Ch'ixi Landscapes: Indigeneity and capitalism in the Bolivian Chaco

Penelope Anthias

Abstract

Contemporary debates around the ontological turn have pitted efforts to take indigenous ontologies seriously against demands to make visible the forms of dispossession and environmental suffering that characterize the (post)colonial and capitalist present. Meanwhile, a growing array of governmental projects seeks to identify and protect indigenous ontologies *in the face of* capitalist development processes, including through forms of collective tenure. How can we make sense of such initiatives, and what kind of territories do they encounter and produce? This paper engages this question ethnographically through an examination of everyday life in a legally-recognized Native Community Land in the Bolivian Chaco. Drawing on Bolivian Aymara scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's notion of *ch'ixi*, I argue that indigenous territories are neither ontologically separate from, nor entirely subsumed by, capitalist development processes, but are subject to multiple land values, ontologies, and investments. I show how a contested indigenous land titling process, capitalist labor relations, hydrocarbon compensation money, and efforts to maintain relations with non-human actors are all interwoven in the fabric of Guaraní everyday life. Such *ch'ixi* landscapes emerge at the interstices of capitalist efforts at rendering territories investable, governmental efforts at managing dispossession, and Guaraní efforts to maintain life and exercise territorial sovereignty amidst contradictory processes of (post)colonial governmentality.

Introduction

The so-called "ontological turn" in anthropology has reignited debates about how scholars engage and represent indigenous peoples and territories. Proponents have argued for "taking other ontologies seriously" – that is, moving beyond traditional notions of cultural difference to acknowledge that indigenous peoples inhabit and produce different worlds. Critics, on the other hand, have argued that such approaches rest on a reified notion of indigenous alterity that occludes the economic and environmental processes that shape real indigenous peoples' lives. The importance of such debates goes beyond academia, given that ideas about ontological difference underpin a range of political and governmental projects – particularly those targeting indigenous populations. Rather than debating the relationship between indigeneity and capitalism at a theoretical level, policy debates have tended to focus on how to protect indigenous life-worlds *in the context of* capitalist development processes. Such efforts to recognize and protect ontological difference form part of the empirical realities that many anthropologists seek to describe.

Recent initiatives to map and title "indigenous" or "tribal" communal territories are a case in point. Implemented across diverse postcolonial contexts, collective indigenous territories are often depicted and valued as sites of alternative, non-capitalist ontologies of land. In the context of contemporary land grabs, some proponents are calling are calling for an expansion of indigenous and customary tenure rights across the globe

(Rights and Resources Initiative, 2015a). But what do such initiatives achieve and what kind of territories do they produce? Do they prevent the penetration of capitalist development processes or enable non-capitalist ontologies and land values to flourish? Or do they merely obscure on-going processes of capitalist territorialization, echoing the erasures of some ontological turn scholarship? More broadly, what do communal territories tell us about the relationship between indigeneity and capitalism at the current global conjuncture?

This paper addresses these questions ethnographically through an analysis of everyday life in the Guaraní community of Tarairí, located in Bolivia's remote and gas-rich Chaco region. Tarairí is one 36 communities that make up the Native Community Land (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen – TCO) "Itika Guasu". Like many communal titling programs, TCOs designate land as "outside of the market" and were framed as a means of protecting indigenous cultures and livelihoods from ongoing processes of marketization. In practice, however, TCOs have failed to prevent indigenous territories being incorporated in and transformed by such processes. Nor have they resolved colonial legacies of racialized land inequality, which place severe constraints on indigenous livelihoods. Rather than acting as a container for ontological difference, TCOs are subject to multiple and competing land values, ontologies and investments. A contested land titling process, capitalist labor relations, financial agreements with oil companies, and efforts to maintain relations with non-human actors are all interwoven in the fabric of Guaraní everyday life.

These everyday realities demonstrate that indigenous lives do not unfold on a separate ontological plane, but are deeply imbricated in the colonial-capitalist present. However, it is not only capitalist relations that penetrate indigenous communities, but also governmental efforts to recognize and protect indigenous ontologies in their wake. This double movement constitutes a complex terrain for indigenous struggles for self-determination. Drawing on Aymara sociologist Silvia Rivera's concept of *ch'ixi* – a term that denotes the juxtaposition of contrasting elements – I argue that indigenous lives are neither ontologically separate nor fully subsumed by the modern, but rather entail fraught negotiations with, and everyday endurance amidst, contradictory processes of postcolonial governmentality.

Other worlds? The ontological turn and its critics

While contemporary discussions of ontology are diverse, [1] an important strand of anthropological work is a "reinvigorated engagement with radical alterity" and a call to "take other ontologies seriously" (Blaser, 2012). Influenced by the perspectivist approach of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and grounded in a rejection of a "thin" understanding of culture-as-identity, this body of scholarship rejects the modernist idea of cultural difference as multiple perspectives on the same reality, arguing instead for the existence

[1] This includes recent geographical scholarship influenced by Science and Technology Studies (STS), Deleuzian philosophy, and phenomenological approaches.

of multiple realities or worlds (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478; see also 2012). Indigenous peoples have been a central object of, if not central participants in, such debates, where ontology is often used "to signal a difference between a given Indigenous group and various agents of western modernization/colonization" (Blaser: 2012:3).[2] Ontological turn scholarship challenges the epistemic asymmetries that have historically marked scholarly engagements with indigenous peoples, calling on the ethnographer to rethink her analytical concepts in symmetrical dialogue with other ways of understanding reality (Blaser, 2010). It also highlights the importance of place, counteracting a tendency in some Marxian-inspired political ecology work to assume that local dynamics are always derivative of extralocal forces (Coombes et al., 2012).

Yet, the ontological turn has also produced powerful critiques. Bessire and Bond (2015) argue that its construction of ontological difference rests on a targeted erasure of ethnographic evidence, which obscures the economic and environmental processes that shape real indigenous peoples' lives. They make this point forcefully in relation to the question of environmental suffering. Observing that "many of the more corrosive consequences of industrialization are unfolding in those areas long believed to be most pristine" (446), they argue that ontological anthropology's division between modern and non-modern forms is "incapable of accounting for those disruptive beings and things that travel between ontologies", which includes the impacts of logging, mining, agriculture, and oil extraction.

But does a recognition of the economic, social and ecological effects of globalized capitalism necessarily stand in opposition to the notion of ontological difference? Bolivian Aymara sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui provides an alternative to this binary, depicting a Bolivian socio-cultural reality in which indigeneity is *present amongst*, but not subsumed by, the modern. She describes this using the Aymara word *ch'ixi*, which denotes "a color that is the product of juxtaposition, in small points or spots, of two opposed or contrasting colors… ch'ixi combines the Indian world and its opposite without ever mixing them" (Ibid: 105). What emerges is "the parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonize and complement each other" (Ibid.). In her account, ontological difference does not exist apart from the modern, but rather permeates it, providing a basis from which to transform and decolonize the present and future.

Bolivian sociologist Rene Zavaleta's (1986) concept of a *sociedad abigarrada* (motley society), which Rivera Cusicanqui references, similarly stresses how indigenous socio-cultural formations are asymmetrically articulated with, rather than separate from, relations of colonialism, capitalism and modernity. A similar point is made by Marisol de la Cadena, who draws on Marilyn Strathern's concept of "partial connection" to examine indigeneity in the Andes as "a complex formation, a historic-political articulation of more than one, but less than two, socionatural worlds" (2010: 347; see also de la Cadena,

[2] Insofar as indigenous ontologies are associated with relations with non-human entities (whether spirit beings, animals or plants), such work resonates with broader geographical discussions of more-than-human agency. In this sense, the concept of "ontology" bridges distinct approaches to thinking "beyond the human" (Kohn, 2015) – a project in which Indigenous scholarship is given a privileged value.

2015). In the very different context, Donald Moore (2005) uses the concept of "entangled landscapes" to describe the co-existence of multiple spatialities and sovereignties emergent from a complex history of colonial rule and postcolonial governmentality. Audra Simpson makes a similar argument with regards to sovereignty, insisting that "Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance" (2014: 10-11).

Rivera Cusicanqui's concept of *ch'ixi* provides a useful lens through which to understand the everyday entanglements of indigeneity and capitalism in indigenous territories of the Bolivian Chaco. Yet, a focus on indigenous territories also highlights another important point. Ideas about ontological difference are not just a theoretical proposition; their mobilization in governmental projects has played an important role in *shaping* the political, cultural and ecological landscapes that many indigenous peoples today inhabit. Indeed, this is part of the critique. Bessire and Bond (2015) warn that the ontological turn bolsters contemporary forms of governmentality that designate particular socio-natures as worthy or not of protection. Rivera Cusicanqui grounds her concept of *ch'ixi* in a critique of the political effects of multicultural tropes of indigeneity, which award indigenous peoples "a residual status that, in fact, converts them into minorities, ensnaring them in indigenist stereotypes of the noble savage and as guardians of nature" (2012: 99). Audra Simpson is equally scathing of "notions of lost worlds, worlds of yesterday, of perfect timeless tradition, that sets up an impossible burden of proof for Indigenous claimants today" (2014: 163). She highlights the need for a "historical accounting" of how such ideas have been complicit in colonial forms of governmentality predicated on indigenous dispossession.

As such, approaching indigenous territories as an ethnographic object requires first examining how particular ideas about indigeneity have been operationalized in their production. Rather than examining the processes of subject-formation this has entailed, my account focuses on the ambivalent positioning of Bolivia's TCOs in relation to ongoing processes of capitalist development. As the next section demonstrates, TCOs mobilized unrealistic global expectations for indigenous socio-natures, while failing to prevent – and in some ways facilitating – their integration into transnational processes of resource extraction.

(Un)investible territories: Bolivia's Native Community Lands

While indigenous mapping has a long history (Bryan and Wood, 2014), the last two decades have seen an explosion of new initiatives for mapping and titling "indigenous" and "tribal" territories. By 2012, in Latin America alone, states had recognized indigenous and Afro-descendant tenure rights to some 200 million hectares of land, an area slightly larger than Mexico (Bryan, 2012). Similar initiatives have been implemented in parts of Asia and Africa. The World Bank has been at the forefront of this "territorial turn" (Ibid., Hale 2005), which responded to the activism of indigenous movements contesting centuries of colonial dispossession and assimilationist development (Engle, 2010).

Despite their longer historical context, today's indigenous territories must be understood in relation to a particular moment of capitalist expansion in the Global South during the 1980s and 1990s. In a context of neoliberal structural adjustment and growing social and environmental activism, indigenous land rights were seen as a way of mitigating the negative impacts of large-scale capitalist projects and liberalized land markets on resource-dependent communities and fragile biodiverse environments. Global advocates argued that collective land rights would help shield indigenous peoples from these impacts, leaving them free to practice their own culturally-defined and environmentally sustainable forms of development, which is was hoped would benefit not only indigenous peoples but all of humanity (Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015).

Notions of indigenous peoples' distinct cosmologies and relationship with nature played an important role in shaping global and national support for communal titling initiatives. In Bolivia, indigenous organizations, activist cartographers and state officials documented the existence of sacred sites and spirit beings in their efforts to justify and make legible indigenous territorial claims, and designed zoning practices that contrasted "indigenous" and "modern" relationships between "man" and "nature" (EINE, 2000).[3] While not necessarily framed in terms of ontology, indigenous communal territories carried with them the aspiration that other (non-capitalist) more-than-human assemblages could be preserved amidst a broader landscape of market-led development.

Yet, what is also striking is that the global proliferation of indigenous and tribal territories went hand in hand with the entry of transnational capital into these spaces. Alongside indigenous land titling initiatives, the World Bank and other development institutions continued to invest in the kinds of large-scale capitalist projects and market-led reforms from which indigenous peoples were thought to be at risk, including massive investments in hydrocarbon and mineral extraction. In the context of such projects, it was argued that secure land rights would reduce the risk of social conflict, creating a more secure environment for global investment.[4] This ambiguity regarding whether communal land rights are intended to keep indigenous peoples outside of the market or smooth the entry of capital into their territories is reproduced in current global policy discourse, now framed in relation to the "global land grab" (World Bank et al., 2010; FAO, 2012; RRI, 2015a and 2015b).

Academic discussions of communal land rights reflect (on) this ambiguity. Tania Li has argued that today's communal territories are reminiscent of a long history of "communal fixes" through which colonial governors sought to designate particular groups of people

[3] Such "translations" took place on an asymmetrical terrain and did not always work out in indigenous peoples' favor (see Anthias, forthcoming: Chapter 2).

[4] . The World Bank's 1982 Operational Manual Statement (OMS 2.34) and 1991 Operational Directive (OD4.20) are illustrative of this double-edged agenda. OMS 2.34 starts from the assertion that "Unless special measures are adopted, tribal people are more likely to be harmed than helped by development projects that are intended for beneficiaries other than themselves" and recommends "the recognition, demarcation and protection of tribal areas containing those resources required to sustain the tribal people's traditional means of livelihood" (Davis et al., 1998.: 4-6). OD 4.20 strengthened this commitment to indigenous land rights (Ibid: 7-8), which are argued to "reduce the risk that tribal people will suffer from the project's consequences *or disrupt its implementation*" (cited in Davis, 1993: 5, my emphasis).

as "outside of the market", in order to avoid widespread dispossession and social disarray resulting from unregulated capitalist development (2010; see also, 2005). Other scholars have emphasized how collective land rights help *advance* (neoliberal) capitalist development, by rationalizing land tenure, reducing the potential for conflict, preventing radical political alternatives from emerging, and providing a convenient "one-stop-shop" for global investors (Hale 2005:18; see also Hale, 2011; Bryan, 2012; Borras and Franco 2010).

Bolivia's Native Community Lands are illustrative of how communal territories were simultaneously rendered investible and uninvestible spaces. Created in 1996 following several national indigenous mobilizations and a policy reform process financed and overseen by the World Bank, TCOs were defined as:

> The geographical spaces that constitute the habitat of indigenous and originary peoples and communities, to which they have traditionally had access and where they maintain and develop their own forms of economic, social and cultural organization in a way that guarantees their survival and development (INRA Law, Article 41. 5).

The concept of "habitat", taken from the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, reflects how global discourse on indigenous territories was influenced by cultural ecology – an approach that highlights the co-production of indigenous "cultures" and "natures", while obscuring the broader relations of colonial and capitalist political economy in which both have been historically embedded. Designating land as outside the market – "inalienable, indivisible, irreversible and collective…exempt from seizure and imprescriptible" (Ibid.) – TCOs were framed as guaranteeing the survival of indigenous cultures in an era of rapid marketization. One former employee of the national agrarian reform agency INRA explained that TCOs were deemed necessary given the generally pro-market thrust of the INRA Law, which put indigenous peoples at risk of losing their land altogether.[5]

At the same time, TCOs' most valuable resources were rendered available to global investment. By 1996, many TCO claims were already subject to hydrocarbon, mineral or forestry concessions, following a decade of neoliberal reform (Perreault, 2013; Kohl, 2006). The next five years saw a boom in hydrocarbons development, concentrated in indigenous territories of the Chaco region (Hindery, 2013). TCO status gave indigenous peoples no rights over the subsoil, which remained patrimony of the Bolivian State. The legal separation of soil and subsoil rights reflects a "geological" view of the landscape (Braun, 2000), as well as a "neoliberal" view of nature as "a unique object that can be atomized into bits to be owned" (Mansfield, 2007: 401). This undermined indigenous peoples' vision of territory as an assemblage of elements including land, forest, subsoil and sky (CIDOB, 1991).

Even with land things were more complex than they appeared. Following varied histories of frontier settlement, resource extraction and indigenous dispossession,[6] most TCOs were home not only to indigenous peoples but also to private land claimants, some of

[5] Interview conducted in Tarija city, 4/2/11.
[6] See Soruco et al., 2008 and Gustafson, 2009.

whom already held property rights. In other words, TCOs looked more like Silvia Rivera's *ch'ixi* landscape – a patchwork of contrasting colors – than global imaginaries of indigenous territories as bounded spaces of cultural and ecological difference. Following sustained pressure from landowner organizations during its elaboration, the INRA Law stipulated that private land claims within TCOs would be legally recognized – and indeed prioritized – provided claimants could demonstrate productive land use.

As such, notwithstanding their discursive framing as bounded spaces of ethnic and cultural difference, TCOs accommodated the land values and claims of other actors present in, or with interests in, these spaces. For landowners, private investments in land helped to justify property claims that competed with, and potentially overrode, those of indigenous peoples. For transnational hydrocarbon or mining companies, access to the Bolivian subsoil a foregone conclusion, established in maps, plans and contracts made without reference to, and in some cases prior to, the legal recognition of TCOs. As a result, despite TCO recognition, lowland indigenous peoples in Bolivia have continued to compete with settler populations for land and resources, while also facing a wave of extractive industry development in their territories.

As TCOs moved from agrarian law into processes of mapping, titling, and development planning, they became subject to an array of inscription devices – Spatial Needs Identification Studies, Legal-Technical Evaluations of private property claims, wooden posts marking community boundaries, GIS maps, indigenous "talking maps", NGO progress reports, Indigenous Peoples' Development Plans, Forestry Management Plans, and so forth. These knowledge practices reflected divergent understandings of what TCOs were or should be. The appropriate relationship between indigenous peoples, territory and capitalist markets remained an unresolved question, subject to differing interpretations by state officials, NGOs, activists, private landowners, companies, indigenous leaders and community members.

This provides important context for understanding the entangled ontologies, investments and values that permeate everyday life in indigenous territories of the Chaco. I now turn to an exploration of these, based on six months I spent living in the community of Tarairí, at the heart of the Guaraní TCO "Itika Guasu". Following a brief description of the community, I structure my discussion around an ethnographic vignette.

Ch'ixi landscapes: everyday life in a Guaraní community

Located on a flat, dry plateau overlooking the Pilcomayo River, Tarairí is one of a string of riverside communities, which, despite being surrounded by water, inhabit some of the most arid lands of TCO Itika Guasu. To the West, the land drops down to several hectares of cleared communal land used for household plots, followed by miles of dense dry forest, cut through by a dirt road. This road, made passable to vehicles following the recent municipal project, now enables regular access to the community by NGOs, the municipal government and *karai* (non-indigenous) traders, who come to buy fish or sell provisions. The road connects Tarairí to a bus route an hour and a half's walk away, where a bus to the nearest town of Entre Ríos (a three and a half hour journey) passes

each morning. Community members – especially men – frequently make this journey to buy household provisions, visit the Guaraní organization, or get to casual jobs on haciendas, in Entre Ríos, or further afield.

Tarairí constitutes a *tentami,* the basic unit of Guaraní social organization, where a group of matrilineal family members share a single *oka* (patio) (Albó, 1990). Houses are spaced a good 5-10 meters apart around the periphery of this central communal space, which first became known to me as *la cancha* (the football pitch). People insisted on maintaining this distance between homes in the context of an NGO housing project during the 1990s. A legacy of this project, houses shared the same design – wooden beams, plastered adobe walls, ceramic roof tiles, and a front porch supported by four large pillars. In most cases, part of the original palm-thatched adobe structure had been maintained for use as a kitchen.

The dirt ground in front of each house was where families spent most of their time at home, eating, receiving visitors, drinking mate, doing handicrafts, weaving fishing nets, doing school homework or sleeping in the heat of the afternoon. This was also where families slept at night, on *guirapembireta* – wooden bed frames cross-woven with strips of leather. Inside rooms were essentially used only for storage. Aside from houses, the community has a health post and (Spanish language) primary school, completing the circle of buildings around the central oka/cancha.

This uxorilocal family structure, the absence of karai households, older women's continuing use of the *mandu*[7] and fact that Guaraní was preferred over Spanish were some of the factors that conjoined to designate Tarairí, at least in the minds of local NGO and state employees, as a "traditional" Guaraní community. Combined with the community's enthusiastic embrace of NGO projects, this led one NGO employee to award Tarairí the dubious title of "a model community". Perhaps reflecting this perception, during my six-month stay, Tarairí was the site of agricultural development projects by two local NGOs, as well as a municipal "ecotourism project" and a week-long visit by some evangelists, who elected the community as the site for a church. Reflecting a less romantic reality, there were visits by anti-*chagas* fumigators[8] and a global food aid program. This is indicative of the multiple and multi-scalar relations through which community life in Tarairí is reproduced, "traditional" characteristics notwithstanding.

By the time I moved to Tarairí in August 2011, I was familiar with the "inscription devices" (Li, 2014) that produced the territory from a distance as an indigenous territory, hydrocarbon frontier, or as a series of private cattle ranches. Everyday life in Tarairí was profoundly shaped by these framings (and others) in ways that were concrete and contradictory. Yet, it also exceeded them, containing elements that were not visible to state cartographers, development institutions or hydrocarbon companies. I now explore

[7] *Mandu* (*tipoy* in Spanish) is the Guaraní word for a rectangular piece of coloured cloth pinned at the shoulder, worn by Guaraní women.

[8] Chagas is a disease of the heart common throughout rural Bolivia. It is transmitted by a blood-sucking insect called the *vinchuca* (kissing bug), which likes to live in adobe houses.

these everyday entanglements ethnographically, drawing on an edited excerpt from my fieldnotes from January 2012.

Sunday January 8th, 2012, 6.00am

I awoke exhausted and unmotivated, my flimsy mattress still damp from yesterday's rain. The air was cool and humid, signaling the belated arrival of the sowing season. Crawling out of the dank storeroom where I slept during wet weather, I found Alfredo, the father of my host family, pottering around happily to a soundtrack of techno-cumbia, which was blasting from a shiny new boom box that sat on a wooden table on the shaded porch. Alfredo informed me proudly that he had purchased it in the nearest town, Entre Ríos, the previous day for 250 Bolivianos – roughly equivalent to 25 restaurant meals. Gazing around the sparsely furnished house, I reflected on alternative things he might have bought with the money. Yet his choice of a stereo was not frivolous; it was a carefully chosen status symbol, a luxury modern consumer item that would mark him out from his neighbors and relatives.

Next door, at Alfredo's sister Rosa's identical house, his nieces Jennifer and Carolina were hard at work grinding maize, their arms swinging rhythmically as they took turns lifting a giant wooden pestle above their heads, dropping it with force and precision into the concave center of the maize-filled mortar. The mortar landed with a dull and satisfying thud, quite different from the woody crack my own efforts often produced. The sound intermingled strangely with Alfredo's grinding music. Next to the young women was a less familiar sight: a bicycle propped against a tree, which belonged to their 15-year old brother Wilson. I had rarely seen Wilson in the community; like most young men he was usually away doing casual jobs in construction or agriculture, but the rain had brought him and many of his peers back to the community to sow maize. Wilson had spent much of the previous few days propped against his bike in full public view, although he didn't appear to be going anywhere.

As this illustrates, posing with consumer goods was not unusual in Tarairí. Yet, compared to Wilson's bike, Alfredo's stereo had a different, and more ambivalent, meaning. As Alfredo explained – and as other community members were well aware – the money to buy it had come from his salary from the Guaraní organization, the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní Itika Guasu (Guarani People's Assembly Itika Guasu – APG IG). The introduction of salaries to APG IG affiliates was a new development, introduced following a recent compensation deal with the Spanish oil company Repsol.

That night, it was impossible to sleep; the music from Alfredo's stereo continued at high volume, now emanating from Rosa's house. In the moonlight, I saw Alfredo and several other men drinking on her patio. The next morning, I learned that the men had been celebrating Wilson's 21st birthday. Chulo – a non-indigenous fish merchant who was becoming a regular presence in the community – had sold them the drink; *"de ganas*" (foolishly, without consideration) Alfredo's partner Sonia remarked bitterly. The phrase sounded ironic, given that Chulo was selling liquor at a premium. Sonia's disapproval was more than moral; Alfredo's occasional drinking was often followed by domestic

violence, something the couple was seeing a local shaman about. The previous week, Sonia had asked me to purchase a small plastic bottle of pure alcohol in Entre Ríos – where she rarely went herself – for an offering to a spirit the shaman held responsible for Alfredo's violent behavior.

I had my own less serious reason to be angry with both Chulo and Alfredo. The day after the party, I had planned to accompany the community's men on a maintenance mission to repair underground pipes that channeled water from a spring several hours walk away. Not only had the men involved in the drinking party forfeited their own obligations to participate in the collective work, but a nighttime altercation with those not drinking had resulted in my exclusion – mainly because no one had the courage to approach the house to wake me up. My interest in the expedition was partly because most men had been absent for much of my six-month stay in the community. It was especially rare to see them mobilize for communal work. I had also been intrigued to learn more about a conflict with a landowner in whose property the spring was located. But my main interest in the expedition was based on what I'd heard – and been warned – about the *ɨiya,* the spirit owner of water who jealously guarded the crystalline waters of the spring. While there had been debate regarding whether I could approach the spring at all – there was a story of a *karai* engineer who'd almost died there – most people agreed that, provided I approached slowly and made the appropriate offerings, the *ɨiya* would accept me.

There is nothing special about this morning's events; I selected this example because it contains elements that were present in most of my observations and experiences of everyday life in Tarairí. I now unpack what some of those elements are, focusing on the distinct ontologies and values of land that permeate and structure Guaraní community life. As I will emphasize, these elements co-exist in complex articulations, yet without eradicating the existence of ontological difference. In Silvia Rivera's terms, I explore "the coexistence in parallel of multiple cultural differences that don't fuse but antagonize and complement each other". I use as a starting point for my discussion three objects that appear in the above story: the pestle and mortar, the bicycle, and the boom box.

i) Land as a basis for subsistence

At first glance, the sight of two women grinding maize in a hand-carved pestle and mortar seems to resonate with global imaginaries of indigenous territories as containers for subsistence-based livelihoods. The Guaraní's staple crop, *avati* (maize) remains at the heart of Guaraní culture, land use practices and imaginaries of territory. Older Guaraní recall a time when grandparents moved freely through territory in search of the ideal place to make their next *koo* (farmed plot). In a culture based on shifting cultivation, ideas of "land as subsistence" are intimately linked to spatial mobility and economic autonomy. Yet, such values are difficult to sustain amidst a landscape of postcolonial dispossession.

Over the past century, Guaraní communities of the Bolivian Chaco have seen their ability to practice subsistence farming gradually eroded as settlers occupied their lands and forced them into exploitative labor contracts, known as *empatronamiento.* During the late

1980s, these communities mobilized to break their socio-economic dependency on non-indigenous landowners – something they achieved with support from local NGOs. Their urgent need for land to rebuild independent subsistence livelihoods led into the elaboration of a collective land claim. In this context, access to land for maize cultivation is an intensely political question, bound up with a broader struggle for cultural recognition, autonomy, and citizenship.

Yet, rebuilding subsistence livelihoods has not been easy – in large part, owing to continuing problems of land access. Despite its discursive framings, TCO land titling in the Bolivian Chaco has not resulted in a significant redistribution of land to indigenous claimants. Today, nearly two decades after TCO Itika Guasu gained legal recognition, most of the land – and the most productive land – in the territory remains in the hands of private landowners. The situation of Tarairí is particularly dire; the community is surrounded on all sides by private property claims, in varying statuses of legal recognition. In a household survey I conducted in early 2012, nine of Tariarí's thirteen households complained they had insufficient land access to meet their livelihoods needs. Four households claimed to have no land at all. A further four households farm plots of land located in the property of a private landowner, negotiated through informal agreement.

These ambivalent outcomes reflect the inherent limitations of the INRA Law – which recognizes "productive" private property claims – as well as landowners' ability to wield power within regional institutions responsible for land titling. Prevailing local conceptions of land's value played an important role here; local state officials tended to share landowners' view that greater participation in meat and agricultural markets gave them a superior moral claim to property. They did so against a backdrop of threats of violence, as well as personal and family ties. Land as a basis for indigenous subsistence may have gained support from European donors and the World Bank, but it held little sway in institutions of the Bolivian Chaco, where indigenous dispossession by an expanding cattle ranching frontier laid the foundations of state power (Echazú, 1992).

On top of land scarcity, community members in Tarairí face worsening conditions of drought, which scientists attribute to global climate change, regional deforestation and the impacts of semi-extensive ranching. Guaraní communities and local cattle ranchers often blame the drought on the presence of hydrocarbon companies, citing the appearance of gas flares a decade ago as the beginning of climatic uncertainty. With unpredictable rains, people are wary of investing their labor in the land. As one sixteen-year old put it: "When it rains a lot, we don't leave, we can make our plot*;* now that it doesn't rain much we sometimes sow and it dries up, so there's no point being here – that's why we leave to work". The meager wages they earn are used to purchase food for their families.

While I lived in Tarairí, community members were not only eating low-quality rice and pasta purchased in Entre Ríos, but were also buying maize from *karai* landowners, having failed to save anything from the previous year's harvest. As such, while two young women milling maize might seem an idealized picture of indigenous subsistence livelihoods, there is more to this image than meets the eye. In this particular case, the maize had not been purchased; rather, it had been given as in-kind payment to the girls'

father, who works as an agricultural laborer for a neighboring landowner. While TCO recognition has transformed the nature of such labor relations – which are no longer governed by a regime of debt bondage – they remain structured by racialized inequalities in land access. Such inequalities prevent the Guaraní from relying on the subsistence livelihoods imagined for them by global advocates of TCOs, forcing them to engage in capitalist labor and commodity markets.

Still, people are not entirely subsumed by such relationships. When the rains come, men return from casual jobs to sow maize, squash, black beans, yucca and melon. Women accompany them to sprinkle the seed. Young boys help clear the land. Amidst precarious conditions, these cycles of food production still define Guaraní peoples' relations with the territory and with each other.

ii) Everyday investments: wage labor and social reproduction

If the pestle and mortar symbolizes more than subsistence livelihoods, then what of Wilson's bike? Wilson purchased his bike from money he saved up doing construction jobs in Entre Ríos and other nearby urban centers. He used the bike to get to and from the bus route, a one and a half hour's walk from Tarairí. Such casual jobs are currently plentiful, in the context of a hydrocarbon boom that is both requiring and financing a wave of construction and infrastructure development in the Chaco. For young Guaraní men like Wilson, who generally leave the community for wage labor at the age of fourteen or fifteen, this marks their first sustained engagement outside of Guaraní territory. They learn to speak Spanish, eat non-Guaraní food, and gain a sense of their identities as Tarijeño, Chaqueño, and Bolivian, as well as Guaraní. They learn the value of their labor in monetary terms and acquire limited purchasing power as consumers.

Such work takes these men away from the land and away from their communities. It both reflects and drives growing dependency on goods and food purchased outside of the territory. Older Guaraní men sometimes lament the loss of economic autonomy, cultural knowledge and corporal strength associated with growing integration in a *karai* economy. They talk nostalgically of a time when grandparents collected honey instead of purchasing sugar; walked for days instead of expecting lifts from NGOs and state officials. Yet, labor migration is nothing new; these same men talk nostalgically of collective work expeditions to Argentina – still known in Guaraní as *mbaporenda* (work place) – where Guarani have labored on sugar plantations since the late nineteenth century.

Contrary to popular perceptions, indigenous participation in capitalist labor relations does not necessarily signal a diminishing attachment to territory or an erosion of indigenous cultural values. The money that men from Tarairí earn in casual jobs gains value primarily in the context of community life. It plays a vital role in household incomes, enabling families to purchase food, school materials, clothing, household goods, animal vaccines and building materials. Even when they buy things for themselves – such as new clothing, a cheap mobile phone, or a bike – these purchases form part of place-based processes of social reproduction. For younger men like Wilson, the display of consumer goods is an important sign they have accumulated the capital required to build their own

house and start their own household. Most young men in Tarairí said they planned to live the rest of their lives in Guaraní territory. Most likely, this would entail continuous movement between communities, where men remain during the fishing and sowing seasons, and casual jobs in urban centers or private estates. A bike would come in handy.

Wage labor is not exclusive to men; women sometimes leave their communities for jobs, often domestic work in Entre Ríos or Tarija city. During my stay in Tarairí, Alfredo's female cousin took a job cooking for construction workers in a nearby village that was rapidly expanding as a transit hub for hydrocarbon workers. Her wages helped support an all-female household that was struggling to subsist on the sale of handicrafts, palm for which was becoming increasingly scarce. Nor does wage labor always mean leaving the TCO, or even the community. Several men in Tarairí gained paid employment constructing concrete accommodation blocks for the municipality's eco-tourism project, while women made money cooking for *karai* construction workers employed by the project. The newly graveled road linking the community to the bus route also provided work for a limited time period. During my stay, the first (male) community member from Tarairí left to work at the expanding Margarita gas field, located nearby in the northeastern part of the TCO.

While I do not intend to paint an idealized picture of such capitalist labor relations, they are intrinsic to the reproduction of Guaraní life in Itika Guasu. Hard-earned wages enable people to invest in their communities, sustaining a culture in which relations of reciprocal exchange, rather than money, continue to structure everyday life. Goods purchased with cash outside the territory become part of a place-based cultural economy that is both more-than-capitalist and more-than-human. For example, if I wanted to get fish for my household – Alfredo rarely went fishing and my efforts had limited success – I would buy coca in Entre Ríos for one of the community's fishermen, who used it to make offering to the *ɨiya* (the spirit owner of water) prior to fishing expeditions.

These networked relations and everyday investments diverge from global imaginaries of indigenous territories as bounded spaces of cultural difference existing beyond the realm of capitalism and modernity. Yet, this does not signal an erasure of ontological difference, the Guaraníes' assimilation into a capitalist economy and *karai* culture. Rather, distinct cultural forms, ontologies and land values coexist and articulate, in ways that are both antagonistic and complementary (Rivera Cusicanqui: 2012: 105). Participation in capitalist labor markets does not preclude, and may even help sustain, relations with non-human actors. Wilson's bike not only takes him away from the community, it also brings him home to plant his plot with maize and other crops in time for the rains. The harvest from his labor is passed to Alfredo's elderly mother, one of three sisters from whom the rest of the 100 or so community members descend.

iii) Investing in the subsoil

Finally, I turn to Alfredo's new boom box. Although in some ways akin to other consumer goods purchased with wages, this object has a particular significance, owing to the fact it was purchased with a salary paid by the Guaraní organization. As noted above,

this money came from an "Itika Guasu Investment Fund" created through a recent agreement with the Spanish oil company Repsol. The Agreement ended a decade-long conflict, in which the oil company had repeatedly rejected Guaraní demands for consultation and compensation on hydrocarbon development in the TCO.

Repsol began its operations in Itika Guasu in 1997, just a few months after the territory was recognized as a TCO. Between 1997 and 2003 Repsol drilled 4 gas wells, and built a processing plant, and a network of gas pipelines, access roads, airstrips and workers' camps. 2011 saw a massive new wave of investment in the gas field, which included the expansion of the gas processing plant and the drilling of several new wells. As such, the Guaraní struggle for land rights in Itika Guasu has unfolded in parallel with hydrocarbon development. As noted in the previous section, this is not an unusual, given that the creation of TCOs under the INRA Law coincided with reforms to the hydrocarbon sector that opened up these territories to transnational investment. By 2008, 20 of Bolivia's 84 TCOs were subject to contracts for hydrocarbons exploration or exploitation (CEASES, 2008).

Indigenous territories of the Bolivian Chaco have been transformed ecologically, politically, economically and culturally by this boom in natural gas production. Direct and indirect ecological impacts have included water contamination, deforestation, air pollution and a loss of wild fauna. Employment opportunities in road construction, security, cooking, cleaning and laundry have reshaped household economies and gender dynamics. Corporate social responsibility projects on housing, honey production and handicrafts have brought uneven benefits to communities and households.

TCO recognition has not prevented these transformations from happening, but it has shaped the politics surrounding them. In Itika Guasu, Guaraní leaders have consistently cited the TCO as a basis for demands for participation in hydrocarbon governance, including to consultation, compensation and socio-environmental monitoring. Yet, whereas the early days of the TCO claim were framed by a vision of territory as a space of cultural revalorization and subsistence livelihoods, a decade-long struggle for resource justice has seen the emergence of a vision that focuses on exercising territorial control in the context of broader territorializing processes. The notion of the TCO as Guaraní *property* – enshrined in the 2010 agreement with Repsol – has been central to this shift. Perhaps most significantly, some Guaraní leaders have come to see compensation payments like the "Itika Guasu Investment Fund" as a route to autonomous territorial governance. At the APG IG's anniversary celebration in March 2011, the TCO's President described the Fund as "part of our long-term funding strategy, which will permit us to carry forward our own development. This guarantees our real autonomy and that of our children". Rather than seeing this as evidence that a capitalist ontology of territory has replaced indigenous ontologies, we can read it as evidence of how indigenous peoples "perform and display our own commitment to modernity" (Rivera Cusicanqui: 2012: 96).[9]

[9] The original article uses the phrase "apuesta por la modernidad", which could also translate as a bid or wager for modernity.

As a peripheral member of the leadership that negotiated the agreement with Repsol, Alfredo shared this vision gas-funded indigenous autonomy. In this sense, his new boom box reflected a moment of Guaraní politics at which economic empowerment had become a symbol of territorial recognition and autonomy. As I have suggested elsewhere ([citation removed for blind review]), it also reflected a *national* context in which notions of citizenship, development and modernity have become wedded to extraction. Some community members – including Sonia – were optimistic about the development projects that the Investment Fund would make possible, which the TCO leadership claimed would include medical services, housing improvements, and tractors for maize production. Others were more skeptical, doubting the promised project would ever arrive and complaining that the Investment Fund failed to address their pressing problems of land access or the long-term environmental impacts of extraction.

Even for community members like Alfredo, who benefitted from Fund's distribution, this did not define his relationship with territory or his position within the community. His neglect of his communal work obligations might seem to be linked to his membership of an economically empowered leadership elite, but this was only part of the story. Alfredo insisted that the reason he didn't want to participate in the water work was that he wanted to continue working on his household plot, where I had accompanied him and his daughter the previous day. Once his plot was harvested, a third of the maize would be awarded to his sister Rosa, and subjected to Jennifer and Carolina's tireless milling efforts. It was this daily work, more than his trips to Entre Ríos, that defined Alfredo as a Guaraní community member. The main effect of his new "salary" was that he no longer had to leave the community for wage labor – a change that allowed him more time in the community tending to his plot, weaving fishing nets, or building wooden furniture for his house.

Conclusion

Contemporary debates around the ontological turn have pitted efforts to take indigenous ontologies seriously against demands to make visible the forms of dispossession and environmental suffering that characterize the (post)colonial and capitalist present. Drawing on Bolivian Aymara scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's notion of *ch'ixi,* I have argued that argue that indigenous territories are neither ontologically separate from, nor entirely subsumed by, capitalist development processes, but are subject to multiple land values, ontologies, and investments. I have grounded my discussion in everyday life because it is here that these different elements co-exist and articulate. As I have shown, Guaraní people in Itika Guasu they are active participants in capitalist development processes, and are developing territorial strategies that build on these engagements. This does not imply an eradication of ontological difference. Guaraní communities have ways of inhabiting, experiencing and valuing land that are fundamentally different from those of *karai* (non-Guaraní) people. Such cultural forms co-exist and articulate with capitalist development processes, informing how processes of socio-economic and environmental change are experienced and managed.

As I have shown, multicultural framings of indigeneity do not just obscure these everyday entanglements, but contribute towards producing them. Bolivia's Native Community Lands are illustrative of how capitalist processes of territorialization and governmental efforts to designate and protect ontological difference are intimately connected, both in policy and in practice. These contradictory processes create complex challenges for indigenous communities who are already struggling to confront histories of colonial dispossession. As everyday life in Tarairí demonstrates, global visions for indigenous socio-natures may be impossible to live up to in contexts of racialized land inequality, resource competition and socio-environmental change. Indeed, the reproduction of "traditional" culture may depend on personal investments of cash incomes in rural spaces where land-based livelihoods are increasingly precarious. Rather than approaching indigenous territories as sites of untouched non-modern ontologies, ethnographers might more fruitfully explore the new formations that emerge as indigenous peoples seek to pursue their own world-making projects amidst contradictory processes of capitalist territorialization and postcolonial governmentality.

References

Borras, S.M.J. and Franco, J., 2010. From threat to opportunity? Problems with the idea of a 'code of conduct' for land-grabbing. Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal, 13, 507–23.

Blaser, M., 2010. Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Braun, B., 2000. Producing Vertical Territory: Geology and Governmentality in Late Victorian Canada. Ecumene, 7:1, 7-46

Bryan, J., 2012. Rethinking territory: social justice and neoliberalism in Latin America's territorial turn. Geography Compass 6, 215–226.

Davis, S., 1993. The World Bank and Indigenous Peoples. Unpublished World Bank Report. Accessed from: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2003/11/14/000012009_20031114144132/Rendered/PDF/272050WB0and0Indigenous0Peoples01public1.pdf.

Davis, S., Salman, S., Bermudez, E., 1998. Approach Paper on Revision of OD 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples. Unpublished World Bank Report. Photocopy obtained from Sarah Radcliffe, April, 2012.

De la Cadena, M., 2010. Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond "Politics". Cultural Anthropology 25:2, 334-370.

De la Cadena, M., 2015, Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds. Durham: Duke University Press.

Echazú, E.A., 1992. Historia de Tarija. Tarija, Bolivia: Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia.

Engle, K., 2010. The Elusive Promise of Indigenous Development: Rights, Culture, Strategy. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Food and Agriculture Organization, 2012. Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. Food and Agriculture Organization: Rome.

Hale, C.R., 2011. Resistencia para qué? Territory, autonomy and neoliberal entanglements in the ‘‘empty spaces’’ of Central America. Economy and Society 40, 184–210.
Hale, C.R**.,** 2005. Neoliberal multiculturalism: The remaking of cultural rights and racial dominance in Central America. PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review, 28 (1), 10–28.
Hindery, D., 2013. From Enron to Evo: Pipeline Politics, Global Environmentalism, and Indigenous Rights in Bolivia. University of Arizona Press.
Kohl, B., 2006. Challenges to neoliberal hegemony in Bolivia. Antipode 38, 304–326.
Li, T.M., 2014. What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 39(4), 589–602.
Li, T.M., 2010. Indigeneity, capitalism, and the management of dispossession. Current Anthropology 51 (3), 385–414.
Mansfield, B., 2007. Privatization: property and the remaking of nature–society relations. Introduction to the special issue. Antipode 39, 393–405.
Moore, D.S., 2005. Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Perreault, T., 2013. Nature and nation: the territorial logics of hydrocarbon governance in Bolivia. In: Subterranean Struggles: New Geographies of Extractive Industries in Latin America, Anthony Bebbington and Jeffrey Bury (eds.), University of Texas Press, 67-90.
Rights and Resources Initiative, 2015a. Who Owns the World’s Land? A Global Baseline of Formally Recognized Indigenous and Community Land Rights. RRI: Washington, D.C.
Rights and Resources Initiative, 2015b. Interactive Online Tool: Respecting Land and Forest Rights: A Guide for Companies**.** RRI: Washington, D.C.
Rivera Cusicanqui, S., 2012. Ch’ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization. The South Atlantic Quarterly, 111:1: 95-109
Simpson, A., 2014. Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States. Duke University Press: Durham.
World Bank Group, FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD, 2010. Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Rights, Livelihoods and Resources. World Bank Group, FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD: Washington, D.C.
Zavaleta Mercado, R., 2008 (1986). Lo Nacional-Popular en Bolivia. La Paz: Plural Editores.