In September 2001, the provincial third circuit court of appeals in El Dorado, Misiones rejected an appeal by the Mbya Guarani communities to reconsider the previously denied "preventive measure" (against logging), which had been grounded in the "interdiction to regain possession". The court's judgement is worth citing at length, as it undermines the communities' claim to property through ancestral possession,[66] as Indigenous subjects with distinct constitutional rights, by situating them as equivalent

[66] The judgement also resituates the communities relationship to land, as occupants of their ancestral territory, from "possession as owners", as the legal representative had argued in the Interdiction, to mere occupants, arguing that occupation does not constitute "*animus dominus*", since one can occupy while recognizing another as owner (as with tenancy or usufruct rights), or occupy with the intention of appropriation. Further, the judgement states that "dominion is perpetual", independent of the exercise of that dominion, "salvo que se deje poseer la cosa por otro, durante el tiempo necesario para adquirir la propiedad por prescripción / unless one leave the object to be possessed by another, during the time necessary to acquire the property by prescription". The subtle argument here is that, lacking an "animus

subjects of rights within the property frameworks of the Civil Code while upholding the inviolability of private property founded in Indigenous dispossession:

> *Habiendo el demandado presentado título de propiedad del inmueble en cuestión es el que ostenta públicamente la posesión como elemento constitutivo del dominio (art. 2513 C.C.) obtenido mediante tradicción (sic) del que fuera oportunamente su vendedor (art. 2379) y goza a su favor de la plenitud tal derecho (art. 2523 de la Código Civil) […] la ocupación de un territorio (Corpus) por comunidades aborígenes nómades o semi-nómades, con el solo objeto de usarlo y gozarlo, pero sin intención de someterlo a su dominio (aminus) no constituye posesión por si, en el sistema del Código Civil.*
>
> The defendant, having presented the property title of the property in question, is he who publicly holds the possession as constitutive element of dominion (article 2513 of the Civil Code) obtained by transfer from he who was appropriately the vendor (article 2379) and has in his favor the fullness of said right (article 2523 of the Civil Code) […] the occupation of a territory (Corpus) by nomadic or semi-nomadic aboriginal communities, with the sole objective of using and enjoying it, but without the intention of submitting it to their dominion (ownership) does not constitute possession, in the system of the Civil Code.

In a tangled run-on sentence, the judgement then goes further, calling into question the shifting legal status of Indigenous communities in the 1994 Constitution as the product of inapplicable, foreign realities:

> *Pero a la luz del nuevo derecho Constitucional Argentino, vigente desde 1.994, que consagra una importante modificación al estatus jurídico de las Comunidades Aborígenes, producto del avance de la Legislación Internacional, sin que se adecuen las Instituciones locales y muchas veces se receptan formulas preconcebidas para otra realidad social, sin verificarse si son o no acorde a la nuestra, ponen permanentemente en crisis el orden jurídico, obligando al juzgador compatibilizarlas.*
>
> But in light of the new Argentine Constitutional law, in effect since 1994, which consecrates an important modification in the juridical status of the Aboriginal Communities, product of the advance of the International Legislation, without the local Institutions adapting themselves and many times they receive formulas preconceived for another social reality, without verifying if they are or are not in accordance with ours, putting in permanent crisis the juridical order, obligating the judge to make them compatible.

In doing so, the court traces the history of legislation pertaining to Indigenous territorial rights in Argentina, framing law as a bottom-up process in which the international should be interpreted through the national, rather than giving supremacy to international rights legislation as it is terrritorialized in the local. Referencing

dominus" on the part of the communities, the landowners constant claim and maintenance of property titles is sufficient to refute an argument for acquisitive prescription on the part of the communities.

Argentina's internal application of ILO 169 via national law Nº 24.071 (1992), and the powers given to Congress by the 1994 Constitution to "*reconocer […] la posesión y propiedad comunitaria de la tierras que tradicionalmente ocupan [las comunidades indígenas]* / recognize […] the possession and communitarian property of the lands which [Indigenous communities] traditionally occupy", the text cites as precedent national law 23.302 (1985) to argue that the lands to be allocated by the State to Indigenous communities are specifically limited to public land (*tierras fiscales*) or, in extraordinary circumstances, lands expropriated by the state. The state, the text clarifies, has created laws to settle Indigenous communities in the lands they traditionally occupy, but "*sin desconocer el derecho del propietario ni conculcar la garantía constitucional de la inviolabilidad de la propiedad privada (art 17 C.N.)* / but without rejecting the right of the property owner nor infringing on the constitutional guarantee of the inviolability of private property (article 17 of the National Constitution)". The judgement makes the crucial distinction that the constitutional rights ostensibly provided to Indigenous communities by article 75 of the 1994 Constitution are simply powers of *recognition* (of rights) granted to Congress, which require additional laws to bring the rights into being; in their absence, the court relies on the previously established laws, such as 23.302.

Through this carefully organized argument, the court makes it impossible for Indigenous claimants to legally dispute the private property matrix which has subdivided their ancestral territories. First, the court reiterates the problematic categorization of the Mbya Guarani as nomadic or semi-nomadic communities, and thus, their claim to possession is rendered as "use" rather than ownership (or even possession, *per se*); ownership, it appears, can only be constituted through the (colonial) register of titled property. Then, the court places both international law and the 1994 constitution within the trajectory of precedent established by prior, far less radical national laws with regard to the recognition of Indigenous rights, such that the only property to which Indigenous communities have a direct claim are public lands; the acquisition of private lands requires the purchase from or donation by the title holder, or state expropriation. The court therefore undermines any legal advances in Indigenous land rights represented by the 1994 Constitution and international law, making inviolable the colonial property regimes of private property which were plainly established through the dispossession and erasure of Indigenous communities through logics of *terra nullius*. While the court affirmed the right of the communities to obtain the possession and property of the

lands they traditionally occupy *through* the State, and to participate in the "management of the natural resources and other interests which affect them," as prescribed in the 1994 Constitution, the court rejected the appeal of the preventative measure grounded in the right of the Mbya communities to recover possession of their lands after suffering violent dispossession, effectively allowing logging to proceed unabated.

In Robert Nichols (2020) discussion of recursive dispossession as the mechanism by which land is simultaneous dispossessed as it becomes a thing which can be possessed (as property) he points to complexities of pinpointing and making Indigenous land claims through claims to "original" or "inherent" ownership simultaneous with the assertion that land cannot be property. In the Anglo settler context, this supposed contradiction—of making claims to something that has been dispossessed but which could not be possessed prior to its dispossession-- has been used to undercut Indigenous land claims through liberal legal theories. In the case of Lote 8, it had been this "inherent" ownership of ancestral possession (vis-a-vis the Constitution) that was legally rejected in the unsuccessful claim to property (as regulated by the Civil Code). Thus, despite Argentina's constitutional reforms, the Mbya were still illegible as subjects of property rights under the law through claims to ancestral ownership even after meeting the legal criteria of usucaption necessary to dispute the colonial property titles superimposed on their lands. It was this (racialized) illegibility within colonial property regimes that led to a shift in the juridical strategy to claims made to *territory*.

3.3.2 Interlude: political ontologies of land, productivity and relations

In an October 2002 response to the 2000 "*interdicto de recobrar la posesión y medida cautelar*", the landowner's lawyer filed a series of "*pliegos de posiciones*" or "list of charges" which the two leaders of the Indigenous communities would have to absolve themselves. In that moment both leaders lacked national identity documents—a reality for many Indigenous individuals at that time—rendering them illegible as subjects of the rights associated with citizenship to the same state whose responsibility it was to confer those rights. Ultimately, one Mbya leader was allowed to respond because his identity was considered public knowledge, due to the media attention the case had received and his previous participation in a

meeting in the Ministry of Ecology. The charges were illustrative of the barriers the communities faced in making the claim to property through ancestral possession.

While several of the charges are patently false[67] or disingenuous in their implications,[68] the list begins:

1. La comunidad Mbya Guarani se caracteriza por ser eminentemente nómade
2. La propiedad del Lote 8 pertenece a la empresa […]
3. Ud. y su comunidad pertenecen a la Asociación del Pueblo Guarani
4. Por ley provincial los aborígenes son legítimos dueños de más de 12.825 Ha. de tierra en esta provincia
5. En el departamento de San Pedro la Asociación del Pueblo Guarani posee 555 Ha. en propiedad….

1. The Mbya Guarani are characterized as eminently nomadic
2. The property of Lote 8 belongs to the company […]
3. You and your community belong to the Association of the Guarani Nation
4. By provincial law, aboriginals are the legitimate owners of more than 12.825 hectares of land in this province
5. In the Department of San Pedro the Association of the Guarani Nation possesses 555 hectares in property….

Other charges include that the communities had not established extensive agriculture in Lote 8, the fact that Lote 8 had been held as private property since 1944, that the community was made up of less than 30 individuals, and that timber extraction by the company had been authorized by the Ministry of Ecology.

The charges unite several key elements in an attempt to delegitimize Indigenous claims to property through the delegitimization of both Mbya Guarani communities' relationship to Lote 8 specifically and their land use practices generally. Echoing discourses that excluded the Mbya from environmental management within Yabotí, the reiteration of Mbya Guarani territoriality as “eminently nomadic”, constructs the presence of Mbya communities in Lote 8 as temporary, illegitimate occupants, arriving only *after* the establishment

[67] One example is the claim that “Ud y su comunidad viven hace menos de 5 años en el Lote 8 / You and your community have lived in Lote 8 for less than 5 years”.

[68] For example, “Ud. nació en otra aldea, distante a más de 50 km…/ You were born in another community, 50 kilometres from the area in question.” In the anthropological literature, Mbya Guarani communities are characterized as uxorilocal/matrilocal; this was certainly the case of the leader in question, who explained to me that he was born in another community within San Pedro and had joined his wife’s community after time in Santa Catarina, Brazil. The lawyer’s inclusion of the leader’s location of birth amounts to a patriarchal and colonial delegitimization of a male representative’s ability to make claims for his community based on this matrilocality.

of “legitimate” property relations by Lote 8 non-Indigenous owners in the form of private property that can be traced to 1944. This legal sleight of hand of property is deceptive: rather than *including* Lote 8 within the expanse of Mbya territorial practices of shifting cultivation and settlement, the cadastral limits of property necessarily produces the exclusion of the Mbya *from* Lote 8. Imbricated with this delegitimization of the claim to Lote 8 as Indigenous property is the assertion that the Guarani are already landowners elsewhere in the province; as with the environmental management aspirations of conservation zoning discussed in the previous section, the Mbya are rendered displaceable (and containable) by the logics of property. Furthermore, these charges suggest that within Lote 8 the Mbya Guarani communities have failed to fulfill the social function of land necessary to legitimate usucaption, due to the scarce size of the community and lack of a “productive” relationship that would warrant a nearly 4000 ha lot, whereas the landowner and associated logging company has demonstrated productivity through authorized timber extraction. These notions of capitalist productivity, rational land use and improvement are central to Bhandar’s (2018) notion of the “racial regimes of ownership” which exclude Indigenous peoples from property relations in settler states, racializing and devaluing land use practices that fail to conform to these standards (Correia 2018, Wolford 2005), underwritten by pervasive and pernicious discourses of *muita terra para pouco indio*[69] / too much land for too few Indians (Stocks 2005).

The Mbya Guarani elder I cited in the introduction to this chapter described his response to these familiar questions through a distinct ontological framework. He told me that in the dispute over the land the *blancos* had asked: “*Cuantos son? Son muy pocos para tanta tierra!* / How many [of you] are there? There are so few of you for so much land!” He told me he explained: “*Son tres mil. Porque están los javalís, los tigres, porque también necesitan comer.* / There are three thousand. Because there are also the wild pigs and jaguars, and they too need to eat.” His response refutes both scientific quantifications of space and of people as subjects of property claims, through an assertion of responsibilities to non-human kin as part of a relational community within the *selva*. Shiri Pasternak (2017) observes that “[w]here Indigenous peoples

[69] This anti-Indigenous refrain, reiterated throughout Latin America in relation to Indigenous land rights, as discussed by Stocks (2005), has been infamously asserted by Jair Bolsonaro, who became president of Brazil while I conducted fieldwork.

assert jurisdiction through protection of their tenure system, they are also extending this care to other-than human "tenures" or ecosystems" (122). Here, Mbya Guarani responsiveness to the needs of other-than-humans—the wild pigs and jaguars who also need to eat—are intertwined with their claims to land.

3.3.3 The 'territorial turn': property's exclusions and the shift to vital territory

As attempts to dispute property through possession and take preventative measures to halt logging were rejected by the provincial third circuit court of appeals, due to what a lawyer involved in the case described as the entrenched dynamics of local racism and complicity of the state and business within Misiones, the legal strategy was shifted and expanded by "jumping scales" (Correia 2018; Blomley and Pratt, 2001). Involving the federal government offered the possibility of rupturing these local complicities, with the support of members of the Commission of Population and Human Development of the Cámara de Diputados de la Nación (National House of Representatives). The approach of the ten year review of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve presented to UNESCO provided an additional opportunity to call into question the legitimacy of management by the Ministry of Ecology, and the continuation of Yabotí as a Biosphere Reserve. While these legal battle and political negotiations continued on provincial, national, and international fronts, in July of 2002, the "Acuerdo de Posadas" (Posadas Agreement) was signed[70], halting deforestation in the vicinity of the two Mbya Guarani communities until the "vital area" they required could be determined.

Mbya Guarani efforts to legally halt deforestation and legitimate their land claims through an appeal to territory required the documentation of the impact of deforestation on the forest with which the Mbya could make legible a demonstrable relationship, through the legal mechanism of an environmental impact assessment (EIA). Based on the Acuerdo de Posadas, the parameters of the required EIA were to determine the effects of logging on social and environmental sustainability and "*Determinar el área vital, en*

[70] The signatories included representatives of the Comisión de Población an Desarrollo Humano de la Cámara de Diputados de la Nación, the provincial Minister of Ecology and representatives of the Ministry, representatives of the logging company, members of the indigenista organization which provided logistical and legal support and representation to the Mbya Guarani communities, and the political leaders (*mburuvicha*) of the two Mbya Guarani communities.

la que se proveen las Comunidades para su sustento, su salud, materias primas, alimentos / Determine the vital area which provides for the sustenance of the Communities, their health, raw materials, foods." Producing an environmental impact assessment, in turn, required generating both a registry of Mbya forest use (and how this was impacted by logging) and a registry of the extent of Mbya forest territory. Through an *indigenista* organization, the communities worked with a biologist and an ecologist to create the territorial documentation necessary for creating an environmental impact assessment.

The notes from this process in the archives of the *indigenista* organization include both hand-drawn maps (without scale or concrete references) that describe distinct areas of the forest, labeled in Mbya Guarani, and detailed lists of ethnobotanical accounting, enumerating plants, animals, and sources of food and medicine. Read across these notes taken by "translators" within the *indigenista* organization, this documentation serves two purposes. First, there is a clear accounting for the effects of logging, for instance, on certain medicinal plant species, or, the scarcity of honey of the native yate'i bee, crucial to certain ceremonies. But secondly and perhaps more importantly, was the very precise accounting of Mbya environmental knowledge and nomenclatures which produces their legibility as claimants through the depth of this spatialized ethnobotanical knowledge. Based on this spatialized Mbya knowledge, this EIA claimed a vital territory[71] of 6000 hectares for these two communities, affecting multiple lots[72] within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve. In response, the state hired a second expert, who completed yet another assessment, including additional communities. As an eventual result, the Ministry of Ecology's Resolution 533 (August, 2004) temporarily halted the deforestation of an area of nearly 10,000 hectares in the Yabotí Biosphere reserve.[73]

---

[71] The assessment refers to this as the communities' "territorio de vida" (Montenegro 2003) which, in light of the mandate of the Acuerdo de Posadas, I have translated as "vital territory" to stress both necessity and the sustainment of life itself.

[72] This was distributed across the totality of Lote 8 (3960ha), the majority (1600ha) of Lote 7, and 500ha between Lote 5 and 6 (Montenegro 2003).

[73] While I was conducting fieldwork, this area was often referred to as "the 10,000 hectares", simultaneously in relation to the logging moratorium and the assessment of these lands for potential conservation investment. The area from which extraction was prohibited actually totaled 9693.19 hectares across lots 5a, 5b, 6b, 7a, and 8, for a period of not more than one year, requiring the elaboration of special management plans taking into account the results of the commissioned EIA and technical report. As I completed fieldwork, more than fifteen years later, the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve still lacked the general management plan, referred to in Resolution 533 as necessary for an integral management of extraction.

A lawyer involved in the case described the process as shift in the legal strategy:

> *Pasamos a una estrategia defensiva, a una estrategia de exigibilidad jurídica que era haber planteado una acción de reconocimiento de la posesión, la propiedad comunitaria indígena, la necesidad de delimitación del territorio a partir de lo que habían sido las evaluaciones de impacto ambiental y social, eso le da racionalidad al reclamo.*
>
> We shifted from a defensive strategy to a strategy of legal enforcement which was, having put forward an action of recognition of possession, of Indigenous communitarian property, the necessity of delimiting the territory based on the environmental and social impact assessments, this gives rationality to the [land] claim.

This strategy of "legal enforcement" was grounded in an interpretation of the recognition of Indigenous territory that had been sanctioned by the 1994 Constitution and ILO 169. As he explained: "*El Estado reconoce que quien es propietario es quien vive ahí ancestralmente. Reconocer…y implica el trabajo de delimitación, y a ese trabajo de delimitación había que darle racionalidad* / The state recognizes that the owner is who is lived there ancestrally. To recognize…and [that] implies the work of delimitation [of territory], and that work of delimitation had to be given a rationality".To "*dar racionalidad al reclamo* / give rationality to the land claim" through an EIA, he argued, "helped" the courts "*le[er] de otra manera el conflicto* / read the conflict differently".

Yet, if before Mbya place-based relationships were deemed illegitimate by environmental management and judicial authorities because they were presumably unfixed, in the process of being made legible to the state for the purposes of making rights claims, Mbya territory *had* to be rendered spatially, rather than temporally fixed, through a legal snapshot of current use patterns and environmental knowledge. Thus, the Mbya were made legible to the state as rights bearing subjects under the reformed constitution through their legibility as ethnobotanical subjects with a mappable territoriality grounded in spatialized ethnobotanical knowledge. In other words, through environmental impact studies, the principle of Indigenous pre-existence, as laid out in the 1994 constitution, is territorialized as *bounded* territory through environmental knowledge (Bryan 2009), but without according communities the concomitant ability to make property claims. Instead, through claims to territory, Indigenous communities become fundamentally different kinds of subjects under the law in terms of their relationship to property. Furthermore, as Penelope Anthias (2019) has demonstrated in the Bolivian Chaco, in Misiones the newly inscribed rights and

protections for Indigenous communities of the "territorial turn" ironically exist within—and must be made commensurate with—the same colonial property regimes that the law acknowledges Indigenous territoriality to predate, as the third circuit court's judgement made clear.

Anthias (2018) has argued that Indigenous land claims expand or contract based on the available legal frameworks for legibility. She demonstrates that an analogous shift from a strategy for land claims based on "ancestral territory" to one of "spatial needs" (59-61) for Guarani land claims in the Bolivian Chaco occurred with the imperative to "justify" territorial claims in material needs that could be rendered legible to the state; as she notes, "spatial needs…reframed indigenous land claims within an existing discourse of rights" (59). However, in the case of Lote 8, the shift from claims based on possession-as-property of "ancestral lands" to claims based on "vital territory" was embedded in a legal strategy in which attempts to claim property through the constitutional recognition of Indigenous pre-existence (with "ancestral lands" as prior to colonial property) had failed. Vital territory was a therefore a secondary strategy after the legal "recognition" of Indigenous pre-existence within the Constitution was not sufficient to overcome racialized property regimes and produce property rights for the Mbya. This strategic shift responded to and was embedded within the continued racialization of the Mbya (and Indigenous peoples more broadly) as territorial, rather than propertied subjects. While I don't negate the importance of struggles framed through territory, the discursive framing of environmental relations through "vital territory" undergirds perceptions of the Mbya Guarani as "guardians of the forest" and ideal land stewards for conservation, which would become a crucial element in the unfolding land struggle.

3.3.4 Contesting racialized property regimes through the environmental management apparatus

Partially precipitated by the conflicts surrounding Lote 8, in 2005 the *Comité de Gestión* / Management Committee of the Yabotí Biosphere reserve was created (hereafter Comité), with the goal of achieving broader participation (and therefore legitimacy) for the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (Ferrero 2020).[74] Yet this 'inclusion' of the Mbya within environmental management was again predicated on an

[74] This was followed in 2006 by the creation of the Área de Manejo Integral de la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí (AMIRBY) under Resolution 296 of the Ministry of Ecology, which separated the delegation for management and administration

either/or logic that constructed the Indigenous subject as outside of property. Initially the internal regulations of the *Comité* de Gestión specified that the Mbya Guarani communities were to have one representative on the *Comité*, while the approximately 31 landowners (Gomez 2019), were afforded two. According to notes from the archive of the *indigenista* organization that accompanied the selection of these representatives, the Mbya forced the modification of this rule, choosing two leaders as representatives the *Cómite*. In a letter to the *Comité* dated April 21, 2005, several Mbya Guarani leaders of communities located within Yabotí argued for this modification "*para que exista en principio igualdad de los partes* / in order that, in principal, there is equality of representation", implicitly referring to the imbalance in the regulations which allows for two representatives among the landowners, and one representative of the "aboriginal communities", on the *Comité*.

This same letter continues with a rejection of the Ministry of Ecology's Resolution 226 (2004) which had created a new "technical manual of instructions" for the organization of sustainable forestry within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, replacing one from 1994. Resolution 226 covers, in great detail, the rules governing the management plans which each property owner must submit to the Ministry of Ecology for the authorization of native timber extraction. Yet the only mention of the Guarani communities living within the RBY occurs in the resolution's antecedents, where it is noted that an internationally financed study of the "*relación del aborigen con el medio ambiente* / relationship between the aboriginal and the environment" is underway, "*con el objetivo de garantizar la permanencia de los recursos naturales esenciales para preservar el modo de vida tradicional de las comunidades que dependen de la Reserva, y garantizarles el derecho a su usufructo* / with the objective of guaranteeing the continuance of the essential natural resources for preserving the traditional way of life of the communities which depend on the Reserve, and guaranteeing them usufruct rights [within the Reserve]. While the existence of the Guarani communities within RBY and the material needs of their "traditional" way of life are noted in the resolution, the guidelines for the management of timber resources for sustainability are purely technical, and, in contravention of article 75 of the National Constitution, the Guarani are not participants in the management of these

of Yabotí within the broader Ministry of Ecology, situating it more locally, in San Pedro.

resources. In their letter, the Mbya leaders argue that Resolution 226,

> *…no se nos da el trato igualitario de poseedores y propietarios, que tenemos conforme a lo que sostiene la Constitución Nacional y el Convenio 169 de la O.I.T., privilegiándose a los empresas, propietarios regístrales, municipios e intereses nada más que económicos de los mismos violándose de esta manera nuestros derechos como pueblos indígenas que tenemos sobre las tierras que ancestralmente ocupamos.*
>
> ….doesn't give us equal treatment as possessors and owners, which we have according to the National Constitution and Accord 169 of the ILO, privileging the businesses, registered owners, municipalities and solely economic interests of the same, therefore violating our rights as Indigenous Peoples which we have over the lands we ancestrally occupy .

Thus, their letter disputes the prioritization of property rights over possession rights within Yabotí, first in the balance of power within the administrative space of the *Comité*, and secondly, within the material management of the Biosphere Reserve.

A second letter to the provincial Ministry of Ecology from the two Mbya Guarani leaders chosen to participate in the Comité de Gestión, dated May 19, 2005, reads:

> *Por la presente nos dirigimos a Ud. en representación de la Asociación de Comunidades del Pueblo Guaraní […] a los siguientes efectos:*
>
> *Nuestra Asociación es por Ley y por Título Público propietaria de dos tierras dentro de Yabotí […] ambos en el Departamento de San Pedro, sobre Yabotí Miní.*
>
> *Respetuosamente quisiéramos saber si nos asiste por derecho o por deber participar como propietarios o como aborígenes en el Comité de Gestión que el Ministerio de ECOLOGIA dispusiera a todos los efectos referentes a la Biósfera Yabotí.*
>
> With this letter we write you in representation of the Association of the Guaraní Nation […] to the following effects:
>
> Our Association is by Law and by Public Title owner of two properties within Yabotí [cadastral locations described] both in the Department of San Pedro, on the Yabotí Mini [Arroyo].
>
> Respectfully we would like to know if we are participating by right or by obligation as property owners or as aborigines in the Management Committee that the Ministry of ECOLOGY has created for all matters having to do with the Yabotí Biosphere [Reserve].

Here, the Mbya representatives dispute the foundational colonial property regime through which the Biosphere Reserve's administration of environmental management had been established and ordered. This property regime, and the conservation imaginaries entangled with it, produce and reiterate the fundamental

impossibility of the Mbya being legible as anything other than 'territorial' within (colonial) non-indigenous property. Although ownership of these properties by the Mbya was part of the charges the lawyer for the logging company used to *negate* the claim to property rights to Lote 8 made by the Mbya communities based on Indigenous pre-existence, the Mbya Guarani representatives' letter to the *Comité de Gestión* draws on the communities' situatedness as *both* property owners and 'aborigines'. The letter subtly highlights their invisibilization through racialized conceptualizations of property in a management committee where they have been 'included' as Indigenous communities that exist within—but remain incongruent with—the private property which otherwise determines participation in the *Comité*. Thus, in a purportedly inclusive aperture of the management of the RBY, this letter makes a claim to Mbya Guarani propertied personhood, without negating their claims to a more expansive territory than that titled as property, underscoring the contradictions of the "racial regimes of ownership" (Bhandar 2018) in which Mbya communities must either conform to settler property regimes (thus, only be property owners) or be 'territorial' subjects outside of property.

While conservation governance within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve had relied on and reinforced the colonial property regime to the exclusion of the Mbya Guarani, the generation of 'inclusive' framework for environmental management became a new local terrain of struggle through which Mbya leaders were able to dispute the logic of these property regimes through the administrative apparatus, rather than directly through the law. In other words, struggles over racialized property regimes are resituated through and in relation to conservation by the "legal geographies of liminality" (Correia 2018) in which Mbya Guarani claims to constitutionally enshrined rights are put "in parentheses" through the "temporal interventions of political time" (Salinas 2020). Ferrero (2013) and Salinas (2020) suggest that the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and concomitant conservation frameworks provided legal grounds for Guarani communities to fight the exploitation of the *selva.* I instead argue that the administrative and institutional spaces of conservation governance also created possibilities for the Mbya Guarani to negotiate, contest and engage with the racialized property regimes which had produced their exclusion. This process of negotiating rights through conservation would be later be extended through the purchase of land for conservation.

In 2006 national law 26.160[75], which declared the "emergency in possession and property of the lands traditionally occupied by Indigenous communities", mandated the surveying of these lands. This process of surveying, and the celebrated "folders" (*carpetas*) which each community received with the information for their surveyed territory, was designed to protect Indigenous communities from eviction from the lands they occupy. The Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8 were the first in Misiones to have their land surveyed. However this process of "demarcation" doesn't lead to state expropriation of private property for communitarian property, despite the text of article 75 of the 1994 Constitution, which states that Congress should "Guarantee […] the possession and communitarian property of the land that [Argentine Indigenous Nations] traditionally occupy". As I will demonstrate in the following section, in the case of Lote 8, the failures of state recognition and the vulnerabilities of inhabiting legal "liminality" was combined with the exclusions of racialized property regimes and an imaginary of Mbya Guarani "vital territory". This conceptualization of vital territory situated the Mbya Guarani as land stewards and racialized conservation subjects in subsequent proposals for the conservation of Lote 8, and the land purchase and titling process that was ultimately realized.

[75] Law 26160/2006 declared the "*emergencia en materia de posesión y propiedad de las tierras que tradicionalmente ocupan las comunidades indígenas originarias del país, cuya personería jurídica haya sido inscripta en el Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas u organismo provincial competente o aquéllas preexistentes* / emergency in possession and property of the lands traditionally occupied by Indigenous communities native to the country, whose juridical personhood has been registered in the National Registry of Indigenous Communities or relevant provincial organism or those prexisting", suspending evictions for a period of four years (this has been extended multiple times, as the surveying process remains incomplete) and mandating the "technical—judicial—cadastral" surveying of the ownership status ("*situación dominal*") of the lands occupied by Indigenous communities throughout the country.

3.4 Land titles and conservation citizenship

> *Hay todo una idea de que el Estado debería devolverle esas tierras del particular a esas comunidades. Y los particulares en realidad tiene un titulo de propiedad. Entonces el Estado debería comprarle a los propietarios esas tierras para devolvérselas a las comunidades. De ese punto de vista nosotros como [ONG] cumplimos una función bastante útil, porque le compr—pusimos el dinero para comprar a los particulares y lo donamos a las comunidades*.
>
> There's this whole idea that the State should return these lands from individual [owner] to those communities. And the individuals in reality have a property title. So the State should buy the lands from the owners in order to return them to the communities. From this point of view, we, as [the NGO] filled a pretty useful role, because we bou—provided the money to buy from the individuals and we donated it to the communities.
>
> Lawyer and president of a local NGO representing the land trust in the purchase and titling of Lote 8; interviewed December, 2018

With a logging moratorium established by Resolución 533, land that no longer had value for extractivism became valuable as a commodity of conservation on the international land market. In 2009, the communities learned that the land where they lived was in the process of being purchased—without their knowledge or consent--by an international conservation land trust for the creation of a natural and cultural reserve.[76] In fact, the sale and agreement between the landowner, provincial government, and a local NGO representing the land trust had already been publicly celebrated — with the presence of the governor — as the addition of 4000 hectares to the adjacent Moconá Provincial Park. Local coverage of the agreement clarified that the nine Mbya communities living in the area to be purchased would have perpetual "use" of the area to be conserved, with only a small portion reserved for tourism (Misiones Online, 2009).[77] The "*convenio de compra* / purchase agreement" between the landowner and the NGO specified that in the management plan for the Natural and Cultural Reserve "*se respetarán las condiciones de de [sic] uso y ocupación dentro de las áreas que actualmente forman el territorio que [las comunidades aborígenes] ocupan* / will respect the conditions of use and occupation with the areas the currently conform

[76] The biologist who had assisted them in producing the first EIA explained to me that he had discovered the sale of the lands almost by chance, when he saw a map of the area on the NGO's website, soliciting donations for the purchase.

[77] In this initial agreement, Lote 8 was to be subdivided into three areas; area A, the "dominant estate" in relation to the others, the 200 hectares retained by the landowner for ecotourism (also retained in the final instance), area B, 914 hectares, property of the NGO for conservation and activities typical of a park, and area C, 2850 hectares, where the Mbya communities were physically located, for a Natural and Cultural Reserve in collaboration with the provincial government.

the territory that [the aboriginal communities] occupy". However, this agreement also clarified that:

> *[La ONG] conoce la actual situación fáctica y jurídica de ocupación y reivindicaciones de las comunidades aborígenes radicadas en el Inmueble. Consecuentemente renuncia a reclamar a [la empresa] daños o perjuicios, lucro cesante, reducción de precio, evicción y cualquier otro concepto por dicha causa.*
>
> [The NGO] knows the current factual and legal situation of occupation and demands of the aboriginal communities living in the Property. Consequently it will not claim damages, loss of income, loss of value, eviction, or anything else from the [landowner's company] for this matter.

The Natural and Cultural Reserve, in fact, was imagined as a solution for the ongoing land conflict. Rendered outside of property by the court, and with territory fixed and rendered synonymous with "use", the Mbya claim to land and jurisdiction over that land could be invisibilized even as it was acknowledged, in a similar fashion to the negation of their land claims through "use" and mobility in the mapping-into-being of Yabotí, as discussed in an earlier section.

But the sale of the land and the creation of a reserve was still subject to free, prior and informed consent, following ILO 169, ratified by Argentina in 2000, which had not occurred. The lawyer quoted at the beginning of this section, who worked for a local NGO representing the land trust, explained the discrepancy and stakes of the dispute over ownership:

> *La cuestión es que, cuando vamos a registrarlo, empiezan aparecer comunidades que dicen, mira, ustedes no pueden comprarlo. Yo con mi cabeza de Buenos Aires, como no podemos comprarlo, si este es el vendedor, lo pone en mi nombre…y ahí aparece toda una concepción de, bueno, que ellos no son los dueños, los dueños somos nosotros. Ellos son los titulares registrales, o sea, el que esta anotado en el registro.*
>
> The issue is that, when we go to register it (the purchased land), [Indigenous] communities begin to show up, saying, look, you can't buy it. And me, with my Buenos Aires mentality: What do you mean we can't purchase it, if this is the seller, I put it in my name…And that's when a whole conception appears of, well, they aren't the owners, we're the owners. They are the registered title holders, that is to say, the one who is annotated in the [cadastral] registry.

While the Mbya communities continued to dispute the claim to property, Indigenous claims to *territory* were in the process of being evaluated and ostensibly protected with the implementation of national law 21.160. In parallel to protesting the purchase of Lote 8 for conservation, in 2010 the Mbya denounced logging in the adjacent Lote 7, which both EIAs had included as part of their territory. In an April 16th petition to the president of the Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs -

INAI) responsible for implementing Law 26.160, the chiefs (*caciques*) of the Mbya Guarani communities of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve reiterated their "urgent request" for INAI to carry out surveying of their territory, which "*deberá ser relevado como un solo territorio* / should be surveyed as a single territory". In a letter received the same day by the provincial Minister of Ecology, the communities protested the "illegal, unauthorized" logging occurring in Lote 7[78] and requested an audience with the minister, stating:

> *Nosotros no vivimos del monte sino en el monte, allí es donde nuestro espíritu encuentra paz, es el lugar donde se reserven y crecen nuestra medicina y alimento, en donde nuestros hijos pueden crecer en la seguridad de nuestras costumbres tradicionales, las que no solo tenemos derecho a conservar sino queremos hacerlo.*
>
> *Usted sabe que permitiendo la tala del monte se hace cómplice de la destrucción de nuestra cultura.*
>
> We don't live from the forest [79]but rather in the forest, that is where our spirit finds peace, it's the place where our medicine and food is preserved and grows, where our children can grow in the security of our traditional customs, which we not only have to right to conserve, but which we wish to conserve.
>
> You know that by allowing the logging of the forest you make yourself an accomplice to the destruction of our culture.

It was in the context of this ongoing logging within their territory and their need to ensure *secure* land tenure that the Mbya communities of Lote 8 engaged in dialogue with the landowner, the conservation NGOs and the State[80]. Through a long and intense negotiation process, they succeeded in reaching an

---

[78] Resolución 085/2006 of the Ministry of Ecology modified the areas where logging was prohibited by Resolución 533, extending the moratorium on logging indefinitely on certain lotes, including all of Lote 8 and all but *rodal* 1 of Lote 7, based on studies conducted by an "interdisciplinary team" for the Ministry. The archive of the indigenista organization that accompanied the land struggle includes two curious documents, illustrative of the power relations shaping the management of Yabotí. The first dated, 12th of May, 2006, from the General Coordinator for the Area de Manejo Integral Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí (AMIRBY) to the Sub-secretary of Ecology of the Ministry of Ecology, who write to reject the management plan proposed for rodal 1 of Lote 7, for not adhering to Resoluciones 085/2006 and 187/2007, which specified the requirements of the special management plan. The second, dated the following day, is a note to the Technical Coordinator of Yabotí, passing along "for his consideration" the request from the logging company involved in Lote 7 (whose management plan had been denied) that two members of the company be included in the "interdisciplinary team" responsible for "la definición de la territorialidad guarani en la zona de los 10.000 hectáreas de RBY bajo la resolución 085 y 187/06.

[79] "Monte" in Argentina could perhaps also be translated to wilderness (but without the scale implicit in that term); it is an area where vegetation grows wild or ostensibly unmanaged. Depending on the region, it can refer to the forest, scrubland, chaparral, etc; I have translated the term as forest here for clarity within context.

[80] Throughout the negotiation of the purchase of Lote 8, the provincial government was represented by the Ministry of Ecology.

agreement with the NGO and its local representative, which resulted in nearly all of Lote 8 being titled to the Mbya Guarani[81] communities, with the understanding that they would steward its conservation, memorialized in the Acuerdo Marco / Framework Agreement.[82] The purchase for conservation and titling of the majority of this land to the communities was hailed as an unprecedented process of negotiating Indigenous territorial rights through multicultural alliance.[83] Yet the transactional process of property titling, while accompanied by the provincial Ministry of Ecology, circumvented the State's responsibilities to guarantee the land rights which the communities had legally fought for at both the national and provincial levels for years. While these Mbya communities had been the first in the province to have their territories surveyed under law 21.160[84], this did not provide them with definitive land rights. Rather, it was through dialogue, political pressure, and struggle that they were able to acquire land rights vis-a-vis a private conservation initiative, which resolved an obligation that the State was unable or unwilling to fulfill.

In her 2018 monograph, *Limits to Decolonization*, Penelope Anthias introduces the term "hydrocarbon citizenship" to describe the recognition of Guarani land claims by transnational companies in territories made "governable" through Bolivia's hydrocarbon economy (244), in the face of the failures of state recognition in the titling of Indigenous territory. In Misiones, I would suggest an analogous 'conservation citizenship' describes recognition of Mbya Guarani land rights by transnational conservation networks in territories made governable through environmental management. Conservation citizenship becomes meaningful in the context of the unrecognized rights of the 1994 Constitution, the precarious

[81] While the legal dispute had involved two communities, by the time of the land purchase and titling, a third community had relocated to Lote 8 from another area of the province. The subdivided portion of Lote 8 titled to the Mbya Guarani was titled as communitarian property to these three communities, not to the Guarani 'nation'.

[82] The experience and outcomes of this negotiation process was important to many of my non-indigenous interlocutors who had participated, representing, for them a unique process of intercultural and inter-epistemic negotiation. However, it was not emphasized in the least by the Mbya leaders who had also participated with whom I spoke; instead, they emphasized the process of struggle, particularly in the context of logging, and the importance of having land titles. An account of the negotiation process is detailed in Jimenez Perez 2013.

[83] La Alianza Multicultural / the Multicultural Alliance, a product of the negotiated purchase memorialized in the Acuerdo Marco / Framework Agreement, included the original landowner, the government, represented by the Ministry of Ecology, the Mbya Guarani communities, and the NGO(s); with the exception of the State, all were landowners of a portion of Lote 8, after its subdivision. Though there were many reasons cited for this (some of which were discussed in Chapter 2), by the time I began fieldwork, in 2017, the Alianza no longer operated as a space of dialogue and collaboration for the sustainable management of Lote 8, as initially envisioned.

[84] Tellingly, their territories were surveyed by individual community, not as a collective within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, as they had insisted.

nature of Indigenous land tenure in Argentina, ongoing extractive forestry, and the limits of law 26.160[85]. As illustrated by the opening vignettes of this chapter, 'conservation citizenship' implies land rights which are always contingent, tied to maintaining legitimacy as conservation subjects.

In the case of the Mbya Guarani, inclusion in conservation citizenship was grounded in a requirement of demonstrable Indigenous authenticity, especially in terms of environmental relations, as I further explore in the following chapter. In February 2020, the spiritual and political leader of the oldest community in Lote 8 described the land struggle, suggesting that in the initial proposal (for the Natural and Cultural Reserve) the Mbya "*íbamos a ser como los animalitos* / we were going to be like the little [caged] animals". He explained that many *caciques* accepted "permisos de ocupación / permission of occupation" in the property of others, which he saw as a weakness. He told me, "*No es fícil defender el territorio* / it's not easy to defend territory" explaining that to do so, the Mbya had to describe how they lived. "*Es muy dificil* / It's very difficult…" he reiterated "…*tiene que mostrar su cultura* / you have to demonstrate your culture" and yet, here we were, he acknowledged, eating non-Indigenous foods.[86]

This requirement to perform authenticity for inclusion in conservation citizenship was painfully illustrated during the course of fieldwork through the filming of the documentary in November 2019, as members of the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8 were asked to demonstrate "traditional" practices for the camera; these performances were then narrated[87] for conservation audiences as evidence of the success of the land trust's investment, which had provided titles for the Mbya (Timbó Films 2021). Yet Mbya struggles to maintain the *mbya reko*[88] *through* property were also mobilized against them, as evidence that

[85] In addition to the concrete limits of what the law insures, it is worth noting that at the time of writing, despite multiple extensions of the term for completion of surveying, less than half of Indigenous territories have been surveyed.

[86] As discussed in the following section, the elder had a sharp awareness of the political economy involved in the consumption of non-indigenous foods, in part, due to limited land, which, in circular fashion, made it difficult to demonstrate "authenticity" for land claims.

[87] This "narration" was itself an interpretive and performative act. In one example, at the request of the filmmaker, two men from another community in Lote 8 came to the community where we were staying to demonstrate the thatching of a roof with tacuara, a bamboo-like cane. As I watched in the background, behind the camera, I asked the elder, standing beside me, what the structure they were thatching would be. He chuckled and told me that it was old and of no use and would be torn down—the thatching was just for demonstrative purposes. Yet in the 'documentary', the thatching by the visitors is described, in anthropological fashion, as a type of traditional "reciprocal" labor and economic relationship between Mbya communities.

[88] "The Mbya way of being" The Mbya refer to this as "ñande reko": "our way of being", but as I am not part of the (inclusive we) ñande, I use mbya reko; both are used in anthropological literature.

the Mbya were *losing* their culture through property relations. As a former Minister of Ecology explained:

> ***La consignas ancestrales ya no están más en todas las comunidades*** *[…] yo no seguí más el proceso del famoso Lote 8 […] creo que las comunidades quedan con el título de una parte de esa tierra cuando ellos dijeron toda la vida que los títulos para ellos no existían. Son propietarios de una tierra porque ellos nacieron ahí y la naturaleza le dedica y la historia que ellos son dueños de su manera de ese territorio, no eh, las comunidades, hay comunidades que reclaman títulos de propiedad, entonces, esos conflictos no están bien, nunca se resolvieron bien.*
>
> **The ancestral rules are no longer in all of the communities.** I didn't follow the process of the famous Lote 8 […] I believe that the communities got the title of a part of that land when they always said that for them, titles didn't exist. They are owners of a piece of land because they were born there, Nature dedicates it to them and the idea is that they are owners in their own way of that territory, no, um, the communities, there are communities that demand property titles. So, these conflicts aren't good, they never ended well. (My emphasis)

As I have demonstrated over the course of this chapter, the racialized conceptualization of indigeneity as outside of property was a continuous thread across the three distinct configurations of the relationships among property, indigeneity and the forest I've described. What changed, through each rearticulation, was the *value* produced through this racialization. According to Audra Simpson (2014), assertions of Indigenous sovereignty reveal the inherent instability of settler colonial claims, which must be constantly reinscribed. The conservation land purchase may in fact have supplanted the state in the adjudication of land rights, but it also stabilized the fundamentally precarious colonial property regime of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve in the face of the disruption of an Indigenous territorial claim, which, as the previous section demonstrates, presented challenges to property in both legal and administrative spaces. While the negotiated purchase led to legal titling, it reified the existing property boundaries, and the broader colonial property matrix imposed on Mbya territory, as the restitution of the other areas included in the EIA remain unresolved. Tellingly, as the land trust's website describes,

> The ground-breaking nature of this agreement [for the sale of Lote 8] lies in the Multicultural Alliance formed between government officials, Guaraní representatives, WLT representatives, **and the former landowner who sold it back to these Indigenous people** (World Land Trust, 2022, my emphasis).

By stabilizing property and diffusing the threat of territory, conservation citizenship further legitimates dispossession, providing payment for stolen Indigenous land.

Moreover, not all Indigenous peoples are subject to recognition of their land claims via these

alternative “citizenships”, which require an embeddedness in circuits of capital and a real or perceived value for investment and inclusion. *Conservation* citizenship is premised on the value produced simultaneously through land deemed worth conserving and an imaginary of Indigenous stewardship which contributes to this conservation value. In the case of Lote 8, colonial histories of extraction, deforestation and the expansion of industrial agriculture across Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina have produced the scarcity of the “endangered” *selva paranaense* subtropical forest that produce its conservation value as a biodiversity hotspot. Yet, as was emphasized to me during fieldwork, the market value of land shapes international conservation investment; if the price is deemed too high in Misiones,[89] equally biodiverse land can be purchased for conservation in Borneo or the Brazilian Amazon. The rights of “conservation citizenship” are therefore inextricable from the international conservation land market, which determines what is conserved and what, in turn, becomes Indigenous property. But indigeneity is also part of producing the value of conservation land, as the conservation NGO lawyer explained to me:

> *Porque además en conservación hay modas. Así como hay modas en otros lados también en la conservación hay modas entonces, así como fue el ozono, bueno ahora es el cambio climático, o las áreas protegidas marinas después se van a pasar de moda y también están las comunidades. Entonces estos últimos años eso en el mundo ha tenido gran importancia por lo tanto hay mayor cantidad de donantes que tengan voluntad "Ay, comunidades, si me parece interesante, vamos a poner fondos ahí. Diez años atrás nadie te decía eso. No sé dentro de diez años cual va a ser la moda, no, pero es un buen momento para conseguir fondos para comprar tierras donde hay comunidades porque el mundo esta sensible a eso […] en temas de características de naturaleza las comunidades que viven en la naturaleza empiezan a recibir un tratamiento y un respecto diferente a lo que había ocurrido diez años atrás, muy diferente. Y las misma normativas empieza receptar la obligación de respetar la autodeterminación de las comunidades o derecho de las comunidades cosa que no ocurría antes. Entonces es un buen momento para digamos como estratégico para conseguir fondos para que esas comunidades se hagan de su tierra de hecho es una consecuencia de eso y tengan sus títulos de propiedad y tengan su posibilidad de vivir tranquilamente allí.*
>
> Because, in addition, in conservation there are trends. Just like there are trends in other things, in conservation there are trends. So, just like the ozone was, well, now it is climate change, or marine protected areas, later they’ll go out of fashion, and there are also the [Indigenous] communities. So then these last few years this has had a great importance in the world, and, as a result, there are more donors who have the desire, “Oh, [Indigenous] communities, yes, that’s interesting, let’s put

[89] In fact, this was one of the reasons cited for why lots 5, 6, 7 and 8, comprising the “10,000 hectares” that would link Esmeralda and Moconá Provincial Parks had not yet been purchased, despite initial interest from the land trust and the expectations of the communities, as illustrated in the second opening vignette of this chapter. The other reasons were political, some related to the conflict over the *camino* discussed in the following chapter.

> money there." Ten years ago nobody said that to you. I don't know what will be the trend in ten years, no, but it's a good moment to obtain funds to buy lands where there are [Indigenous] communities because the world is sensitive to that […] in issues of characteristics of nature the communities that live in nature begin to receive a treatment and a respect different from what had occurred ten years ago, very different. And the same regulations begin to receive the obligation to respect the auto-determination of the communities or the right of the communities, something that didn't occur before. So, it's a good moment to, let's say, strategic to obtain funds in order for these communities have their lands in fact, it's a consequence of that, and have their property titles and have the possibility of living peacefully there.

In fact, there is remarkable continuity between the designs for the conservation corridor between Esmeralda and Moconá proposed by Vida Silvestre Argentina in the early 1990s, in which the Mbya communities were to be *removed* from their lands, because of the value of that land as "virgin" forest, and later conservation frameworks in which the Mbya are incorporated to *add* value as racialized, legitimate "guardians of the forest" who can be represented to procure further conservation funding.

3.5 Becoming with property

In this chapter, I argue that as the *selva misionera* is revalorized as a conservation resource, the recognition of Indigenous land claims in Central Eastern Misiones is reconfigured through a shift in which neoliberal conservation governmentality, where recognition is premised on legitimacy (as racialized 'authentic' others), eclipses state recognition, premised on legibility (of territorialized environmental knowledge and use). This is not just a shift in terms of the prevailing global conservation imaginaries, in the shift from the fortress model to an inclusive or community-based conservation model: it is contextualized by broader moment of ethnodevelopment and the multicultural rights of the territorial turn. The processes of racialization which had excluded the Mbya from property rights only to later make them subjects of territorial rights are themselves integral to producing the Mbya as racialized 'conservation citizens' whose land rights are tied to their legibility as conservation subjects and their *recognition*, not by the state, but by conservation networks. Thus, the 'novel' conservation collaborations of Lote 8, which appear to obviate the limited state mechanisms for the recognition of Indigenous land rights, are actually intimately tied to these processes through the racialization of the relationship between property and indigeneity. With each reconfiguration of the *selva*-as-resource across three decades, the challenges presented by Mbya presence, claims, and relationships to the colonial property regimes of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve are

resolved and absorbed by environmental management, the law, and conservation. Despite the concrete material gains made through securing titles for the majority of Lote 8, the property matrix which otherwise dissects Mbya territory appears increasingly reified and stabilized, while the terms legitimacy for indigeneity are increasingly articulated through conservation, as suggested by this chapter's opening vignettes.

And yet: the challenges persist. Mbya territory is not absorbed by or conflated with property, nor has titling constrained ownership. Mbya territorial practices continue to exceed the boundaries of the lot, and in the years since titling, two new Mbya Guarani communities have relocated to within Lote 8.[90] In concluding this chapter, I reflect on several conversations with the Mbya elder from the opening vignette, as he described what is lost and what is achieved through property.

November 2019

Standing at the edge of the *oka*[91] looking out over a patch of land which had been cleared and was now regrown, the elder explains to me "*para ter a terra, vôce tem que ficar, não pode mais mudar*[92] / in order to have the land, you have to stay put, you can't move". This is why, he tells me, he isn't leaving here. But in a few years of staying in one place "*ya não tem mas pindó, tem que ir longe para buscar* / there won't be any more pindó[93] and you'll have to travel a great distance to find some" and the children will know less and less of the forest, as they develop a preference for "sweet" non-indigenous medicines and food.

He explains that before "*cuando se acaba, en unos años ya se muda* / when [the forest] runs out, in a few years [the Mbya] relocate". He himself, he tells me had been born in an aldea outside the Biosphere Reserve, far from here, near Alecrín[94]. Before, he reiterates "*tinha muito mato, não tinha dono* / there was a lot of land, it didn't have an owner" By staying, the resources dwindle "*ya no da para comer del monte* /

[90] An important tension exists between the articulated concerns of conservationists with the "carrying capacity" of Lote 8 and its potential to become "overpopulated" as new Mbya communities relocate there, and the very real significance of titled land as a refuge within Yabotí.

[91] The central clearing/patio in Guarani communities, around which houses are organized.

[92] Without the participation of an interpreter, my conversations with this elder largely took place in Portuguese/Portuñol, with some interspersed words in Mbya. On my last visit he insisted I return for at least a month, to learn to speak properly (in Mbya Guarani). Unfortunately due to the pandemic, my promise to return remains unfulfilled.

[93] *Syagrus romanzoffiana,* a palm with many important food and medicinal uses for the Guarani.

[94] A Mbya Guarani community close to San Pedro.

it's no longer possible to eat from the forest", and the agricultural fields become less productive, so "*tem que buscar trabalho fora, para comprar mercaderia* / you have look for work outside (the community), to be able to buy merchandise (store-bought foods)."

December 2019

Midday inside the dim *opygua*,[95] the elder retells the story of the beginning of the land struggle. Another leader (and community), he tells me, went to live in Parque Esmeralda due to the logging conflict. He said this *cacique* "*não quería terra medida…não quería luchar* / he didn't want measured land (property)…he didn't want to fight [for the land]". But, he explained, "*Antes cuando había mucho mato se podía caminhar, a gente cambiaba de lugar* / Before when there was a lot of selva one could walk, we relocated". It was for this reason that it was necessary to fight for *this* land, because there was so little *selva* left.

In her study of the overlapping and competing forms of jurisdiction of the Algonquins of Barriere Bake and the Canadian settler state, Shiri Pasternak (2017) distinguishes between two forms of dispossession which occur without physical removal from the land. The first is "displacement without moving", which "entails being simultaneously immobilized and moved out of one's living knowledge as one's place loses its life-sustaining features" (Nixon 2003, cited in Pasternak 2017, 56). The second, Pasternak's Algonquin interlocutors describe as "alienation", a process of being "dispossessed of governing authority" (56) through the imposition of non-Indigenous governance regimes. The advance of the agrarian frontier and the subdivision and enclosure of the *selva* in property as a resource of extractive logging have immobilized[96] many Mbya Guarani communities in an increasingly diminishing land base. Yet, without sufficient land, the reification of these same property regimes through titled property accessed through conservation perpetuates this "displacement without moving" as the intergenerational transmission of

[95] Mbya house of prayer, also the residence of the *opy*, the spiritual leader of the community

[96] In fact, there remains substantial mobility of and between communities, as described by Salamanca (2012) and observed during my own fieldwork. However, the inability to "walk" or relocate that this elder describes, due to the enclosure of the forest in property—including Lote 8 as Indigenous communitarian property—represents a reorganization of spatial relations.

environmental knowledge is limited by decreasing biodiversity, and the central spiritual role of dreams in guiding territorial relocation is lost as the selva is deforested or enclosed (Salinas 2020)[97]. Simultaneously, legal setbacks during the early years of land claim upheld extractive logging rooted in the authority of titled property, despite the insistence by the Mbya Guarani of their governing authority over their ancestral lands. Yet, as they institute a new governance regime through *recognition*, conservation institutions and networks are also capable of perpetuating alienation, as the opening vignettes to this chapter, as well as Chapter 4, further illustrate. Nonetheless, these constraints, new forms of governmentality and the material consequences of limited land still do not undermine the fundamental importance of the affective experience of secure land tenure Mbya leaders relayed to me, nor what that experience of security makes possible.

February 2020

One afternoon, the elder explained that his goal was to have the titles, to have a place to plant and hunt. He was old, he told me, and he needed to have a security in land tenure, not to continue moving around. His comments underscored the important difference between mobility guided by dreams and the forced mobility of dispossession and displacement, so easily imagined by the non-indigenous actors who believed the communities can simply be relocated to another tract of *selva*. He explained that his relatives (other Mbya) thought it was wrong to fight for titles, because they believed the land was already theirs. But his concern, he told me, was the Mbya culture, connected to the forest and the water. In many conversations, he and an elder from the other community at the center of the decades long struggle consistently reiterated to me the sense of *relief* that titling had brought.

---

[97] In opening her 2020 article, Salinas includes a powerful quote from an Mbya interlocutor to illustrate this point, worth reproducing here: *No fue ni una revelación ni un sueño lo que decidió el lugar de Ka'aguy Eté. Ya lo sueños no sirven. Por tu sueño te vas a otro lugar, pero hoy ya vienen los empresarios [propietarios] y te echan y te hacen nota porque este y aquello. Es como si nuestro sueño no sirve. Nicanor fue a la oficina de tierra varias veces a pedir tierra. Y la última vez, le dijo que venga otro día, entonces Nicanor se quedó nomás en la puerta, durmiendo [me dice riéndose] Ahí recién vio que él realmente quería tierra para nuestra aldea [Notas de campo, Ka'aguy Eté 24 de enero de 2013].*

It wasn't a dream or a revelation that decided the location of Ka'aguy Eté. Dreams don't matter anymore. Because of your dream you go somewhere else, but today the businessmen (property owners) come and they kick you out and they write you up for this or that. Nicanor went to the office of Lands several times to ask for land.And the last time, they told him to come back another day, so Nicanor just slept in the doorway [they tell me laughing] Then finally they say that he really wanted land for our community. [Field notes, Ka'aguy Eté January 24, 2013.]

When, in our final interview, I asked what was, for him, the most important thing to preserve, the elder replied “the songs”, referencing the nightly prayers. Since we were discussing the land and conservation, I had expected an explanation of Mbya understandings of the forest, of maintaining ecological diversity. Or perhaps, of Mbya-forest relations, a way of being on the land. His response shook me. In a very real way, titled land, with all its limitations, had provided the security to imagine the maintenance of spiritual practices at the heart of *mbya reko.*

Chapter 4: (Re)producing the *Selva Misionera*: Environmental Management as Settler Colonial Territoriality

In 2019, the *selva misionera* was voted one of the seven natural wonders of Argentina (Agencia Télam, 2019). Winner in the "*bosques y selvas* / forests and jungles" category, this recognition of an entire ecoregion, part of the *selva paranaense,* a subtropical forest known locally by a name that also claims it for the province of Misiones, seemed incongruous as a *maravilla* alongside more monumental natural features like the Perito Moreno glacier or sites like Nahuel Huapi National Park. The selection of the *selva* was due in no small part to promotional efforts on its behalf by the provincial Ministry of Tourism, the culmination of several decades of the production of the *selva* as both an object of conservation efforts and as the natural patrimony which distinguishes Misiones. This celebration of the *selva misionera* as a *product* has a specific trajectory within the "green" province: Misiones is the first province in Argentina to boast a Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources (MEyRNR, hereafter, Ministry of Ecology) and touts itself as the "Capital Nacional de la Biodiversidad / National Capital of Biodiversity". Yet, this celebration of environmentalist progress exists in tension with and accompanied by the historic and ongoing centrality of extractivist logging and plantation forestry within the provincial economy, and colonization plans, laws and practices wherein land claims and values were assessed based on the "improvement" represented by clearing the forest: realities which themselves contribute to anxieties over the *selva's* disappearance.

In this chapter, I examine the effects of (re)producing the *selva misionera* as an object of environmental management in the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and its area of influence. I argue that in Central-Eastern Misiones, conservation is a borderlands project that rearticulates settler colonial (and settler state) territoriality through the making of conservation property and (national) conservation subjectivities.

Conservation in this region is articulated through a complex network of institutional spaces and actors, wherein a broad tendency towards the privatization and neoliberalization of conservation complements state environmental management regimes, while simultaneously redefining them (Gomez and Ferrero, 2011; Büscher, Wolfram and Fletcher, 2014). Mediating these contradictions through their labor, provincial park rangers emerge as key conservation subjects responsible for the protection of provincial conservation

property—and as such, for producing and inhabiting particular conservation imaginaries. The practices—institutional and relational—of park rangers[98] and other conservation actors construct the *selva* as national patrimony to be protected and policed, reinscribing the Argentina-Brazil border and rearticulating settler colonialism through environmental management.

Within Yabotí, Lote 8, a 3901 hectare tract of land within Yabotí, bought from a logging company by a British land trust, and titled directly to three Mbya Guarani communities, continues to be produced and narrated as both Indigenous territory and a conservation collaboration, a site of multiple claims and conflicts involving local, national, and international actors and institutions. As the previous chapter makes clear, accessing land rights through conservation inextricably entangles the Mbya Guarani communities with conservation actors, frameworks and discourses. Lote 8 is therefore an important site for interrogating what the conservation of the *selva* does, and how particular narratives and practices of conservation territorialize vis-à-vis dominant legal and scientific regimes which, in making Lote 8 legible, circumscribe it within settler colonial territoriality. Moreover, the inverse is also true: the worlds produced through the conservation of the *selva misionera*— material, discursive, affective and embodied—are those in which Mbya Guarani territory, consolidated as property through conservation, become located.

After briefly situating my argument at the intersection of critical settler colonial studies and political ecologies of conservation, this chapter proceeds through four empirical sections, engaging distinct scales. The first section introduces a recent conflict over a *camino*, or access road, to Lote 8 through Moconá Provincial Park, and the dispute's embeddedness in settler colonial logics of property. The second section discusses seemingly opposing conservation imaginaries which produce complementary exclusions through conceptualizations of indigeneity and Indigenous mobility in relation to conservation land. The third section explores how provincial parks are socially produced as conservation spaces through the labor of park rangers. The fourth section expands this discussion of boundary-making through conservation labor to the regulation of the superimposed borderlands of the national border and the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve. Through these four sections, I contextualize a seemingly local dispute about an access road through a

[98] Though a literal translation of guardaparques is "park guard", I have translated to the more familiar park ranger to avoid implicit associations with the militarization of park labor.

provincial park, in which narratives of pristine nature and 'authentic' ecological indigeneity were deployed to question Mbya Guarani territory and mobility, within two crucial dimensions of the social enactment of conservation: the production of the boundaries of provincial parks through the labor of park rangers and the production of the settler state and conservation subjects through the relationships and imaginaries of conservation practice. I argue that it is through these everyday, embodied practices that environmental management both enacts and reiterates settler colonial control over land.

4.1 Settler environmentalism as territorial acquisition

In a 2017 essay, Shannon Speed cogently argues that we should conceptualize Latin American states as settler colonial states, suggesting, with Gott (2007) that Latin American settler states begin, rather than end, with formal independence, when settlers "[gain] full control of the Native population and its land" (Speed, 2007: 785). Indeed Argentina's multiple wars of extermination, promotion of European immigration, and racist assimilatory policies (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003) parallel the genocidal features of more commonly theorized settler states of British colonial origin in the Americas. Yet the operation of the settler state in Argentina, and settler colonialism more broadly, are also shaped by distinct, specific processes of racialization (Briones 2002) and institutionally embedded epistemic racism.

I draw from Speed's provocation to bridge the North/South theoretical divides between studies of settler states and studies of neoliberal capitalism, by focusing on environmental management, and conservation in particular, as a site of convergence of these territorial projects. In interrogating environmental management as a form of settler colonial territorial control, organized through conservation imaginaries and territorialized through the embodied labor of conservation actors, I consider both Indigenous struggles for jurisdiction in relation to land (Pasternak 2017) and the everyday relational production of territory as a "dynamic assemblage" (Correia, 2018; Moore, 2005). Environmental management as settler colonialism operates simultaneously in both registers.

Wolfe (2006) described settler colonial genocide as a "structure", an ongoing territorial project of land dispossession premised on a "logic of elimination" and attempts to kill or assimilate of Indigenous

populations, replacing them with settlers[99]. Conservation, on the other hand, has often produced its object as pristine through the erasure of Indigenous histories (Braun, 2002). Recent conversations at the intersection of political ecology and settler colonial studies have begun to interrogate the role of conservation projects in the production of settler environmentalist identities and the dispossession of Indigenous land (e.g. Ybarra, 2017), and there has also been increased attention paid to the role of property regimes in producing racialized subjects in settler colonial states (Bhandar, 2018). As Glen Sean Coulthard asserts, "*Settler–colonialism is territorially acquisitive in perpetuity*" (2014: 152, italics in original), yet its operation has shifted to productive and biopolitical forms of power, including through care (Million, 2013), inclusion (Hale, 2005) and recognition (Simpson, 2014). Political ecologists have similarly demonstrated the role of conservation interventions in producing and disciplining conservation subjects (Sundberg, 2006; West, 2006; Agarwal, 2005), while simultaneously producing their object of conservation, as claims about environmental management are also ontological claims about what that environment fundamentally *is* (Blaser, 2010; De la Cadena, 2015).

I shift the empirical focus to Central-Eastern Misiones, Argentina, where I argue that these tendencies are replicated in novel ways. Conservation represents a relatively recent regime of environmentality in Misiones (Gomez and Ferrero, 2011), consolidated through the promotion of the *selva misionera* as a "product" for tourist consumption, the expansion of eco-tourism (Braticevic & Vitale 2010), and a wave of neo-rural migrants, often locally referred to as *porteños*[100]*,* frequently and visibly active in environmental causes. In using settler colonialism as a framework to analyze environmental management in the context of *structures* of ongoing Indigenous dispossession, I interrogate the particular articulation of settler colonial control of land *as* environmentalism—and specifically as conservation—that occurs in the Río Uruguay borderlands. In doing so, I respond to Mollett's (2016) call for a postcolonial political ecology

[99] As Speed reminds us, in Latin America settler colonialism did not always rely on genocide/replacement, but also processes of dispossession, labor exploitation, assimilation, etc; this does not change the fundamentally territorial character of the settler colonial project, even when advanced through--and in support of--resource extraction.

[100] The term porteña/o(s), which in other contexts describes someone from Buenos Aires, in Central-Eastern Misiones generally refers to an outsider, usually but not always Argentine. It is a term which connotes urbanity (whether or not the person referred to is actually from a major city) and can even include neo-rural transplants from the provincial capital of Posadas. Porteña/o is not a static category; its use here responds to its deployment by research participants as a category of (mis)identification (see also Salinas 2016).

that understands struggles over land for biodiversity conservation in Latin America within histories of colonial encroachment, such as those exemplified in Misiones (Salamanca, 2012).

I draw on the stories and voices of settlers and non-Indigenous actors to focus on the logics through which settler claims to, over, through and about land are reinforced by everyday forms of policing the boundaries of Indigenous land. Rather than placing these stories and practices in tension with Mbya Guarani stories, struggles and contestations, utilizing Mbya voices to dispute settler claims, I instead examine how settler claims territorialize through quotidian environmental management practices and narratives. Examining these practices elucidates how settle colonial logics are reproduced (even) through the everyday labor of conservation workers, especially at the agricultural frontier of an international conservation borderlands.

4.2 Paradigms of conservation property and the camino *to Lote 8*

In late June 2017, I arrived in El Soberbio, a small Argentine town along the Río Uruguay, facing Brazil. When I walked into the tourist office, one of the women who worked there grabbed my friend, a recent *porteña* arrival, and exclaimed, "*¡Hoy a la mañana, entraron a machetear el camino a Lote 8 por Moconá! Vamos a pararlo, estamos intentando juntar gente para pararlo.* / This morning, they began opening the road to Lote 8 with machetes through Moconá! We're going to stop it, we're trying to get people together to stop it."

The conflict, as I later learned, was an ongoing dispute over an access road to the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8 through the "untouchable" Moconá Provincial Park[101]. The creation of an access road had been a key addendum to the original sustainable use agreement for Lote 8 in 2012. In this addendum to the agreement which specifies the terms of the purchase of Lote 8 and its transfer to the Mbya, the provincial government agreed to provide an access road as part of the subdivision of the lots between the land titled to the Mbya, the 10 hectares titled to a Buenos Aires-based NGO for conservation

[101] In the context of the debates over the *camino*, it is worth clarifying that Moconá Provincial Park itself was property donated to the province by the family of the owner of Lote 8 for the creation of a reserve (decreto 1900/1967) which later became a park established by provincial law 2854/1991 (currently Ley XVI nº 27).

and environmental education activities, and the 200 hectares with a view of the falls, retained by the original landowner, for potential ecotourism development.[102] It was generally agreed that selling was roundly advantageous for the landowner (whose company also owns or manages several large lots managed for timber extraction within Yabotí); the company was able to make a sizeable profit[103] from land from which logging had been barred by the state during the history of conflicts with the Mbya, detailed in Chapter 3, while retaining the most valuable land for investment. The fundamental division between those who opposed and those who supported the *camino* was whether they narrated it as a road for a future ecotourism complex, or for the Mbya to access the land which had been legally titled to them.

That there is a conflict at all is due to the fact that, rather than an improvement to the lengthy, scarcely maintained logging roads through the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve by which vehicles currently access Lote 8, the *camino* would extend the road which enters Moconá Provincial Park by approximately 2km along an existing footpath of the Mbya before entering Lote 8, bypassing the 200 hectares of the original landowner on the way to the communities. The *camino* thus was doubly offensive: it would bisect the "virgin" *selva* of Moconá Provincial Park, and it would (ostensibly) serve the private interests of an already wealthy landowner in his timely pivot from timber extraction to ecotourism.

Throughout fieldwork, the conflict over the *camino* was narrated to me nearly constantly, from multiple, sometimes vitriolic, perspectives, whether or not I asked about it. The conflict was also well-documented in the local popular media over several years, with different news sources implicitly favoring or opposing the *camino* through their coverage[104]. Rather than attempting to crystallize any single interpretation of the conflict, I am primarily interested in how particular discourses are being mobilized with respect to land, conservation, and Indigenous territory, and how my interlocutors discursively position their opponents as part of consolidating their own claims to legitimacy (Hajer, 1997). Those who opposed the

[102] While the initial agreement also included a buffer zone in *condominio* (shared ownership) between this NGO and the communities, this land was titled directly to the Mbya.

[103] The purchasing price was sometimes cited to me as one million US dollars during fieldwork, though other accounts (Salinas 2016) cite one million Argentine pesos, which in 2012 would have been approximately $213,000 USD.

[104] For instance, coverage in Primera Edición tended to favor the perspective of those opposed to the *camino*, while coverage in Misiones Online tended to favor the perspective of those who supported the *camino.*

camino were narrated by its advocates as racists who subordinated constitutionally protected territorial rights founded in Indigenous pre-existence to state conservation property. Those who advocated for the *camino* were narrated by its opponents as sacrificing the pristine *selva* to eco-speculation, making the public space of the park the "*antesala*/foyer" for exclusive ecotourism, reducing park rangers to security guards for private capital.

The following Saturday, in early July, a rally was held in the town square by those who had organized themselves as the "*Defensores de la Selva* / Defenders of the Forest". Most participants were young, heterosexual *porteño* couples and their children, although the park rangers who had been most active in the struggle against the road served as central speakers at the rally. Conspicuously absent were representatives from the Mbya Guarani communities, either those of Lote 8, whom the road would reach, or those located along the alternative "Camino Norte / Northern Road", whom the *Defensores* insisted were opposed to the new road. In his speech to the crowd of activists, one park ranger argued that leaving Moconá "*intocable* / untouchable" ultimately benefited the Mbya, as a site for the regeneration of the biodiverse forest ecosystem they rely on.[105] During the rally, he and others insisted that the Mbya communities of Lote 8 had been deceived about the road. According to the pamphlets distributed at the rally that day:

> *El camino que pretenden abrir, con la excusa de darles un camino a los guaraníes, está trazado por el medio del parque provincial Moconá uno de los pocos manchones de selva virgen de la región, el cual, con la apertura del camino, perdería su estado de pureza quedando el parque dividido en dos. [...] Construir el nuevo camino beneficiaría solo a algunas comunidades guaraníes, empresarios madereros, empresarios ingleses, complejos turísticos exclusivos y a los gobernantes, pero perjudicaría al parque, a los soberbianos y a toda la tierra y a las generaciones que se vienen que aprovecharan [sic] los beneficios de estos pocos parches de selva virgen que quedan en el mundo.*
>
> The road that they are trying to open, with the excuse of providing an access road for the Guarani, passes through the middle of Moconá Provincial Park one of the only patches of virgin forest in the region, which, with the opening of the road, would lose its state of purity with the park divided in two. [...] To build the new road would benefit only a few Guarani communities, timber businessmen, English businessmen, exclusive tourism complexes and politicians, but it would cause harm to the park, to Soberbians, and all the earth and the future generations who will take advantage of the benefits of these few patches of virgin forest that remain in the world.

[105] The contrary had been argued by a biologist and proponent of the *camino* at the September 2016 public hearing; he suggested that the better conserved and more biodiverse Lote 8 was actually losing biodiversity to Moconá.

Though the conceptualization of a “virgin” forest is problematic on its own terms, particularly in a dispute involving access and mobility within the ancestral and present-day territories of the Mbya, the boundaries of the ‘virgin’ forest mobilized within this dispute are themselves an artifact of property lines. In interviews, at cultural events and during everyday conversations with regional environmentalists, park rangers and students of the Instituto Superior de San Pedro who opposed the *camino*, the interiorization of the language of state property *as* the language of conservation was strikingly consistent. Provincial parks are divided into two kinds of spaces: the area of public use, and the area of permanent conservation, as delimited in each park’s management plan. Moconá Provincial Park, as the most important site of eco-tourism in the region, has a relatively impressive (if underutilized) infrastructure for the reception of tourists, but it was nonetheless discussed, in its entirety, as “virgin” *selva*. As part of Argentina’s *Ley de Bosques Nativos* / Native Forest Law (26.331/2007), land is categorized as *roja*/red (conservation land), *amarilla*/yellow (native forest in private property) and *verde*/green (secondary/degraded forest), with distinct uses permitted in each. In the 2010 map of the province of Misiones that corresponds to the provincial *Ley de Bosques* (Ley Provincial XVI nº 105 Anexo A; see Figure 6) the *categoria roja* is essentially a map of national and provincial park land, with a few private conservation reserves. Moconá’s designation as *“zona roja”* does limit development within the park (thus providing legal grounds for opposition to the *camino*), but as described in the map’s key, “*roja”* simply demarcates a “protected natural area”, rather than being a measure of forest quality or the state of conservation of that area. Yet in the frequent appeals to the *“zona roja”* as untouchable conservation land that the *camino* would bisect, this distinction was obscured: *zona roja* was repeated as an appeal to immutable selva that could be lost, ignoring the fact that it is cadastral boundaries and categories of ownership which produce these territorial subdivisions.

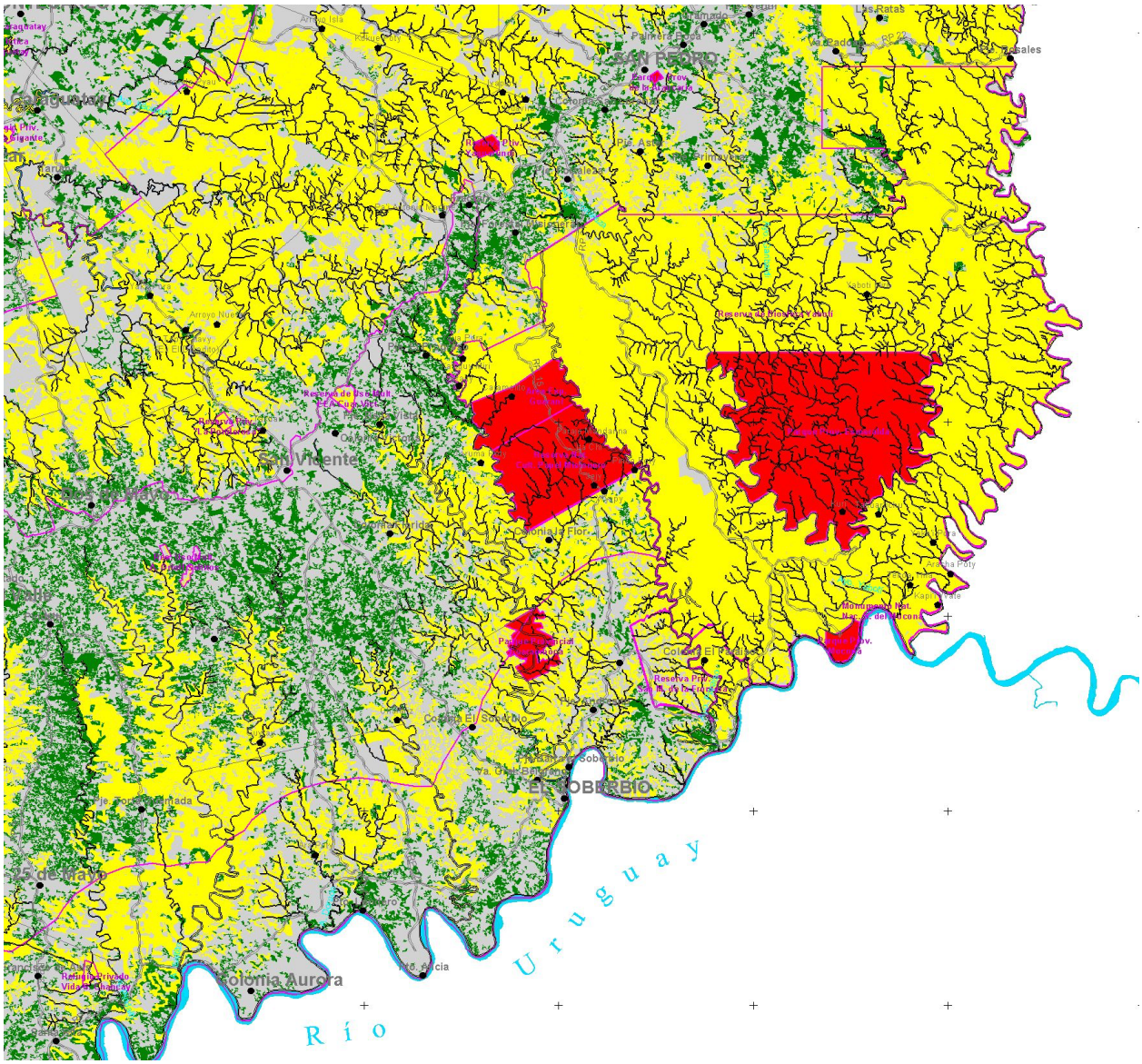

Figure 6: Excerpt of a map from the Native Forests Law of Misiones, Ley XVI Nº 105/2010, Anexo A

But property relations were also central to the distrust of the *Alianza* voiced by many of those opposed to the camino, offered as evidence that the Mbya communities had been deceived. As one park ranger argued during the September 2016 public hearing over the *camino*:

> *Nosotros estamos totalmente de acuerdo que ustedes tengan el camino [...] pero no podemos ser cómplices y mentirles que ese camino va a ser la solución para ustedes. Hay sobradas pruebas y casos en la provincia de Misiones donde lamentablemente los hemos usado a ustedes para llegar a fines que eran para nosotros [...] Al principio de esta Audiencia había fundamentos técnicos*

donde decían que los pueblos originarios solo vivían gracias a las áreas naturales protegidas[106] *[...] y hoy les hacen hablar de propiedades, cuando ustedes tienen su territorio y lo pueden conservar así. Hoy queremos delimitarlos. Me parece injusto y me da vergüenza.*

> We are completely in agreement that you [the Mbya] should have an access road [...] but we can't be accomplices and lie to you that this road will be the solution for you. There is too much evidence and too many cases in the province of Misiones where unfortunately we have used you in order to arrive at our own ends. At the beginning of this hearing there were technical foundations where they said that the native peoples have only lived thanks to the protected areas, and today they make you speak of property, when you have your territory and you have been able to conserve it that way. Today we want to delimit you. It seems unjust to me and it makes me ashamed.

His argument brings together several themes which, in diverse configurations, were repeated by my non-Indigenous interlocutors and across textual material, discursively linking Mbya lack of agency, state conservation land, and property within a narrative that subtly underwrites settler colonial territorial control through conservation imperatives. First, despite clear attestations within the transcripts of the public hearing of the process of collective Mbya decision-making which in support of the *camino,* the Mbya are perceived as manipulated for non-Indigenous ends. The generalized distrust of the *Alianza*, based in a distrust of the convergence of logging interests and 'English' territorial interests in Argentina[107], apparently undercuts the possibility that the Mbya could have asserted and negotiated their own desires within the conformation of the *Alianza* as an assemblage, as discussed in Chapter 2—and that they might continue to do so. Second, protected natural areas and particularly, those owned and managed by the state, are portrayed as ensuring the continuance of Indigenous lives and lifeways, thus, a road that threatens the integrity of Moconá

[106] This is an interpretation of the speaker, which appears to invert the earlier statements of the author of the technical study whose exposition in the transcript includes the statements: "no existe area natural protegida en Argentina que [sic] algún momento de su história no haya tenido presencia temporal o permanente del hombre / there doesn't exist a natural protected area in Argentina which [in] some moment of its history has not had the temporary or permanent presence of mankind" which he points to as a critique of the "paradigma proteccionista /protectionist paradigm" or fortress model of conservation; and, "Sabemos a partir de diversas producciones de la Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza-- UICN-- que la mitad de las culturas existentes son la expresiones de comunidades que habitan o son vecinas de áreas naturales protegidas. En otras palabras: la mitad de las culturas existentes en el mundo se manifiestan y se emplean en áreas naturales protegidas, hecho que las convierte en objeto de conservación, pero fundamentalmente de consideración. / We know through diverse publications of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature--IUCN--that half of the existing cultures are the expression of communities which are present or employ themselves in natural protected areas, a fact which converts them into objects of conservation, but fundamentally of consideration. (Translation note: I interpret "as convierte" to refer to comunidades, not áreas.]

[107] Latent anti-English sentiment in Argentina is a product of the Malvinas War, but also rooted in much longer histories of economic imperialism; to speak against an "English" land grab, as Lote 8 was frequently characterized directly and indirectly, occurs within a specific context of Argentine collective memory and identity.

threatens the Mbya. The Mbya are invoked as beneficiaries of state conservation, protected *through* environmental protection measures, therefore justifying state claims to land. Finally, property is perceived as a category foreign to the Mbya, with the designation of 'territory' (language frequently mobilized by *indigenista* organizations in Latin America to make human rights claims) as the proper category of land relations for Indigenous subjects, as discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

Of course, a central conflict for the Mbya communities in and around Lote 8 had been the fact that their 'territory' was contained within and subdivided among the property of several powerful landowners, thus exposing them to logging activities, quite literally, in the midst of their agricultural fields, and to the sale of their home in order to create a natural and cultural reserve, without their knowledge or consent, prior to the negotiated agreement resulting in communitarian land titles. The park ranger's reference to the territorial delimitation and constriction implied by property acknowledges the fundamental onto-epistemic disconnect between land organized as territory and land managed as property, without acknowledging the impasses faced by communities struggling for territory within intractable colonial property regimes (Anthias 2019).

Previous scholarship exploring the conflict over the *camino* to Lote 8 has framed it as a dispute over models of conservation and tourism in Misiones, reproducing the critique that the negotiated land titling process and construction of the *camino* are principally functional to ecotourism and new forms of extracting value from the selva. Cossi and Goméz (2015) examine the conflict during the period from 2012-2015, suggesting that the conflict over the *camino* is fundamentally a dispute over the "redistribution" of the selva as a resource for economic exploitation via tourism (2015: 12), while Ferrero (2020) argues that the case of Lote 8 is emblematic of a broader turn to "mercantile conservation" in the management of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve (and globally). In my own research, the broader trajectory the case of 'Lote 8' was discussed by several employees of the Ministry of Ecology as a linchpin in a series of conflicts and shifts within management frameworks of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, consistent with what other scholars have noted (Papalia, 2012; Ferrero, 2020). *'Porteño'* neo-rural environmental activists, students at the ISSP, and park rangers also described the conflict over the *camino* as a point of inflection, in which the perceived threat to the selva became a galvanizing moment for environmental consciousness and mobilization. For

instance, the rally against the *camino* I attended in 2017 transformed into the yearly *Festival de Yaboty*[108]*,* an environmentally-oriented festival in El Soberbio which I attended in 2019. Yet differently positioned actors situated the *camino* within different trajectories of conflict: students at the ISSP discussed the *camino* within a series of threats to the system of protected areas from governmental authorities, for instance, in the context of critiques of new concessions within Iguazú National Park, while neo-rural environmentalists saw it as a threat to the selva they had relocated to live in relationship with, contextualized by extractivism and the logging trucks they witnessed leaving Yabotí daily.

While framing the dispute over the selva in the political-economic terms other scholars have foregrounded might draw these differences into a unified narrative, I argue that the constant resurfacing of the conflict over the *camino* in conversations with research participants--often unprompted and several years after the most active moment of the conflict--demonstrates its centrality in shaping collective memory and subjectivities *in relation* to spatial processes. Through this reiteration, the *camino* operated as a locus for narrating or exemplifying how these differently positioned actors understood and produced themselves as conservationists. Therefore, the dispute over the *camino* provides an entry-point to trace how the production of conservation imaginaries, practices and spaces through this production of conservation subjectivities operates to replicate and extend settler colonialism as a territorial project. In the next section, I show how the frameworks of conservation management of those who opposed the *camino and* those who support it both operate from spatial paradigms which serve to limit Mbya territoriality and delegitimize territorial claims through settler property regimes, rendering Indigenous 'authenticity' a requirement for access to rights-based land claims.

[108] Even among government documents, the spelling of Yabotí varies. Yabotí is likely a hispanicized versión of a word for tortoise (jabuti) used in Brazil and derived from Tupi; Yabotí Guazu (big Yabotí) and Yabotí Miri (little Yabotí) are two streams within the Biosphere Reserve. As Cecilia Salinas (2016) points out, official documents suggest the name is Guarani for tortoise, yet tortoise is *karumbe* in Guarani; and *jaboticaba*, a fruit tree and alternate explanation for the name offered by one of Salinas's interlocutors, is *yva poru* in Mbya. This vague indexing of indigeneity through naming occurs simultaneously with the invisibilization of the Mbya territorial claims in the creation of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve.

4.3 The complementary exclusions of adjacent conservation frameworks

In August 2017, only a few weeks after the rally against the *camino*, I found myself in the Buenos Aires office of the conservation NGO that had been tasked with administering conservation with the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8. One conservation biologist explained to me his frustration with the process of trying to coordinate conservation planning with these communities, citing the *fundamental differences* between Guarani understandings of territory, property, and kinship relations, and those required for the conservation of a bounded area of forest. Most worrying for this scientist was Guarani "semi-nomadic" mobility, which, he believed, would ultimately destabilize the communitarian but fixed ownership on which conservation planning was predicated. Relegating Guarani cosmology to the realm of superstition, he asked me, *"Y qué pasa si les baja una estrella y deciden irse?/* What happens [to the conservation agreement] if there's a falling star and they decide to leave?"

Argentine and Brazilian anthropologists who have been active supporters of Mbya Guarani territorial struggles have emphasized the importance of mobility in structuring Guarani conceptualizations of territory as networked and socially produced through kinship relations articulated in movement between communities and shifting patterns of land use (Salamanca, 2012; Pradella, 2009). Conversely, to fix territory to Cartesian space objectifies the site of environmental management (Martinez-Reyes, 2016) and reiterates settler conceptualizations of land as a quantifiable commodity. Historically, settler assertions of the unfixed nature of Mbya Guarani socio-environmental practices have been used to justify colonization of Mbya territory (Soares 2012). In Central-Eastern Misiones, these same claims about the unsettled territorial practices of the Mbya also justified their exclusion from the management of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve at the time of its creation (Ferrero, 2005; Ferrero, 2020), as discussed in Chapter 3. Thus, both the discursive devaluing of relational practices as an alternate form of environmental management *and* conservation regimes predicated on the control of mobility operate to limit Mbya territorial production, autonomy, and sovereignty.

Yet while ontological difference was, at most, flattened to "belief" (de la Cadena, 2015) by conservationists in the discussions of Mbya environmental management in Lote 8, the environmental practices of the Mbya were constantly subject to scrutiny in ways that persistently undermined the

legitimacy of Mbya territorial claims. In an April 2014 letter to the local delegation of the Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racismo (INADI) the Guarani leaders assembled in a *aty ñechyrõ* (an assembly of leaders) made a formal complaint against five park rangers, quoting a phrase attributed to them which had apparently appeared in a local news source:

> *"Pero si alguna de las comunidades decidiera que debería estar más cerca de los servicios que ofrece la sociedad occidental, lo razonable pasaría porque [sic] esta comunidad se traslade"*
>
> If one of the communities were to decide that it should be closer to the services offered by Western society, what would be reasonable would be for that community to relocate.

In interviews in 2019, several *Defensores* repeated to me this seemingly common-sense argument that if the communities of Lote 8 wanted access beyond the *selva*, instead of cutting a road through Moconá, they should relocate to areas or communities near existing roads. As one environmental activist stated:

> *Para mí o estás ahí en este lugar tratando de conservar tus costumbres que no tienen nada que ver con la intervención del hombre blanco en tu vida, que no sé si puede ser posible mientras nos sigue disminuyendo la selva, porque ellos viven de eso [...] O salir. […] Entonces también veo una contradicción. En querer permanecer en este ambiente selvático para conservar su cultura que es fantástico y sería tan bueno, o estar en ese ambiente y gozar de esos servicios que pueden disfrutar en otro ambiente que no sea ahí.*
>
> For me, or you're in that place, trying to conserve your customs which have nothing to do with the intervention of the white man in your life, which I don't know if that's possible while our selva is continually reduced, because they [the Mbya] live from that [...] Or leave. [….] I see a contradiction, in wanting to stay in this jungle environment to conserve their culture, which is fantastic and would be great, or being in this environment and having access to services which they can enjoy somewhere else.

With recourse to familiar tropes of 'authentic' indigeneity situated in wild spaces, here the legitimacy of Mbya claims are evaluated against a conceptualization of Mbya cultural purity, located within an also pure, virgin *selva*, and contrasted with access to services (health, infrastructure) within the domain of the "white man". If the Mbya want to access services through the construction of the *camino*, it is suggested, their territorial claims to *selva* appear questionable. Interestingly, as our conversation continued, none of the sites for relocation proposed by this activist were titled to the Mbya communities[109] who lived there. By

[109] One involved a legal agreement between a Mbya Guarani community and a private conservation reserve within

delegitimizing the right to accessibility in the form of the *camino* required of the state in generating new property boundaries, the importance of land rights, so crucial for the continuance of Mbya life in the *selva,* was simultaneously trivialized.

For conservationists directly involved in Lote 8 who supported the *camino*, the legal right to claim Indigenous communitarian property was also tied to problematic notions of Indigenous authenticity, and always already suspect. One NGO worker involved in Lote 8 lamented *"...el cacique está vestido de Nike...y al final soy yo quien está luchando para defender su cultura… /* the chief is wearing Nike…and at the end of the day I'm the one fighting to defend his culture". Those involved in conservation planning in Lote 8 were dismissive of the sustainability of Indigenous environmental management practices, flattening the diversity of practices and experiences in the process. Clearly, even achieving legibility within settler colonial property regimes was not enough to solidify Mbya territory, as its legitimacy could always be undermined by a failure to meet standards of Indigenous authenticity or adequately and legibly perform conservation.

In tracing the history of Lote 8, Ferrero (2020) suggests that the struggle over the *camino* represents a conflict between opposing conservation paradigms, as conservation moves from *conservación integral* (or community-based conservation) to *conservación mercantile* (mercantile conservation), a form of conservation for profit. The struggle over the *camino* could also be interpreted as a clash between a neoliberal conservation model based on an "*Alianza Multicultural Pública y Privada* / Multicultural Public-Private Partnership" in the case of Lote 8, and one that reifies the state as the custodian of conservation land as a public good through the protection of a provincial park. However, provincial conservation land in Misiones is in no way exempt from the neoliberalization of environmental management, and is increasingly managed through privately-funded initiatives and international cooperation (Gómez and Ferrero 2011), the effects of which are explored in the following section. It is through conservation that competing frameworks of environmental management make claims about—and attempt to exert control over—Indigenous movement and territorial practices in the adjacent spaces of Lote 8 and Moconá Provincial Park. The concern that circulated in NGO conservation planning conversations about Lote 8 was with fixed

Yabotí which had ceded use--with specific territorial restrictions--to the community.

occupancy and ownership by the Mbya Guarani, which required rendering particular communities legible and defining their role and mobility *within* bounded conservation land, titled to them as collective property. The concern articulated by *Defensores,* on the other hand, was to define the exclusive parameters of "untouchable" state conservation property, thus representing Mbya Guarani mobility *outside* of bounded conservation land, yet beneficiaries of it. The central ontological framework through which conservation was narrated remained that of property, legible through the epistemology of the law.

In the following section, I complicate the apparent fixity of state conservation property "untouchability" suggests with an examination of the role of provincial park rangers in producing conservation spaces. Through their embodied labor, park rangers bring provincial parks into being as state land, as both precaritized conservation workers and relational subjects critical to the production and circulation of conservation discourse, as seen in the dispute over the *camino*. Shifting the focus from conservation imaginaries to the social production of conservation spaces, I demonstrate how conservation labor is fundamental to enacting and reinforcing settler colonial claims to land.

4.4 Socially constituted conservation property and precaritized conservation labor

In May 2018, on our way to Ca'a Yarí, a provincial park near the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve that exists—socially—without a formal creation law, the park ranger I was traveling with suggested that the amount of available land in Misiones offered temporary protection against the occupation of provincial parks by *colonos*. He added grimly: "*Pero cuando se acaba la tierra, van a venir por los parques* / When the land runs out, they'll come for the parks". He and other park rangers suggested that it was through their physical presence in land allocated for conservation that park rangers maintain state conservation property: after the donation of the land to the province, Ca'a Yarí became a park because rangers took turns filling weekly shifts there. Ca'a Yari Provincial Park was *enacted* through the presence of park rangers on the land, their surveillance of park boundaries, and their relationships with neighbors of the park, even in the absence of a definitive legal framework. Several times park rangers told me the contrasting story of nearby Provincial Park Guarembocá, created in 2006 by provincial law 4258 (now provincial law XVI Nº 88). Although it continues to exist on paper, Guarembocá was never brought into being socially through the presence of

park rangers in their function *as* the Ministry of Ecology; by the time the Ministry arrived to occupy the space physically, the park had become a *colonia,* deforested and occupied by small-scale agricultural producers.

Kiik (2018) refers to conservationists as "missing ethnographic subjects" arguing that while much political ecology literature in anthropology focuses on the conservation "encounter", there has been little attention to the social worlds and meaning-making of conservation actors themselves. The work of park rangers and park guards, in particular, has been undertheorized in political ecologies of conservation, despite the importance of their embodied labor in producing and maintaining conservation spaces and subjects--and the borders and boundaries between them (Joslin 2020; Mendoza 2018; Sodikoff 2009; Pennaz 2017; Valdivia, Wolford and Lu 2014). In Misiones, the embodied experiences of local conservation actors are central to producing the *selva misionera* as an object of conservation. The experiences of provincial park rangers, as workers employed by the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources in a time of budget cuts where external funding and "projects" increasingly determine the work they realize (even within provincial parks), offer key insights for understanding conservation—and conservation struggles.

Gonzaléz-Hidalgo and Zografos (2020) suggest that emotional political ecologies allow us to interrogate the role of emotions in shaping subjectivities in the context of environmental conflicts, pointing to the importance of engaging emotions in political ecology in order to better understand the power asymmetries in human-environment geographies. I draw from emotional political ecologies (Sultana 2015; Gonzalez-Hidalgo 2020; Singh 2013) in order to prioritize the emotional dimensions of the production of collective park ranger subjectivities in relation to the production of the 'public' spaces of provincial parks in Misiones, Argentina and their politicization as underpaid workers. Dismissal of park rangers' opposition to the *camino* as capricious, controlling or possessive in relation to parks diminishes the importance of their labor in producing these spaces socially at the same time as their material care for biodiversity and ecological relationships is entangled with their production as neoliberal subjects. Simultaneously, the social production of provincial parks through the labor and social relations of park rangers not only operates to territorialize the settler state (as I'll discuss in the next section): they are also embodied settler claims to land through labor. In this section, I broaden my discussion from the conservation imaginaries deployed in

the dispute over the *camino,* to examine how the everyday reiteration of settler colonial territoriality through environmental management occurs through the co-constitution of conservation subjects and conservation spaces.

The creation of the first provincial parks of Misiones in the early 90s was accompanied by the creation of the category of provincial park rangers, whose powers and responsibilities were legally consolidated with a provincial law in 2003. This first generation of park rangers employed by the Ministry of Ecology are known as the *"baquianos"*, a term used to refer to a rural man intimately familiar with local terrain; these *baquianos* were often men who were already living in or near the area in question before its creation as a provincial park. In 1997 a *tecnicatura* (approximately, an associate's degree) was created in San Pedro, Misiones to educate future park rangers, representing an important shift in how these conservation workers were produced, understood, and understood themselves.[110] The professionalization of park rangers marked a change in labor relations, as the formally educated park ranger as *"técnico"* was no longer simply a local man essentially fulfilling the role of caretaker in the area where he lived, but a worker, employed in conservation.[111]

During the course of fieldwork I formally interviewed or conversed at length with approximately twenty park rangers. Many of these had entered the Ministry of Ecology in 2005-2007, during a phase of abundant hiring that coincided with other investments in the promotion of the selva as a product for ecotourist consumption, such as the paving of provincial route 2 to Moconá Provincial Park. These formally

[110] Students I spoke with at the ISSP came from all over Argentina; some aspired to enter the National Park Service, others planned to return to their home province, still others had become involved in local conservation, agroecological or environmental education projects and planned to stay in Misiones.

[111] While it exceeds the scope of this chapter, there are important dimensions of park rangers' positionalities (particularly gender and regional identification) which shape the evolving relationship between conservation workers and conservation spaces. Environmental education was clearly perceived as the site of gendered care, and within the province of Misiones the few female park rangers were frequently assigned to environmental education activities, sometimes contrary to their own interests; every presentation or activity I attended in Misiones on environmental education was coordinated by women. I formally interviewed three female park rangers currently employed by the Ministry of Ecology, and another who had previously worked in provincial parks and now works in a private conservation area within Yabotí. One woman I spoke with in the office of AMIRBY but did not formally interview estimated that there are approximately twenty female park rangers of about 120 employed by the Ministry. The majority of the provincial park rangers I spoke with were from Misiones, but many were from other areas of the province, particularly more urban areas in the south of the province. Recently, a few Mbya park rangers have been incorporated into the provincial park system, (making up 2-3% of the total number of rangers); though not among those I formally interviewed, the Mbya ranger I spoke with described his *labor* in terms consistent with the broader *structures* of settler state territoriality examined in this article.

educated park rangers talked about everyday frictions with the *baquianos* and being "tested" in the field, a dynamic one park ranger argued had led to a carelessness with the technical work for which educated park rangers were uniquely qualified, as they attempted to be as "rough" as their *baquiano* counterparts in survival skills and control and enforcement. As *baquianos* retire or effectively leave duty, many newer park rangers agree that a "technical" park staff is an important improvement on the provincial park systems' beginnings. Yet the resources for actually exercising their profession within parks are limited, and this general lack of funding results in having to make difficult decisions between which essential duties to fulfill; park rangers often mentioned using money from their meager salaries to fill in the gaps.

While the defunding of provincial parks was lamented as making their jobs more difficult, it was suggested to me that as *técnicos,* park rangers were poised to seek funding external to the Ministry (which many had) through international cooperation and NGOs. What differentiates the technical park ranger is not only a set of skills, but the application of that expertise to obtain external funding, as one park ranger explained:

> *a partir de que el técnico comenzó a [...] desarrollar proyectos [...] y conseguir fondos ahí recién se comenzó a diferenciar de su colega baquiano. Pero si no, si no hacía eso, no se diferenciaba nunca. Por qué? Porque las tareas cotidianas de cortar el pasto, de mantener camiones, vehículos y de hacer mecánica es un trabajo que también lo puede hacer un baquiano. Cuando ensayas tu grado de expertise cuando vos agarrás, te sentás y escribís o leés y escribís un proyecto de educación ambiental, investigación o de uso de...una gestión, digamos.*
>
> when the *técnico* began to develop projects and obtain funds, that was when they began to differentiate themselves from their *baquiano* colleague. But if not, if they didn't do that, they would never be different. Why? Because the everyday work of cutting the grass, maintaining trucks and vehicles, and mechanical work, that's a job that the *baquiano* can also do. When you demonstrate your level of expertise is when you apply yourself, you sit down and write, or read and write a project, environmental education, research or use of...management, let's say.

In other words, even as state employees, park rangers as *técnicos* were produced as neoliberal conservation subjects, able to compete on the market for NGO and international cooperation funding in order to properly care for and bring into being the parks in their care in the context of state funding shortages. To be an effective "*técnico*" is to subsidize state conservation, drawing on commitments of care and affective relationships in order to expand funding sources, reflecting similar dynamics to those discussed by other scholars in the context of low-wage or underpaid conservation work (Joslin 2020,

Sodikoff 2009). In fact, it seemed that many, if not all, of the projects of which park rangers proudly spoke (such environmental education programs) or which they demonstrated to me (such as greenhouses for the reproduction of native plants) had been funded through national or international NGOs or international cooperation initiatives. In one strange example I experienced while visiting a park, funding from the multi-phase research project of an academic from North America was channeled through the Ministry of Ecology to provide basic equipment, such as uniforms for park rangers; hired researchers from this project acted nominally as park rangers, filling in gaps in the shift schedule to keep the park continuously occupied.

Nearly all the park rangers I spoke with mentioned their ongoing struggles for a decent salary and working conditions as unionized state employees; one described, in tears, his frustration at not being able to provide a future for his son while working full time. Provincial park rangers typically work week-long shifts within the park, followed by a week off—during which some worked a second job, often in private conservation reserves. Many mentioned marital conflicts due to their time away from home, struggles with depression and alcohol due to isolation, and difficulty adjusting to life when off-duty; I was told the shift system of provincial parks "*desestructura la familia* / unstructures the family". Several suggested that they are perceived by the Ministry of Ecology as disposable and interchangeable laborers, despite the fact that they constantly emphasized to me that their work relies on the interpersonal relations between park rangers and with local residents, and, I argue, it is their embodied labor that socially constitutes state spaces of conservation. Another park ranger argued that although park rangers *were* the Ministry on the ground, they were seen as simply "*cumpliendo una función* / filling a role", a holdover, he suggested, from the time of the *baquianos*—the perception of the park ranger as little more than a caretaker. However, he said, park rangers who sought to educate themselves or further specialize were not allowed to progress because "*el Ministerio quiere gente sumisa* / the Ministry wants people who are submissive". While the lack of state support made external funding necessary for the community-engaged work so essential to socially producing provincial parks, park rangers and former and current employees of AMIRBY spoke of facing criticism and resistance from their own Ministry as they asserted their autonomy carrying out externally funded environmental education and conservation projects.

The territorial effect of their personal investments in state conservation property--economic,

emotional, and embodied--combined with the extensive amount of time living within the parks, was a blurring of the boundaries of belonging. The analogy of parks as "home" which I often heard from park rangers was unsurprisingly reflected in a letter from a park ranger which accompanied a technical report filed in the dispute over the *camino*. He describes the care taken by park rangers assisting with technical studies, "*demostrando su conocimiento y experiencia dentro de Parque Provincial Moconá, que muchos de nosotros lo conocemos con sus fortalezas y debilidades como nuestras propias casa* [sic] / demonstrating their knowledge and experience within Moconá Provincial Park, which may of us know with its strengths and weaknesses as we do our own home." Later in this same letter, this relationship of care is invoked as a moral basis for the implied opposition to a road through the park, "*esperando [...] que no se vea como un capricho de Guarda parques [sic] que desempeñan sus funciones con compromiso social en defensa del medio Ambiente en todos los Parques de la Provincia* / in the hope [...] that it isn't seen as a whim of park rangers who carry out their duties with social commitment in defense of the environment in all the parks of the province."

While not all park rangers opposed the *camino* to Lote 8, it was in this context that the conflict was repeatedly narrated to me by park rangers: as a struggle for integrity, as underpaid conservation workers, against the back-door dealings of the Ministry of Ecology with powerful politicians and businessmen. The fact that park rangers understand themselves as protecting the integrity of "public" property suggests that the fight against the *camino* was more than simply a bargaining chip in park rangers' ongoing labor struggles and negotiations with the Ministry, as conservationists involved in Lote 8 suggested in interviews and archival documents. A labor conflict must be situated in how the park ranger's labor is constituted and experienced—what park rangers understand their labor to be and do."Defending" Moconá was a defense of the functions given to them by law, and of the sovereignty of park rangers as authorities in the spaces of provincial parks: within the property that was theirs to protect and care for, they refused to permit the intrusion of interests and actions which they perceived as contrary to those established by law for the protection of a public good. As one park ranger described it, the struggle over the *camino* was "*un conflicto entre la ley y el Ministerio* / a conflict between the law and the Ministry [of Ecology]"; park rangers were defending the law which had designated Moconá as *zona roja*.

Following their actions and political organization against the *camino*, many of the park rangers who worked in Moconá were reassigned to other parks (a process they referred to as *traslados de castigo,* or "punishment transfers") in the midst of a series of other reassignments which they argued existed to depoliticize the circumstances of their relocation, and which trivialized the fundamentally relational, place-based, and place-making labor of conservation realized by park rangers. Though they fought against these reassignments collectively to some success, the struggle against the *camino* continues to be narrated as a key *event* that shapes how these park rangers understand themselves, their collectivities, their allies and their enemies (even among peers and superiors). While some of those who supported the construction of the *camino* characterized the opposition of the park rangers as an egocentric play for territorial control over the park, in the conflict over the *camino* something more intimate was also at stake. Spaces and subjects come into being together (Massey 2005), and while they socially constituted state conservation property through their labor and presence, provincial park rangers were also constituted by these parks as devalued laborers, squeezed by state defunding of conservation and the neoliberal "project" mentality of external funding. The deeply personal identification of park rangers with the struggle against the *camino* through Moconá—to the point that receiving support from the local community was described to me by two different park rangers as a form of *recognition* of park rangers as subjects—demonstrates that environmental management regimes are fundamentally affective and *embodied*. Settler colonial territorial control exerted through conservation frameworks is (also) enacted through the everyday practices and relationships that produce both conservation spaces and conservation subjects.

The conservation labor of park rangers exists at a tension between affective ecologies of care (Singh 2018) and control in the form of environmentality and the territorialization of state power. While park rangers work to reproduce the selva, obtaining funds for native plant nurseries and the reproduction of endangered tree species, like the *pino Paraná* (*Araucaria angustifolia)*[112]*,* they are themselves disciplined as conservation subjects. Park rangers, in effect, negotiate the same regime of neoliberal conservation which had led to land titles for the Mbya Guarani communities of Lote 8. While they certainly contribute to

[112] An endemic subtropical variety of araucaria, or monkey puzzle tree, and provincial monument (protected species) in Misiones.

constituting the discourses of legitimacy where those land rights are situated with respect to environmental management, through struggles against the *camino,* park rangers also articulated a parallel and competing claim to conservation citizenship, as neoliberal conservation workers. Nevertheless, through their labor, park rangers also work to discipline other subjects and spaces for conservation and the nation in the production of conservation territories. In the following section, I extend this discussion of conservation labor, expanding beyond the scale of individual parks to examine the environmental management practices of (b)ordering (Valdivia, Wolford and Lu 2014) which operate simultaneously with and through the borders of protected areas and national territory. Through this simultaneity, conservation produces and reifies the settler colonial state and the bodies and populations which do and don't belong as subjects of management within these (b)orders.

4.5 Conservation as a project of boundaries and bordering in the borderlands

As Valdivia, Wolford and Lu (2014) discuss, protected areas are made and enacted beyond their borders, through "leakages" and "border-crossings". In Misiones, this movement across borders--neighborly gestures, prohibited fishing--is part of the social production of provincial parks. But the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve and its area of influence is constituted through *two* superimposed borderland spaces and imaginaries. The first is the borderlands of Brazilian "leakage": embodied by poachers, but also by *colonias*, in the *portuñol* spoken by high schoolers, and in the small boats I've shared with construction materials and appliances, ferried across the river just upstream of the border guards to evade customs. The second is the zoned conservation borderlands of Yabotí, designed to incorporate managed native timber extraction around the core conservation areas of the provincial parks, with a varied history of integrating Mbya communities and neighboring *colonias* into management decision-making processes (Ferrero, 2005; Salinas 2016). The tension between managing these two borderlands is integral to how settler colonialism operates through environmental management, relying on border-crossings to territorialize the borders of the nation, the boundaries of conservation, and the subjects produced through both.

One park ranger and avid botanist explained to me that the concentration of the remaining *selva paranaense* nearly exclusively in Misiones was due in part to the fortuity of national borders: whereas

Paraguay and Brazil historically possessed a much greater area of *selva paranaense,* their warmer climates meant that the subtropical forest contained comparatively richer soils for agriculture (and thus, the *selva* has all but disappeared, replaced by extensive soy plantations on either side of Misiones); in temperate Argentina, the subtropical *selva* covered some of the country's least agriculturally productive soils.[113] While Misiones remained politically and economically marginalized (compared to the wealthy states of Southern Brazil on the other side of the border), it was also produced as a frontier. In other conversations, this narrative of conservation as a national—if coincidental—success often resulted in a concomitant condemnation of the style of colonization/land clearing associated with the largely Brazilian immigration in the area of influence of the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve: deforestation was *inherently culturally Brazilian*[114]*.* Meanwhile, poachers who cross the international border from Brazil with firearms were seen as a principal threat to both conservation and the physical integrity of park rangers, since the penalties for these poachers if they are caught are much more severe than those for *colonos* settled in Argentina and others who hunt and fish illegally within protected areas. Border-crossing poachers, I was told, were transgressing "national sovereignty"; as armed foreign nationals, their actions were materially comparable to invasion. Over and over, I heard variations on the statements "Now that they've destroyed their *selva*, Brazilians cross the border to hunt here," or, "Now that they've run out of land, Brazilians settle and deforest here."

The *selva* and its conservation were frequently invoked to position Misiones within Argentina and in relation to the border nations of Brazil and Paraguay, moving capital and political power through the promotion of what a conservation biologist referred to as the *selva* as the "product" of Misiones, while also positioning different types of people and their relationships and uses of the *selva* through conservation

[113] In a lecture at the ISSP, anthropologist Brián Ferrero went so far as to suggest that if the 1885 'Fallo Cleveland' (in which land disputed between Brazil and Argentina was given to Brazil) had gone the other way, Misiones would not only be twice as large, but there would be twice as much selva. Having gone instead to Brazil, this land was deforested and now largely dedicated to industrial agriculture.

[114] In her study of "Los sin tierra" (the landless) of Misiones, Bidaseca (2012) points to the racialization and "foreignization" of difference in the Río Uruguay borderlands of Central Eastern Misiones in the area of El Soberbio. She argues: "Partiendo de la hipótesis de la existencia "de un *racismo nacionalista de clase* (...) cuando los depositarios de las prácticas de exclusión y estigmatización son la/os inmigrantes brasileños", la investigación descubre un mecanismo que oculta un proceso de *extranjerización del excluido* a partir de los parámetros de racialización de las cualidades del "extranjero" que acaban empleándose para justificar la exclusión y la desciudadanización de los propios connacionales" (p 17).

practice. In this sense, knowing and naming the *selva paranaense* as *selva misionera* is also a border-making claim. The making of (national) conservation subjects relies on state conservation territoriality to make proper (non-Indigenous) settlers *and* simultaneously hardens the national border; conservation therefore both extends and supports settler land appropriation *and* justifies the settler state presence.

While the securitization of environmental management serves to militarize borders and produce "foreign" threats to conservation (Ybarra 2016; Ybarra 2017), in Misiones in particular, conservation also functions to create state territorial presence in the frontier (Freitas 2016).[115] Repeatedly, the dual function of conservation-related state presence was invoked by park rangers: the defense of "natural patrimony" from foreign threats and the making of national conservation subjects. Park rangers and other representatives of the Ministry of Ecology discussed how they were perceived *as* the state in the marginalized/frontier region of Central-Eastern Misiones, where environmental education and outreach blended with other types of service provision, as park rangers act as a point of contact that bridges opaque state bureaucracy. For instance, park rangers discussed delivering goods and state donations to Mbya communities within Yabotí, or filling out and delivering paperwork to the appropriate institutions for neighbors who needed road maintenance. In the everyday work of constituting conservation spaces socially, park rangers often mentioned the importance of visiting neighbors to discuss the park as an accessible public space that should be collectively cared for—they argued these visits and small neighborly gestures helped shift the perception that park rangers were nature police who only existed to catch local residents in environmental infractions. Even so, others pointed to the legal sovereignty given to park rangers within the space of provincial parks: park rangers produced state conservation property both through neighborly relations that extended beyond the space of the park, and as authorities within its boundaries—often mediating between the two.

[115] As Freitas demonstrates, the nationalization of border zones has been a key role of Argentina's state conservation initiatives since their inception. Argentina's National Park System was conceived based on the conservation model of the United States (i.e. strict conservation of vast tracts of "wilderness"), but the initial mandate of the National Park System emphasized the creation of state presence through large parks (such as Nahuel Huapi National Park, on the Chilean border, and Iguazú National Park, established in 1934 on the Brazilian border at the northwestern corner of the province of Misiones) and planned settler colonization, in order to "Argentinize" the borderlands against foreign threats to sovereignty, subordinating conservation to development through colonization (Freitas, 2018; Freitas 2016; see also Mendoza 2018).

The international border marks a hard limit to this relational construction of conservation space, however. One park ranger and instructor at the ISSP was unequivocal in his assertion that the work of producing conservation subjects ends at the border: crossing it, Brazilians could only be threats.

> *realmente hay que prepararse que las áreas protegidas de frontera hay que prepararse un poquito más. Sí, es una problemática, pero cuando hablamos de infractores ya no nacionales, como que la actividad de educación ambiental y extensión quedan subordinadas a solo fiscalización. Porque incluso, por lo que te acabo de decir digamos puede que no sea la simple cazaría, la cazaría sea el derivado de que está en el monte y tuvo la oportunidad pero está en el monte para otra cosa, sí? Entonces eso es lo que voy, eh, es importante estar, por eso yo te digo, control y vigilancia para el vecino para el que es un cazador digamos cultural, si necesita educación ambiental y extensión, pero no para el internacional, es más complicado.*
>
> Really you have to prepare yourself, that the protected areas of the border you have to prepare yourself a little more. Yeah, it's an issue, but when we're talking about foreign offenders, it's as though the activity of environmental education and extension are subordinated to enforcement. Because, in fact…it may be that it isn't just simply hunting, that hunting was a derivative of being in the wilderness for something else, yeah? So, that's what I'm saying, it's important, that's why I am telling you, control and surveillance for the man who is, let's say, a cultural hunter, yes, he needs environmental education and extension, but not for the international [hunter], it's more complicated.

Like the international border, the property lines of provincial parks are also boundaries to be defended, as the conflict over the *camino* suggests. The notion of park rangers as a defense against invasions of state property was in part reproduced through the physical practices of patrolling. Due to the physical risks, heavy understaffing within individual parks, and general lack of funds for gasoline from the Ministry, patrols were often carried out in groups between the park rangers assigned to several parks in the region. The vast areas which these small groups (whose availability was limited by their responsibilities in other parks) were expected to surveil meant that typically they patrolled the more accessible perimeters of the parks, which is to say, the boundaries of property[116]. Despite park rangers' constant emphasis on outreach and neighborly relations as making their work possible, they very much understood themselves as defending the integrity of the property of the state (as a *bien común*/public good).

Even so, the tensions between models of policing state conservation property were something that

[116] This was typically done by walking the *rumbos,* footpaths that demarcate property boundaries. As a physical practice, walking *rumbos* is as much a form of policing park boundaries as it is a form of marking and maintaining property limits.

several park rangers mentioned. It is only recently that park rangers are legally allowed to carry guns if they have a license. Patrolling for poachers necessarily implies the risk of encountering armed hunters in the course of exercising one's job, but since park rangers had to pay for the cost of the license themselves, many carry and use guns without a license. The park rangers with whom I conducted participant observation were frequently armed—on our visit to Ca'a Yarí, just after explaining the new law and his lack of a license, the park ranger I was with casually placed a shotgun in the truck before we got in. Without the right to be armed, park patrols were to be carried out in collaboration with police or *gendarmería* (a military force analogous to border police), but park rangers complained that both of these forces operate from a military model which does not require them to be *socially* accountable to infractors. Park rangers recounted stories of patrols with police or *gendarmería* where hunters' dogs were shot, or the hunters themselves were mistreated and humiliated. These park rangers felt that this adversarial dynamic was ineffective and dangerous, as it ultimately undermined both the slow work of generating relationships, and the physical safety of park rangers themselves, isolated and exposed in park outposts. One park ranger explained:

> *Vos tenés que mediar, porque si no ya vas a tener un problema con el vecino. Entonces eso fue más el reto, cómo mediar entre una ley que tenías que aplicar y ver también la situación en que estaba el vecino y ver cómo mediar [...] para que no sea tan cortante, viste, que haya esta relación.*
>
> You have to compromise, because if not you're going to have a problem with the neighbor. This was really the challenge, how to compromise between a law that you have to apply, and also look at the situation of the neighbor and see how you can compromise [...] so it's not so abrupt, you see, so that there can be this relationship.

As she makes clear, in the labor of socially producing conservation spaces, the boundary-making work of patrolling and enforcement always required some flexibility so as not to risk neighborly relationships.

Within Argentina, conservation and the state are produced together through the embodied labor of park rangers, making national conservation subjects even of "Brazilian" *colonos;* but Brazilian poachers are produced *by* the border at the same time as they reiterate it, becoming the justification for its militarization in the name of conservation. This assertion of sovereignty through conservation, in turn reinforces settler state control over space.

4.6 Conclusions on (settler) conservation territoriality

In this chapter, I have explored the rearticulation of settler colonial territoriality through environmental management as the *selva misionera* is revalorized as an object of conservation and "product" of the province of Misiones, Argentina. I have demonstrated this through (1) the role of conservation property in restricting Mbya mobility (2) the subversion of Mbya territorial claims through requirements of an 'authentic' indigeneity grounded in non-Indigenous conservation imaginaries (3) the co-production of state conservation property and precaritized state conservation workers in ways that reify their interiorization of conservation imaginaries of bounded conservation space to be protected (4) the role of conservation narratives and practices in the production of national conservation subjects, foreign conservation threats, and the international border itself, legitimating the settler state and its territorial claims through conservation. In the Río Uruguay borderlands, these entangled articulations of conservation practice increasingly tighten the operations of environmental governance as a territorial project of 'legitimate' land claims and 'proper' management. Conservation visions involve material land claims and abilities to make them, and the onto-epistemic regimes that organize land management. Crucially, I argue that the conservation imaginaries of legitimacy and authenticity that are deployed in the multi-year conflict over the *camino* to Lote 8 are grounded in the relational and embodied spatial practices of conservation labor, which socially bring provincial parks into being as conservation spaces and reiterate the 'national' through the transformation of settlers into a (potential) conservation subjects. Thus, the histories of colonial and settler colonial expansion that have produced deforestation in the Río Uruguay borderlands are renewed through conservation governance and the newly valorized *selva*-as-product.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

In this dissertation, I sought to understand the transformation of the multicultural rights regimes of Latin America's 'territorial turn' through conservation in Misiones, Argentina. Through Lote 8, I have made an argument about the invisibilized causes and unexpected consequences of the recognition of Indigenous land rights and access to Indigenous communitarian property through transnational investments in conservation. I argue that the "rupture" of the purchase of Lote 8 is continuous with and an extension of the racialization of the relationship between indigeneity and property that renders Mbya Guarani communities land "users" and stewards, "territorial" and always outside of property. Yet by "returning" territory as property through a land purchase, the investment in conservation through which the three Mbya communities received titles buffers the inherent instability of settler colonialism against the challenge of Indigenous land claims grounded in the constitutional recognition of the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Indigenous people to the Nation, which, if honored, would disrupt the entire system of property relations within civil law in Argentina. At the same time, recognition through conservation *destabilizes* the legitimacy of Mbya claims to Indigenous territory, by requiring that the Mbya Guarani communities transparently perform conservation—as determined by non-indigenous environmentalists—to deserve land rights. More broadly, I argue that accessing land titles through conservation entangles "rights" with environmental management as it operates as a mode of extending settler colonial territorial control through the everyday enactment of conservation spaces by conservation workers. In other words, as demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, land rights achieved through conservation are constrained by conservation environmentality in two ways: through the requirements of authenticity and performances of conservation by the Mbya Guarani, and through the making of settler colonial conservation territories through conservation labor and imaginaries.

By revealing my interactions with the network of 'Lote 8' through the ethnographic process of 'access' in Chapter 2, I showed how Lote 8 is produced and stabilized through the power relations of a multi-scalar network. What I imagined Lote 8 was—and what I imagined possible from Lote 8, was transformed in the course of fieldwork, yet this transformation was illustrative in understanding the politics of representing Lote 8 through conservation as a case of 'Indigenous rights resolved' in international spaces, like the United Nations, or to international audiences of conservation donors in congratulatory

messaging from the purchasing land trust. Chapter 3 traced the conditions of possibility of the land purchase –the failures of state recognition—and its continuity with earlier forms of dispossession where the Mbya were rendered spatially invisible by their presumed spatial unfixity ("semi-nomadism") or, in later iterations, their discursive construction as "territorial" subjects. These constructions of the Mbya as territorial were deployed to exclude them from property, and from making successful claims to property through the law, even as 'territory' was articulated as a claim in the legal struggle over Lote 8. The racialized conceptualization of the Mbya Guarani as territorial, with property ensured through conservation, subtly suggests that the Mbya can never be never fully recognized as property owners—or that, as several non-Indigenous interviewees suggested to me, the Mbya were only really interested in usufruct rights—so that ownership even in titled land somehow rests in conservation. Criticizing the outcomes of the land purchase, the then-director of Guarani Affairs told me, tellingly, that Lote 8 was the "*única tierra britanica* / only British land" in Misiones.[117]

However, conservation territories are multiple and contested, they exist simultaneously and in relation. The conservation governance regimes of Central-Eastern Misiones are not fully consolidated; they can be interpolated and reworked. The limits of the 'recognition' of rights through conservation do not diminish the persistence of the Mbya Guarani throughout the struggle for their land, nor the affective importance of land titles for providing security, which continues to make possible the reproduction of Mbya worlds and the envisioning of Mbya futures. In the context of ongoing logging in the territory of established communities in Misiones and the violence, threats and harassment experienced by Mbya *retomadas* as Mbya communities reoccupy their ancestral territory in Argentina and Brazil, titled land is a substantial material achievement. "Conservation citizenship", as a position from which to articulate a claim to rights and legitimate belonging, is not only a space produced through exclusion; it is also a space claimed, and fashioned in this claiming. In narrating their participation in the struggle for Lote 8, none of the three Mbya

[117] This characterization is obviously incorrect, and while it may speak in part to the tensions between the Provincial Office of Guarani Affairs (Dirección Provincial de Asuntos Guaranies) and the *indigenista* organization that had supported, translated, and represented the communities of Lote 8, this claim is made possible by the reality of the land purchase by a British land trust, and I assume, also contains the political charge of the unspoken reference to the Malvinas War and the historic "colonial" economic relations between England and Argentina (Salvatore 2008).

elders I interviewed referred to “rights”. Rights were a pragmatic language of legibility, but, once titling was realized, land rights were grounded simply in the insistent reiteration of a relationship with land. “Negotiated rights” through conservation also open space for contestation and assertion of Indigenous relationality as an alternate form of legibility to that required of Indigenous communities in making claims of the state.

5.1 Final reflections: negotiating decolonization without conservation?

Long after leaving Misiones, as I was writing this dissertation, five Mbya Guarani communities of the Kuña Piru Valley of Central Misiones were ceded the title to 6035 hectares of land. The property had been donated to the Universidad de la Plata in 1992 by the cellulose company Celulosa Argentina, which had owned the land inhabited by the Mbya for over a century (ENDEPA 2021). In 2001, the communities began to demand the ‘return’ of this land through communitarian land titles, accompanied in their struggle by the same *indigenista* organization as the Mbya communities of Lote 8. In fact, in my initial meeting October 5, 2018, with members of this organization, they had suggested I study this struggle, at the time unresolved, insinuating that it was much more interesting than Lote 8, which had been “resolved” years before. At the time I declined, explaining, naively but wary of the redirection, that I was a political ecologist and my interest was in conservation.

In 2005, the communities began a lawsuit against the Universidad de la Plata and the Nation, under the same legal rubric as that of the communities of Lote 8: “*Reconocimiento de posesión y propiedad comunitaria* / Recognition of possession and communitarian property,” grounded in the same legal frameworks. After nearly twenty years of struggle and negotiation, in 2019 the Universidad de La Plata and the Mbya communities signed an agreement for the transfer of property titles to the Mbya (ENDEPA 2021).

As in the case of Lote 8, the return of land occurred without a judgement validating the communities’ property rights based on the 1994 National Constitution, ILO 169, their claim to ancestral territory, and their continuous, peaceful and public occupation of the land. Yet unlike in the case of Lote 8, where a prolonged legal battle seemed unlikely to bear fruit by the time the land was already in process of being purchased for conservation, the capitulation of the university, some suggest, was due to the likelihood of losing the court case (ENDEPA 2021).

Nevertheless, Lote 8, though an exemplary case, is not an anomaly. Within Yabotí there are multiple communities whose access to land, titled or no, has been negotiated through conservation. How, then, does the case of Kuña Piru inform or dispute the arguments of this dissertation, made through Lote 8, about the role of conservation networks in recognizing and actualizing Indigenous land rights?

Conservation, I am arguing, is not the only or even a necessary pathway to land rights, even those foreclosed by the state. Rather, it becomes a *possible* pathway to the recognition of rights, through a very particular assemblage of relations, of indigeneity, of property, of the *selva*, and of actors, human and non-human, in the production of conservation territories. Through Lote 8 I have attempted to tell the story of which elements came together, in what way, and to what ends. Yet I would suggest that the intensification of the entanglements between property and environmental management makes these pathways increasingly viable, especially in desirable sites of conservation investment, where conservation citizenship becomes a strategic position for negotiating rights.

Bibliography

Acuerdo Marco para el Uso Sostenible de Lote 8 (2012)

Addenda al Acuerdo Marco Para El Uso Sostenible del Lote 8 (2012)

Agnew J (1994) The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory. Review of *International Political Economy* 1(1): 53–80.

Agarwal A (2005) *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Agencia Télam (2019) Estas son las siete maravillas naturales de la Argentina elegidas por el voto de la gente. *La Nacion.* 8 May. Available at: https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/estas-son-las-siete-maravillas-naturales-de-la-argentina-elegidas-por-el-voto-de-la-gente-nid2245541 (accessed 18 October 2019)

Anderson B & McFarlane C (2011) Assemblage and geography. *Area* 43 (2): 124-127.

Anthias P (2018) *Limits to Decolonization: Indigeneity, Territory and Hydrocarbon Politics in the Bolivian Chaco*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Anthias P (2019) Rethinking territory and property in indigenous land claims. *Geoforum* 119: 268-278.

Anthias P & Hoffmann K (2020) The making of ethnic territories: Governmentality and counter-conducts. Geoforum 119: 218-226.

Anthias P & Radcliffe S (2013) The ethno-environmental fix and its limits: Indigenous land titling and the production of not-quite-neoliberal natures in Bolivia. *Geoforum* 64: 257-269.

Antipode (2010) Special issue on Capitalism and Conservation. *Antipode*, 42(3): 469–799.

Área de Manejo Integral de la Reserva da Biosfera Yaboty (2016) Mapa de Zonificación de la Reserva de Biosfera. Map, San Pedro, Misiones, Argentina, September.

Asher K (2009) *Black and Green: Afro-Colombians, Development, and Nature in the Pacific Lowlands*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Baletti B (2012) *Ordenamento Territorial*: Neodevelopmentalism and the Struggle for Territory in the lower Brazilian Amazon. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(2): 573-598.

Bhandar B (2018) *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Bidaseca KA (2012) *Los sin tierra de Misiones: Disputas politicas y culturales en torno al racismo, la "intrusion" y la extranjerización del excluido en un espacio transfronterizo*. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO).

Biermann C & Anderson RM (2017) Conservation, biopolitics, and the governance of life and death. *Geography Compass*. 11: 1-13.

Blaser M (2009) Political Ontology. *Cultural Studies* 23 (5-6): 873-896.

Blaser M (2010) *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Blomley N (2003) Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey and the Grid. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 9(1): 121-141.

Blomley N & Pratt G (2001) Canada and the political geographies of rights. Canadian Geographer 45 (1), 151–166.

Braticevic SI and Vitale E (2010) Redefiniciones Espaciales Recientes en El Soberbio, Misiones. *Avá* 17: 23-36.

Braun B (2002) *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bryan J (2009) Where would we be without them? Knowledge, space and power in indigenous politics. *Futures* 41: 24-32.

Bryan J (2012) Rethinking Territory: Social Justice and Neoliberalism in Latin America's Territorial Turn.'*Geography Compass* 6(4): 215–226.

Büscher B, Heinz W and Fletcher R (2014) *Nature Inc.: Environmental Conservation in the Neoliberal Age*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Cinto JP (2014) Plan Operativo Anual 2015 correspondiente al Plan de Conservación de Bosques Nativos del "Lote 8, Fracción B" de Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí.

Conservation and Society (2007) Special issue on Neoliberal Conservation. *Conservation and Society*, 5(4): 432–612.

Constitución de la Nación Argentina 1994 (Argentina)

Codigo Civil y Comercial de la Nación 2014 (Argentina) Available at: http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/105000-109999/109481/texact.htm (accessed 11 December 2022)

Corbin J and Strauss A (1990) Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13: 3-21.

Correia JE (2018) Indigenous rights at a crossroads: Territorial struggles, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and legal geographies of liminality. *Geoforum* 97: 73-83.

Correia JE (2019) Unsettling Territory: Indigenous Mobilizations, the Territorial Turn, and the Limits of Land Rights in the Paraguay-Brazil Borderlands. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 18(1): 11-37.

Cossi CA and Gómez RE (2015) Figuraciones, conservación y hegemonía en el proyecto de construcción de un camino en la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí en San Pedro, Misiones - Argentina. Periodo desde el año 2012 hasta el año 2015. *De prácticas y discursos. Cuadernos de ciencias sociales* 4(4): 1-19.

Coulthard GS (2014) *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Current Conservation (2010) Special issue on Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation and Displacement. *Current Conservation*, 3(3): 4–30.

Daigle M (2016) Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, 60: 259-269.

De la Cadena M (2015) *Earth Beings: Ecologies of practice across Andean worlds.* Durham: Duke University Press.

De la Cadena M & Starn O (2007) *Indigenous Experience Today.* New York: Routledge.

De Leeuw S, Cameron E & Greenwood M (2012) Participatory and community-based research, Indigenous geographies, and the spaces of friendship: A critical engagement. *The Canadian Geographer* 56 (2):180-194.

Deleuze G & Guattari F (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by B Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Di Giminiani P (2018) *Sentient Lands: Indigeneity, Property and Political Imagination in Neoliberal Chile.* Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Eidt RC (1971) *Pioneer Settlement in Northeast Argentina*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Elden S (2013) *The Birth of Territory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ENDEPA - Equipo Nacional de Pastoral Aborigen (2021) ¡El Valle de Kuña Piru es Mbya! Available at: https://www.endepa.org.ar/informe-especial-el-valle-de-kuna-piru-es-mbya/ (accessed 26 Dec 2022)

Engle K (2010) *The Elusive Promise of Indigenous Development.* Durham, Duke University Press.

Escobar A (2008) *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ferrero BG (2020) Alianzas y luchas. Trayectoria de conservación y disputas por la selva en la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí (Misiones, Argentina). In *Anthropologia Social. Perspectivas y problemáticas 5*, edited by Juan Mauricio Renold. Rosario: Laborde Editor, pp.113-150.

Ferrero BG (2013) La conservación de la naturaleza como arena de acción política: Dos conflictos en la provincia de Msiones. *Publicar: En antropología y ciencias sociales* 15: 33-54.

Ferrero BG (2005) *Estudio de la gestión territorial y de los recursos naturales, de la población rural del Área de Influencia de la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí-Argentina. Buscando alternativas para un desarrollo local sustentable en torno a una Reserva de Biosfera.* PhD Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Misiones, Argentina.

Fletcher R (2010) Neoliberal environmentality: Towards a poststructuralist political ecology of the conservation debate. *Conservation and Society* 8(3) 171-181.

Fletcher R (2017) Environmentality unbound: Multiple governmentalities in environmental politics. *Geoforum* 85:311-315.

Freitas F (2018) Argentinizing the Border: Conservation and Colonization in Iguazú National Park, 1850s-1950s. In: Blanc J, Freitas F & Frank Z (eds) *Big Water: The Making of the Borderlands Between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay*. Tucson: Arizona University Press, pp.105-128.

Freitas F (2016) *Boundaries of Nature: National Parks and Environmental Change at the Argentine-Brazilian Border 1890-1990*. PhD Thesis, Stanford University, United States.

Fundación Biodiversidad (2015) Proyecto de Formulación Plan de Conservación para el Acuerdo Marco para el Uso Sostenible del Lote 8 de la Reserva de Biosfera Yabotí. Proyecto 13-PC-017-12, Informe Final Periodo Septiembre 2013-Octubre 2014.

Gardner, B (2016) *Selling the Serengeti: The Cultural Politics of Safari Tourism.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Gómez E (2019) Establecidos y marginados en áreas naturales protegidas: dos casos de estudio en México y Argentina. *Letras Verdes* 26: 51-68.

Gómez ER and Ferrero BG (2011) Gobernabilidad y Ambientalismo en la Selva Paranaense. *Avá* 20: 73-94.

Google (2022) Satellite Imagery. Raster, retrieved through QGIS QuickMapServices (accessed 8 December 2022).Gordillo G and Hirsch S (2003) Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina: Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8(3): 4-30.

González Casanova P (1965) Internal colonialism and national development. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *1*(4), 27–37.

González Casanova P (2003) Colonialismo Interno (una redefinición). *Revista Rebeldía* 12.

Gonzalez-Hidalgo M (2020) The ambivalent political work of emotions in the defence of territory, life and the commons. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. Epub ahead of print 30 Sep 2020. DOI: 10.1177/2514848620961737

Gonzalez-Hidalgo M and Zografos C (2020) Emotions, power and environmental conflict: Expanding the Emotional Turn in Political Ecology. *Progress in Human Geography* 44(2): 235-255.

Gordillo G and Hirsch S (2003) Indigenous struggles and contested identities in Argentina: Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8(3): 4-30.

Gott R (2007) Latin America as white settler society. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26(2): 269-289.

Grünberg G (2008) Guarani Retã: Los Pueblos Guaraníes en las Fronteras Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay. Brasilia, BR: Centro de Trabalho Indigenista / Instituto Socioambiental.

Haesbaert, R. (2004). *O mito da desterritorializção: Do 'fim dos territórios' a multiterritorialidade*. Rio de Janeiro, BZ: Bertrand Brasil.

Haesbaert, R. (2013). Del mito de la desterritorialización a la multiterritorialidad. Cultura y Representaciones Sociales, 8(15): 9–42.

Haesbaert R (2020) Território(s) numa perspectiva latinoamericana. *Journal of Latin American Geography* 19(1): 141-151.

Hajer MA (1997) *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hale C (2002) Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala. *The Journal of Latin American Studies* 34(3) 485-524.

Hale C (2005) Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28(1): 10-28.

Halvorsen S (2019) Decolonising territory: Dialogues with Latin American knowledges and grassroots strategies. *Progress in Human Geography* 43(5): 790-814.

Haraway, DJ (1988) Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14(3), 575–99.

Haraway D (2016) *Staying with the Trouble*: *Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Harvey D (2005) A *Brief History of Neoliberalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heynen N, McCarthy J, Prudham S & Robbins P (2007) *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences*. New York: Routledge.

Huang M, Lu V, MacDougall S and Steffen M (2018) Disciplinary violence. Anthropology News website, 10 May. doi: 10.1111/AN.861

Hunt S (2014) *Witnessing the colonialscapes: lighting the intimate fires of Indigenous legal pluralism.* PhD Thesis, Simon Frasier University.

Hutchison C (2014) *Delivering Public Health: Mbya Encounters in Misiones, Argentina*. PhD Thesis, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Igoe, J (2017) *The Nature of Spectacle: On Images, Money, and Conserving Capitalism*. Tucson: The

University of Arizona Press.

Instituto Geográfico Nacional (2022) Área protegida. Shapefile. Available at: https://www.ign.gob.ar/NuestrasActividades/InformacionGeoespacial/CapasSIG (accessed 8 December 2022).

Instituto Geográfico Nacional (2022) Provincia. Shapefile. Available at: https://www.ign.gob.ar/NuestrasActividades/InformacionGeoespacial/CapasSIG (accessed 8 December 2022).

Jiménez Pérez J (2013) Análisis y documentación de una experiencia de resolución de conflicto por la tenencia de la tierras en bosques nativos entre Comunidades Guaraní, el Estado Provincial, propietarios forestales y ONG ambientalistas en la Provincia de Misiones, Argentina. Master's Thesis, Universitat Politècnica de València.

Joslin A (2020) Dividing "Above" and "Below": Constructing Territory for Ecosystem Service Conservation in the Ecuadorian Highlands. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110(6): 1874-1890.

Keller H (2004) Evaluación de impacto de la explotación maderera en torno a las comunidades guaranies "Teko'a Yma", Kai'i Yvate","Takuaruchu" y asentamiento del arroyo Barra chica San Pedro, Misiones: Ministerio de Ecologı́a y Recursos Naturales Renovables.

Kiik L (2018) Conservationland: toward the anthropology of professionals in global nature conservation. *Critique of Anthropology* 39(4): 391-419.

Law J (2004) *After Method: Mess in social science research*. New York: Routledge.

Ley XVI Nº 29 [formerly Nº 2932/1992] Sistema Provincial de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (Misiones, Argentina)

Ley XVI Nº33 [formerly Nº 3041/1993] (Misiones, Argentina)

Ley XVI Nº 105/2010 Ordenamiento de los Bosques Nativos de la Provincia de Misiones Anexo A (Misiones, Argentina)

Ley Nº 23.302/1995 Ley Sobre Política Indígena y Apoyo a las Comunidades Aborigenes (Argentina)

Ley Nº 26.160/2006 Emergencia en Materia de Posesión y Propiedad de Tierras (Argentina)

Loperena C A (2017) Settler violence? Race and emergent frontiers of progress in Honduras. *American Quarterly* 69(4): 801–807.

Martínez, SM and García JC (2013). Atrapadores de oxígeno. La esperanzadora lucha de los Mbya Guaraníes. *Voces en el Fenix* 25: 116-125.

Martinez-Reyes J (2016) *Moral Ecology of a Forest: The Nature Industry and Maya Post-Conservation.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Massey D (2005) *For Space*. London: Sage Publications.

Mendoza, M (2018) *The Patagonian Sublime: The Green Economy and Post-Neoliberal Politics.* Boston: Rutgers University Press.

Million D (2013) *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Misiones Online (2009) Crean una nueva reserva de cuatro mil hectáreas. April 16 Available at: https://misionesonline.net/2009/04/16/crean-una-nueva-reserva-ecologica-de-cuatro-mil-hectareas/ (accessed 12 December 2019)

Mollett S (2014) A Modern Paradise: Garifuna land, labor, and displacement-in-place. *Latin American Perspectives* 199 41(6): 27-45.

Mollett S (2016) The Power to Plunder: Rethinking Land Grabbing in Latin America. *Antipode* 48(2): 412-432.

Mollett S (2020) Hemispheric, Relational and Intersectional Political Ecologies of Race: Centring Land-Body Entanglements in the Americas. *Antipode* 53(3): 810-830.

Montenegro, R (2003) Determinación del Territorio que Necesitan dos Comunidades Mbya Guarani para Satisfacer sus Necesidades Vitales en Función del Impacto Ambiental Producido en la Zona por Empresas Madereras y Cazadores (Zona de la Reserva de Biosfera de Yabotí, Misiones).

Moore D (2005) *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Moreton-Robinson A (2017) Relationality: A key presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm. In: Anderson C and O'Brien (eds) *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*. JM New York: Routledge, pp. 69-77.

Nagar R and Swarr AL (2010) Introduction: Theorizing transnational feminist praxis. In: Swarr AL & Nagar R (eds) *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 1-20.

Natural Earth (2022) Countries. Shapefile, available at https://www.naturalearthdata.com/downloads/50m-cultural-vectors/50m-admin-0-countries-2/ (accessed 8 December 2022).Nichols, R (2020) *Theft is Property! Dispossession and Critical Theory.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Nepomuceno I, Affonso H, Fraser JA, Torres M (2019) Counter-conducts and the green grab: Forest peoples' resistance to industrial resource extraction in the Saracá-Taquera National Forest, Brazilian Amazonia. *Global Environmental Change* 56: 124-133.

Nixon R (2011) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Noroña B (2021) Extractive governmentality, ethnic territories and racial imaginaries in the northern Amazon of Ecuador. *Geoforum* 128: 46-56.

Offen, KH (2003) The Territorial Turn: Making Black Territories in Pacific Colombia. *Journal of Latin American Geography* 2 (1): 43-73.

Ojeda D (2007) Green Pretexts: Ecotourism, neoliberal conservation and land grabbing in Tayrona National Natural Park, Colombia. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (2): 357-375.

Painter J (2010) Rethinking territory. *Antipode* 42: 1090-1118.

Papalia M (2012) Construcción de Demandas Políticas de Comunidades Mbyá Guaraníes en Contextos de Conservación de la Naturaleza. *Cuadernos de Antropología Social* 36: 119-150.

Pasternak, S (2017) *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake against the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Pennaz, ABK (2017) Is that Gun for the Bears? The National Park Service Ranger as a Historically Contradictory Figure. *Conservation and Society* 15(3): 243–254.

Povinelli E (2002) *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Pradella LGS (2009) Jeguatá: O Caminhar Entre os Guarani. *Espaço Ameríndio* 3(2): 99-120.

Porto Gonçalves CW (2002) Da geografias às geo-grafias—um mundo em busca de novas territorialidades. In: Ceceña AE & Sader E (eds) *La guerra infinita—hegemonia y terror mundial*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, pp. 217–256.

Quijano, A (1999) Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina. *Dispositio/n* XXIV.51: 137-148.

Resolución 226/2004 Ministerio de Ecologia, Recursos Naturales Renovables y Turismo (Misiones, Argentina)

Resolución 533/2004 Ministerio de Ecologia, Recursos Naturales Renovables y Turismo (Misiones, Argentina)

Rivera Cusicanqui S (2010). *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores.* Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón Ediciones.

Rojas Marchini, MF (2022) *Making the Environmental State in Chile: Knowledge, Markets, and Legal Frameworks for Biodiversity Conservation.* PhD Thesis, University of British Colombia.

Rola A (ISA) (2016) Mapa Guarani Continental: Localização das comunidades Guarani na Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay e Uruguay. São Paulo, BR: Instituto Socioambiental.

Salamanca C (2012) *Alecrín: Cartografías para Territorios en Resistencia*. Rosario: Universidad Nacional

de Rosario Editora.

Salinas CG (2016) *Elusive Appearances: How Policies Fail in the Argentinian Paraná Atlantic Forest.* PhD Thesis, University of Oslo.

Salinas CG (2020) Intervenciones temporales y la política de la tierra en la reserva de biosfera Yabotí. *Etnografías Contemporáneas*, 6(11) pp.134-158.

Salvatore R (2008) The Unsettling Location of a Settler Nation: Argentina, from Settler Economy to Failed Developing Nation. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107(4): 755-789.

Sanford V (2009) What is an Anthropology of Genocide? Reflections on Field Research with Maya Survivors in Guatemala. In: Hinton AL & O'Neill KL (eds) *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation.* Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 29-53.

Schneider LT (2020) Sexual violence during research: How the unpredictability of fieldwork and the right to risk collide with academic bureaucracy and expectations. *Critique of Anthropology* 40(2) 173-193.

Scott J (1998) *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Singh NM (2013) The affective labor of growing forests and the becoming of environmental subjects: Rethinking environmentality in Odisha, India. *Geoforum* 47: 189-198

Singh NM (2018) Introduction: Affective Ecologies and Conservation. *Conservation and Society* 16 (1): 1.

Simpson A (2014) *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Snelgrove C Dhamoon RK & Corntassel J (2014) Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations. *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, 2 1-32.

Soares MDA (2012) *Caminhos para Viver o Mbya Reko: Estudo Antropológico do Contato Interétnico e de Politicas Públicas de Etnodesenvolvimento a partir de Pequisa Etnográfica junto a Coletivos Guarani no Rio Grande do Sul*. PhD Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

Sodikoff G (2009) The Low-Wage Conservationist: Biodiversity and Perversities of Value in Madagascar. *American Anthropologist* 111(4): 443-455

Smith LT (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* 2nd Edition. London: Zed Books.

Speed S (2017) Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala. *American Quarterly* 69(4): 783-790

Stocks A (2005) Too much for too few: Problems of Indigenous Land Rights in Latin America. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34: 85-10.

Sultana F (2015) Emotional political ecology. In: Bryant RL (ed) *The International Handbook of Political*

Ecology. Cheltemham: Edward Elgar, pp.633-645.

Sundberg J (2006) Conservation Encounters: Transculturation in the 'Contact Zones' of Empire. *Cultural Geographies* 13: 239-265.

Tsing AL (2005) *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tuck E and Yang KW (2012) Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1: 1–40.

Tusing C (2021) From campesino-to-market: the life story of a land lot under Paraguay's shifting property regime. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Baltimore, Maryland. November 17-21.

Todd Z (2016) An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology*. 29: 4– 22.

Valdivia G, Wolford W and Lu F (2014) Border crossings: New geographies of protection and production in the Galapagos Islands. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 (3): 686–701.

Vida Silvestre Argentina (1992) Una propuesta para el desarrollo socio-económico de la zona de Moconá, abarcando parte de los departamentos de San Pedro y Guaraní mediante la promoción del turismo y la protección de áreas naturales. Areas Naturales Protegidas, Ministerio de Ecologia y Recursos Naturales Renovables. Posadas, Misiones.

West P (2006) *Conservation is Our Government Now*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wolfe P (2006) Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4): 387-409.

Wolford W (2005) Agrarian moral economies and neoliberalism in Brazil: competing worldviews and the state in the struggle for land. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37(2), 241–261.

World Land Trust (2021) Indigenous People's Day: New Video Shows Impact of WLT-backed Project to Return Land to the Guaraní. Available at: https://www.worldlandtrust.org/news/2021/08/worlds-indigenous-peoples-day-guarani/ (accessed 26 December 2022)

Ybarra M (2016) "Blind Passes" and the Production of Green Security through Violence on the Guatemalan Border. *Geoforum* 69: 194-206.

Ybarra M (2017) *Green Wars: Conservation and Decolonization in the Maya Forest.* Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Zaragocin S (2019) Gendered geographies of elimination: Decolonial feminist geographies in Latin American settler contexts. *Antipode* 51(1): 373–392.