The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Afterlife of Abundance:

Wageless life, politics, and illusion among the Guaraní of the Argentine Chaco

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In Argentina, indigenous populations have been marginalised from the nation-state's projects of enfranchisement even though their labour has often been in high demand. The Guaraní of the Argentine Gran Chaco are a case in point. Once highly involved in the extractive frontier economy of the region, they have had very little access to broader political projects of belonging. Over the last few years, however, this historical trend has been reversed. On the one hand, Guaraní settlements currently constitute a surplus population whose labour is no longer demanded by the regional economy. On the other, state-sponsored cash transfer programmes secure the subsistence of Guaraní families while multicultural legislation has sought to enfranchise them in new ways. At the local level, these simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion have created a series of tensions and contradictions that mark everyday life.

To investigate these processes, this thesis explores the various motivations, opportunities, and challenges that characterise the political and economic life of Guaraní settlements. It considers the gendered impacts of unemployment and welfare dependency at the settlement level and analyses the ways in which autonomy and dependency play out in local politics. This leads to an ethnographic exploration of factional conflict and to an appreciation of how people negotiate legal projects of institutionalisation. It is shown that practices of egalitarianism, hierarchy, autonomy, and representation are intertwined with ideas about gender, work, and plurality. The thesis argues that a concern with abundance lies at the heart of Guaraní life. Two subjunctive moments – an annual harvest celebration and the game of football – are explored as particular instances in which the Guaraní appear to attain such desirable states of abundance; at the same time, it is argued that these moments create a space of 'illusion' wherein the gendered ties of dependency and control that underpin abundance are fundamentally misrecognised. The thesis elaborates a theory of Amerindian political economy in which wageless life and abundance partially displace more classic themes of labour and scarcity. In doing so it provides new understandings of how collectivities are fashioned among subaltern populations, while highlighting how inclusion and exclusion are achieved and experienced in the everyday.

Table of Contents

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LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

PROLOGUE:
AN UNSUCCESSFUL HUNT

First, there was a faint rustle in the underbrush; then, the howls of a pack of dogs. We stopped in our tracks and stood still as something careened through the vegetation nearby. We listened closely to the barks and bays in an effort to gauge the direction the pack was headed in. Armed with old shotguns, three hunters dispersed into the forest, positioning themselves so that they might intercept their prey – a stray peccary? a deer? maybe even a tapir? – should it emerge.

Although we were a party of five, there were only three shotguns available, so one of the hunters' cousins, Carlos, and myself were left to guard the others' rucksacks. We had left the settlement early in the morning and although it was well into the afternoon we had not had a bite to eat. In fact, the only provisions we carried in our rucksacks were a few cartons of wine, some bottles of rubbing alcohol, and some water. After walking in the forest for hours, the iron-toed work boots that Carlos had lent me were blistering my feet and the slight drizzle was beginning to soak through my clothes. Like me, Carlos was fatigued, and we soon found a comfortable, if sodden, tree stump to sit on. We spoke in whispers and waited expectantly for the loud *crack* of a gunshot to break the forest stillness.

Like most men in the Guaraní settlement of Aguararenta[1], Carlos had been unemployed during most of my stay in the settlement. He, his wife, and children subsisted thanks to the national government's cash transfer programme, referred to locally as the *salario universal* or 'universal wage'. Over the past few days, however, Carlos's luck seemed to turn when the municipal government of a nearby town hired him as a handyman. In fact, the leader of Aguararenta had mediated the employment process: he had solicited the mayor for help and received a handful of jobs in return. In turn, this leader had redistributed the jobs amongst his followers. However, as we talked about this new job, Carlos chuckled, 'We'll see how long it lasts. It's the time of politics now, *el tiempo de la política*, so the mayor is hiring tons of people because he's afraid of losing the elections.'

Our conversation was cut short as we heard one of the hunters approaching through the trees. He shook his head in disappointment, 'I think it was a *corzuelita*, a little deer.' He pulled out a handful of coca leaves from a green plastic bag, cut off the stems with his fingernails, and tucked the leaves into his cheek. In his other hand, he held a small, yellow sachet of baking soda (*bico*). With a nimble flick of the wrist, he sprinkled some *bico* into his mouth and handed the bag of coca to Carlos. After a short wait, the second and third hunters arrived, breathing hard. One of them poured some rubbing alcohol into an empty plastic bottle and added some water. '*Cachila*?' he offered. The characteristically masculine smell of chewed coca leaves, baking soda, and alcohol permeated the scene. The hunters rested and compared notes on the failed chase and we were soon on our way again, hoping that the dogs would pick up the scent.

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[1] All personal and place names in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

The hunters knew the forest well. Armed with chainsaws instead of shotguns, they often came in search of valuable hardwood trees that they would cut down into even, rectangular cants that were then collected by the employees of nearby saw mills. As we walked, one of the hunters talked about the forest and its many dangers, 'when you come to the forest you have to talk to the Owner, *el dueño*. He has to know you, you have to ask for permission so that he lets you take an animal or the wood. If you cut down or hunt too much, sometimes he takes you, *te lleva*, or you become sick.' I looked around with some misapprehension and quickened my step so as not to fall behind. 'Really,' he continued, 'everything has an owner, *todo tiene dueño*. Even the refinery, it has the owner of the company, *el dueño de la empresa*, and the oil, there is also a *dueño del petróleo*; when you hear the siren in the refinery that's because they have fed a worker to the *dueño*.'

As we walked along, I tried to imagine what it might be like to work for a being that needed to be assuaged and convinced to relinquish control of valuable resources. No one ever told me so, but I wondered whether the mayor who had employed Carlos might not be a sort of *dueño*. Or was it the leader of the settlement who was the *dueño?* I wondered also whether the roadblocks that men like these hunters often organised to make demands from politicians and extractive companies were not a way of hunting the 'owners of the company's' valuable resources. Soon, tiredness and hunger crowded out my rambling thoughts, and I decided to focus on expending my energy efficiently, concentrating only on placing one foot in front of the other.

It was about 11 pm when we wearily stumbled back into the settlement. I stopped by Carlos's house to return the boots and rucksack he had lent me. In the lean-to kitchen we found Carlos's wife, Andrea. While her husband had been out hunting, Andrea and their children had gone into the post office of a nearby town where they had stood in a long queue and waited to collect the bi-weekly cash transfer payment. They had then spent the day shopping for food and other essentials in the town supermarkets. As we walked into the kitchen, Andrea was scraping the remains of a stew from the bottom of a burnt and battered pot. A slightly sardonic smile played on her lips, '*nada?*' she asked. 'Nothing,' Carlos confirmed, deflated.

Figure 1. Guaraní hunters

The initial objective of this research project was to explore the ways in which the Guaraní were involved with practices and discourses of citizenship. Based on my understandings of politics in other parts of Argentina, I hypothesised that waged labour and patron-client relations would be two of the central axes of political belonging. With that hypothesis in mind, the proposed goal was to study the broader social ramifications of work and clientelism at the local level and to try and understand how these practices both impeded and facilitated inclusion.

During the time I spent in the field, I gradually came to realise that work and clientelism *were* two key axes of inclusion and exclusion for the Guaraní, but not in the ways that I had originally expected. As I will be showing, work is central for the Guaraní, but not because it is tied to the kinds of populist political discourse and labour movements that are so prevalent in other parts of the country. In terms of the presence of patron-client relations, these relations exist, but they did not look anything like what I expected them to. Guaraní settlements were practically never immersed into the kinds of party-affiliated 'problem solving-networks' (Auyero 2001) that are common in the impoverished neighbourhoods of Argentina's major urban centres. If politicians ever showed up in these settlements, it was when elections were near, as Carlos noted, during 'the time of politics;' instead, I found that the key figures who articulated the relationship between the state –at its various levels – and the settlement were the local Guaraní leaders themselves. That said, the rationales and motivations behind these leaders' operations seemed to reflect local notions of redistributive fairness that were rarely framed within broader discourses concerning citizenship or the nation.

As a result of these findings, a host of other themes that I had not considered in my original project proposal are now central to the argument of this thesis. Looking back, I can see that my very first days in the settlement where I would live for the next 15 months already pre-figured many of the themes that would come to be of interest. The sense of awkwardness, certainly confronted by most fieldworkers, was compounded in my case by a feeling of emasculation as I confronted and, at times tried to conform to new, physically and ethically challenging, forms of masculinity. Linked to this, was a sexual division of labour that I would come to explore more deeply over the course of my fieldwork. The person I initially assumed to be *the* leader of the settlement turned out to be only one of several key political figures in what was a deeply divided political community. In fact, and unbeknownst to me at the time, my first weeks of fieldwork were profoundly scrutinised by my future neighbours as my own positioning in the settlement was judged and debated in relation to an internal conflict that I was initially ignorant of. Other themes, including the social desirability of states of abundance, the occult dimensions of political power, or the crucial importance of documents, would emerge only once I gained some measure of acceptance within the community.

In sum, this dissertation combines a few things I thought I knew about Argentina before entering the field with a whole array of things I learned during the course of fieldwork. In doing so, it attempts to capture a sense of what the political and economic lives of people in a Guaraní settlement are like. The thesis describes the ways in which an indigenous Guaraní population that inhabits the Gran Chaco's extractive frontier lives with the oscillating cycles of work and unemployment that characterise the regional economy. It also explores how these populations deal with the expanding legal apparatus of the state and analyses the contradictory ways in which enfranchisement both creates and limits opportunities for those it seeks to empower.

CHAPTER 1
WAGELESS LIFE, POLITICS AND ABUNDANCE IN THE ARGENTINE CHACO

This dissertation focuses on one of Latin America's most understudied regions: the Gran Chaco. After the Amazon region, the Gran Chaco is the second largest biome in South America (Bucher & Huszar 1999). Extending over a million square kilometres, the semi-arid plains of the Gran Chaco include parts of northern Argentina, eastern Bolivia, western Paraguay and Brazil. The region is bounded by the Salado river basin in the south, by the Paraguay and Paraná rivers in the east, by the Mato Grosso Plateau on the north and by the foothills of the Andes on the west (Miller & Braunstein 1999: 2-3). These transitional hills separate the soaring peaks of the Andes from the vast, dry, sprawl of the Chaco proper.

Ecologically, the dry plains of the centre of the Chaco are distinguished from its western borders where the plains meet the subtropical Andean piedmont. Among the 250,000 indigenous people that live in the region (Combès et al. 2009), these two ecological parts of the Chaco also map onto sociological differences. While most speakers of the Mataco-maká, Guaycurú, Lule-Vilela, Lengua-Maskoi and Zamuco languages inhabit the plains of the Chaco, Tupí-Guaraní speaking populations, like the Chané, Isoseño Guaraní, or Ava Guaraní, typically inhabit the more fertile *yungas* of the Andean foothills. With an estimated population of 100,000, these latter groups are the largest in the Chaco region (Combès et al. 2009: 69).

Figure 2 The Gran Chaco region within South America

Situated at the very heart of South America, the Chaco is a complex place that has been shaped by a long and intricate history of conquest, evangelisation, and war. For centuries, the indigenous populations of the region have both contested and conformed to the various expansions and contractions of state sovereignty as well as to the oscillating boom and bust cycles of the region's sugar, timber, and oil industries. Within this tumultuous history, the Guaraní[2] of the Argentine Chaco have occupied an ambivalent position.

Today, roughly 20,000 people self-identify as Guaraní throughout Argentina (INDEC 2004) [3] and most of them live in settlements arranged along the hot and humid hills that make up the Andean piedmont. Far from embodying any sort of 'pristine' or 'uncontacted' society, the Guaraní have, like most of the indigenous populations in the country, undergone a 'contradictory immersion within the Argentinean nation-state' (Gordillo 2006a: 162, Gordillo and Hirsch 2003). At times, they actively resisted the encroachments of both the Spanish colonial state and, later, the new independent republics. At others, they were complicit in the very expansion of these state projects and were more successful than other indigenous societies at currying favour in the region's extractive economy. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Guaraní populations experienced both long-standing absorption in the frontier economy of the Chaco and exclusion from the burgeoning nation's body politic. Over the last few years, however, many of these conditions have been reversed. On the one hand, the Guaraní face soaring rates of unemployment that are linked to the ongoing contraction of the extractive economy. On the other, legal processes of enfranchisement and new universal welfare policies have reincorporated indigenous populations in ways that challenge and transform everyday life.

Arguably, these emerging patterns in the Chaco pre-figure processes that are likely to occur throughout in remote parts of Latin America as state sovereignty expands alongside the waxing and waning influence of regional economies. And yet, within broader disciplinary debates, the Chaco has occupied a peripheral position. For instance, the first volume of the *Handbook of South American Indians*, published in 1946 and tellingly titled *The Marginal Tribes*, includes a section dedicated to the 'Indians of the Gran Chaco' that consists of only two chapters – one of which was written by Alfred Métraux, an eminent Chaco scholar and a student of Marcel Mauss. The scholarly marginality of the Chaco has meant that the region has not provided a platform for the development of a unique analytical or theoretical body of work. In fact, in an exhaustive review of Chaco scholarship, Combès et al. point out that 'the theoretical models that dominate ethnological analyses for the region have been forged on the basis of Amazonian data' and add that 'Chaco scholarship has defined itself principally in geographic rather than theoretical terms' (2009:

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[2] The Guaraní are most commonly referred to as Chiriguano-Guaraní in the literature. However, in contemporary communities, 'Chiriguano' is often interpreted as a slur and the ethnonym 'Guaraní' is preferred. The communities I conducted fieldwork with are populated by Guaraní families of different origins and although other anthropologists have classed different families as Isoseño, Chané, or Ava based on their place of origin, I will use the ethnonym 'Guaraní' in accordance with people's own usage on the ground.

[3] All translations from Spanish, Portuguese and French sources are my own.

76). This lack of an established theoretical canon creates considerable challenges, but also great opportunities, when it comes to writing an ethnography of the Chaco.

Given this context, this thesis is based on ethnographic data collected in a series of Guaraní settlements that are located between the two *criollo*[4] towns of Aguaray and Tartagal in north-western Argentina. The project seeks to provide a new analytical vocabulary with which to understand the experience of people like Carlos, the precariously employed hunter, and Andrea, the cash transfer recipient, whose lives are heavily dependent upon the resources that the state and the labour market can provide. Put differently, this dissertation is less about autonomy and autarky, than it is about dependence and constraint. However, it is also about how subaltern populations continue to fashion meaningful lives out of – and in spite of – the structures of exclusion that affect them.

In this introduction, I set out to explain the broader theoretical thrust and implications of the thesis' arguments. As I will show in Chapter 2, the Chaco's indigenous populations have suffered and adapted to pressures from broader political structures and have endured the constant and ongoing economic shifts that have shaped the region. For this reason, the dissertation is, at heart, an exploration of contemporary Guaraní political economy.   As such, it seeks to explore 'the formation of anthropological subjects at the intersection of deeply rooted local and global histories' (Roseberry 1988: 164) – an emphasis that has a long and venerable tradition in Latin Americanist anthropology – while also finding inspiration in the particular ways that political economic approaches have been used to study Amerindian populations in lowland South America. Although I engage with these bodies of literature throughout the thesis, my approach updates several of the core tenets of both and does so in ways that reflect the particularities of the Chaco and of Guaraní political economy.

TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE GRAN CHACO

In Argentina, the Gran Chaco has been at the heart of the development of anthropology as a discipline. As the nation-state gradually consolidated during the nineteenth century, 'the Chaco emerged as an unknown place that waited to be explored, mapped and examined as a space of enormous economic potential that had not yet been exploited' (Gordillo 2006b: 227). Relative to Argentina's other internal frontiers, Patagonia and the Northwest Andes, the Gran Chaco was seen as the most 'culturally and historically distant' of the nation's geographical regions (Gordillo 2006b: 229). This perceived distance drew the attention of ethnologists and other scholars and has continued to attract scholarly interest since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although rarely recognised as a scholar of the Chaco, Pierre Clastres' writings are perhaps the most influential work to have emerged from the region. Clastres conducted fieldwork among the Guayaki

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[4] The term *criollo* refers to people who were born in Argentina and are of European descent. In Argentina, and particularly among the Guaraní, it is used as a term to designate the country's wealthier 'white,' non-indigenous population.

people of the Paraguayan Chaco. Even though the threat of white farmers haunts his account of Guayaki life, the objective of his work was to rescue the singularity of indigenous culture in the face of the inevitable defeat of indigenous culture. Writing of Clastres' work on Nivaclé warriors of the Chaco Gastón Gordillo points out that 'the paradox is that Clastres drew on his ethnographic experience among men who fought the militaries of three different nation-states (Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina) to create a timeless archetype about warfare among "Amerindians" in lowland South America' (2014: 58). Perhaps because of this lack of historical specificity, Clastres has been taken up more eagerly by scholars working in Amazonia (see Viveiros de Castro 2010; Sztutman 2011) where a dearth of historiographical sources has hindered the development of more historically grounded research. By contrast, in the Chaco, there is a wealth of archaeological and historiographical evidence that dates back to the 16th century (Combès et al. 2009) and scholars in the region have tended not to engage with Clastres' work to the same degree.

Beyond the sheer availability of data, the anthropology of the Chaco demonstrates a long standing sensitivity to the ways in which the state and expanding capitalist economies have affected the region's indigenous populations. This emphasis is clear in the work of two of the region's founding scholars: Erland Nordenskiöld and Alfred Métraux. In 1910, the Swedish Baron Erland Nordenskiöld published a monograph titled *Indianerleben: El Gran Chaco* that was based on data collected during an earlier expedition into the Chaco region. Although Nordenskiöld could scarcely communicate with the populations he encountered, the book demonstrates its author's keen sense of observation and his attention to ethnographic detail. The book also does well to present the various indigenous societies of the Chaco within a broader historical context that was marked by violence and marginalisation (see Gordillo 2006b: 231-232). Particularly noteworthy in Nordenskiöld's account are re-occurring references to the transformative effects that waged labour on Argentine sugar cane plantations were having on the lives of the Chaco's indigenous populations.

The second great anthropologist of the Chaco, Alfred Métraux, was a student of both Marcel Mauss and Erland Nordenskiöld. In 1928, Métraux established the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Tucumán in north-western Argentina that served as a base from which to conduct fieldwork in the Bolivian and Argentine Chaco. As had Nordenskiöld, Métraux situated his ethnographic research within the broader context of the state's military and economic expansion into the Chaco. Taken together, these two European ethnographers established the ethnographic study of the Gran Chaco and did so by paying close attention to some of the broader political and economic processes that were affecting the everyday lives of the region's indigenous populations. Indeed, 'the Chaco is and always has been a zone of exchange, of reciprocal influence, and of mixing' and the best work that has been produced in the region demonstrates a 'simultaneous attention to external influence and to internal complexity' (Combès et al. 2009: 77).

With these precedents in mind, one of the thesis' objectives is to contribute towards what we might call the 'Chacologisation' of ethnology in lowland South America. As will become clear over of the course of

this dissertation, many of the themes explored here – e.g. the impact of historical processes; the importance of brokers; the close but troubled relationship to the state (and to state-level politics); shifting forms of dependency; the cycles of scarcity and abundance; struggles over labour, and so forth – are likely to be found in other parts of South America. However, their visibility in the Chaco means that the anthropology of the region may help other scholars recognise, foreground, and theorise the importance of these processes in other places.

The recent publication of two monographs on the Gran Chaco suggests that there is room to take steps in this direction. The first book is Lucas Bessire's (2014) ethnography of the Ayoreo of Paraguay. Bessire's work is deeply concerned with exploring the ways in which indigenous society is thrust into the maelstrom of violence that national states and regional economies often produce. In doing so, his work strives to supersede the 'tired binaries of cultural continuity versus culture death' (2014: 19) and positions itself against the ontological paradigm that has had such impact in recent anthropological analyses of lowland South America. Against the focus on ontology, Bessire chooses to pay close attention to the 'actual subaltern experiences' (20) of the Chaco's indigenous populations. This approach leads him to explore 'Indigenous becomings, rather than the essences of their being' (21) and to focus on processes of hypermarginality, voluntary isolation, and neoliberal (post-)multiculturalism that have tended to be absent from anthropological accounts of indigenous societies in other parts of lowland South America.

The second recent book is Gastón Gordillo's (2014) multi-sited ethnographic exploration of the western frontier of the Argentine Chaco. For his part, Gordillo offers an analysis of how the Argentine nation-state sought to incorporate its last frontier through military campaigns, the development of infrastructure, and the memorialising of certain historical events. His work analyses the Chaco as a palimpsest upon which the remains of various state projects can be found. His work, moreover, is concerned with exploring how certain ruins are memorialised while others are forgotten. As Gordillo shows, the memories of indigenous people haunt the memorials and mass graves that dot the region and the expansion of state and economic interests continues to this day. Other remains, such as the detritus of old steam ships, suggest the historical existence of state expansion projects that sought andf ailed to tame the perceived savagery and wilderness of the Chaco. This differentiated production of space, Gordillo argues, provides a window onto some of the underlying power dynamics that have shaped the history of the Chaco.

The historical and spatial breadth of Gordillo's work points towards the long history of non-indigenous political and economic interventions in the Chaco. This is a theme that is also present in Bessire's monograph, and, as discussed above, is a tradition that can be traced back to some of the founding works of Chaco scholarship. Like Bessire and Gordillo, this thesis takes an ethnographic sensitivity to the historical, political and economic fluctuations of the Gran Chaco as its starting point. It describes the ways in which the boom and bust cycles of the extractive frontier have impacted the valorisation of Guaraní labour, and also highlights the extent to which Guaraní political institutions have articulated with

these economic shifts. In some ways, though, Bessire and Gordillo overemphasise the role of the state to the point where the everyday lives of indigenous populations are somewhat blurred from view. My own exploration of the Chaco's political economy takes Gordillo and Bessire's concern with the state to heart, but it also strives to keep this analysis grounded in very particular dimensions of local settlement life. To begin, we need to explore the implications of abundance in contemporary Guaraní settlements.

ABUNDANCE

As summer dwindles, the *carnaval* tree (*taperigua* in Guaraní) blooms yellow in the forests of the Western Chaco. In the past, Guaraní elders took these blooms as a signal that the time of the maize harvest had arrived and that the celebration of the *arete guasu* – the annual maize harvest ritual – was imminent. During my time in the field, the *taperigua* was no longer used to determine the time of the harvest – in part, because maize itself was no longer central to the subsistence of Guaraní families. Even so, the *arete guasu* continued to be a central celebration.

Months before it began, people asked me whether I would be around for the upcoming celebration. Their eyes shone with excitement as they told me about what the *arete* entailed and I noticed that several people would unconsciously finger tap the rhythm of the *pim pim*, the music particular to the ritual, as we spoke. Even though it was plainly apparent that this was perhaps the most important event in the Guaraní calendar, the *arete* still caught me off guard. The sheer energy with which it exploded into life was unlike anything else I had witnessed in Guaraní settlements up to that point. Carved masks representing dead souls, ritualised wrestling matches between a jaguar and a bull, wild peccaries, fermented maize beer, music and dance all marked the occasion off as a unique celebration, imbued with inordinate vitality, and quite distinctly Guaraní.

Still, I was puzzled that this celebration was taking place in settlements where maize no longer provided the basis of subsistence and where agriculture in general was taken as a sign of undesirable backwardness. At the same time, it did not seem to me that this ritual had 'survived' because it was a means through which 'transcendental units' and 'powerful institutions' were being created (Bloch 1992: 5). The more I thought about it, though, the more I began to identify the contradictory ways in which the *arete* resonated with different aspects of everyday life.

The ritual, which I explore in detail in Chapter 3, has been described as a 'veritable cornerstone of Chiriguano civilisation' (Combès and Saignes 1991: 44). As a harvest feast, the *arete* is a celebration of abundance. It is premised on the sheer quantity of maize that is available at a given point in time. The celebration is fuelled by abundant alcohol in which everyone is able to partake and there is a strong emphasis on sharing throughout the ritual. At the heart of the celebration, there is an emphasis on unity achieved through redistribution that coincides with the prominence of a particular kind of ritual leader. At the same time, the *arete* reflects a certain anti-structural tendency to undermine hierarchy that is

captured through carnivalesque moments of inversion. More generally, the ritual resonated with ideas about abundance that surface in the eschatology of various Guaraní-speaking people (H. Clastres 1995, Métraux 1927, Nordenskiöld 1912). In this dissertation, I will argue that paying attention to ideas about abundance helps us understand not only ritual, but also everyday life in Guaraní settlements.

Abundance, I will show, relates to temporally bound moments of plenty in which particular forms of sociality are able to emerge. With this in mind, I trace abundance in a variety of settings that go beyond the *arete*. For instance, in Chapter 4, I argue that the desirability and potential of abundance emerges during the political mobilisations of young men who demand waged employment. In other chapters, I show how abundance is a requisite for the success of political leaders and even suggest that it is one of the key motivations behind the ways in which young men play football matches. In these examples, I argue, states of abundance permit the creation of desirable forms of collectivity: mobilised men, factions, and football teams, all of which operate on similar logics of production, redistribution and consumption. These collectivities, moreover, stress certain forms of egalitarianism and are seemingly predicated on non-coercive forms of action.

Beyond its Guaraní specificities, however, the *arete guasu* is also a useful starting point from which to begin to interrogate a host of classical political-economic approaches, most of which have taken scarcity as an inescapable condition in the world. For instance, the political scientist Nicholas Xenos has written that modern economics is built around a 'scarcity postulate' (1987: 225). According to this postulate, human behaviour is conditioned by the fact that there is 'a finitude of material resources' and/or an 'excess of human desire in relation to them' (ibid). For Xenos, this notion of scarcity can be traced back to the works of scholars like Adam Smith and David Hume. Thus, for Hume, natural scarcity and the unsatisfied needs of the individual become the driving force behind society which, through the division of labour, seeks to compensate for the environment's lack of resources. In Hume's words, "tis only from the selfishness and confin'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin' (Hume 1978: 495 cited in Xenos 1987: 228). If scarcity produces the 'relentless pursuit of self-interest [then for thinkers like St. Augustine or Thomas Hobbes…] the remedy,' Sahlins tells us, 'was the institution of the state,' which allowed humans 'to suppress their enmity – if not their avidity' (Sahlins 1996: 404-405).

A similar concern with scarcity is, in turn, central to much of contemporary economic theory. In the words of economist Lionel Robbins:

> The material means of achieving ends are limited. We have been turned out of Paradise. We have neither eternal life nor unlimited means of gratification. Everywhere we turn, if we choose one thing we must relinquish others (…) Scarcity of means to satisfy given ends is an almost ubiquitous condition of human behaviour (1932: 14-15).

Robbins' invocation of Paradise is revealing since, in the Western tradition, the possibility of a state of abundance is often presented as a utopian future (or past) where many of the world's evils could be overcome. In fact, some of those very same thinkers who postulated that the world was characterised by scarcity, often conducted thought experiments regarding the implications of a world of abundance. For instance, at one point in his *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*, David Hume allows himself to fantasise about a world where needs would be satiated, scarcity would be no more, and the institutions of property and justice would be superfluous:

> For what purpose make a partition of goods, where every one has already more than enough? Why give rise to property, where there cannot possibly be any injury? Why call this object mine, when upon the seizing of it by another, I need but stretch out my hand to possess myself to what is equally valuable? Justice, in that case, being totally useless, would be an idle ceremonial, and could never possibly have place amongst the catalogue of virtues (Hume 2006: 16).

John Maynard Keynes, for his part, argued that 'the economic problem, the struggle for subsistence, always has been hitherto the primary, most pressing problem of […] the whole of the biological kingdom from the beginnings of life in its most primitive forms' (1963: 366). And yet, imagining a future one hundred years after The Great Depression, he imagined that 'the economic problem' might be superseded and an 'age of leisure and abundance' would be ushered in. In such an age, the meaning of work and morals would be drastically transformed and 'all kinds of social customs and economic practices' would be discarded (ibid: 369-370). While for some thinkers scarcity is quite simply a fact of human life, others have argued that scarcity is the result of surmountable, existing social conditions and abundance a future possibility. This idea runs through much of modern political economy and is found in the work of thinkers as varied as Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill, or even Karl Marx (see Xenos 1989 Chapter 2).

From an anthropological stance, the issue of abundance has received limited attention. Perhaps the best-known approximation remains Marshall Sahlins' work on what he termed 'the original affluent society.' In Sahlins' famous work, hunter gatherers are said to enjoy 'an unparalleled material plenty' because their 'material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate' (1972: 2). For Sahlins, scarcity was a 'market obsession' that could be distinguished from the hunter's 'prodigality' (ibid). In this sense, hunters could be said to turn textbook economics on its head: rather than suffering from an inability to satisfy their plentiful wants, Sahlins' hunter-gatherer is a creature with scarce wants and plentiful means to satisfy them.

As Nurit Bird-David points out, Sahlin's model of hunter gathering societies works around an 'assumption of abundance;' that is, his model assumes that resources are readily available such that 'one expects to obtain sufficient resources – at times of abundance even in excess of possible uses and satisfactions' (1992: 32). However, for many societies, the environment does not provide a steady source of resources. Instead, most foraging societies are likely to encounter a 'heterogeneous mosaic of habitat types, which differ in terms of the kinds and relative abundance of the prey species they support' (Ingold

2000: 34). Moreover, this kind of heterogeneity is typically associated to different seasonal temporalities and both archaeological and ethnographic evidence suggests that many societies modify their political institutions to reflect seasonal variations in the availability of resources (Wengrow and Graeber 2015).

Within anthropology, then, discussions of abundance have most often been elaborated with reference to foraging societies and their relationship to the environment that surrounds them. This, it would seem, is due to the fact that these kinds of societies demonstrate an 'economic rationality' that appears to be the inverse of what is found in so-called Western, industrialised economies where 'the postulate of scarcity' (Xenos 1987) is taken as an inevitable truth. This raises a number of interesting questions. Is abundance possible in a society that is not as dependent on hunting and foraging? How might we think about states of abundance within societies that are entrenched within capitalist modes of production? What, if any, are the radical implications of abundance? And, crucially, what sorts of hierarchies and power relations might abundance condone or disguise?

As will be clear throughout this thesis, the Guaraní case provides a number of interesting and nuanced answers to these questions. Today's Guaraní do not rely upon a 'mosaic of habitat types' for their survival. Instead, they depend upon a meagre labour market and, increasingly, on new forms of welfare. Abundance in the Guaraní case does not merely refer to the surrounding environment's ability to yield plentiful resources. Instead, it refers to the ways in which people are able to elicit desirable resources – like jobs or donations – from external actors like politicians or oil company representatives. These acts of elicitation, however, are consistently premised on certain kinds of collective agency which misrecognise the gendered ways in which abundance is achieved. In this sense, the theme of abundance emerges and re-emerges throughout the dissertation at different times in various different guises.

THE POLITICS OF SURPLUS POPULATIONS

While the nineties were a boom time for extractive frontiers throughout Latin America, the Great Recession and the global fall of commodity prices provide an altogether different economic context. Today, unemployment and the expansion of a new kind of welfare state characterise the extractive frontier and have had a tremendous impact on Guaraní settlements themselves. This suggests the need for understanding the ways in which the *lack* of jobs is affecting marginal communities that had grown dependent upon the availability of opportunities for waged labour. More profoundly, it requires that we think about a world in which production does not occupy a central place in day to day life. In other words, approaching the political economy of an indigenous society of the Chaco requires shifting our attention to understand how indigenous populations continue to be embedded within larger processes and structures even though they are no longer exploited for their labour.

Tanya Li recently wrote that, 'to be part of the modern future premised on growth, people need to have something to sell on the global market – be it commodities or labour' (2013: 1). However, due to the

reality of increasing rates of unemployment in emerging economies throughout the world (ILO 2016), many local populations find that participation in the 'modern future' is increasingly hard to achieve. In Southern Africa, 'restructured capitalism has ever less need for the ready supply of low-wage, low-skilled laborers' (Ferguson 2015: 11). Similarly, in many parts of Asia, rural people's labour has become '"surplus" to the requirements of capital accumulation' (Li 2010: 67; 2013). In China and Mexico, female factory workers confront disposability (Wright 2006), while scholars in the Middle East have used the notion of 'waithood' (Dhillon and Yousef 2009: 16) to describe the kind of stunted social trajectories that result when people find that jobs are not forthcoming.

For the Guaraní of the Chaco, the situation seems similarly dire. While once conditions of labour scarcity in the region favoured their integration into the labour market (Chapter 2), today their physical labour is no longer demanded and they do not produce any valuable commodities that can be sold in regional markets. In many ways, day-to-day life in Guaraní settlements seems to be characterised by a pervasive sense of slow waiting: waiting for jobs, for donations, for cash handouts, for politicians, and for bureaucrats. Young people often say that they are 'bored' while adults with family responsibilities express anxiety over their inability to secure the kinds of employment that might allow them to fulfil their aspirations. Bereft of the infrastructure, contacts, and information that would permit them to set up profitable small-scale agricultural projects, most people hope that perhaps, someday, jobs might materialise.

To use Marx's terminology, we might argue that the Guaraní have become 'a relatively redundant population of labourers, i.e. a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus population'. As such they seem to constitute a 'disposable industrial reserve army (…) a mass of human material always ready for exploitation' (Marx 1995: 351-352). Building on this idea, a recent, if somewhat disjointed, body of work suggests that labour markets throughout the world are increasingly incapable of absorbing the labour of subaltern populations. In this literature, structural unemployment often leads to the emergence of what some have called 'disposable' (Mbembe 2003) and 'wasted lives' (Bauman 2004, see also Yates 2011) such that unemployment suggests a crisis of social reproduction, a 'dead end' (Li 2014: 177), and the end of life as these societies had known it.

In this thesis I argue that, among the Guaraní, the lack of jobs has not led to the kinds of anomic, abject poverty that similar structural conditions seem to have created for some other populations (see Bessire 2014 for the case of the Ayoreo in the Paraguayan Chaco). On the contrary, as Judith Butler recently argued, people living in conditions of precarity are often still able to show that they are 'still existing, taking up space and obdurately living' (2015: 18). Something similar occurs in the Guaraní case. In a context so marked by the prevalence of unemployment, waged labour has become a highly valued political resource. In fact, the everyday politics of Guaraní settlements revolves around the scarcity of employment opportunities. *Cupos*, or employment quotas, are a constant subject of conversation and one

of the main drives behind political mobilisation at the settlement level. To gain access to *cupos*, Guaraní men have created what they call Unemployed Workers Centres (*Centros de Desocupados*). Although the name suggests a degree of formal institutionalisation, these Centres are essentially voluntary collectives of unemployed men who come together to demand employment quotas from employers such as oil and gas companies or the municipal state. The Centre's main tactics include the blockading of highways and roads as a way of having their demands heard and, when *cupos* are granted, Centre members distribute jobs amongst themselves. While Centres are led by so-called 'representatives,' they are best described as acephalous and loosely structured collectives.

Although they draw inspiration from a regional history of Peronist unemployed mobilisation (Chapter 2), Guaraní Unemployed Workers Centres have no institutional affiliation to Peronist militancy. On the contrary, like most indigenous populations in Argentina, the Guaraní have been historically marginalised from the labour unions and grassroots organisations that facilitated the enfranchisement of the Argentine working classes. As a result, the Centres are a local response to marginalisation that lacks the kinds of party and union backing that *criollo* – that is, non-indigenous, 'white' – unemployed movements have often enjoyed.

Disconnected from labour unions, parties, and other forms of corporate collective action, Guaraní blockades exemplify the kind of 'plural and embodied action' that Butler explores in a recent book on political assemblies (2015: 19). Guaraní blockades are embodied in the literal sense that bodies assemble on the road to interrupt the flow of traffic on roads and highways and also in the sense that the blockades are a kind of visceral experience in themselves even as they constitute a demand for bodily recognition - recognition that these bodies have, in the words of one young man, 'the capacity to work.' Blockades therefore contribute to a kind of 'political agency expressed in physical form' (Lazar 2015: 245). During these confrontational moments of 'concerted bodily action' (Butler 2015: 48), Centre members effectively demand to be recognised as valuable members of a regional economy that no longer absorbs their labour – and they do so in a way that reflects a particular political and economic ethos. Crucially, these Centres contribute to a particular 'ethics of productivity' (Bear 2015) that challenges the temporalities of 'waiting' that is often associated with surplus populations. In this sense, we will see how the 'timescapes' (Bear 2014c) of labour and unemployment, and a particular understanding of the regional economy, coalesce and give rise to a distinct act of mobilisation.

For the most part, though, blockades were rare and often unsuccessful. In part this was because the regional economy was stagnated and because many companies had ceased hiring locally as their attention turned to other, more lucrative, parts of the country. At the level of the Guaraní settlement, a lack of 'unity' was often invoked as the reason why blockades did not even take place. Partially, this had to do with the sheer logistical difficulty of getting sufficient people involved. Most Centre members were reluctant to put themselves on the line if they felt that the likelihood of securing employment quotas was slim. At the same time, their reluctance reflected a certain wariness towards leaders, which, as I discuss in

Chapter 5, fuelled factional conflict in Guaraní settlements. More profoundly still, I would argue that the difficulty in organising blockades stemmed from a particular political sensibility that favoured a sense of egalitarian autonomy – something akin to what Harry Walker recently termed 'equality without equivalence' (2015a). This is a theme has a long standing history in the anthropology of lowland South America. Pierre Clastres, for instance, argued that in Amerindian societies, the logic of the 'multiple' was opposed to the totalising state-like logic of the 'One' (2010). Following on from some of Clastres' insights, other authors have highlighted the tensions between multiplicity and unity that underpin the construction of political bodies in lowland South America (Viveiros de Castro 2010). Joanna Overing, for instance, writes that 'the social' in Piaroa and Cubeo societies 'is viewed as the means through which people can actively *prevent* the establishment of relations of dominance' (Overing 1989: 160). At the heart of these efforts is 'an insistence upon personal autonomy' that is coupled with a strong sense of 'attachment to the community' (ibid).

As scholars have pointed out, one implication of this political ethos is that the collectivities that are formed are in lowland South America are often non-transcendental in form. Put differently, collectivities are not thought to exist beyond the members that compose them in the here and now. Unlike, say, political parties, labour unions, or church communities, the collectivities that Unemployed Workers Centres form do not endure beyond the moment of 'concerted bodily action.' As Hannah Arendt wrote, the collectivity that emerges within a space of appearance 'does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men […] but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves' (1958: 199). Thus, in these acts of mobilisation there is 'collective acting without a pre-established collective subject' (Butler 2015: 59). This desire for egalitarian autonomy, however, comes into conflict with the state's project of establishing durable collectivities in the form of administratively defined 'Indigenous Communities.'

SHAPING THE BODY POLITIC - CONFLICT AND INSTITUTIONALISATION

Within practically every single Guaraní settlement that I visited, I found very similar forms of internal conflict. As we will see, processes of factionalism – or *divisionismo* as the Guaraní call it – are a direct result of the ways in which settlements and their leadership are positioned within the broader political economy. That said, *divisionismo* also articulates with a deep seated moral economy that centres on ideas about unity and redistribution. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (2010) reading of Clastres, I show that local conflict can be interpreted as a mechanism of inhibition whereby the rising authority of individuals is thwarted. However, at the same time, these conflicts also reflect a struggle over issues of representation in a context where state policies are pushing for the unification and institutionalisation of indigenous settlements.

As the presence of the state in the Gran Chaco increases, what was once a marginal region is increasingly coming under the influence of new administrative projects. In the context of indigenous settlements,

these projects often take the form of legally sanctioned efforts to promote multicultural enfranchisement. In the 1990s, this kind of enfranchisement was celebrated throughout Latin America because it seemed to enable the recognition of indigenous societies' distinctiveness while also establishing a platform for the reparation of historical iniquities. However, scholars have since expressed a degree of suspicion with regards to 'state-sponsored multiculturalism' (Postero 2007: 13; Hale 2002). In particular, multicultural reforms have been associated with parallel processes of neoliberalisation that occurred at about the same time throughout the region (see Yashar 2005). In the words of Charles Hale, 'neoliberalism encompasses economic doctrine but also promotes a reorganization of "political society" along the lines of decentralization, trimming down the state, affirming basic human rights, and calling for minimally functional democracies' (2005: 12). In Argentina, for example, the constitutional reform of 1994, which guaranteed new rights for indigenous populations, occurred at the height of profound structural adjustment reforms that led to the scaling back of the state at a national scale. Taken at a broader level, the close association between multicultural and neoliberal reforms is illustrative of a transformation of state-citizen relations that has occurred globally over the past decades (see Ong 2006). As part of this transformation, the state's ability to provide has been curtailed even as citizens have been impelled to take on responsibility for their livelihoods. For indigenous populations throughout Latin America, neoliberal multiculturalism has affirmed 'cultural particularity' even as it mired societies in 'painstaking, technical, administrative, and highly inequitable negotiations for resources and political power' (Hale 2005: 12).

Over the past twenty years, the cracks in legal projects for multicultural recognition seem to have widened into deeper chasms. For instance, in the Paraguayan Chaco, Bessire notes that 'the increasingly robust protections afforded to culture as a collective right in Latin America coincide with a legal definition restricted to something like a Herderian notion of bounded, stable difference or even cosmological alterity' (2014: 183). The problem, Bessire expands, is that this has led to a 'neocolonial reduction whereby the state gains new moral authority to police Indigenous populations through granting the rights to a symbolic cultural citizenship' (ibid: 183-184). Although scholars have been broadly critical of neoliberal multiculturalism, I would argue that insufficient attention has been paid to the everyday devices and mechanisms through which these legal projects come to have an impact on the ground.

In Argentina, the reification of culture and the attempt to delegate autonomy through the use of particular legal mechanisms has strengthened the position of those leaders who are able to use bureaucracy and documents to their advantage. My analysis in Chapter 6 looks at the ways in which the legal fiction of corporate personhood is deployed in the context of multicultural legislation. In particular, it demonstrates the extent to which local practices of document production become a way in which Guaraní leaders seek to harness the potential of multicultural legislation through the invocation of corporate legal personhood. Through the use of these 'graphic artifacts' (Hull 2003) leaders seek to become legitimated as representatives of state-created 'Indigenous Communities' in the eyes of the state. More broadly, these practices reflect the kinds of bureaucratically mediated modes of governance that

anthropologists have observed elsewhere (Hull 2003; Hull 2008; Hetherington 2011). Thus, my experience in Guaraní settlements suggests that multicultural projects have created opportunities for certain, strategically placed individuals to make considerable political gains through their ability to produce documents that are effective at drawing responses from the state. At the same, though, the strengthening of these leaders also instigates local forms of conflict that, in the Guaraní context, are framed within local egalitarian moral economies.

The tragic irony is that the increase in *divisionismo* conflict ends up bringing the state back in – this time as an arbiter – which, in turn, furthers the institutionalisation of settlements. What I show is that state power ultimately percolates through the inconsistencies that characterise the techniques through which legislation becomes foisted onto a population. Put differently, the Guaraní case shows an instance where various actors with different objectives come together and where the *law* (which seeks to define a relationship between the state and 'otherly-cultured' collective subjects), *documents* (which provide a medium through which these institutions can attempt to communicate), and local *moral economies* (which express people's feelings about what is just and fair) conflict with each other but continue to further the process of multicultural institutionalisation. In other words, I would argue that we cannot take the state's apparently monolithic capacity to police authenticity and 'authorized culture' (Bessire 2014: 186) for granted. Instead, my experience in Guaraní settlements suggests that we must also explore the ways in which the state's recognition of 'others' operates through everyday acts of miscommunication and bureaucratic production. Doing so allows us to see the extent to which multicultural recognition is both a fragmented and fragmenting process.

WAGELESS LIFE

While multicultural legislation seeks to recognise indigenous societies as institutionalised collectivities, newly developed conditional cash transfers (CCT) programmes are a parallel process of state recognition that suggest an altogether different series of political relations and dependencies.

As we have seen, Guaraní settlements today are characterised by mass unemployment and people's efforts to achieve employment through political mobilisation have yielded only meagre results. Nor does local production or agriculture provide for any kind of self-sufficiency. Instead, a majority of Guaraní families are able to subsist thanks to their enfranchisement within newly developed cash transfer (CT) programmes. These programmes, which consist of the 'startlingly simple device of handing out small amounts of money to people deemed to need it' (Ferguson 2015: 2), are rapidly gaining ground throughout various parts of the world and, as one observer points out, are likely to epitomise '21st Century Welfare' (Lavinas 2013). As I show throughout this dissertation, unemployment excludes Guaraní families from historically valued sources of self-worth and ethnic hierarchy. Simultaneously, though, widespread access to cash transfers directly links marginalised Guaraní communities to a nation-wide state project of political inclusion. This new form of enfranchisement has created ties of material

dependency on the state that are qualitatively different to the kinds of clientelism that have been well documented throughout Latin America (e.g. Auyero 2001 for the case of Argentina, see also Ferguson 2013; 2015).

Exploring these new forms of dependency, I would argue, is another area where the ethnography of the Chaco can make a salient ethnographic and theoretical contribution to the regional literature. This is because dependency – within local settlements and between settlements and the state – has typically been ignored in much of the ethnography of lowland South America. In fact, many anthropologists have instead highlighted the ways in which indigenous populations strive to maintain individual and collective autonomy (e.g. Overing 1989, Killick 2007). The emphasis on autonomy and the downplaying of dependency is particularly striking because scholars focussing on the 'political economy of control' in indigenous societies (Viveiros de Castro 1996) have shed some light on the extent to which the autonomy of some requires control over others. Peter Rivière, for instance, stressed the idea that labour was the quintessential scarce resource in Amazonia and that societies were organised around a highly gendered 'political economy of people' (1984). In these societies leaders controlled the scarce labour of women which, in turn, allowed them to accrue greater prestige through acts of generosity and sharing (see also Seymour-Smith 1991; Knauft 1997; Turner 2003). Even in these discussions, however, the issue of dependency remains unexplored.

The ethnographic emphasis on autonomy in much of lowland South America seems to have ignored the fact that dependency characterises many of the relations that *allow* autonomy to play out. Writing about late modernity in industrialised contexts, Wendy Brown has argued that 'the autonomous subject of liberalism requires a large population of nonautonomous subjects, a population that generates, tends and avows the bonds, relations, dependencies and connections that sustain and nourish human life' (1995: 157). Similarly, Butler writes that 'if action is defined as independent, implying a fundamental difference from dependency, then our self-understanding as actors is predicated upon a disavowal of those living and interdependent relations upon which our lives depend' (2015: 44).

Dependency among the Guaraní works along two interrelated axes: the dependency of Guaraní families on the state and, perhaps counterintuitively, the dependency of Guaraní men on their female kin. The first axis – dependency on the state – is an issue that James Ferguson has recently highlighted for the case of Southern Africa. As Ferguson points out, new forms of welfare allow the state to be both 'universally engaged (as a kind of direct provider for each and every citizen) and maximally disengaged (taking no real interesting in shaping the conduct of those under its care, who are seen as knowing their own needs better than the state does)' (2013: 233). This suggests that cash transfer programmes have allowed the state to expand its reach, but in a largely bureaucratised and non-personalised fashion. As a result, Ferguson argues, these programmes create a form of dependency that is 'shallow and impersonal' rather than 'richly social' (Ferguson 2013: 235). However, Ferguson's emphasis on vertical ties of dependency

obscures the ways in which cash transfers can become a kind of 'special money' (Zelizer 1989) that is acquired, distributed and consumed in 'richly social' ways.

This leads me to the second axis of dependency that we find in today's Guaraní settlements. 'Systems of social assistance,' Ferguson writes, 'have long been designed as if for an imaginary world where "able-bodied men" are all employed "breadwinners," women and children their presumed dependents, and the state the residual provider for those who (through accident, bad luck, or old age) require a different sort of "dependence"' (2015: 41). In a similar way, new CT-based welfare programmes, continue to target that population of 'presumed dependents' – for instance, Argentina's *Asignación Universal por Hijo* or Universal Child Allowance programme, which I discuss in Chapter 7, is paid out to mothers on the condition that their children attend school and receive regular health check-ups. However, given the prevailing conditions of labour surplus in the region, cash transfer payments are not, as they were originally intended to be, a supplementary income. Instead they have become the *only* source of regular income in most Guaraní households. As a result, and contrary to locally held assumptions about the role of men as providers, most male household members find that they depend heavily on their female kin for subsistence. Women, for their part, are loath to search for waged work because they (correctly) fear that, if they did, they would lose access to the state's extremely regular and dependable payments. As a result, for most families, productive labour plays no role in everyday subsistence.

Because of this, I argue that life in Guaraní settlements is best described, to use Michael Denning's apt phrase, as 'wageless life' (2010). In invoking the concept of wageless life, I underscore Denning's insistence that we must 'decentre wage labour in our conception of life under capitalism' and focus instead on 'the imperative to earn a living' (2010: 80). However, while for Denning and others (e.g. Yates 2011), this imperative is realised through informal acts of production, I wish to draw attention to the fact that, today, 'the imperative to earn a living' is often achieved through extremely *formalised* state-sponsored projects of redistribution. This suggests the constitution of an altogether different kind of surplus population – one that may be irrelevant to capital, but continues to garner some sort of value by dint of having its members recognised as (poor) citizens.

In sum, the prevalence of unemployment and the fact that subsistence is ensured through regular and dependable forms of state welfare characterises wageless life in the contemporary Chaco. In light of the wide availability and dependency upon cash transfer benefits, I think we can begin to ask questions about the Guaraní's political concern with acquiring employment *cupos* since jobs are not crucial to people's everyday survival. Over the course of this dissertation, I will argue that the political struggle for jobs – which is a primarily *masculine* struggle – is distinguished from the collection of cash transfers because it suggests an altogether different regime of value: where the latter is associated with 'mere' subsistence, the former has become associated with a state of abundance and, as a result, with politics. Significantly though, this political life hides away the ties of dependency and care - the 'condition[s] of possibility' (Butler 2015: 45) - that sustain political gatherings, such that the struggle for subsistence has in fact

become depoliticised. This, I think, puts is in a position to re-assess the *arete guasu,* the meaning of abundance, and the nature of political mobilisation.

ILLUSION

As I will show in this dissertation, ritual and play are both moments that allow for the construction of transient yet powerful forms of togetherness. In this sense, the collectivities that emerge in ritual and play contrast starkly with the reified and institutionalised forms that the state sponsors. To explore these issues, I consider the annual maize harvest ritual (Chapter 3), discussed above and the game of football (Chapter 8). I choose these two examples because in many ways they can be likened to 'total social facts', that is, events that simultaneously bring in social, religious, economic, utilitarian, emotional, aesthetic, jural and moral aspects of life (Mauss 2002: 101; Levi Strauss 1969: 52). As such, they bring to the surface several of the themes that run through this thesis. In particular, they lend insights into local notions regarding concerted action in relation to gendered practices of production, consumption and redistribution.

The theoretical work on play highlights the ways in which games are bracketed off from everyday life and are thus able to produce new 'magic worlds' (Huizinga 1955) of their own. Similar notions have led to the theorisation of rituals as 'subjunctive' or 'as if' (Seligman et al. 2008) moments that occur outside the realm of everyday life. By engaging with this literature, I develop Huizinga's notion of 'illusion' (Huizinga 1955) to describe the kinds of alternative, time-bounded moments that emerge within ritual and play. In using the term illusion, my goal is not to claim that the kinds of sociality that emerge in these moments are somehow unreal. Instead, I draw inspiration from the etymology of the word illusion – which stems for the Latin 'in-play' or *inludere* (Huizinga 1955: 11) – to suggest that ludic forms of ritual and play serve as a platform for the recognition of certain kinds of embodied action. Illusion here does not refer to a sharp distinction between empirical reality and a mere figment of a person's imagination, rather it suggests a type of human action that is firmly grounded in the world but partakes in a temporality and sociality of its own. In Huizinga's words, the game represents 'not so much a sham-reality as a realization in appearance: "imagination" in the original sense of the word' (Huizinga 1955: 14). However, through the constitution of illusion, ludic action enables the disavowal of other forms of action and effectively blocks them from view.

My incursion into the realm of illusion, ritual, and play as well as my ethnographic attention to how they contrast with everyday life, contributes to our understanding of processes of 'collective self-fashioning' (Lazar 2013b: 98). As Lazar has shown in both Bolivian and Argentine contexts, the formation of collectivities is something that people must actively work on and constantly recreate. In line with this argument, my ethnographic exploration of the maize harvest celebration – the *arete guasu* – finds that the ritual establishes the creation of simultaneous yet contradictory forms of group belonging. On the one hand, the celebration permits the establishment of a desirable form of unity that is achieved through a

sense of collective effervescence. On the other, it is also a ritual of reversal with strong anti-structural potential. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, I show how this ritual provides insight into the radically unifying and also destabilising potential of states of abundance. In a similar way, I show that football is expressive of an emergent sense of a collective, productive, masculinity among Guaraní young men; one that gains strength because individual and collective actions are rendered meaningful within the 'frame' (Bateson 1972) of the game. Thanks to betting practices, this form of collectivity also allows young men to finance drinking parties, which reflect the kinds of abundant consumption that occurs more generally during the annual maize harvest celebration. When understood alongside other forms of political mobilisation among young Guaraní men, we begin to see the ways in which football allows players to achieve a desirable sense of egalitarian collectivity.

In this sense, I think we can begin to draw parallels between, on the one hand, ritual and play and, on the other, blockades and political mobilisation. I would argue that all of these constitute 'spaces of appearance' (Arendt 1958) in which political action is physical and embodied – rather than simply verbal. In them, we find that collectivities are formed through 'embodied' action which allows for something like a 'sense of collective selves in concert […] maintained through physical movement' (Lazar 2008: 262-3). Within these spaces, collective forms of power emerge as a kind 'potentiality in being together' (Arendt 1958: 201). In the case of the blockades and football matches, this potentiality emerges most clearly as a function of plurality (Arendt 1958: 176) that cannot be reduced to a singular collective subject. At the same time, the emphasis on collective and embodied action within a space of appearance allows us to explore the extent to which 'fragility' characterises collectivity (Lazar 2013b).

However, by drawing on the notion of illusion, my work shifts Lazar's focus on 'how membership of the group is created' (2013b: 96), to emphasise instead the extent to which the constitution of collectivity is a simultaneously inclusive and exclusive process. In this sense, I aim to critique Arendt's somewhat uncritical embrace of the space of appearance. This critique stems from the ethnographic observation that within spaces of appearance – be they games, rituals, or mobilisations – not everyone is equally able to 'appear'. In this sense, we can say that '"the people" are not a given a population, but are rather constituted by lines of demarcation that we implicitly or explicitly establish' (Butler 2015: 3). Ludic and political action, I argue, is precisely one place where these kinds of demarcation take place and are created. This is where illusion comes in. These spaces of appearance are characterised by being places in which particular forms of 'action' – to use Arendt's word – can take place, but we also know that games and rituals are instances in which 'subjunctive' worlds are created (Seligman et al. 2008). In this sense, collectivity produced in the *arete*, the football matches of productive masculinity, and the united action of the Unemployed Workers Centre, all highlight 'the incongruity between the world of enacted ritual and the participants' experience of lived reality' (ibid: 20). Here, 'illusion is what can be' (ibid: 22) a world of different possibilities, but also a world of disavowal.

It is in this sense that I aim to explore the afterlife of these moments of illusion. That is, I am interested in exploring how the forms of collectivity and action that emerge in bracketed moments of play, ritual and politics live on in everyday life. My intention is less to establish a causal mechanism, than to show a certain elective affinity between the ways in which indigenous settlements are being constituted and the forms of collectivity that get celebrated. At the same time, I aim to underscore the extent to which deeply woven relations of dependency – both within settlements and without – get erased, and aim to understand what the effects of this erasure might be. The Guaraní of the Gran Chaco provide a particularly enlightening case for this project because they demonstrate a simultaneous and contradictory degree of inclusion and exclusion. These patterns, I argue, challenge and nuance several of the core assumptions at the heart of politico-economic anthropological approaches: here it is not control over scarce labour, but control over seemingly unproductive action that garners political prestige. At the same time, dependent ties of subsistence, those which sustain social reproduction, become disavowed. Politics here operates at a level of illusion, in a subjunctive space, that seems incongruous with everyday reality, but which, in turn, gains clarity when we consider the extent to which the Guaraní are embedded within broader projects of belonging that are coupled with the regional economy's inability to incorporate labour.

METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research for this study was conducted over an initial period of 15 months between September 2012 and December 2013 as well as during a six week long return visit in October 2015. During the first two weeks of my time in the region I stayed in Tartagal where I rented a room in the house of a local paediatrician. From Tartagal, I would take a bus to visit various Guaraní settlements in the hope of finding a host settlement. Most of these settlements are arranged along either side of National Route 34 (Figure 2), which in turns runs parallel to an old railway line that was abandoned in the 1990s. Guaraní settlements range in size from roughly 200 to over 2,000 people and most of the inhabitants are descended from Guaraní refugees who escaped from Bolivia in the 1930s during the so-called Chaco War (see Chapter 2).

To my initial surprise, I was enthusiastically received in a number of settlements and the leaders I spoke to seemed eager to have me live in their community. In a matter of a few days, I came to an agreement with the leaders of Aguararenta who allowed me to live in the Communal Assembly Hall (Figure 2 shows the approximate position of the settlement). 'Aguararenta' is a pseudonym, and is borrowed from a passage from Erland Nordenskiold's *Indianerleben* (1912: 221). In this passage, Aguararenta is described as 'the place where the dead live' and is a place of reversal where nightly drinking feasts are hosted – an idea that will hopefully gain relevance by the end of this thesis. Aguararenta translates as 'the place (*-renta*) of the fox (*aguara*).'
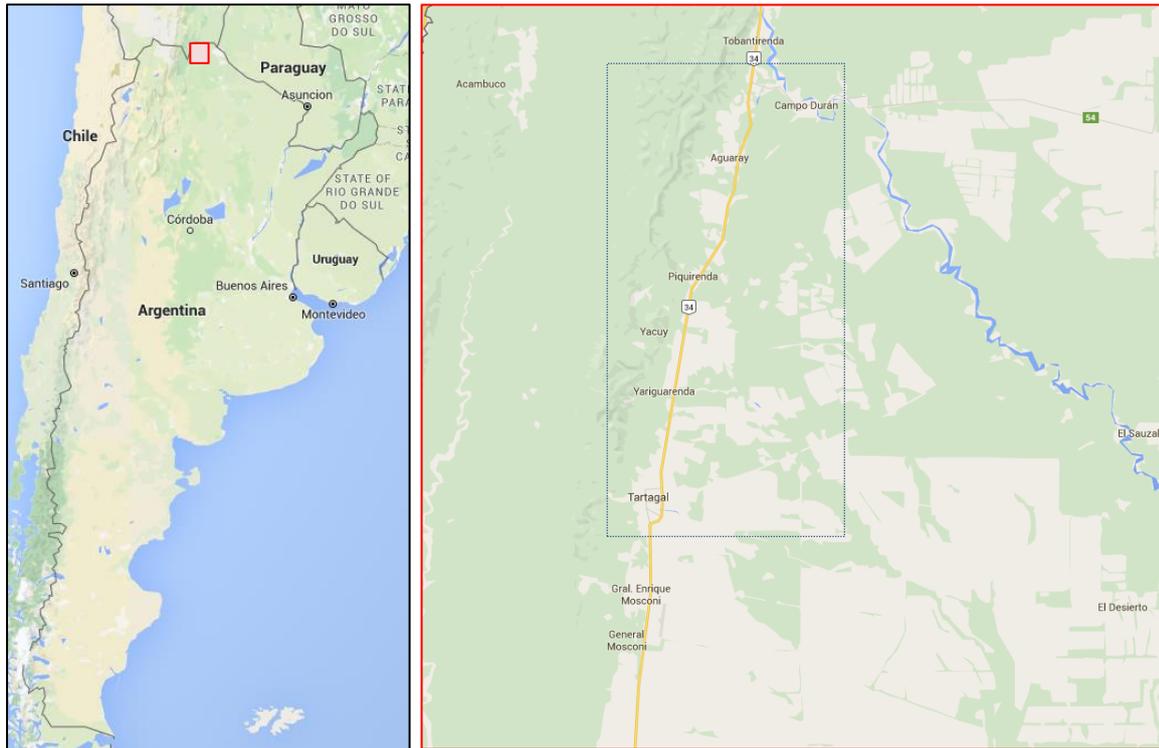
Figure 3 Fieldsite location (Map data Google 2016)

I eventually came to learn that at least one of the reasons why I was so quickly allowed to settle in Aguararenta's Assembly Hall was a result of internal political competition of which I was unaware at the time. While an older leader, Rogelio Hernández, had wanted me to live in the local school - an institution he had a close connection to - a younger and increasingly powerful faction that was led by Eliseo Segundo and Diego Romero had manoeuvred for me to set up camp in the Assembly Hall that they had recently re-claimed as their own meeting place. Both factions had expected that I would be useful for helping write project proposals that would bolster their political ambitions. In other words, the initial eagerness with which I was received in the settlement had to with the kinds of expectations that my presence awakened and with the hope that I might be a useful ally in a longstanding factional conflict.

As I gradually became aware of this, it became important that I spend a lot of time and energy making sure that I was not perceived to be too firmly in the camp of either faction. To do so, I regularly visited members of both factions and did my utmost not to become involved in local politics. I did, however, accede to helping both sides with the drafting and occasional writing of documents, but explicitly told each that I would not share information regarding the other's plans or strategies. This often proved to be an exhausting, and frustrating, strategy but in the long run it helped me establish myself as a relatively impartial adoptee of the community. As a result of this, I came in contact with a large number of political documents that were often quite sensitive to the community.

Although I had initially planned to live with a local family, living in the Assembly Hall proved to be an excellent place from which to get a sense of the kind of political life of the settlement. Long meetings

were unexpectedly held in the Hall and I was allowed, and often invited, to stay and observe them. Additionally, because of my positioning in a centrally located communal building I received regular visits from my curious neighbours. Moreover, the building had windows on every side which meant that most people were aware of what I was up to when I was indoors. Because I was alone, my new neighbours often took pity on me and would invite me to pay them regular visits.

Most of these visits took place in the different families' patios known in Guaraní as *okas*. Most *okas* have a large shady tree in the centre of the patio, typically an *algarrobo* or carob tree. The only other plants that grow in the *oka* are fruit bearing trees including mangos, maracujá, orange, grapefruit and avocado trees. Above all, the *oka* is a quintessential space for everyday sociality. This is where children play and families eat or share rounds of *mate* tea and chat. Squabbling dogs, cats, and chickens further animate the space. Over time, these visits became a regular part of my fieldwork methodology as they allowed me to observe and participate in people's domestic lives and also provided me with the flexibility to meet and speak to a large proportion of Aguararenta's families. Most patios were shared by a number of houses, which meant that a visit to one house often implied a visit to a broader kinship network. Thanks to this, I was able to draw up kinship diagrams for most of the families in the settlement. These diagrams not only helped me identify historical patterns in social relations, they also proved a worthwhile method for gaining entrance into the field as they were collective endeavours where different family members from different generations came together to share and discuss memories. Kinship diagrams also aided my collection of individual life histories and shed light on the post-Chaco War origins of Aguararenta as a settlement.

Given my interest in local labour practices, I sought opportunities to become involved in the kinds of work that my neighbours performed. This was a gendered endeavour and I accompanied a number of men of various ages to perform work in the fields that surrounded the community, and also accompanied groups of loggers on their trips to the forest. I was eventually helped to clear a small patch of forest for myself where I tried my hand at growing the kinds of crops that some of my neighbours typically planted, including maize, calabash, beans, and onions. Unfortunately, my endeavours came to naught when a herd of cattle broke through the enclosure and devoured everything in sight. In a way, my failure was telling as it reflected - on a smaller and less tragic scale - Branislava Susnik's (1968) observation that the Guaraní's maize-centred economic autonomy was historically defeated by *criollo* settlers and their roaming herding practices which put unfenced crops at risk. Due to the rare occurrence and precarity of waged employment, I did not join men on the job while they were employed as I felt this might jeopardise their tenuous employment status. The only exception to this was my participation in the peanut harvest on a farm owned by a non-Guaraní inhabitant of Aguararenta, which I describe in Chapter 4.

Because of my age and gender, I participated actively in the social life of young men. I took the opportunity to do so by joining them in their daily football matches, and also occasionally joined them on their nights out clubbing in the cumbia dance halls of Tartagal, or on their drinking parties in the settlement. Although I was generally able to converse with women freely, I did not accompany them in

their everyday lives to the extent that I did with men. Thus, although my visits to the *okas* allowed me to observe women at work, I did not participate in the kinds of work women performed. Similarly, I generally did not participate in all-female forms of sociality.

One aspect that does not receive much attention in this dissertation concerns the role of religious life. Aguarerenta did have small Catholic and Evangelical church communities and I took turns attending services with both communities. A small Catholic chapel hosted mass bi-weekly, but the congregation was generally modest in size. Similarly small groups attended the Baptist and Pentecostal churches that were also found in the settlement. Although the evangelical presence in other nearby settlements was larger and growing, in Aguararenta religious life was primarily restricted to select families. In fact, most of Aguararenta's inhabitants did not seem particularly preoccupied with religious matters, nor was religion a regular topic of conversation during my stay in the settlement. I therefore made the methodological decision not to pursue an in-depth exploration of religious life, even though I did maintain everyday contact with members of the different religious communities and regularly attended services.

Although I focussed primarily on life in Aguararenta, I also visited a number of neighbouring Guaraní and Chané communities. In these settlements, I usually visited two or three different families and this allowed me to gain a comparative perspective into the kinds of practices and histories I was observing in my host community. Through these visits I soon learned that Aguararenta's medium size, its location in between *criollo* towns, and its close ties to several large regional economic interests in the region made it representative of many of the patterns that I had come to observe. Having said that, my description of the *arete guasu* in Chapter 3, draws mainly from my participation in the ritual that was celebrated in the nearby settlement of Yacuy.

In several of the settlements I visited, clusters of houses were organised into what many people jokingly called *barrios* or neighbourhoods. In my host-settlement of Aguararenta, the joking spatial separation into *barrios* also indicated an important ethnic division within the settlement. While one *barrio* was arranged along the main road and was populated by Guaraní families, the other was composed of houses on either side of a secondary road and was populated by *chaqueños*. The term *chaqueño* essentially refers to a non-indigenous rural population of the Chaco. Traditionally cattle herders, *chaqueños* descend from European migrant families. Unlike *criollos* who are also descended from Europeans, *chaqueños* are, as the word implies, strongly associated with the Chaco and they themselves are quick to point to their long history in the region. In Aguararenta, some of the *chaqueño* families had fled from Bolivia and Paraguay during the Chaco War just like their Guaraní neighbours had. Others, however, had already been living and working in the region before the war. On average, *chaqueño* families in Aguararenta seemed to be better off than their Guaraní neighbours. In large part, this was facilitated by the fact that *chaqueños* were more likely to be employed. Everyday socialisation between the two groups was polite but quite rare. Moreover, although many Guaraní saw *chaqueños* as desirable marriage partners – not least because they were some of the few families they were not related to –, marriages between Guaraní and *chaqueños* were extremely rare.

In fact, the marriage of one of the few inter-ethnic couples that I knew of had been so contentious that the couple had left the settlement and moved to a nearby town.

For their part, *chaqueños* often felt a sense of superiority over their Guaraní neighbours and many also resented the fact that, given the legal arrangements I will discuss in Chapter 6, the Guaraní monopolised positions of political leadership in the settlement. This was seen as particularly unjust because many *chaqueño* families had lived in the region for as long, or even longer, than their Guaraní neighbours. Perhaps for this reason, the *chaqueños* celebrated the yearly patron saint day celebration with particular zeal as they were given a chance to parade through the settlement on horseback to the accompaniment of a military band while wearing traditional *gaucho* clothing that linked them directly to Argentina's national folklore.

Without wishing to belittle the importance of *chaqueño* populations in Guaraní settlements, this project focuses primarily on the everyday life of Guaraní families. This decision was warranted by the general lack of everyday interaction between the two *barrios* and by the very different ways in which Guaraní and *chaqueño* individuals related to the broader economic and political structures that surrounded them. In many ways, as during the patron saint day celebration, *chaqueños* have enjoyed much greater access to the symbols of nation building in the region. This research project was particularly concerned with the study of a population that had historically been excluded from the nation both symbolically and materially. Having said that, it is worth pointing out that, deeper in the Chaco, the state's donation of a large territory to an indigenous Wichí federation has created tensions and conflicts between *chaqueño* and indigenous populations. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 6, the state's multicultural legislative projects may end up creating similar tensions in places like Aguararenta.

During the last weeks of my stay in the region, I conducted archival research in the Franciscan Church of La Purísima in Tartagal where I was able to read and copy missionary chronicles from the early twentieth century as well as some of the parish's internal meeting minutes which related to the relationship between indigenous settlements and the Church. These archival sources proved very valuable for gaining a fuller understanding of the missions and their development. As far as I am aware, no detailed histories of this recent process of missionisation have been published.

In October of 2015 I returned to Aguararenta for a six week spell of fieldwork. This return trip was meant to provide an opportunity to observe the national presidential elections as they played out on the ground. As it turned out, the elections were a rather dull affair in the sense that there were no rallies or political party activity of the kind I was expecting. However, I took the opportunity to focus more explicitly on the issue of cash transfers, which was actually one of the main motivations that people talked about when rationalising their electoral choices. Most of the data presented in Chapter 7 was collected during this return visit.

Chapter 2 introduces the Guaraní of the Chaco and schematises the historical trajectory of the settlements with which I conducted fieldwork. In so doing, the chapter brings out the importance of political mediation on an extractive frontier, and considers the extent to which conditions of labour scarcity in the regional labour market contributed to the strengthening of positions of authority. It also considers the marginal role that the Guaraní played in Peronist citizenship projects in Argentina, and argues that this marginality allowed them to benefit – albeit briefly – from the flexibilisation of labour markets during structural adjustment reforms in the 1990s. Finally, it sketches the history of Guaraní settlement in Argentina from the 1930s after the Chaco War, through Franciscan missionisation and into the multicultural recognition of the 1990s.

Chapter 3 provides an ethnographic description of the annual maize harvest celebration, the *arete guasu*. The chapter describes this carnivalesque-like feast of reversal as a celebration of abundance that has a long-standing historical genealogy. It is argued that the celebration provides a transient image of the radical social force of moments of abundance. Such moments are experienced as ecstatically desirable, yet the social cohesion they bring is also considered dangerous. In its conclusions, the chapter suggests that a focus on abundance may provide an analytical corrective to traditional political economic approaches that have centred too squarely on preconceived notions of scarcity.

Chapter 4 considers Guaraní involvement in the labour market within the framework of a broader regional economy that has historically depended upon extractive industries. The vast majority of Guaraní men and women are unemployed or, at best, temporarily employed in low-skilled jobs. Within these conditions of precarity, Guaraní men have organised into what they call Unemployed Workers Centres. Although these Centres developed within a regional history of unemployed worker mobilisation, they are also premised on socio-cultural logics that draw on the history and experience of indigenous marginalisation from welfarist citizenship projects in this part of the Argentine Chaco. Unemployed Workers Centres also shed light on notions of hierarchy and equality that are particular to the Guaraní. These local attempts to confront the reality of unemployment are highly gendered and age-graded. This is in part because the kinds of jobs available in the regional economy tend to be offered to young, and typically single, men who employers deem to be more capable of performing arduous physical labour.

Chapter 5 considers the moral economies that underpin the pandemic occurrence of internal conflict within Guaraní settlements. The chapter argues that these forms of conflict are directly related to the ways in which Guaraní leaders mediate between local settlements and the broader economy. It also shows that, although processes of institutionalisation have strengthened leaders' positions, the scarcity of external resources puts their legitimacy under constant threat. To explore this further, the chapter develops an argument around notions of unity, disclosure, and concealment as they pertain to the practice and perception of political leadership in Guaraní settlements. *Divisionismo* or factionalism is analysed as a political process of inhibition that limits the strengthening of leaders.

Chapter 6 looks at the contradictions that emerge when processes of factionalism dovetail with legal mechanisms for multicultural recognition. In particular, the chapter argues that legal recognition has strengthened the position of political leaders because it has allowed them to stand as representatives of entire settlements. Moreover, it demonstrates the extent to which the production of documents enables the harnessing of the legal fiction of the Indigenous Community. Because the state's response is far from hegemonic, it is through the cracks and contradictions of the legal framework that power comes to operate. The end result of this situation is that the autonomy which multicultural jurisprudence sought to create gets consistently undermined.

Chapter 7 explores the impact of cash transfer programmes on and within Guaraní households. State-backed cash transfer programmes currently provide the basis for the subsistence of a majority of Guaraní households. The payment of these cash transfers is also a highly gendered affair since they are paid out only to unemployed mothers. The widespread availability of state-sponsored cash hand-outs reflects a broader, global trend in welfare policy in which states provide citizens with monetary benefits so long as easily achievable conditions are met. These new forms of welfare had their origins in Latin America where Mexico's *Programmea Oportunidades* and Brazil's massive *Bolsa Familia* blazed the trail for subsequent cash transfer policies. Although CT programmes have spread throughout the global South, ethnographic analyses of the impacts of these policies are still rare (but see Hornes 2012, Corboz 2013, Eger and Damo 2014). This chapter considers the ways in which cash transfer programmes are re-founding people's sense of dependency on the state, while also highlighting the extent to which these dependencies are generating new social relations and subject positions.

Chapter 8 returns to the theme of illusion and provides an ethnographic exploration of everyday football matches in Guaraní settlements. The chapter sets out to highlight gendered and political implications of the game. Specifically, it argues that the game of football allows young Guaraní men to recreate a sphere of sociality that sets them apart from the household. The game allows players to constitute a form of egalitarian yet powerful form of collectivity, one that resonates strongly with the kinds of political action that are central to the Unemployed Worker's Centres described in Chapter 4. Finally, the chapter shows that the game is also an important avenue for the policing of masculine subjectivity, which at the same time captures many of the tensions and ambiguities presented throughout the dissertation.
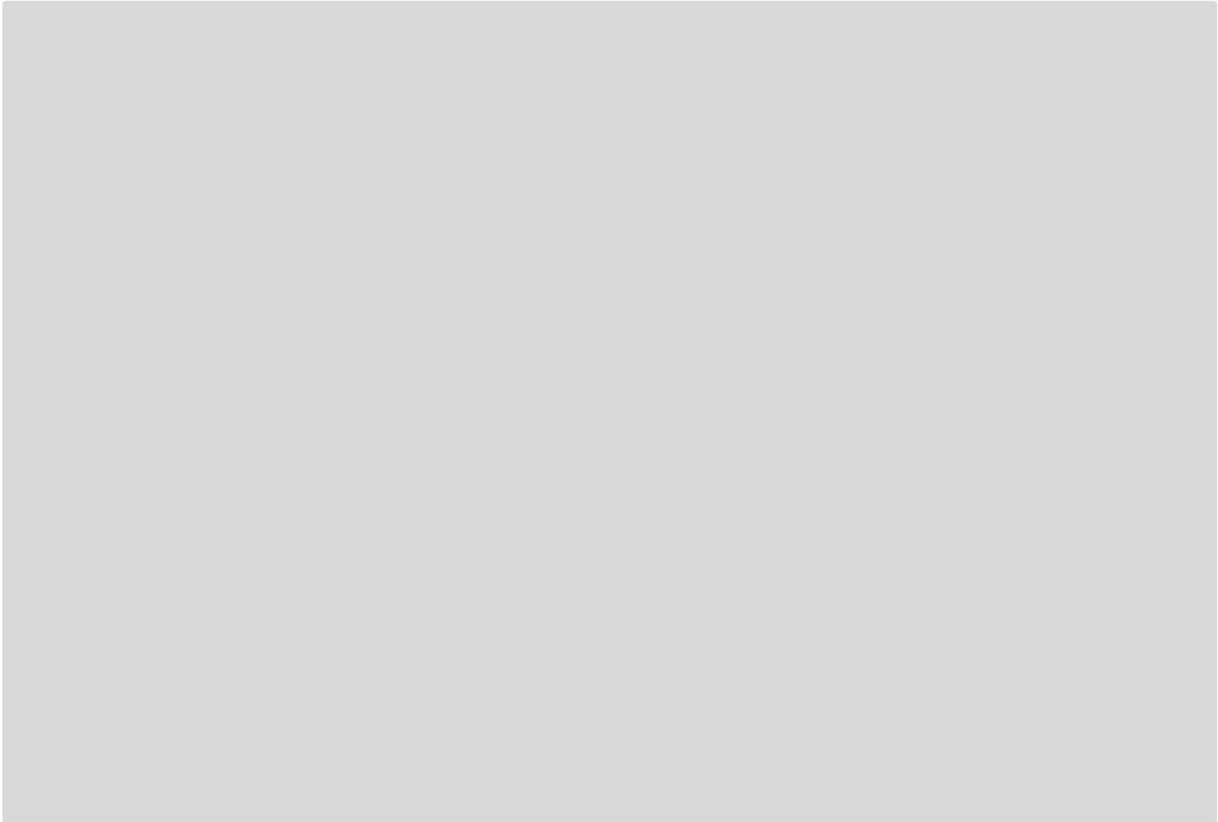
Figure 4. A basket weaving lesson

CHAPTER 2
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GUARANÍ OF THE GRAN CHACO

In this brief history, I will discuss various forms of economic production and political organisation that have been recorded throughout the history of the Guaraní. The chapter is organised into several sections which each describe different moments in the historical trajectory of the Guaraní and of broader developments in the Chaco more generally. It begins by looking at early Guaraní slaving practices and considers the particularities of a slave-based political economy of control to expore the extent to which desirable abundance was achieved through control over captive labour. The chapter then moves forward in time and describes some of the political transformations that came about as the result of the Guaraní's increasing involvement in the regional labour market during the 18th and 19th centuries. In particular, it focuses on how conditions of labour scarcity facilitated the rise of leaders who mediated the employment process. From there, I describe the disruptive effect of the Chaco War in the 1930s and the subsequent setting up of Guaraní refugee settlements in Argentina. This allows me to briefly explore the missionisation of these refugee settlements and to describe some of the Franciscans' attempts to facilitate the integration of their indigenous charges. The final sections consider more recent configurations of the regional labour market and argue that the Guaraní were left out of Peronist citizenship projects due to their exclusion from formal waged labour. They also describe how, in the wake of structural adjustment reforms in the 1990s, mass unemployment led to turbulent mobilisations in this part of the Chaco but also created a situation that, paradoxically, favoured the disenfranchised Guaraní.

At the heart of this brief history is the changing (and ongoing) importance of labour - and control *over* labour - that has marked the development of this part of the Chaco for centuries. This history is one of domination, but it also reflects the extent to which the Guaraní were involved in shaping the outcomes of broader historical processes. The shifting demand for Guaraní labour has had a determining effect upon Guaraní society, but the Guaraní themselves were active participants in these broader political and economic processes. This involvement determined some of the outcomes that regional patterns had at the local level and also makes sense of several of the processes I would come to witness during the course of my fieldwork.

AN EARLY SLAVING ECONOMY

The distant ancestors of today's Guaraní are believed to have migrated westwards from the Amazon alongside Spanish explorers who hired them as guides, porters and militiamen (Calzavarini 1980: 53; Pifarré 1988). At the same time, the arrival of the Europeans coincided with a wave of prophetic migrations that were ostensibly in search of a utopian Land-without-Evil known as *Kandire* (H. Clastres 1995). Upon reaching the Andean foothills where they reside today, the Guaraní migrants conquered and enslaved a pre-existing Arawak-speaking population known as the Chané. Over time, the material and sociological idiosyncrasies of the Guaraní and Chané melded and gave rise to what archaeologists call the

'Chiriguano complex' (Nordenskiöld 1912; Susnik 1968; Calzavarini 1980; Pifarré 1989; Combès and Villar 2007).

According to early colonial chronicles, Guaraní settlements were composed of patrifocal long houses, known as *malokas,* where uxorilocal marriage arrangements allowed male household heads to control the labour of both female kin and sons-in-law. *Malokas* could house more than two hundred individuals and typical villages were composed of between three and five long houses arranged around a central plaza (Combès and Saignes 1991: 41-42). Although the long houses that composed Guaraní settlements were exogamous, the settlements themselves were endogamous and men's political alliances were cemented through preferential patrilateral cross cousin marriage (Saignes 1985). Household heads and chiefs in particular enjoyed polygynous marriages that in turn allowed them to establish alliances through ties of affinity (Saignes 1990). At the regional level, villages were often loosely allied with other villages into what some historians call 'provinces.' Regional chiefs, known as *mburuvicha,* led these provinces, but their authority was often contested and unstable (Langer 2009: 13).

Warfare was a crucial part of society and some young men were initiated into a 'brotherhood' of warriors known as *kereimba* who led Guaraní attacks and were famed for their courage (Combès and Saignes 1991: 66). Writing in the 16th century, Juan Polo de Ondegardo, a Spanish chronicler and colonial functionary, noted that the warrior's 'wealth and internal affairs revolved around the heads of those they had killed in battle and which they kept in their homes and in their tombs' (cited in Saignes 1985: 180). The *kereimba* were expected to demonstrate fearlessness in battle and, since military exploits were an important source of prestige, these warriors often organised raids without the approval of the *mburuvichas* (Pifarré 1989: 44). One of the reasons why war was such a crucial avenue for social mobility had do with the fact that it allowed younger men, particularly those who were not in a position of leadership, to capture wives and slaves who provided an important source of labour (Langer 2009: 15; Combès and Saignes 1991).

The capture of slaves and control over their labour was one of the defining features of early Guaraní society and it permitted many Guaraní settlements to achieve impressive feats of production. Thanks to this surplus labour, Guaraní villages were capable of producing truly staggering amounts of maize. In fact, Santos-Granero has argued that 'the high productivity [of Guaraní agriculture] must be largely attributed to the surplus labour provided by […] captives and servant groups' (Santos-Granero 2009: 136). To give a sense of scale, in 1574 Spanish Viceroy Francisco Alvarez de Toledo reported that a single Guaraní settlement had stored upwards of a thousand tons of maize and that another settlement had enough maize to survive for two years (Pifarré 1989: 42). Yet another colonial observer claimed that, in a good year, the Guaraní produced so much maize that much of it was left to rot (cited in Santos-Granero 2009: 136). There is no doubt that these historical sources must be taken critically, and these figures are not indisputable facts. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that reports concerning the sheer quantity of crops that the Guaraní harvested seem quite consistent, so much so that one historian refers to the Guaraní as 'a civilisation of maize' (Susnik 1968).

In the production of surplus maize we can see early indications of what I argue is a long-standing concern with abundance. Vast stores of maize contributed to the forging of alliances because they provided the raw material for large quantities of maize beer or *chicha*. Produced by women and captives, *chicha* 'served as the lubricant in meetings to negotiate political and military alliances.' Furthermore, feasts served as a platform to demonstrate the 'resources of a particular chief' (Langer 2009: 28). Though chiefs and aspiring young men were those who stood to gain from the production and sharing of abundance, abundance could not be achieved without the labour of dependents – including women and slaves.

From the outset, Guaraní slave raiding practices were embedded in a logic that both resonates with and distances itself from well-known models of predation and control in Amazonia. In Guaraní, the master of a slave was referred to as an *iya*. This figure of the 'owner' is well documented in various Amerindian societies and is not restricted to the relationship between masters and slaves. In fact, Carlos Fausto, who has written an extensive review of the 'relational schema' of ownership in Amazonia (2008), argues that the template for the figure of the owner is that of a human being who owns a wild animal pet. Fausto distinguishes Amerindian ownership from the notion of property ownership that we are more accustomed to: where property ownership posits a relationship between a subject and an object, Amerindian ownership refers to a series of social relations that allow owners to become 'magnified persons' thanks to their ability to incorporate multiple inter-subjective relationships (Fausto 2008). The crucial objective for Guaraní slave-owners, then, was not to objectify slaves, but rather to subjectify them so as to make them amenable to relations of ownership. In this way, slaves, like pets, became domesticated and were eventually integrated into society, as either wives or adoptive children (Santos-Granero 2009: 115).

We can begin to understand how this was accomplished when we consider the kind of language and relationships that characterised slaving practices. The Guaraní used the word *tapïi* to refer to potentially enslaveable societies.[5] As a label, *tapïi* denoted a category of 'generic, potential captives' (Santos-Granero 2009: 116) and could be distinguished from affines who were referred to as *tovaya*, which, in a classic Amazonian way, referred to both brothers-in-law and enemies (Combès 2008: 520, see also P. Clastres 1987). However, the distinctiveness of Guaraní slaving practices was not restricted to the fact that there was a particular category for people who could be enslaved. Spanish chroniclers reported that the Guaraní referred to individual war captives with words derived from the root *tembiâ* – 'that which I seized while hunting, fishing, or warring' (Santos-Granero 2009: 115).[6] According to the available sources, captured enemies 'were handed to [captors'] wives to serve them as domestics', and women became the 'absolute owners of war captives' (Santos-Granero 2009: 78).[7] Slaves were also made to work as

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[5] Other Guarani-speaking societies throughout lowland South America used etymologically related words to refer to other non-Guarani speaking societies (Combes 2008: 514).

[6] Among the Guaraní I lived with, the cognate word *tembiu* was translated as food.

[7] This bears a striking resemblance to accounts common throughout lowland South America where hunters give their prey to their wives. It also resonates with patterns in contemporary Guaraní societies where men who earn wages should hand over their money to their wives and mothers.

farmhands, in what was a quintessentially feminine form of labour (Susnik 1968: 33), and captive women were made to prepare maize beer (Combès & Saignes 1991: 80). Furthermore, male captives were feminised as Guaraní men often ridiculed their slaves by comparing them to women and by denying them the right to wear the *tembeta* lip plugs that signaled virility and transition into male adulthood.

All of this suggests that slavery was conceived of as a very particular kind of relationship and indicates that the relationship between Guaraní masters and their *tapïï* requires further unpacking. Carlos Fausto has written that 'owners control and protect their creatures, being responsible for their well-being, reproduction and mobility' (2008: 333). He points out that, from the perspective of the owned, submitting oneself to a relation of mastery is not necessarily 'a negative and inescapable injunction: it may be (…) a positive way of eliciting attention and generosity' (2008: 333: see also Walker 2012). This is not to say that the *tapïï* wilfully submitted. Rather, it suggests that from the perspective of the Guaraní masters, slaves could in fact be domesticated. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that when slaves were used as warriors, their prowess on the battlefield and their ability to capture their own slaves often allowed them to become integrated into Guaraní society on a more equal footing (Saignes 1990).

Guaraní slavery can be understood as an illustration of the political economy of control that scholars have described in various parts of lowland South America. Like the examples that Rivière (1984) and Turner (1979) described, control over labour in early Guaraní society was a highly gendered affair. Polygynous marriages allowed male heads to control the labour of wives and in-laws, which, in turn, helped to increase male prestige through demonstrations of abundant wealth. Capturing labour therefore became one of the fundamental strategies whereby desirable – and politically valuable – abundance could be achieved. However, before long, the pressure of a growing colonial presence and missionisation began to transform significant aspects of Guaraní political economy. Soon, the use-value of captive labour decreased but its exchange-value grew and Guaraní owners began selling slaves to Spanish frontiersmen in exchange for valuable goods. At the same time, the demand for the labour power of the Guaraní themselves began to grow in the context of an expanding, but labour scarce, frontier economy.

POLITICAL MEDIATION ON AN EXTRACTIVE FRONTIER

Over the centuries, the character of the agricultural-cum-slave raiding economy was steadily transformed. As early as the sixteenth century some Guaraní were already involved in the burgeoning frontier economy: selling off their captives in exchange for Spanish tools and weapons, or selling their own labour on Spanish farms (Saignes 1990). Young men in particular were well positioned to take advantage of the economic opportunities afforded by the frontier economy and managed to find employment as cattle herders (*baquianos*), farm hands, and seasonal harvesters. However, it was during the mid-nineteenth century that the Guaraní truly became integrated into the regional labour market. This was due to the establishment of sugar cane plantations in the northwest of Argentina. The plantations drew in a massive seasonal labour force of indigenous workers and thus had a transformative effect on the Chaco as a

whole. In fact, the attraction of work on plantations was so great that the Guaraní called Argentina *Mbaporenda*, 'the place where there is work' (Hirsch 1999) and felt that it was 'a place of wonder, with an abundance of highly desirable things' (Langer 2009: 121).

By the late nineteenth century, 'the most important role the Chiriguanos played in the regional economy was not as producers or consumers, but as laborers' (Langer 2009: 103). During the early twentieth century, Argentine bureaucrats dreamed of forthcoming progress and calculated the numbers of unconquered indigenous people who could be put to work as *braceros*, a term for unskilled labourers that stems from the Spanish word for arm, *brazo*. In the words of one functionary 'the most useful resource for industry in this part of the frontier are their [the Indian's] arms' (cited in Lagos 2000: 161). The regional labour market of the Chaco was organised around the often forceful extraction of indigenous labour, complete with 'harvests' of Indians and 'numbered Indians' transported and redistributed by steam train (Lagos 2000: 143).

In 1898, Jose Amadeo Baldrich, soldier, explorer, and bureaucrat, spoke of indigenous labour as one more naturally occurring resource that waited to be exploited:

> 'those thirty or forty thousand [indigenous] souls (…) let us try to incorporate them to the common work and since they are strong, vigorous men who know how to work and be useful (…) it is a virtue of foresight, of tact, of humanity and convenience to take advantage of this available element just as we will take advantage of the products, the timber and the soil, fertilising them with labour where necessary' (cited in Lagos 2000: 68).

In these words, Baldrich describes indigenous labour as one of nature's boons, a resource that would help the nation develop and modernise. Readily available and resilient, indigenous labourers would be put to work and this, Baldrich hoped, would instil a new sense of civility among them. His words also prefigure that the demand for labour was highly gendered, and this becomes even clearer in the words of a sugar cane plantation administrator who lamented the fact that he had to hire 'the entire tribe, old and useless people who are nothing more than a nuisance and force the company to pay the youth who are fit for work smaller wages than they deserve' (cited in Lagos 2000: 56).

As this was going on, the Franciscan missions that were set up in Bolivia during the nineteenth century became a reluctant source of labour for the sugar cane plantations in Argentina. While the plantations sent out labour contractors known as *enganchadores* to attract Guaraní workers, the missionaries felt that this threatened their evangelising efforts and resisted the contractors' attempts to lure workers away. It would be mistaken, however, to assume that the indigenous populations of the Chaco were merely passive victims of a process of labour absorption. In the Guaraní case, chiefs or *capitanes* mediated between contractors, workers and priests, and became crucial actors in the hiring of indigenous workers (Langer 2009: 115). Given the high, and seasonally marked, demand for scarce labour, plantations required the mediation of indigenous leaders who were able to recruit workers and maintain discipline.

Within the history of these seasonal labour migrations, perhaps no other leader exploited his mediating position as successfully as did Mandeponay, a Guaraní leader from the mission of Macharetí who was famed as 'the most powerful chief among the Chiriguanos' (Langer 2009: 120). In the late nineteenth century, Macharetí was the largest settlement on the frontier, larger even than any of the *criollo* villages that dotted the territory. This granted Mandeponay 'control over the largest numbers of workers in the region, an extremely valuable resource along the frontier, where labor was always scarce' (Langer 2009: 175). The Guaraní *cacique* began travelling to the Argentine sugar cane plantations as early as 1884 and is believed to have benefited hugely from his position as he was paid for every labourer supplied. Mandeponay also positioned himself as negotiator between the Bolivian authorities and the indigenous groups that lived deeper in the Chaco. His influence was such that the administrator of one of Argentina's most important sugar cane plantations wrote him a letter of recommendation and vouched for him before Bolivian authorities. He also received a land grant of 2,500 hectares from a Bolivian military leader in 1886 (ibid: 176). The way in which Mandeponay flouted some of the Franciscans' orders while living in one of their missions indicates the degree of influence that he managed to accumulate. Most notably, he was able to publicly flaunt his six wives in spite of the Franciscans' energetic attempts to crack down on polygynous marriages within the mission. Mandeponay also continued to celebrate *arete*-like feasts, but with an important modification: instead of drinking *chicha,* the parties were now fuelled by cane brandy that was paid for with money or purchased and brought back from Argentina (ibid: 178).

Mandeponay perfectly illustrates the way in which an indigenous leader could gain extraordinary influence by mediating employment in a labour scarce context. As a go-between in the employment process, Mandeponay conformed quite neatly to the portrait of the 'broker' that Deborah James has described (James 2011): in the good graces of plantation bosses and local authorities, he received money and land as payment for the workers he recruited. While accepting the establishment of a Franciscan mission in his home community, he maintained his polygynous marriages, refused to cede authority to the missionaries and simultaneously made himself indispensable to their evangelising efforts. Like a traditional Guaraní chief, Mandeponay sponsored drinking feasts. However, instead of regaling his guests with *chicha* made by his wives, he offered them store bought cane brandy. The case of Mandeponay throws into the relief the crucial articulation of indigenous political authority and the regional economy, which ultimately resulted in the increasing embeddedness of Guaraní society within the expanding structures of the Argentine state. This process of incorporation was not simply an imposition from the outside upon Guaraní society. Rather, members of Guaraní society, like Mandeponay, took on an active role in bringing about changes, and these transformations had a long lasting effect on Guaraní life and on the socio-economic position that Guaraní workers could aspire to occupy.

It is worth stressing that the rise of leaders of Mandeponay seems to have responded to the conditions of labour scarcity in the region. In fact, there is evidence that suggests that much later, under similar

conditions of labour scarcity, similar kinds of brokering leaders emerged. For instance, a century after Mandeponay began taking workers to the sugar cane plantations of Argentina, Simón et al. (1980) wrote a report for the International Work Group of Indigenous Affairs in which they describe the migration of Guaraní workers from the Izozog in Bolivia to sugar cane plantations in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in the late 1970s. The migratory processes the authors describe revolved around the then booming economy of Santa Cruz that 'led within a few years to a need for manpower which far exceeded the potential at hand' (Simón et al. 1980: 103). Just as occurred on Argentine sugar cane plantations in the 1880s, the plantations in Santa Cruz strove to attract scarce labour from indigenous communities. While the report at times suffers from a romanticised opposition between the 'good', 'collective' Guaraní and the 'bad' and 'individualistic' capitalists of national society, it contains useful data on the organisation of the employment process. For my purposes here, one of the most illuminating insights contained in the report concerns the role that Guaraní 'contractors' played as key mediating figures in the whole process. As the authors note, the role of contractor would often overlap with that of the local leader:

> The captain, the elected head of the community, inspires confidence by his agility in external relations with public and private institutions of the national society. These relations are both desired and considered necessary by the Izozeños. The successful "sale" of his own people as dependent wage earners, for his own profit, is all the easier for a contractor who is at the same time a captain. Small doses of help for the community, given personally or obtained from public institutions, give the appearance of further participation in communal life with all its social norms and values (Simón et al. 1980: 112)

Comparisons between Mandeponay and the more recent contractor-captains are inevitable. Although the authors go on to dismiss these captains-turned-contractors as corrupt and unauthentic, this normative position hinders a more profound analysis of the ways in which local notions of political authority interacted with the new challenges and opportunities that the labour market afforded. Indeed, both Mandeponay and the more recent contractor-chiefs share strikingly similar positions as brokers who mediate the employment process. As with Mandeponay, the Izozog brokers were also active players who channelled the influence of the state, the missions, and the plantations in ways that were productive of new social relations even as they depended upon pre-existing ones.

Fundamentally, Guaraní leaders like Mandeponay or the *capitanes* of the Izozog mediated between Guaraní populations and the external world of *criollos*. Although, as we will see, Guaraní society today suffers from conditions of labour surplus, the relatively privileged position that Guaraní labour enjoyed in the extractive economies of the Chaco has had an impact on some of the key institutions that endure to this day. This is particularly true of political leadership, which, as in other parts of lowland South America, is still envisaged as one of the key sources of valuable resources.

FROM '*TOLDERÍO*' TO '*MISIÓN*'

As described above, the Guaraní's experiences of integration into the labour market went hand-in-hand with their experience of life in Franciscan missions in Bolivia. However, over the course of the 20th century, both the labour market and the missions would undergo dramatic transformations and, after military conflict erupted in the region, many Guaraní eventually abandoned Bolivia to settle in Argentina. The Chaco War of the 1930s essentially put an end to the missionary project in Bolivia, nonetheless, many Guaraní would be brought into a new set of Franciscan missions on Argentine soil during the second half of the century. This second wave of missionisation, however, developed alongside a strengthened and more institutionalised nation-state and, as a result, these missions comprised a new permutation of the civilising mission – one where religion and the values of secular citizenship coincided. Arguably, many of the processes of institutionalisation that would emerge in the early 21st century can be traced back to this second wave of missionisation. To recount this story, however, we must begin with the Chaco War.

In the early 1930s, many of the indigenous groups that inhabited the border areas of the western Chaco suddenly found themselves in the middle of a military conflagration. The so-called Chaco War, which saw the armies of Bolivia and Paraguy pitted against each other, forced several indigenous populations to flee and take refuge. Both the Bolivian and the Paraguayan armies persecuted the Guaraní in particular because their ability to speak both Spanish and Guaraní (a widely spoken language in Paraguay) made military authorities suspicious of their potential role as spies. In an ostensible effort to protect them, many Guaraní – including several of the founding members of present day communities like Yacuy – were held in detention centres. The war also reached the Franciscan missions in which thousands of Guaraní had lived, not only did the Bolivian army take control of the missions and recruit Guaraní men as guides and labourers, the missions themselves were also engulfed in the conflict and suffered Paraguayan attacks (Langer 2009: 261).

Although the Guaraní were massively constrained during the war, Bossert et al. (2008) have shown that they were not simply passive victims. For instance, echoing the kind of role that Mandeponay had played, one important leader in the Isoso region of Bolivia recruited men to send to the front line on behalf of the Bolivian army and his rivals actively sought the help of the Paraguayans in an effort to undermine this leader's authority. Overall, however, the Chaco War shook Guaraní society to its core and it is estimated that around 10,500 Guaraní abandoned their old territories during the conflict. Many of these refugees fled to the northwest of Argentina, a country they were familiar with due to earlier labour migrations (Bossert et al. 2008).

The long trek into Argentina was fraught with danger. Many people I spoke to had heard stories about hunger and violence and some older people remembered that their parents feared the presence of wild cannibals that were said to inhabit the unknown forests. Once in Argentina, many people settled near small rivers and creeks. However, the location of these settlements also hints at the fact that these

refugees were sensitive to the availability of jobs[8] and many families settled, rather haphazardly, near haciendas, saw mills and train stations where opportunities for waged employment were forthcoming and where fertile land remained unoccupied. Even a couple of decades later, Franciscan chroniclers would observe that in the settlement in Yacuy 'many of these indigenes work in Mekle's [a local land owner] saw mill and others in the neighbouring ranches' (CMFT Chronicles 1924-1961). In fact, the majority of today's communities are still located alongside the remains of the abandoned train track, and often near the place where a train station or saw mill once stood.

According to most of the people I spoke to, the newly arrived Guaraní families built their houses far apart from each other. My older informants remembered how back then 'everything was forest' and their memories of the original locations of their houses suggest that, more than resembling a tight-knit 'community', settlements were loose configurations of houses drawn together by the availability of waged employment. This is in stark contrast to the kinds of settlements that many of these families had already grown accustomed to through decades of life in Franciscan missions in Bolivia. In the earliest missionary chronicles I was able to find, Franciscans described these loose configurations of Guaraní houses as *tolderíos* and *rancheríos*, words that disparagingly suggest a disorganised collection of Indian hovels.

Nevertheless, genealogical data suggests that the separate families that made up these *tolderíos* soon began intermarrying and it is likely that some sense of social cohesion began to emerge. At the same time, among that first generation of Guaraní refugees, marriages between what are today considered to be separate settlements were common and there seems to have been considerable movement of families between settlements. For instance, one of the oldest families that now lives in a settlement near Aguararenta had actually moved there attracted by the presence of a school and a larger sawmill. Similarly, in 1955 Franciscans reported that in the settlement of Yacuy 'very few were actually born here, rather they are Chiriguano related to those from the Mission of La Loma (…) and with many more from Charagua, Bolivia' (CMFT Chronicles 1924-1961).

Although the first efforts to set up a missionary centre in the region date back to 1924, missionary work began in earnest in 1927 with the establishment of Tartagal's Franciscan Missionary Centre (CMFT) (Sargenti & Nunez 2011: 32). At a time when the local lumber market was booming and oil had been recently discovered, attempts to 'civilise' the region's indigenous population were of paramount importance to the regional elites. Over the course of the next few decades, Franciscan missionaries progressively extended their work among the Guaraní. At first, the priests paid periodic visits to the settlements where they would distribute various goods, including sugar, *mate*, sweets, clothes and powdered milk. Gathered under the generous shade of a carob tree, the Franciscans would give mass and

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[8] The largest Guaraní settlement in Argentina is in Pichanal few kilometres away from the still existing sugar cane plantations. The communities I conducted fieldwork with, however, descend from families that did not continue the one hundred kilometre-long trek to the plantations and chose instead to stay in the proximity of the sawmills near what is now Tartagal.

pray 'to the Lord that these human beings incline towards the Christian life' (CMFT Chronicles 1924-1961).

Figure 5. First page of the Tartagal Franciscan Missionary Centre chronicles.

If we take the chronicles at face value, there was much missionary work to do. In a report sent to Rome in 1955 the Franciscans stated that, at a time when the population of Tartagal had climbed to 17,000, there still remained 10,500 'infidels and Indian tribes' in the parish. Moreover, 'progress was very slow' in no small part because of the 'peculiar character' of the Guaraní who 'even though they receive goods and advantages (*un bien y una ventaja*) don't go [to mass].' Perhaps because the going was so slow, the Franciscans made sure to document their progress and wrote down the numbers of baptisms, marriages and first communions they celebrated in the settlements they visited. Given the 'moral and material situation' of the Guaraní the Franciscans began devising plans for creating what they called '*reducciones*' (literally, reductions).

Centuries before the establishment of these Franciscan missions, *reducciones* had been an important part of Spanish imperial policy throughout Latin America (Mumford 2012). The idea behind the *reducciones*, was to bring dispersed indigenous populations together so that they could be more easily evangelised, taxed, and controlled. Given this historical precedent, I was shocked to find that in the 1950s and 60s Franciscan missionaries still thought of their missions as *reducciones*. The journals also show that the missions were created on land donated by landowners specifically for the purpose of 'reducing', 'educating' and 'civilising' indigenous populations. For these new *reducciones*, the Franciscans drew on the already established examples of the Missions at La Loma and Rio Caraparí where the Guaraní, 'enjoying ample territory, slowly and pacifically, are passing (*pasando*) to our civilization.' Establishing *reducciones*, the missionaries hoped, would enable the potential converts to have a school and 'their own place' (*asiento propio*) and this, surely, would help further the civilising mission (CMFT Chronicles 1924-1961).
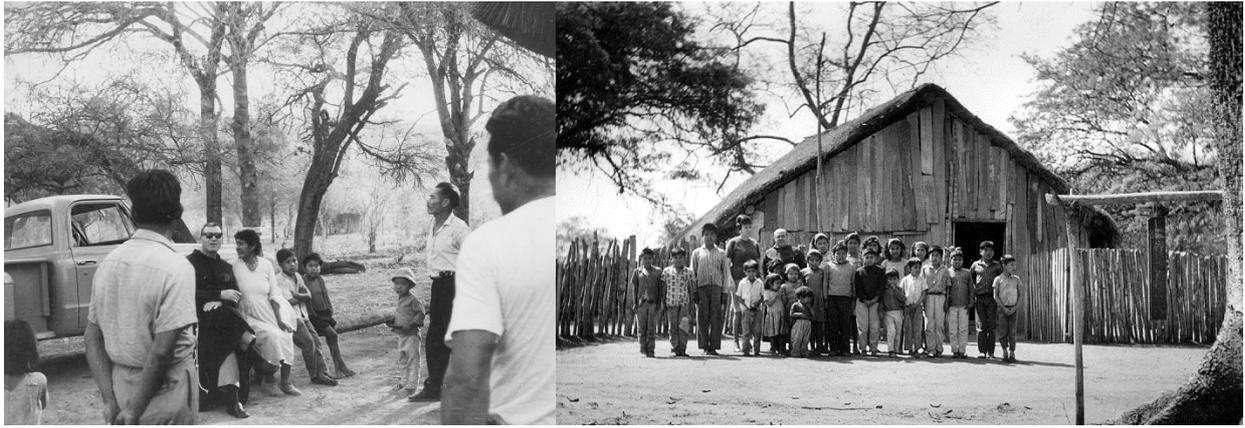
Figure 6. Early images from the Mission of Yacuy circa 1950. The building to the right shows the first school built in Yacuy. In the foreground, a piece of railway track doubles as a mission bell (images courtesy of Maria Luisa Jalil).

Reflecting the deep ambivalence that has accompanied 'civilising missions' throughout the world, most of the older Guaraní people I spoke to agreed that the missionaries had been good (*buenitos*) to them even as they remembered how they had cracked down on the celebration of the harvest and punished children who spoke Guaraní by making them kneel on maize kernels. They appreciated that they had established schools for them and taught them to read and write and also remembered that it was thanks to the Franciscans that they had been able to get hold of ID documents for the first time. In the words of one older man, who was perhaps recounting only the more pleasurable moments, 'The priests would donate clothes and goods, sugar, *mate*, sandwiches and would make sweets for the kids. They helped us so much, not like the nuns nowadays who put up signs and prices for the clothes! (Martin Soria cited in Marchionni 2009).

Franciscans are still the main Catholic order working in the region. Many of the priests I met during fieldwork lamented some of the tactics that had been used in the old missions. Particularly they felt that the way in which the Guaraní language had been supressed was tragic. However, these same missionaries were quick to explain that the old priests were essentially trying to help the Guaraní to become integrated into society. One priest asked me rhetorically, 'How were they going to get jobs if they couldn't speak Spanish?' Startlingly, in a book published in 2011, two Argentine Franciscans espouse a more extreme form of this argument: 'The Indian is lazy and does not produce? Let us distinguish: for the Indian freshly taken out of the forest this may be true; but for the one who has been educated in the Missions, even if for a few years, it is not (…) [Employers - referring to sugar cane plantation labour bosses and other 'industrial establishments'] have always preferred reduced Indians because they were more worthwhile, since in the Mission they grew accustomed to the kind of ordinary work that is appropriate for a rational and human life' (Sargenti & Nuñez 2011: 94-5).

The missions also affected the social and political organisation of Guaraní settlements. In my host community, several people remembered that the priests had asked those families that lived further away to move closer to the school and the chapel. As a result, and as in many Latin American settings, the

schools and Catholic churches lie at the centre of most of today's communities. Teaching converts to work with the necessary discipline was also one of the missionaries' objectives and agricultural cooperatives and carpentry workshops were set up to accomplish this task. Additionally, the first chiefs were often those that the missionaries appointed. Some of my interlocutors remembered that the first chiefs were chosen because they were the best Spanish speakers in the communities. In Aguararenta, the late Benito Segundo was generally remembered as the community's first chief. Many claimed that he had been chosen because of his command of the Spanish language, but some of his detractors claimed that actually the priest had merely asked him to be the chapel caretaker. Whatever the historical truth of the matter, it seems clear that the missionaries were crucial players in the selection of leaders. In fact, mission documents from Tartagal show that, as late as 1969, the Franciscans were discussing 'the necessity of forming leaders among the indigenous populations of our missions' (CMFT Minutes Book 1/1/1969). A man by the name of Venancio illustrated this when he told me that Benito Segundo was actually the priest's second choice for chief. He claimed that the Franciscans had actually offered the job to his father, but that his father had turned the post down because he preferred to work in the saw mills. Don Venancio, always a joker, chuckled mischievously as he contemplated the fact that, had his father taken up the offer, he would now be the community chief.

It seems clear that the missions effectively transformed the social and political organisation of Guaraní settlements over the course of 20 to 30 years. What were initially loose constellations of Guaraní households drawn together by the availability of work and slowly developing kinship networks eventually became *misiones* with appointed *caciques*. Once they had organised people into missions, the Franciscan priests began brokering the relationship between the Guaraní and the exterior world. The CMFT chronicles document how the priests petitioned all kinds of powerful actors including regional landowners, provincial and national state authorities, and even the Standard Oil, Esso, and YPF oil companies, for goods, land, and building materials with which to stimulate their civilising work. Working with the explicit aim of helping indigenous people become integrated and respectable members of society, the Franciscans educated, clothed, fed, and employed their charges even as they created new leaders and set the foundation for a new kind of political body. A sense of social cohesion developed as marriages between different communities became rare while endogamous marriages - between the families that made up the original settlements - became the norm. At the same time, the fact that mediating tasks were undertaken by missionaries may have strengthened a sense of isolation from broader structures. As is clear in their chronicles, the missionaries now brokered relations with external actors on behalf of their indigenous charges and furthered the existence of a social unit that would be reinforced through the practice and ideology of communal property, the celebration of the mission's patron saint and even by the mission's spatial distribution.

In spite of all of their efforts, the Franciscans' attempts to prepare their charges for entry into the labour market seem to have yielded disappointing results. In the first decades of the 20th century, just when the

Guaraní were fleeing Bolivia and then being re-settled into new missions, the regional economy underwent important transformations, which, conjoined with political developments at the national level (including the rise of Peronism) would lead to a segmented labour market in this part of the Chaco. In turn, this development reflects some of the key assumptions that have shaped nation-wide, state-sponsored discourses on national identity and citizenship, and sheds some light on why the Guaraní were excluded from it.

WORK AND BELONGING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

While an abundance of valuable hardwoods had driven the initial *criollo* settlements in this north western corner of Argentina (Minetti 2005), it was the arrival of the railroad that truly spurred the new regional economy. In the context of an expanding nation seeking further control over its vast territory, logging itself was crucial for the development of railroad infrastructure since the hardwoods that are endemic to the region were used as both railway sleepers and fuel for locomotors. With the aim of helping to populate the land, recently disembarked European migrants were sent from Buenos Aires to work on the construction of the new railways. Simultaneously, the new infrastructure opened up economic opportunities for *criollo* settlers as it facilitated the transportation of valuable wood to the provincial capital of Salta and beyond to Buenos Aires.

By the 1940s, employment patterns on plantations were also undergoing drastic transformations. Bosses began hiring workers permanently and captains like Mandeponay became superfluous to the labour market as their brokering skills were no longer in demand. Other changes soon followed: no longer paid with vouchers they could trade in for goods at the plantation store, the sugar cane workers began receiving cash. Every fifteen days, the workers, dressed in their best finery, lined up outside the office and waited to receive their cash envelopes. Dictated by the temporality of the wage, workers' newly acquired wealth allowed them to purchase large amounts of goods and alcohol that they could share. Hawkers, peddlers and creditors assailed the workers (Bernand 1973: 78) and, at night, the availability of money prompted a celebration that bore a striking resemblance to the *arete guasu* itself: 'it was then that they brought out their flutes and their drums and played until dawn, as though this were their last night' (ibid: 77).

If these wages gave people a sense of wealth that they could associate with a state of abundance, some of the stories I heard during the course of my fieldwork suggested that wages also held forth the promise of a new sense of belonging. This sense of belonging was closely associated with new patterns of consumption and also seems to have had a strong resonance with the Guaraní's own sense of ethnic hierarchy. Elisa, a woman in her forties, remembered her grandmother's tales about the Paraguayan *finca* she worked in before settling in Argentina. 'They did not know *la moneda* (literally 'the coin') but they wanted to be able to go into the shop and buy with money, even though they weren't lacking anything because they were paid in *mercancía* (manufactured goods).' The aspirational desire contained within

Elisa's statement highlights the attractiveness of money as a form of wealth that went beyond the mere accumulation of things. Elisa's grandmother had *mercancía* because she worked on the *finca*, but she did not have the wherewithal with which to walk into a store and buy the specific things she desired. If the Paraguayan *finca* did not lend people access to cash, the newer forms of work the Guaraní encountered upon their arrival in Argentina opened up new opportunities for the acquisition and accumulation of socially-valued wealth.

Many Guaraní I met were dismissive of other indigenous groups from the Chaco who they claimed were not as 'clever' (*pícaro*), or hard working as themselves. This emic ethnic hierarchy may have partially originated as result of the historical labour experiences the Guaraní had undergone. For instance, on sugar cane plantations, the division of labour was organised around strict ethnic hierarchies. The Guaraní were generally at the top of these hierarchies because the plantation bosses saw them as more 'civilised' and harder-working than other, non-agricultural, indigenous groups from the Chaco (Gordillo 2004: 113). In fact, in the 1960's, a sugarcane plantation administrator told Carmen Bernand that the 'Chahuancos are not Indians but stable workers. The Indians are the others' (1973: 74). This seems to have also had an impact on the views other indigenous groups had of the Guaraní; for example, among the Toba of the Chaco it was widely believed that the Guaraní had access to magical sources of gold (Gordillo 2004: 147).

Along these lines, Alfredo, an older man in his eighties, remembered his time working at a saw mill and told me that he used to receive half of his pay in cash and half in vouchers that he could exchange for manufactured goods. By contrast, he said, the *indios* (Indians) - by which he meant members of non-Guaraní indigenous groups from the Chaco, typically Wichí – were only paid in goods. He also remembered that the *patrón* was always good (*buenito*) to him, but that he would yell at the Wichí workers whenever they asked to be paid in cash: 'what do you Matacos want money for anyway?' Implicit in Alfredo's account is the idea that the value of cash would be wasted on these members of a traditionally hunting and gathering society. Similarly, in Alfredo's story it would seem as though his relative access to money vindicated his sense of ethnic superiority; particularly since the *criollo* boss was making a clear distinction between the value of Alfredo's work and that of his '*indio*' co-worker by paying the former in cash and vouchers and the latter only in goods. For many Guaraní, their closer association with the world of the *criollos* and, by association, with jobs, had to do with the fact that they were more able to communicate and relate than other indigenous groups were. As Alfredo once told me while comparing Guaraní and Wichí socio-cultural traits, 'we are more *pícaros*, lively, more welcoming and talkative. That's why we have jobs. You need pliers to pull words out of a Wichí!'

However, while the labour market seems to have been providing some Guaraní with a sense of access to abundance, it was also leaving them out of the country's most important citizenship project to date.

At about the same time that Guaraní refugees began settling and working in the Argentine sawmills, oil was discovered in the hills just above what is now Tartagal. Little more than a scarcely populated train

station at the time, this discovery would propel the settlement of the region. The oil reserves in the region were first exploited by the U.S. based Standard Oil Company as early as 1926. By 1928 the company had invested more than fifteen million pesos, and was drawing oil from seven wells even as it prepared to begin production in thirteen more. Much to the chagrin of provincial elites who benefitted from the royalties paid out by Standard Oil, the discovery of oil promptly thrust the region into the limelight of national politics as burgeoning populist movements in the national capital called for the expropriation of American interests in the name of national sovereignty. The Argentine state eventually expropriated Standard Oil holdings in the country and nationalised the oil sector. With the rise of Peronism, the oil sector - and, specifically, the nationally owned oil company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales* (YPF) - became closely associated with the expanding welfare state, and soon turned into a cornerstone of Peronism's fundamental re-working of citizenship in the country.

YPF was often regarded as a shining example of the potential of the Argentine welfare state. On the one hand this had to do with the massive benefits that YPF employees received. Near its Patagonian wells, for instance, YPF offered 'cradle-to-grave enterprise welfare (…) higher-than-average salaries, extremely good housing serviced by company personnel (…) access to a good hospital and health plan, and paid vacations', the wealth of its employees added buoyancy to the 'social and economic life of the region' (Auyero 2003: 42).Within these companies, strong labour union movements developed and were encompassed within the Peronist political project, which granted workers a broader sense of belonging which has proved extremely resilient. Thanks in large part to its influence within these labour unions, Peronism proved extremely successful at providing a sense of self-worth to the Argentine working classes (James 1988). An important aspect of this was to promote the idea that production was central to national sovereignty. Being a worker, in other words, was not to be an alienated, under classed individual, but rather to participate fully in a project of militancy, nation building and progress. As Sian Lazar has noted:

> The basic citizenship equation in Argentina from the 'top-down' perspective remains that a) full citizenship rights are recognised by the government predominantly for formal sector workers and b) the articulation between those workers and the state is mediated by trade unions; and this has been the case since the rise of *peronism* in the mid-20th century. The combination of these two factors results in a highly collective form of substantive citizenship for a significant proportion of those who have the formal status of citizen. (Lazar 2013a: 112).

Just as in Patagonia, in the towns of General Mosconi, Tartagal and Aguaray, YPF became the main source of employment and local businesses depended upon the custom of the relatively well-paid company employees known as *ypfeanos*. One cool evening after a heavy rain storm, I sat in Tartagal's main square and struck up a conversation with an elderly man, Gustavo, who sat on the bench beside me enjoying the fresh air. Gustavo's life history exemplifies the kinds of trajectories that were available to those *criollos* who were employed by the state in twentieth century. Gustavo's father had been a French

immigrant who, having arrived in Argentina in the early 1900s, was sent to Tartagal to work on the construction of the new railway lines. When he was a teenager Gustavo saw a newspaper ad in which Standard Oil called for mechanics and lorry drivers. Accompanied by a friend, Gustavo joined a line of hopefuls outside the company offices and was hired as a driver. When Standard Oil was expropriated, YPF kept Gustavo on as a driver. When he retired, in the 1980s, YPF offered Gustavo a full pension and promised to cover relocation costs to anywhere in the country. A *Tartagalense* at heart, though, Gustavo chose to stay put in his hometown.

Gustavo's life trajectory, the comfort and security he achieved by working for YPF, and the benefits he gained from the company's 'cradle-to-grave welfare', contrast starkly with the Guaraní's experience of the state-owned oil sector. To begin with, it is notable that in the early 20th century Standard Oil did not hire indigenous workers (Langer 2009: 119). Moreover, the distinction between indigenous and 'Argentine' workers seems to have persisted even when YPF was nationalised. For instance, several people I spoke to remembered how haughty YPF employees would refer to them offensively as *chiretes* (a derogatory term for indigenous people) and would taunt them when they travelled to town on public buses. Some people even remembered how they used to scavenge for food in the rubbish heaps at the YPF camps and how the company employees would chase them away even though large amounts of food were being wasted. Crucially, while a few *chaqueños* in places like Aguararenta had held lifelong jobs in YPF, there was not a single Guaraní who had. Even in the Chané community of Campo Durán, which is located right next to what was once an important YPF refinery, some Chané received jobs from YPF but these were never fixed contract jobs – like the ones Gustavo had – but rather occasional short-term work stints (Carenzo 2010: 154). Although I have no evidence to suggest that there was an official policy that restricted employment to *criollos*, it seems clear that the formalised employment opportunities that the oil sector offered were, for one reason or another, off limits to the Guaraní. While other sources of jobs were available, the fact that the Guaraní did not work for the state-owned oil company meant that they were also left out of the 'citizenship equation' that linked the state and the workers through the medium of labour unions.

In sum, experiences of waged labour have been crucial to the Guaraní's sense of belonging and even contributed to the sedimentation of emic ethnic hierarchies. However, during the 20th century, these experiences were not inscribed within the sorts of ideological projects that were common to Peronist militants. Without recourse to the symbolic infrastructure of populist politics that issued from the nation's capital, the Guaraní found the social productivity of labour to be inscribed within its material affordances, which created a sense of belonging and pride but was separate from the Peronist-style promises of citizenship. In this sense, Guaraní experiences of inclusion (and exclusion) from the labour market tend to focus more on the kinds of material wealth that could be gleaned from work than on the kinds of citizenship ideals that *criollo* Peronists might ascribe to employment.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE END OF THE MISSIONS

This Peronist citizenship equation was severely challenged during the structural adjustment reforms that took place in the 1990s. Due to these reforms, economic sectors that had long been protected by the state were privatised and labour unions lost much of their political clout. In the region of Tartagal, the privatisation of YPF led to the laying off of 90% of the company's employees. Unemployment reached unprecedented levels in the region (upwards of 30%, when in the early nineties it was as low as 6%) and temporary contracts, rather than permanent ones, became the norm (Benclowicz 2011). As unemployment rates rose around the country, the unemployed, the *desocupado,* became an increasingly charged political firgure.

In Argentina, the birth of the unemployed workers movement is typically traced back to 1996 when the first road blocks or *piquetes* took place in two small oil producing towns in the middle of Patagonia. Against the backdrop of soaring unemployment that was the result of the state's privatisation of the state-owned oil company (YPF), *piquetes* were organised around the demand for 'dignified jobs' and 'blocked all the local, provincial, and national roads (…) effectively halting the movement of people and goods for seven days and six nights' (Auyero 2003: 17). Over the next few years, similar *piquetero* mobilisations gathered force throughout the country as a delegitimised state hesitated to repress the protests for fear of further jeopardising governability. In the part of the Salta province where I did my research, the mobilisations led to the blockading of National Highway 34 in 1997 and, prefiguring the violence that would erupt throughout the country during the economic meltdown of 2001, police and infantry repression sparked a violent response that climaxed with the fire-bombing of the municipal government building.

The *piquetero* movement, whose ranks were filled by Peronist supporting ex-labour union members, sought to combat the anomic estrangement that resulted from the breakdown of the state's 'welfare enterprise' (Auyero 2003). It was also, however, a movement that was productive of new forms of belonging. Indeed, as unemployed workers fought for the retrenchment of the state, they created a sense of militancy that served as a proxy for the forms of citizenship and belonging that had been lost. The emergence of the *piquetero* movement in places like Tartagal, Aguaray, and General Mosconi can therefore be understood as a movement that sought to bring back the state and its associated privileges in an effort to recuperate a sense of enfranchisement that had been shattered by the pressure of structural adjustment policies.

After its liberalisation, the Argentine oil sector attracted large amounts of foreign investment and production of crude oil rose sharply towards the end of the 1990s (Manzano & Monaldi 2008: 92). The privatisation of YPF also led to a much more flexible labour market in the sector. In spite of the drastic social consequences that these laying offs had on the *criollo* population, they also had an unexpectedly beneficial impact upon the Guaraní. New companies filled the vacuum left by the breakdown of YPF's monopoly and private companies and contractors sought to hire cheaper, non-unionised workers on

temporary contracts instead of attempting to recruit the highly politicised and militant ex-YPF workers. Even though the privatisation of YPF led to soaring rates of unemployment in the region, it had the paradoxical effect of opening the doors of the oil sector to Guaraní workers. Having not been involved in the labour struggles of the ex-*ypfianos*, the Guaraní became an eager and readily available source of non-unionised labour.

This led to a minor oil boom for the Guaraní. It was during this time that considerable numbers of Guaraní were hired to work as members of seismic exploration crews, both in the Chaco and much further afield in Patagonia. Although the jobs were often limited to, at most, a few months of work, the wages received far outstripped anything most people had earned before. Many Guaraní were able to build themselves new houses, purchase consumer goods including TVs, stereos, and even cars. Even more, the fact that, at the time, the Argentine peso was pegged to the US dollar meant that, even though cost of living in Argentina was quite high, their newly acquired pesos were worth a considerable amount in the Bolivian frontier towns where many Guaraní would go shopping.

In many ways, this was a heady time. Beyond the ways in which the shift in the labour market favoured the Guaraní, in 1994, a reform of the Argentine Constitution included pro-indigenous legislation for the first time in the country's history. As a result, over the next few years the missions were dismantled, the Franciscans bequeathed land to a few of the larger missions and relinquished control of the schools to the state in others. As the missionary presence diminished, the body politic of Guaraní communities once again underwent a transformation. Required by the new constitution to do so, the old missions registered as legal persons. No longer *Misiones*, they became *Comunidades Indígenas*, or Indigenous Communities. Where once Franciscan priests had been the main brokers between communities and the outside world, the newly instituted *presidentes* took over the task of representing and defending the collective interests of their communities. In fact, even though his tenure was short-lived and controversial, an inhabitant of the Guaraní community of Yacuy even managed to become a national congressman.

Figure 7. Franciscans bequeath land titles to the community of Yacuy in 1993, while women dressed in traditional tipoys *celebrate and dance* pim pim *around a television crew (images courtesy of Maria Luisa Jalil).*

If the 1990s seemed to hold forth the promise of a new life, this turned out to be an evanescent mirage. As we will see, even though they were meant to grant indigenous populations some kinds of self-governance, the establishment of Indigenous Communities soon created new forms of conflict that required the state's involvement. Consequently, Guaraní leaders have had to adopt new leadership skills and adopt new positions vis-à-vis the communities they are now expected to represent. At the same time, the mini oil boom that had benefited many Guaraní soon came to an end as disgruntled *criollo* workers were reincorporated into a nation-wide political project. Throughout the country, *piquetero* leaders gained legitimacy (sometimes even official positions) under a new neo-Peronist government. In fact, in towns like Aguaray or Tartagal, *piquetero* groups continue to constitute a powerful pressure group, often allied to town mayors, and have become adept at lobbying companies for employment opportunities. This has coincided with a progressive weakening of sectors like sugar cane plantations and timber extraction that have long provided a source of employment for the Guaraní. Currently, most Guaraní find that the labour market is saturated and that the demand for their labour is extremely low. As we will see in Chapter 4, though, Guaraní settlements have learned valuable lessons from the *criollo piqueteros* and have come to imitate some of the unemployed workers' strategies.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, I would like to briefly draw attention to the crucial importance that labour has had for Guaraní populations through the centuries. Whether as 'owners' of slaves, employees of sugar cane plantations, second-rate workers in a segmented market, or favoured employees in the oil sector, Guaraní society and its political institutions have been crucial to the region's frontier economy. Throughout much of this history, the Guaraní benefited from conditions of labour scarcity which placed, at least some of them, in a strong bargaining position. Politically-speaking, the ability to gain control over this labour and to mediate employment processes provided a source of influence for Guaraní leaders. Over the course of the twentieth century, though, the Guaraní's position has tended to weaken. Although opportunities for

waged employment have favoured Guaraní more than other indigenous populations of the Chaco, their inability to access formal, union-mediated work also marginalised them from significant citizenship projects in Argentina. At the same time, when structural adjustment reforms led to a spike in the demand for non-unionised labour, Guaraní workers benefited greatly.

Having said all of this, it is important to keep in mind that the history of labour in the Chaco's extractive frontier has tended to favour the employment of men, rather than women. This has meant that men were more likely to have access to desirable forms of wealth than women, which, in turn, had an impact on local politics. As in the case of Mandeponay, access to money and store-bought alcohol allowed him to sponsor drinking celebrations that would have accrued great prestige and greater influence. It is noteworthy that, in so doing, Mandeponay also by-passed the necessity of women's *chicha*-producing labour, thereby leaving women out of the circuts of political value that drinking celebrations created. On the other hand, however, the high rates of unemployment that affect Guaraní settlements today have had a disproportionate effect upon men. As we will see, this creates a disjuncture between the kind of political mobilisation for (rarely forthcoming) jobs that men have become involved in, and the wide-ranging dependency of Guaraní families on cash transfers and welfare benefits that women collect.

Labour, in sum, has been the key practice along which the Guaraní have been able to participate within the broader political and economic projects that have shaped the Gran Chaco. The shifting demand for their labour ran parallel to other simultaneous projects of civilisation, most notably the Franciscan missions in both Argentina and Bolivia, and this convergence shaped the kinds of political leadership that would emerge. Where Mandeponay could challenge the missionaries thanks to his influence over the inhabitants of Macharatí, post-Chaco War leaders like Benito Segundo seem to have been weaker and much more dependent on the brokerage of the Franciscans themselves. This relationship between civilisation and labour would shift abruptly during the 1990s and into the 21st century. Over the last few decades, a more flexible labour market and an extractive economy in crisis have coincided with state-sponsored projects to devolve autonomy to the Guaraní themselves. It is this new conjuncture – marked by unemployment, a new juridical framework, and new forms of welfare – that the remainder of this thesis will be exploring.

To understand the current situation in Guaraní settlements, however, we need to first focus on the *arete guasu*, a seemingly anachronistic celebration of the maize harvest that occurs every autumn. A visceral celebration, it seems to both confirm the importance of broker-like leaders even as it undermines them by suggesting the radical social potential that abundance entails. At the same time, the ritual is premised on the productivity of dependent labour while also celebrating a world where labour is no longer required. It is to this ambivalent ritual event that we will now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 3
ARETE GUASU: THE MAIZE HARVEST CELEBRATION

In Miri's *oka*, three mud and thatch huts were arranged around a tall carob tree. The *algarrobo*'s pinnate leaves filtered the late afternoon sunlight and cast a generous shade over the swept-dust patio that the huts enclosed. Drunkenly swaying beneath the tree, a group of men beat a formless, shuffling rhythm on homemade snare drums called *cajas*. Miri himself, a tall and lanky white haired man, sat on a stool. At his feet stood an assortment of beer bottles and wine cartons and he held a tin flute, a *mimbi,* in one calloused hand. With his free hand he reached down, picked up a bottle and took a long draught before passing it on to the other men in the circle. He spat out a few chewed leaves of coca, nodded to the lurching percussionists and put the flute to his lips. The flute sounded the first long, shrill note and the amorphous rhythm of the *cajas* transformed into a steady and recognisable *rat-tata-tat-tat* that was held together by the deep *boom-boom-boom* of a bass drum or *bombo*. In the background, a couple of children playfully held hands and danced the skipping steps of the *pim pim* round and round around the carob tree, kicking up clouds of dust as they went.

One of the men who had brought me to Miri's house interrupted the hypnotic scene to clarify that this was just '*la previa,*' a sort of preview of the annual maize harvest celebration known as the *arete guasu*. Although, the expression '*la previa*' typically refers to the 'warm up' drinking that young people enjoy before they head over to cumbia dancing clubs in *criollo* towns, my interlocutor was implying that the 'big real day' [*ara* (sun/day) –*ete* (real or very) *guasu* (big)] had still not commenced in earnest. He then explained that the musicians had been playing and drinking through the previous night and that they had only stopped when they were too exhausted to carry on. While the drums had changed hands several times throughout the night, Miri, who was referred to as the 'owner of the party' (*arete iya*), had only occasionally been replaced by his son – an apprentice flute player.

As the Chaco sun dropped behind the hills, we turned our attention back to the musicians. The shadows were lengthening and a crowd of men and women of all ages was beginning to gather in Miri's patio. Older women of Miri's household walked among the newly arrived attendees with pitchers full of *chicha,* a locally produced fermented maize beer. They poured the beer into plastic tumblers and stood beside the recipient who drank the *chicha* in one go before returning the cup to the woman who had served them. The *arete guasu* was gathering momentum and, in the hours that followed, it would fully erupt into life.

As I will describe below, the energy and vibrancy that characterises the feast is astounding, particularly considering that in these communities moments of collective sociality that transcend the boundaries of kinship units are rare. Stranger still, the ostensible cause of all this mirth is the maize harvest, even though maize no longer provides the main source of subsistence among the Guaraní. On the face of it, the *arete guasu* seems like a surprisingly anachronistic event in Guaraní communities.

Diego Villar and Federico Bossert have summed up the celebration of the *arete* among the Chané[9] as:

> 'a complex event, a festive cycle that implies symbolic prohibitions and ritual prescriptions, references to symbolism and to the cosmological horizon, invitations to drink, dances, ritual fights, the renewal of cosmogony, the performance of interethnic relations, a collective reflection on the problem of temporality and, finally, the ritual destruction of all of the elements of the celebration' (Villar & Bossert 2011: 183)

Other scholars have argued that deep within the *arete* festivity lies a visceral expression of Guaraní identity. Thus, for Silvia Hirsch (pers. comm., 2012), the *arete* is a moment of collective catharsis, a moment when the Guaraní's supressed and undervalued ethnic identity explodes into life and attains vindication through its public performance. In line with this argument, Guaraní intercultural school teachers often associate the *arete guasu* with the notion of *ñande reko* ('our way of life'). This expression is typically presented as the Guarani version of *buen vivir* (living well) (see for instance PADEP/GTZ 2008) and intercultural teachers often use the word '*cosmovisión*' to refer to the distinctive values, practices and beliefs that are said to inform Guarani 'culture.'[10] Similarly, various NGOs both in Argentina and in Bolivia have also attempted to find the essence of Guaraní culture in the harvest celebration.

While previous analyses have attempted to assemble the totality of symbols and meanings that surface in the celebration and developed an argument regarding Guaraní 'cosmovision,' I find such arguments problematic. This is primarily because attempts to mine the celebration in search of nuggets of Guaraní identity cannot make sense of the ways in which the celebration fluctuates and how it relates to the world around it. As described in Chapter 2, the tumultuous history of the Guaraní, and of the Chaco more broadly, are too complex to suggest that a key social practice could have survived unscathed through centuries of war, evangelisation, and migration. After a brief look at other feasting celebrations in South America, I will consider the extent to which the *arete* seems to match on to a version of the political economy of control model that Amazonianists have proposed (Viveiros de Castro 1996). However, I will then reconsider this interpretation in light of the celebration's crucial anti-structural tensions and ambiguities that seem to undermine that very same political economy. In light of this disjuncture, I consider the *arete* to be a ludic ritual that raises powerful ideas about production, consumption, and desirable sociality. Specifically, I suggest that the *arete guasu* must be understood as a 'subjunctive' (Seligman et al. 2008) and temporally bound moment of playful illusion (Huizinga 1955) in which participants experience the radical potential of abundance.

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[9] The Chané are a closely related Guaraní speaking population, they are assumed to descend from the historically enslaved Arawak speaking populations that the Guaraní subjugated. Some Chané settlements in Argentina claim to be ethnically distinct from the Guaraní. However, in the communities where I worked, I met many people who descended from Chané communities, but did not distinguish themselves from their Guaraní neighbours in any way.

[10] The term *cosmovisión* is often used in the anthropology textbooks that teachers must study from in order to become certified intercultural educators. Not coincidentally, much of the training materials that intercultural teachers use have been inspired by intercultural education models that were developed in Bolivia – a country where the state has taken up the notion of *buen vivir* to propose an alternative, allegedly 'native', framework for development (see for instance Gustafson 2009).

Historical precedents to the Guaraní's contemporary celebrations of abundance are found in the widespread and well recorded examples of Tupí-Guaraní myths concerning a utopian after-world known as the Land-without-Evil. Although the pan-Guaraní nature of these accounts has been questioned (Villar & Combès 2013), many of these myths capture an underlying distinction regarding states of abundance and scarcity. In Hélène Clastres' words, 'the Land-without-Evil is first described as a place of abundance: maize grows by itself, arrows shoot forward during the hunt. Opulence and leisure are infinite, hence work is no longer necessary: dances and drinking bouts can be the only occupations there' (1995: 56). In this description the utopian social state that characterises the Land-without-Evil seems to be the mirror image of Peter Rivière's political economy of people: here human labour, that quintessential scarce resource, is no longer needed. Instead, a seemingly naturally occurring state of abundance takes its place. Several Guaraní populations are believed to have actively sought out this state of abundance and there are records of prophet-led quests for the Land-without-Evil (Métraux 1927). For his part, Nordenskiöld describes a Chané myth concerning the village of the dead where nightly *chicha* drinking feasts are celebrated and everyone, 'children, women, and men' even 'sorcerers and murderers', participates. Here, in the 'realm of the dead,' Nordenskiöld, concludes 'no punishment exists' (1912: 221).

While certainly a quintessentially Guaraní celebration, turning our attention to other feast celebrations that punctuate the annual cycles of life throughout lowland South America helps us gain a comparative understanding of what abundance is and what it does. Among the Piaroa of the Orinoco basin, for instance, month-long feasts occur towards the end of the rainy season and may be organised annually as long as there is a skilful enough leader to do so (Overing Kaplan 1975: 56). Among the Araweté, a Guaraní speaking society in Brazil, feasts centred on maize beer occur in the dry season. The Araweté typically live in dispersed households, and it is the temporary availability of maize which allows them to live in a village for a short time of the year. In Viveiros de Castro's words, 'maize concentrates; it is practically the only force that does so' (1992: 92). For the Huaorani of the Ecuadorian Amazon, feasts occur during the fruiting season, which lasts between January and April. During these feasts, groups related through intermarriage congregate in old palm groves planted by their ancestors (Rival 2002). Here, abundance is tied to the richness of the natural environment which pre-empts the need for cultivation (Rival 2002: 89) and leads to an 'antiproductivist vision of an abundant, giving world' (ibid: 145). Similarly, the *arete guasu* is a celebration that occurs during the maize harvest. In the past this would have been a time when the small-scale granaries, or *trojas*, of individual Guaraní families would be overflowing with ears of corn.

As Peter Rivière (2000) has noted, feasts and festivals in lowland South America may be likened to what Marcel Mauss called 'total social facts' (Mauss 2002). In them, the social, religious, economic, utilitarian, emotional, aesthetic, jural and moral aspects of life are simultaneously brought together (Mauss 2002: 101;

Levi Strauss 1969: 52). Mauss himself initially coined the term with reference to the potlatch, an Amerindian feast. For Mauss, 'the obligation to give is the essence of the potlatch' (2002: 50) and he claimed that in potlatch societies people are always obliged 'to share the *windfall* of gains of the hunt or good gathering' (50, emphasis added). The mention of windfall gains is worth highlighting as Stephen Hugh Jones has described North Western Amazonians' reluctance to save and their propensity for spending money as soon as it is acquired as evidence of a 'windfall mentality' (1992: 64). The idea of windfall mentality gains analytical traction when considered in the context of Mauss' potlatch societies. Hoarding in these societies is rendered pointless since redistribution, rather than accumulation, is the key. Critically, redistribution of this sort helps bridge the distance between different social groups (Mauss 2002: 51).

This feature of feasting practices is also prevalent in lowland South America where feasts are often explicitly viewed as opportunities for decreasing social distance between disparate groups. For example, during the dry season, the Carib-speaking Panare of the Guianas celebrate a male initiation ceremony where clown-like figures that represent fierce visitors from other settlements are coaxed and tamed through the sharing of beer (Henley 2001). Similarly, Joanna Overing (1975) demonstrated that local Piaroa groups are in fact knitted together through ties of alliance and that leaders instantiate these alliances during moments of generous giving. Similarly, among the Huaorani, feasts are hosted by a couple known as *ahuene* or 'the owners of the feast' and guests essentially pledge their allegiance through their participation, 'thus confirming the political complementarity of leader and follower roles' (Rival 2002: 131).

Abundance, as a brief survey of these other feasting practices shows, is premised on a particular temporality of production and requires an act of collective consumption for it to become socially effective. In this sense, abundance is the opposite of individual accumulation. This is because the social value of abundance stems not from the exchange of material objects themselves, but from its potential for fostering social relations. Total social facts like the potlatch or the *arete* are therefore central to a sense of shared 'public wealth' (Santos-Granero: 2015) in which the temporally distinct rhythms of production, consumption, and exchange make for the production of society itself. This suggests that the transient collectivitiy that a celebration like the *arete* aims to establish cannot be taken for granted but must be striven for. However, at the same time, abundance seems to create new social possibilities of radical egalitarianism and reversal.

'THIS IS THE *ARETE*!'
With linked arms, I was thrust into the circle of dancers. Simple as the skipping step of the *pim pim* appears, I never quite mastered it. The crowd that danced around the *algarrobo* was composed of several smaller circles of male and female dancers. Though all of the circles rotated in the same direction, they would suddenly shift the sense of their rotation and, inevitably, send me clattering into my dance partners.

One of the women dancing beside me suggested that I listen closely to Miri's flute, the melody would tell me when the change in the rotation would come; but, try as I might, I found no clues in in the piercing notes of the *arete iya*'s flute.

The figure of the *arete iya*, the 'owner of the celebration,' is an intriguing one and his role resonates with traditional notions of chiefly authority. Like a chief, the *arete iya* must provide for his guests, maintain harmonious relations and impart wisdom to the people. Among the musicians the *arete iya* occupies a position of certain respect, the alcohol is set at his feet and he ensures that the drum players are constantly provided with alcohol. He is also the person who calls out for a break ('*pausa!*') and the melodies he plays on his flute guide the drum players' rhythms as well as the dancers' patterns. Each flute player is said to have a distinct, recognisable, style of playing. While discussing the flute melodies some days after the *arete*, several people pointed out that the *arete iya* plays different kinds of melodies throughout the celebration and that the different melodies capture the various emotional states that are appropriate for each phase of the party. Without going into much detail, my informants distinguished between the happier melodies at the beginning of the *arete* and the sadder ones at the end.

The salience of the emotional aspects of the flute melodies are captured by the Guaraní verb used to describe flute playing: *ñee mimbi*. *Mimbi* is the name given to the flute and *ñee* is often translated as 'words,' but can also be used to express a notion similar to 'spirit'. The spoken word, as is the case in many Amerindian societies, is of political importance among the Guaraní. In the past, Guaraní prophets are said to have 'sung and chanted "beautiful words," to lead migrations to *Ywy marae'y* (the Land without Evil)' (Ferreira 2002: 131). Among the contemporary Bolivian Guaraní, the *ñee iya* speaks 'persuasively and mediatingly' and his capacity for speech is passed on from generation to generation (Hirsch & Alberico 1996: 132). Similarly in the settlements I conducted fieldwork in, most community councils nominally included a group of wise elders or councillors who were known as the *ñee iya*, the owners of words. Crucially, the act of persuasion through the deployment of *ñee* seems to occur on an emotional plane. In a couple of political assemblies I attended, I witnessed how older chiefs harangued the assembly with tearful voices, seeking to instil in their listeners an emotional response to their words. Similarly, one of Silvia Hirsch's informants told her that a *ñee iya*'s job is to 'motivate' and 'raise the spirits' of his listeners (Hirsch & Alberico 1996: 132). I would therefore suggest that certain parallels can be drawn between the way the owner of the *arete* plays the flute (*ñee mimbi*) and the way the *ñee iya* uses his words to instil an emotional response in his capacity as a community leader. In both cases, the capacity to deploy *ñee* successfully allows leaders to create an affective sense of unity. Thus, reflecting on the effects of a speech delivered by an *arete iya* in the past, one elder recalled that 'he spoke a lot, some people cried with emotion, you feel a lot of compassion with one another' (cited in Marchionni 2009: 75).

The music that is played throughout the *arete* seems to partake in this capacity to instil affective unity, but to some extent it also surpasses it. Indeed, it is hard to overemphasise the sensual and emotional onslaught that the *arete* represents. Drunkenness is actively encouraged; not only would it be very

impolite to refuse a drink, it is expected that the recipient of the *chicha* will empty the cup that is offered in one go. Taking short sips of chicha, 'like a *criollo'*, is cause for ridicule. This drunkenness contributes to the celebration's ecstatic character. Preparing *chicha* is the work of women, and older people in today's communities recall how their mothers filled huge vats with water and masticated maize kernels. In those days, the women covered the vats and buried them to keep the *chicha* cool and let it ferment. After about two weeks, the fermentation process made the vats produce a loud, gong-like sound signalling that the *chicha* was ready for consumption. Today, fermentation is accelerated with the help of store-bought alcohol, and there is no need to bury the vats.

In the *arete* I participated in, the *chicha* we had drunk was having the intended effect. The assembly of swirling dancers went round and round and their shuffling feet lifted a cloud of dust. The constant rhythms of the *cajas* and the *bombo* did not let up, nor did the erratic melodies from Miri's flute. As the dance progressed, the dancers became increasingly drunk and enthusiastic. At random moments men would let out shrill cries that sounded like eerie laughs. They held the cry until others joined in and their straining voices harmonized. As they did, the men made eye contact with each other and erupted into laughter. From somewhere within the rotating mass of bodies, hands covered in red paint emerged to smear the dancers' faces and clothes – not even the *arete iya* or the older women were spared. Stained with red paint, propelled by the incessant rhythm and enthused with refreshing *chicha* and warm beer, the hot gyrating bodies danced on. They breathed in clouds of dust, some laughed, while others clung to each other and cried; a few dozed off drunkenly in a corner or on a chair – only to return to the dancing circle once the intoxicating haze had lifted.

Ahead of me, a circle of dancers dispersed chaotically. I could just discern a lithe male figure, naked save for a pair of black shorts. His entire body and face were covered in a black substance and his eyes shone white in the growing gloom - this was the *cuchi cuchi*, the *chancho del monte,* the wild peccary. He rushed wildly at our dance circle and the air was filled with the foul smell of the fetid mud that was smeared over his body; from a bag at his side he pulled out handfuls of stinking sludge, slinging them at the scattering dancers or smearing it on anyone who came too close.

For the most part, the dancers found the *cuchi cuchi*'s 'attacks' entertaining. But there was one man who had been visibly distressed and, before the wild pig appeared, had been weeping loudly as he remembered trials and tribulations both past and present. When the *cuchi cuchi* approached, he kicked out at him and both men squared up to fight. Although most of the fights I witnessed during the course of my fieldwork were generally not interrupted, the *arete* called for a distinct kind of etiquette. The drums were still beating in the background and the crowds still danced, but the flute melody had stopped. Miri appeared at the side of the two aggravated men and, in his capacity as *arete iya*, he garbled a few words of conciliation. He gesticulated vigorously with his arms and bent at the waist to emphasise each word of appeasement. 'This is the *arete*! This is the *arete*!' he reminded them in a pleading tone, a time for unity and not for anger. While I could not make out Miri's words clearly, the high-pitched tone of his speech

and his body language indicated that he was not ordering the contenders to desist; rather, he was beseeching and pleading them to control their anger, instilling a soothing emotional response in the angry men through a demonstration of pathos.

The *arete ïya* had brought the tension under control by successfully deploying his conciliatory *ñee* and the intense sensorial onslaught of the *arete* soon made us forget this small episode as, all around us, the party raged on relentlessly.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Durkheim coined the famous notion of 'collective effervescence' to describe the kind of electric sociality that emerged during an Australian aboriginal celebration known as the *corroboree* (1995). During this celebration, previously isolated, self-sustaining, kin groups would come together in communal celebrations. These moments, Durkheim argued, were suffused with a sense of transcendence that provided a basis for so-called primitive religion to emerge. As Radcliffe-Brown noted with regards to dancing among the Andaman Islanders, celebrations of this sort produce 'a condition in which the unity, harmony and concord of the community are at a maximum, and in which they are intensely felt by every member' (1933: 252). I would not go so far as to suggest that the *arete* produces a religious experience, but there is certainly a distinctive quality to the kind of sociality that emerges so forcefully during the harvest celebration. Here everyone participates, factional disputes and personal rivalries seem to be set aside. Instead, there is a constant effort to make sure that people come together peacefully and celebrate. The abundance of alcohol and people's willingness to share it without keeping tabs creates an affective state of unity. In this celebration, those issues of poverty and unfair treatment, which were so often talked about in the everyday, seemed to recede into the background as people danced together to the intoxicating, rhythmic music. A sense of 'being united' – a local term that I explore further in Chapter 5 – emerged as a tangible reality thanks, in large part, to the sensual, embodied characteristics of the celebration.

Figure 8 Dancing the *pim pim* around Miri's *algarrobo* in Yacuy - the drummers and flute player in the foreground.

THE *ARETE GUASU* AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CONTROL

According to Branislava Susnik, among the Guaraní 'the poor person, "*parevete*", was the one who did not have sufficient maize to prepare *chicha* and, consequently, was unable to organise feasts (*convites*) or obtain cooperation for agricultural work or house building.' Susnik also argued that the surplus required for feasts was central to the competition for chiefly and group prestige because 'the social reaffirmation of prestige depended on economic abundance, the frequency of intergroup invitations, and the capacity of agglomerating groups of people for the *convite*' (Susnik 1968: 12). Fifty years earlier, Doroteo Giannecchini, a Franciscan missionary, wrote of these feasts that 'without these invitations and friendly reunions each individual would become independent and the tribe would dissolve itself' (1916: 165-166). Another Franciscan missionary noted that *chicha* was the Guaraní's 'coffee, their soup, their wine, their food, their drink, their everything' (De Nino 1912: 247) and a contemporary historian writing of the nineteenth century Guaraní notes that *chicha* helped 'negotiate political and military alliances; when a chief wanted to gather together men for war or cement an alliance, he invited his guests to feast in which they all got drunk on corn beer. These feasts also served to show the resources of a particular chief; the more *cangue* [*chicha*] he was able to provide, the more prestige he gained and the more he obligated his guests' (Langer 2009: 28).

For the women themselves, the production of vast amounts of *chicha* filled them with pride. As Nordenskiöld observed, the time of maize beer elaboration was a time of 'indefatigable activity' and in all the households, both day and night, the elaboration of *chicha* became the 'main occupation' (1912: 207). He also took notes regarding the gendered consumption ceremonies that followed the elaboration of the maize beer: The men would sit on benches and stools, while the women would arrange themselves on the floor behind them. The female household head would bring the *chicha* in her finest pottery and place it before one of the men who would act as host. The *chicha* was then served into calabashes that were made to circulate in a particular order. As in today's celebration, each guest was expected to empty the calabash and a refusal to drink was considered to be very impolite (Nordenskiöld 1912: 208).

All of this is indicative of the kind of political arrangements that a celebration like the *arete guasu* seems to enable. This is particularly apparent in the figure of the *arete iya*. In the past, the importance of establishing alliances meant that household heads and political leaders were under intense pressure to produce sufficient maize. Slave labour, as we saw, was essential for obtaining sufficient levels of production that would allow for the celebration of politically valuable feasts. In a traditionally polygynous and slave-raiding society, the Owner of the Celebrations's authority devolved from his ability to provide fermented maize, in turn an expression of his ability to produce maize and beer through the labour of slaves and women. In a way that is coherent with Rivière's notion of a political economy of people, the Owner of the Party was able to attract a following from his guests precisely because he was able to marshal the labour of other men and women in previous moments of production: slaves worked to harvest maize, while wives, daughters and captive women contributed their own labour to the production of *chicha*. In this view, 'wealth depends on the number of people that Amerindian groups are able to mobilize' (Santos-Granero 2009: 206). Thus, while the *arete iya* was certainly a figure of authority whose prestige stemmed from his control over productive labour, there was also a sense in which he provided for those that supported him. In the context of the feast, it was this ability to provide and redistribute which gained him the support of followers.

In other parts of lowland South America, it has been argued that the appropriation of women's labour and generative power is premised upon a sexual division of labour where men, and male political leaders in particular, provide for female kin (Lorrain 2000). As a result, 'female tasks are encompassed by male tasks' (ibid: 299) and women's work is seen as dependent upon previous material input from kinsmen. In the days when the Guaraní depended on maize, a similar observation could be made in the sense that men provided the maize that women then converted into *chicha*. This, in fact, is an idea that many Guaraní men today also seemed to share and I often heard stories about how 'good' fathers, brothers, and sons would always give any cash they acquired to their mothers and wives so that they could provide for the household. In the context of ritual sharing, though, the *arete* erases the essential productive role that women play. Just as Rivière wrote of manioc beer production in Guiana, 'it is men who alienate the finished products of female work and use them for ritual and political purposes – spheres of activity from

which women are effectively excluded' (1984: 92). In the contemporary Guaraní case, women participate in the celebration itself, but the ritual protagonists – the drum and flute players, the *cuchi cuchi*, the *máscaras,* and the *arete iya* – are all men. Although women certainly gain prestige through the highly social labour of *chicha* elaboration,[11] the public and political act of ritual sharing disavows the dependency of men on female labour.

However, many of these arrangements would be transformed when slavery and polygyny ceased to be common practices. Nonetheless, alternative practices seemed to have created similar patterns at a time when most of the labour required to harvest was performed by men who were not dependents. Until not too long ago, the ability to organise feasts depended on a person's ability to host collective labour parties or *motiro* in Guaraní. During *motiro* work, large groups of voluntary labourers drawn from more distant groups of relatives would come together to work on someone's field during labour intensive periods in the agricultural calendar. Participation in these work parties included an expectation of reciprocity, such that, if person A helped to harvest person B's crop, it was expected that B would then help to harvest A's crop. Additionally, while the men were out working, the crop owner's female kin would prepare food, and oftentimes *chicha*, to regale the workers. In a sense, the workers, through their labour, created an obligation for the person who was working for them. In terms of abundance, we might say that the workers established a legitimate demand to participate in the crop owner's abundance through the act of labour.

On a much a grander scale, the *arete guasu* mirrors some these arrangement an observation that is captured in the spatial arrangements of the celebration. Rather than having some sort of transcendent unity associated with a more explicitly public setting like a plaza or some other communally shared space, the explosive celebration is contained within a family's *oka* or patio and one of the features of these domestic spaces is that they are thought of as being owned by the household head. Although in the *arete* celebrations I witnessed the feast was sponsored by only one family, in the past each household would have sponsored its own *arete*. The chief would kick off the feast cycle by going out and personally inviting the various families to his household, but once his *chicha* was gone, the party would move to a new household until the maize beer was depleted and so on until, presumably, there was no *chicha* left or simply no one willing to keep drinking it. As is typically the case in many Amerindian feasts (e.g. Overing 1975; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Rival 2002), the *arete* allowed families who typically see themselves as separate units, but who may potentially be brought together through intermarriage, to create an exceptional and transitory moment of conviviality, and it is therefore unsurprising that these are moments of an almost electric sociability.

The crucial difference between *motiro* work and the *arete* is that, in the latter, the 'right' to participate in another person's abundance has not been established through a previous act of labour. On the contrary, as I mention below, the *arete* begins with an invitation to socially distant others, people and beings that

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[11] See Heckler 2004 on the pleasures and prestige that Piaroa women accrue through the production of manioc.

would not have contributed to the production of the *arete iya*'s abundance. Where *motiro* creates a series of mutually recognised dependencies that become instantiated through labour, the *arete iya* appropriates the products of dependents in order to create politically valuable ties of loyalty between himself and his guests. In this way, the *arete iya's* acts of generosity create a sense of indebtedness between himself and his guests. This, of course, is reminiscent of many classic accounts of political leadership in lowland South America (Clastres 1987).

But what sense does this interpretation of the *arete guasu* make in today's Guaraní settlements? As we will see in the subsequent chapters, several of the patterns that the political economy of control model proposes seem to subsist in today's Guaraní settlements. In particular, men's increased access to contemporary sources of abundance through waged labour buttresses the predominantly masculine nature of local politics and the political disavowal of women's labour remain firmly in place. However, at the same time, many of the patterns of production and dependency that maintained that political and economic system have been disrupted. As I have described in Chapter 2, the Guaraní's involvement in the frontier economy had a transformative effect on Guaraní society. Ideas of leadership, gender roles, and even interethnic relations were altered significantly as the Guaraní ceased to focus on the capture of slaves and began, instead, to seek out sources of abundance that were obtainable only from *criollos*. In fact, already in the early twentieth century, Nordenskiöld observed that one of the reasons why the *arete* celebration was so important was because it allowed for the distribution of store-bought alcohol, facilitated by the whites and by those who had access to wages (1912: 209). Moving to the present, can we really assume that Miri was in anyway controlling the scarce labour of his female kin? In fact, did Miri really accrue any political prestige through the act of hosting the ritual? More generally, what might this ritual celebration of abundance actually *do* in contemporary settlements?

TENSIONS AND AMBIGUITIES

Customarily, the *arete* begins when the spirits of dead ancestors, known as *agüeros* or *mascaras*, visit the *arete iya* and demand a drink of *chicha* claiming that they have come from a place far away called *matigoroso*. Later on in the celebration, men who represent the dead appear among the dancers. They wear terrifying masks and alter their voices to sound like the dead (see Villar and Bossert 2011). In many Amerindian societies the dead are seen to represent 'maximum alterity' and are believed to inhabit an 'anti-society' (Carneiro de Cunha 1978: 3) and there is evidence to suggest that this belief was also held by the Guaraní (Nordenskiöld 1912: 221). In the not too distant past, the dead spirits would demonstrate their anti-social nature in full and would wreak havoc throughout the settlement, throwing toads at the dancers, ripping up manioc plants, indiscriminately killing chickens with sling shots or stealing potfuls of food. In the words of one reminiscing elder, 'they were very naughty [*traviesos*], but on this occasion it was permissible to commit these acts, nobody had the right to complain' (cited in Marchionni 2009).

That this moment of conviviality with strangers is effectively an exceptional moment is further illustrated by the fact that the *arete* must be 'buried' (*enterrado*, literally, buried) when it comes to a close. Indeed, the final throes of the celebration bear striking resemblances to a funeral. Led by the *arete iya* who plays a particularly mournful melody on the flute, a mass of people walks to a stream where the celebration is finally *enterrado*. At this point, many people cry as they remember those who are no longer there to celebrate and wonder whether they will make it to next year's *arete*. Upon arriving at the stream, some people bathe in the water and the burial is accomplished by throwing the musical instruments and masks into the water. This burial is necessary because the *arete* is said to be a dangerous time during which people's vulnerability to spirit attacks is heightened; as I was once told, if the celebration is not properly buried 'souls are taken.' In fact in a neighbouring settlement, some people maintained that a string of deaths was related to the fact that the *arete* had not been properly buried over several years. Most poignantly, I was told of an old *cacique* who would use a broom to sweep away the footprints of those who had participated in the *arete*, thereby decreasing the potential for danger by eliminating any traces of the celebration.

The extent to which the *arete* implies a reversal is also illustrated by the kinds of bodily state that the celebration induces in participants. Thus it is said that the *pim pim* music has an almost intoxicating effect on the listeners and that it fills them with desire. One man told me that he had been working in his field a few kilometres away from the community when the *pim pim* began. As he worked, he could hear the drums, but he had already decided that, for reasons he did not disclose, he would not be joining in the celebration that year. In spite of his resolution, one of his nieces brought him a carton of wine to entice him to join the dancing. He drank the wine and when it was done he thought, 'what the hell am I doing here?' (*¿Qué putas hago aca?*). By then, he explained, the drums had made him 'hot' (*caliente*), so he dropped the hoe he was working with, and ran off to join the *arete* celebration.

It is telling that the man described himself as being 'hot', for this same word is used to describe a state of sexual arousal. At times, sexual desire can be dangerous and men are not meant to work in the forest when they are 'hot' or if they have had sexual intercourse because the smell attracts large snakes (*viborones*) who might seduce and abduct them. This kind of dangerous heat is also produced when women give birth and both the child's father and mother must observe certain dietary and activity restrictions if they are to ward off any dangers. The social 'heat' produced by the *arete* indicates the ways in which the celebration suspends many of the usual rules and taboos that bind everyday life, and how it physically creates a dangerous, sexualised state of desire that would, under other circumstances, put the individual at risk. In the context of the *arete*, though, each individual contributes to what, in a very different place, has been called a state of 'red-hot sociality' (Chau 2008). In this state of effervescence, a sense of togetherness is co-produced through each person's physical presence and by the kind of sensorial experience this creates (see also Lazar 2015).

I often tried to engage people in conversations about the *arete guasu,* and although I nagged them in the hope that they might provide a meta-commentary of what was going on, it seemed to be a social experience that, understandably, people had a hard time verbalising. Most of my friends and closest informants preferred to tell me about concrete experiences they had had during the celebration, 'Oh! In the old days it was really nice! Everyone would dance back then!'; 'When my grandfather was the *arete iya*, that's when it was nice!', or complained about how in today's celebrations the young people were too daring (*atrevidos*) and did not respect their elders enough.

Additionally, most people seemed to display a rather lax attitude towards the formal aspects of the celebration. For instance, traditionally, one of the final episodes of the *arete* includes a wrestling match between two young men; one of them represents the *toro toro* or the bull, while the other represents a jaguar or *tigre*. These young men are said to be chosen for their agility. While I did not witness one of these wrestling matches in person, some of my informants showed me videos of a fight that had occurred some years ago. In one of these videos, a young man had stripped to the waist, tied a t-shirt around his head and attached two sharpened sticks to either side of his head. He crouched between a couple of women who stood on either side of him. The women held a large cloth and seemed to be protecting him from the *máscaras* who circled and swooped around him, jeering at him. Without warning, the women pulled the cloth away and the *toro toro* rushed out at his tormentors who tried to wriggle their way out of his path. Some of the *agüeros* toppled over as the bull charged at them. Then a young man with spots painted on his body appeared on the scene and he and the *toro toro* locked themselves into a vicious wrestling match. In theory, the jaguar defeats the bull and this kicks off the funerary procession that ends the *arete*.

According to some, the ritualised fight between the jaguar and the bull is a commentary on the subjugation of the Guaraní people, one where the victorious jaguar represents the Guaraní while the vanquished bull stands for the conquering Spaniards. However, such an interpretation, often taken up by professional anthropologists, ignores the ambiguity and danger associated with jaguars in various Amerindian cosmologies, and also contradicts some of my informants' own suggestions that the jaguar actually represents 'the bad guy.' Nonetheless, this idea has in fact been adopted in communities where people have mobilised politically on ethnic grounds. And yet this moment which seems to be so pregnant with meaning is not necessarily treated as such by the participants. For instance, one young man told me about how he had once been asked to be the *tigre* in a neighbouring community, he felt obliged to do so because his older uncle had asked him to, but in truth he was too drunk to pull off a successful performance. He never stood a chance of beating the *toro toro* and, unsurprisingly, his performance was a weak one.

Although the *arete* is nominally a maize harvest celebration, the role that maize plays in Guaraní settlements is increasingly marginal. As we will see, it is usually certain older men who take charge of the maize fields and will recruit the help of brothers, sons, nephews and in laws during labour-intensive

sowing and harvest times. However, even though most families continue to collect an annual maize harvest, they almost seem to do so as though it were an afterthought or out of sheer habit. Some men claimed that they worked the fields because their mothers and wives liked to eat maize, and women corroborated this idea, lamenting that their men had to endure the arduous physical labour that working the fields entails while relishing the prospect of being able to eat maize. Some maize is consumed in the form of boiled *humita* or as a delicious, non-alcoholic beverage known as *mazamorra*, while a few older women I knew still made *aticui* - a form of maize flour eaten by the spoonful. In spite of these usages, maize is not essential for people's subsistence and the vast majority of it is used as chicken feed or reserved as seed for next year's crop. A similar observation can be made regarding the role played by *chicha* in the *arete* itself. The exchange of *chicha* is ostensibly the fundamental driving force of the *arete*, and yet fermented maize beer is no longer the most prevalent drink consumed during the celebration. Even Miri, the *arete iya*, drank store bought beer instead of *chicha*. Fermented maize beer still plays a part in the *arete guasu,* but to what extent does it continue to contribute to, say, political relationships of leadership? More broadly, does the celebration accrue any sort of prestige to its sponsors?

Overall, the *arete* seems to survive in spite of the fact that maize no longer provides the key to Guaraní livelihoods. And not only has maize lessened in importance: the status of once-important elders who preside over proceedings has also declined. Miri, who died a few months after the celebration described above, was perhaps one of the last examples of the old *arete iyas*. He was a survivor of the first generation of Guaraní refugees who settled in Argentina and I was told that he was descended from a chiefly family in Bolivia. Respected though he was, he was one of the poorest men in the community of Yacuy and lived in a mud and thatch hut while all of his neighbours had upgraded to brick houses with corrugated iron roofs. During the annual celebration, however, he seemed to occupy centre stage, a position befitting a man of his lineage. The switch between his usual liminality and his momentary importance seems to suggest that the harvest celebration creates a space in which particular social relations that go beyond the everyday can be instantiated.

For instance, I once joined a small group of young men who were playing the drums, led by an older man named Jacinto. Jacinto was the son of the community's first chief, and had at some point been a chief himself. He eventually decided to step down after he was repeatedly accused of misappropriating communal funds. That night he was playing his deceased father's old flute. The celebration in this case had not drawn in large crowds, perhaps because the music had not yet been able to instil the required 'heat' in the people. Only a group of ten young men were present, and it was clear that some among them were looking for a fight. At one point Jacinto reminded them, 'we are here to play *pim pim*, not to make a mess.' But the drummers were not paying attention. One of them started slamming against the people beside him as he danced, explicitly trying to provoke them. Eventually, one of the belligerent drum players unintentionally bumped into Jacinto. With a look of disgust on his face, the flute player simply left the party. The drum players continued making music regardless, but the rhythm was

constantly interrupted as a few men tried to start an argument – they'd stare straight at each other, and get very close as they threatened each other in hushed voices. One of the young men, nicknamed Perro, would try to play the part of the *arete iya*, 'Drink peacefully [*tomen tranquilos*], don't fight, we are playing the *pim pim* [*estamos pim pimeando*].' For the most part, the fights never escalated, but two of the more aggressive men got into fist fights several times and each time they would wrestle and fall face down in the mud…where they simply fell asleep. Contemplating the sprawled out bodies of the fighters one of their cousins said sanctimoniously, 'we are of the same family, but we were raised differently.'

In stories like these it becomes clear that reducing the harvest celebration to the ritualised representation of a cosmologically coded identity, seeing in it a metanarrative on conquest, or analysing it as a way through which social values are solidified seem to be unsatisfactory ways of dealing with the complexity of the *arete guasu*. This is in part because such accounts overemphasise the search for meaning and function at the heart of the celebration. It is also because, in fact, many of the things that the *arete* might purport to celebrate are no longer relevant in the everyday lives of Guaraní people. Disturbingly, the analytical strategies that have been used in the past to understand the *arete guasu* are incapable of making sense of instances like the one described above where the celebration 'fails' to live up to the standards imposed by such frameworks. Thus with a single stroke the Guaraní cease to be 'authentic' and become relegated instead to anthropology's rubbish heap of 'assimilated', 'acultural' and therefore uninteresting societies. Moreover, these lines of inquiry actually limit some of the insights that *can* be gleaned from a celebration as fascinating as the *arete guasu* and does not allow us to explore the tensions and contradictions at its heart.

The alternative, I would argue, is to note the extent to which these explosions of sociality also encompass moments of inversion. This idea can be pushed further, for it is in fact an intrinsic property of feast celebrations throughout the world. For instance, in *Rabelais and his world*, Bakhtin writes that within class-based and feudal societies, feasts provided 'the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance' (1984: 9). In such a context, the feast has no utilitarian connotation (…). On the contrary, the feast means liberation from all that is utilitarian, practical. It is a temporary transfer to the utopian world. The feast cannot be reduced to any specific content (…); it transgresses all limited objectives' (1984: 276). In this sense the feast and the carnival comprise a ritual of transgression where 'abundance and the all-people's element (…) determine the gay and festive character of all images of bodily life; [and] do not reflect the drabness of everyday existence' (ibid: 19).

Perhaps it is not surprising that the prophetic migrations which first sparked the eastwards movement of Guaraní-speaking people from the Atlantic coast into the heart of South America are said to have been motivated by a search for a utopian world of plenty. Jean de Léry, a sixteenth century chronicler, recounts that the *karai* or prophets told of a 'Land-without-Evil' where the Guaraní 'should not bother working anymore, they should cease going to the plantations; the harvests will grow alone so well that the

Indians will never lack anything' (cited in H. Clastres 1995: 37). This is 'is the counter-order' and 'it is not by chance that the sole social activity to be pursued in the Land-without-Evil is the drinking feast: such feasts, in society, are the expression of the counter-order' (ibid: 56). Here we see evidence of an 'antiproductivist' vision of abundance (Rival 2002: 145), one that is tied to a reversed social world where the need for labour ceases to exist. It is worth noting that among the Guaraní of the Gran Chaco today, the Guaraní word for prophet, *karai*, is used to refer to white *criollos*. Hélène Clastres notes that the Guaraní honoured Jesuit missionaries with the title of *karai* because of the 'whites' technical superiority' (1995: 42). Similarly, *karai* or *criollos* in the Chaco are typically characterised as knowledgeable and wealthy people who, by virtue of these traits, enjoy a position of power from which the Guaraní are distanced. It is impossible to know for certain how the meaning of this word changed over time, but it is extremely suggestive to consider the ways in which prophets, priests and *criollos* have been associated with abundance at different points in time.

A movement between chaos and order, dissonance and harmony, appears to be a constant feature of the *arete* celebration. The young person representing a wild pig is quite clearly flouting the usual relations of respect that dictate sociality between people of different ages, and it is the job of the *arete iya* to ensure that this potential conflict is maintained within the channels of sociality. Likewise, the tension between the brawling young men and the self-righteous observation of their cousin demonstrates another way in which this moment lays bare the distinction between desirable harmony and ecstatic turmoil. The *arete guasu* is a time of extremes, of visceral physicality and emotion. Here, intense solidarity and profound hatred can coincide - safe, perhaps, in the knowledge that these vulnerabilities will be, literally, swept away and floated downstream during the burial of the ritual. Highlighting the disorder that is often at the heart of the celebration, allows me to emphasise the ritual's carnivalesque and anti-structural components. In so doing, perhaps we can identify a certain resistance to hierarchy that these moments of abundance create – it is there in the *máscaras'* chaotic mischief, in the mud and paint that are smeared on participants without paying attention to the age or gender hierarchies in place. However, while it is tempting to see these as 'rituals of rebellion' (Gluckman 1954) which ultimately allow political leaders to then re-assert their power, my own sense is that such a reading privileges a top-down, rather than a bottom-up, Bakhtinean, interpretion of the celebration. The point here is that, at least in today's *arete*, abundance is experienced by ritual participants not as a moment that establishes political ties, but as a desirable moment of sensual, embodied, collectivity. During the time of the celebration, the owner of abundance becomes something of a Clastrean-style chief – that is, a leader who is a 'prisoner in a space which the tribe does not let him leave (1989: 207) and who 'must constantly think of ways to obtain gifts to offer to his people' (ibid: 40). The *arete iya* gives without receiving in return and this creates a radically different kind of social world. In this sense the ritual can be understood as a 'subjunctive' or 'as if' moment in which 'an order that is self-consciously distinct from other possible social worlds' becomes attainable (Seligman et al. 2008: 20).

Figure 9 Agüeros or *máscaras*, arrive at the arete guasu celebration in Aguararenta

SUBJUNCTIVE ABUNDANCE

> When the maize harvest is good, the village celebrates, because in each hut there is drink and food. When, on the contrary, there is not enough, there is no joy, stomachs are empty, and the place for the feast is deserted. When the granary is full of maize, the Indian is proud and arrogant, he mocks the whites, their oppression and their misery. When the granary is empty, he is overwhelmed and sombre (Nordenskiöld 1912: 207).

The *arete guasu* seems to contain the representation of a political economy of control. However, in the world the Guaraní inhabit today, a world of unemployment and cross-cutting dependencies, the *arete* does not contribute towards the establishment of control over scarce labour. Instead, what it does is create the illusion of a world in which there is sufficient resources that everyone can share in, - a world in which, to use Mauss' terms, there is an obligation 'to give' and 'to accept' (2002) and where the sheer availability of resources means that goods are no longer 'rival goods' (Walker 2015a). As Santos-Granero recently pointed out, in many Amerindian societies notions of public wealth 'find their realization only when they are shared or put to the service of others' (2015: 15). Importantly, the abundance celebrated in the ritual does not presume a world of balance and order. Rather it creates a world of extreme possibilities and radically different outcomes.

Arguing at a general level, Catherine Bell claims that carnival-like celebrations are 'bounded periods of orchestrated anarchy' that 'draw together many social groups that are normally kept separate and create specific times and places where social differences are either laid aside or reversed for a more embracing experience of community' (1997: 126). As we have seen, the *arete* celebration is similarly marked off as a bounded time in which extraordinary things occur. This does not happen all year round. Rather, it is a desirable function of the temporality of a crop like maize. The feast is fuelled with *chicha*, the product of female labour which is redistributed in the name of a male owner of the feast. However, this coincides with a radical process of 'anti-structure' (Turner 1977), one that is not simply being contained within the structural after-effects of the ritual. I have suggested that an emphasis on the control over scarce labour priviliges a reading of the ritual from the perspective of a political leader who wishes to establish relations of loyalty among followers and must therefore be able to control dependent labour. As an alternative, I have argued that emphasising abundance over scarcity priviliges a Bakhtinean, perhaps even a Clastrean, reading of the ritual in which the 'the powers of the weak' (Turner 1977: 112) are emphasised. However, contrary to Victor Turner's assertion, I do not think the ritual 'reinforce[s] structure' (1977: 201) - at least not in today's settlements. Instead, the *arete guasu* presents an open-ended celebration of abundance – a kind of 'what if' moment that occurs within its own space and time.

Ultimately, the ethnographic observation that celebrations of abundance occur within temporally limited moments of ritual action raises the question of what happens after the ritual is done. In other words, if these moments provide a moment of alternative, subjunctive, sociality, to what extent do these 'new-found creation[s] of the mind' (Huizinga 1955: 9-10) endure? In a sense, this is the question that the chapters that follow will attempt to answer. In striving to answer them, I am interested in capturing how local political and economic practices in Guaraní settlements articulate with the regional economy and with ongoing pressures from the state. What will emerge over the next few chapters is a sense of how this celebration of abundance provides a counter point to the politics of scarcity. Moreover, in their everyday dealings with scarcity many Guaraní seem to draw implicitly on this 'second life' of abundance. Abundance as such does not always feature as a fully fleshed out ethos, but some of its traits – and the kinds of social relations it requires are recognisable at different times. At its core, the desire for abundance seems to encapsulate a call for a kind of egalitarianism and unity that is only possible in a world where distinctions in wealth do not exist. At the same time, however, the celebration of abundance seems to occur along highly gendered lines and appears to be premised on an important misrecognition of the contribution that female labour makes to society. In other words, although abundance may often be expressed as an eminently desirable, egalitarian and collective state of sociality, it masks a series of relations that render it possible.

CHAPTER 4
MOBILISING THE UNEMPLOYED

Seated at the edge of Aguararenta's dirt road, his back resting against a lamp post, Lucas greeted me laconically, 'boring, eh?'

Life in Aguararenta could be very quiet and I often found the rhythms of day-to-day life in the community to be painfully slow. And yet, all around, the regional economy seethed with life. Oil company pick-up trucks and lorries sped up and down the community's dusty road several times a day on their way to oil wells in the hills. Some years back, a hydroelectric plant had been built a stone's throw away from Aguararenta and the dull roar of the plant machinery reverberated incessantly throughout the community. The gas flare of the nearby PanAmerican refinery reared itself above the tree line while, on the national highway, freight trucks thundered past the entrance to Aguararenta. On the other side of the highway, warning signs signalled the presence of underground oil and gas pipes and, a few hundred kilometres south, the huge and ever-expanding fields of agribusinesses offered a glimpse of what the future might hold in store.

Within this bustling regional economy, most of the people I knew occupied a marginal position. They were only sporadically employed and, when they were, they were offered low-skilled, temporary jobs. In the day to day of life of the community, people like Lucas seemed suspended in a state of boredom and waiting. Where once they'd been able to benefit from a situation where labour scarcity meant that there was a high demand for their labour (Chapter 2), the Guaraní have recently had to adapt to a market characterised by the surplus of labour. However, people in conditions of unemployment are rarely simply 'waiting'. In the Guaraní context, young men have drawn from the repertoire of the *piquetero* movement and created what they called Centres for Unemployed Workers. Along with this organisational innovation, the Guaraní have found new ways of thinking about the regional economy and their place in it. If, in the past, access to goods and money were the main vectors of belonging, today's unemployed Guaraní have reacted to what they see as the injustices of the labour market and are beginning to demand that their capacity to work be recognised by employers and politicians.

For many, unemployment has become a defining feature of everyday life. Structural unemployment of this kind, suggests that the Guaraní have come to constitute a surplus population. Historically, we have seen that the Guaraní were what Marx calls a 'latent' segment of the relative surplus population, that is, a source of labour that was not entirely incorporated into the capitalist labour market. Over time, their incorporation grew, but they were never entirely enfranchised in the way that Peronist *criollo* workers might have been. However, the pervasiveness of unemployment in Guaraní settlements today suggests the demand for their labour has dropped. No longer a latent segment of the surplus population, they have become a 'stagnant' one, as such, the Guaraní form 'a part of the active labour army, but with extremely irregular employment' (Marx 1995: 359).
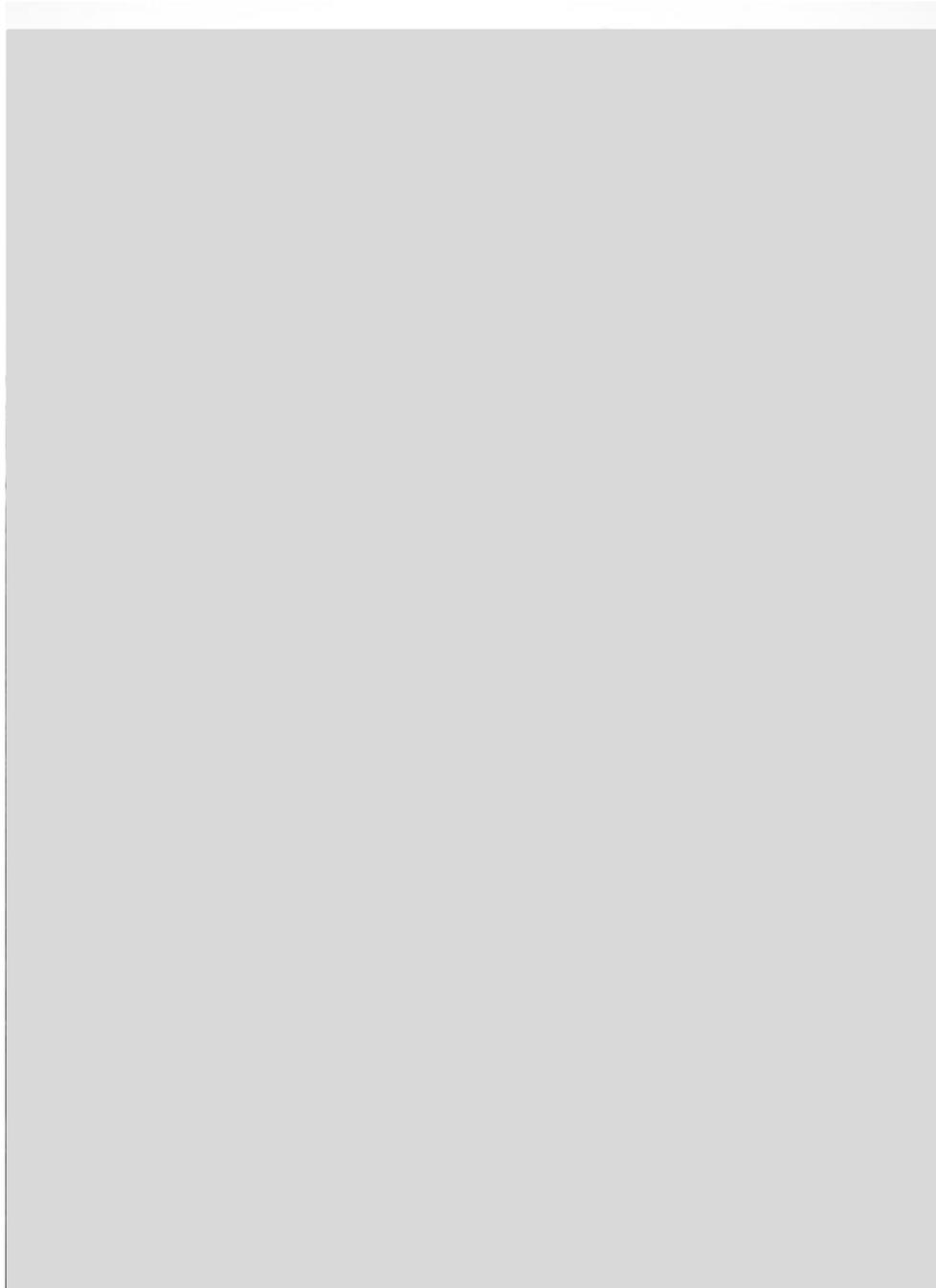
Figure 10. A young unemployed man takes a break while working on his elder brother's field

Although I invoke the idea of surplus populations, I aim to shift the emphasis away from discussions about 'human waste' (Bauman 2004; Yates 2011) and death (Li 2009) that have recently been raised in relation to mass unemployment. Instead, I think it is important to understand how the members of a structurally unemployed population continue to maintain and engage with an 'ethics of productivity' (Bear 2015), which makes sense of their predicament and also frames their responses to the prevailing precarity that surrounds them. In this chapter, I explore what people do when they cannot perform what Marx calls their 'necessary labour.' I begin by discussing how, in spite of the lack of jobs, the desirability of waged work trumps the attractiveness of seemingly more autonomous agricultural work on people's own

fields. Building on this observation, I argue that, many Guaraní think about and represent the regional economy as an ethnically-segregated space of abundance, one in which they are sometimes able to participate through the mediating act of labour. In this context and in the face of pervasive unemployment, young Guaraní men have organised into Unemployed Workers Centres that make demands for jobs in confrontational ways. This strategy, which draws on the regional history of *piquetero* mobilisation discussed in Chapter 2, exemplifies young men's desires for waged work and the forms of social recognition it entails - but also shows how unemployment itself can be socially productive. Nonetheless, contrary to theorists like Butler who have argued that mobilisation in the face of precarity is about ensuring social reproduction and survival (2015), I aim to argue that these mobilisations produce a political space of appearance that is concerned with the redistribution of abundance but fundamentally disavows those relations which ensure day-to-day subsistence.

AGRICULTURE AND 'EASY MONEY'

One afternoon as we chatted at the door of his father's house, my friend Rubén provided some insight into the way in which Guaraní men think about their work and the relations of production they are involved in. Earlier that day a delegation of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) had, at the behest of the Anglo-Argentine PanAmerican Energy Company, given a presentation on the benefits of growing a hybrid strand of maize that, with the help of a drip irrigation system, would allow farmers to collect two annual harvests instead of one. At the time, I was enthusiastic about the economic possibilities such an agricultural project might offer. After all, it seemed to provide a chance for Guaraní families to engage in autonomous work that would also help them lay legal claim to the land that surrounded their settlements. As we chatted, I tried to figure out whether Rubén thought that there might be any monetary potential in agricultural work. Prompted by my questions, he admitted that, over the course of a year, agriculture could probably yield similar amounts of money to that produced through sporadic spells of work for an oil company. However, he clarified, working for an oil company down in Patagonia was 'easy money' (*dinero fácil*). I was not entirely convinced by this suggestion and tried to discover whether perhaps Rubén might feel any sense of accomplishment from working on his own without a boss. To emphasise my point, I proudly showed Rubén the blisters I had developed on my hands while working on my own, very small, *cerco* and waxed poetic about how I would take the collection of my first maize harvest as a personal triumph. Unimpressed, my friend showed me his smooth (but still calloused) hands and said dismissively, 'these hands were not made for that kind of work.' Then he added, 'the field is for the ancients!'

Maize, as we saw in Chapter 2, historically occupied a central position in Guaraní society. Today, even though it is no longer the lifeblood of the community, most families continue to collect an annual harvest. Sowing maize is traditionally done in groups, but the large, cooperative, inter familial work parties that some of my informants remembered no longer take place. Instead, the few senior men who still work the fields can count on the grudging help of only the younger unemployed men in their extended families –

men like Lucas and Rubén – who lend them a hand during sowing and harvest times. The swidden agriculture that these older men engaged in was strenuous and back breaking and many of my informants often pointed out that agricultural work was full of 'suffering' (*sufrimiento*).[12] Furthermore, and in spite of Rubén's admission that agriculture could be profitable, most Guaraní did not have access to markets where they could regularly sell their products for profits that might compete with the wages afforded by an oil company. There was also a great degree of risk involved in agricultural work and I knew of people who had had their work ruined by droughts or roving herds of cattle. For all of these reasons, agriculture was certainly not a source of 'easy money.'

This is not to say that money could *not* be made from agriculture. Rubén, for instance, was quite willing to work as a farm-hand for one of his neighbours, Don Ruiz. Born in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Don Ruiz had settled in the community of Aguararenta many years ago but was not Guaraní. By his own reckoning, Ruiz held about fifteen hectares of agricultural land at the time of my fieldwork. This made him the largest land-owner in the settlment and he used the land to set up a prosperous small-scale agricultural business. A shrewd small-scale capitalist, Ruiz re-invested part of each year's profit in tools, seed, and materials to ensure the survival of his business. He had contacts with several truck drivers and sold his produce for a considerable profit in the markets of Jujuy. Thanks to his business, Ruiz was one of the wealthiest men in Aguararenta, he owned a car and a pick-up truck and lived in a large house. While Ruiz's inexhaustible energy spurred on his financial success, his business model relied heavily on the cheap, seasonal, and readily available labour of his Guaraní neighbours. In the fall, Ruiz would hire dozens of Guaraní men, women, and children from the community to harvest peanuts. The peanut stalks from which the pods were threshed were manually torn from the soil, left out to dry and then clumped into large heaps. Each work party, usually composed of a group of relatives, chose its heap on a first-come first-served basis. Ruiz provided large burlap bags and allowed the parties to work at their own pace. While I was in Aguararenta, he paid 40 pesos, less than three pounds, for every full bag. In a full day of work, the most experienced workers managed to fill two bags. The job was simple but physically draining, as the workers sat under makeshift parasols that gave only partial protection from the merciless Chaco sun.

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[12] It is worth pointing out that agriculture was, historically, considered to be women's work. However, in Guaraní settlements most people would not think it appropriate for a woman to be responsible for working in the fields. Although a woman might lending a helping a hand, there were a number of stories concerning how women who went into a field would be susceptible to attacks from creatures like large snakes or *viborones*.
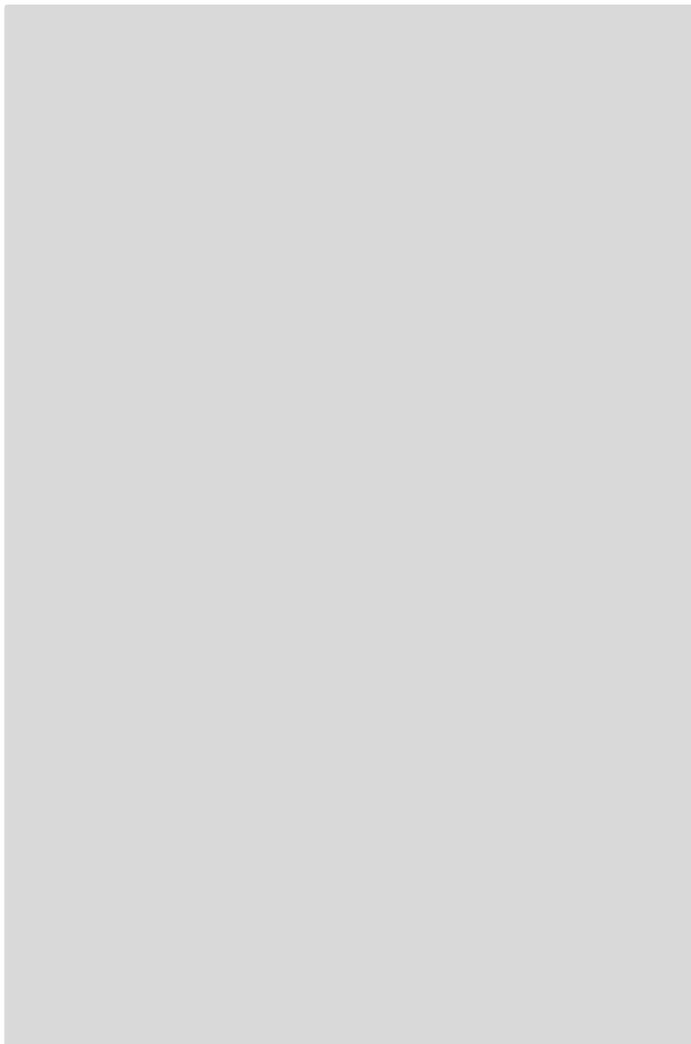
Figure 11. The peanut harvest on Ruiz's farm

The peanut enterprise was evidently successful, and the people of Aguararenta appreciated Ruiz's business acumen as well as his financial success. However, no one in Aguararenta had tried to emulate him. For a young man like Rubén the prospect of simply receiving a wage for a few days or weeks of work afforded an 'easier' access to money than trying to set up his own agricultural business which would have entailed a degree of planning he could undertake and a number of contacts he could not acquire. Additionally, setting up such an agricultural enterprise would have required a certain degree of control over others. My friend Pedro, a mild-mannered and polite man in his forties, gave me some insight into this matter when he stated that, 'The problem is that we never want to work together. If I was the *cacique*, though, I'd gather people and tell them, "now we will work together" and whoever didn't do their part I would kick out of the community.' Coming from someone as soft-spoken as Pedro, this was a startling statement. It suggests, however, that people *should* work out of a sense of solidarity for each other but that they are likely never to do so. In Pedro's rationale the only way to achieve the kind of solidarity and unity required would be through an overt act of coercion – a power that neither he nor anyone else really had. In a variation on this theme, Rogelio Hernández, one of the community's leaders, told me that he would do everything in his power to help Aguararenta gain legal ownership of three thousand hectares of land and told me the great plans he had for the future: once they had the title, he explained, he would set up a lucrative soya plantation. Rogelio planned to sell the harvest to China for a profit and claimed that this would allow him to employ everyone in the community. While becoming the employee of an outsider like Don Ruiz was fairly unproblematic, I think most people would have balked at the prospect of having to work for either Pedro or Hernández – as people often said when someone put on airs of superiority, 'he thinks he's the owner, but that's not the way it is' (*se cree dueño, pero no es así*). This distaste for internal hierarchies, had its most profound expression in local factional conflict which I expore in the next chapter.

If agricultural work required a degree of sacrifice that people were not willing to undertake, and if it implied a degree of control and sumbission that most found abhorrent, it was also an economic activity that was very closely associated with a time of poverty and backwardness. As Rubén so clearly expressed, farming is what the 'ancients' used to do and the time of the ancients, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, was a time of toil and hunger. Indeed, the few men I knew who worked in the fields day-in and day-out were older men, men who had few prospects of finding waged jobs but had enjoyed them in the past. Age and physical injuries meant that these men were no longer likely to be hired for the kinds of physically intensive work the labour market had to offer. Although many of these men actually did very little work in the fields on a typical day, they would still go and sit alone beneath the shade of a tree and survey their fields making sure no cattle trespassed. None of these men ever admitted this to me, but it seemed as though they were uncomfortable sitting at home, surrounded by their wives and daughters who busied themselves with household work. Many of the women often expressed concern that these men were too old to be spending so much time in the fields and that their bodies were no longer able to take the strain. In fact, some older men were often too tired to go the fields, but if I ever found them at home during the day they were quick to tell me about how they had to fence off the field before the maize grew, how they were going to go to the forest to fetch some wood, or how they had to go and weed the *cerco* before their crops got choked. The work was always an ongoing project even though its economic significance was quite low. For these men, however, the ability to harvest a few crops and bring them back to their households gave them a sense of satisfaction and purpose they might no longer find elsewhere. Even if their contribution to the household was not enough to keep the family afloat, it was better than sitting at home.

For young men, however, agriculture seemed like a waste of time. This situation is at times remarkably similar to that explored by Jonathan Parry in an Indian company town, where 'even *unemployed* youngsters resolutely refuse to so much as supervise the work of day-labourers in the fields, let alone work in them themselves' (1999: 117; emphasis in the original). As Parry noted, cash returns from waged labour 'are more immediate, more predictable and more individualised' than the alternative of storing and selling crops (1999: 117). Along these lines, in Aguararenta, one young man proposed that the community lease out the land that it claimed to external people who would grow wheat and rice for export; the condition was that the lessees would hire people from the community as employees. Not only would such a solution provide a regular income, it would also pre-empt the establishment of boss-employee hierarchies among the Guaraní which, as mentioned above, are felt to be inappropriate.

The importance of gaining access to immediate and predictable cash – 'easy money' –, however, requires paying attention to the ways in which work becomes socially productive in spite of the regional economy's inequalities and disparities. To understand this, we need to look at the kinds of stories that people tell about the economy that surrounds them, and also about what they themselves aim to do with the 'easy money' that wages allow them to collect.

To understand how many Guaraní think about the labour, the market and the economy more generally it is useful to return to the figure of the 'owner' – that particular relational schema I discussed in the context of slavery and the *arete* – and to explore how this figure comes to be included within spaces of production. To do so I will briefly dwell on the story of Ikira as it was told to me by Vicente, an elderly man from Tuyunti, a very old settlement[13] that sits on the outskirts of the town of Aguaray:

'We could be really rich, you know? It is full of oil in the ground,' Vicente said. Intrigued, I asked Vicente how he knew this and in response, he told me the story of Ikira - a small community located a few kilometres further up the hill from Tuyunti. The name Ikira, Vicente told me, literally means 'greasy or oily water' in Guaraní (from *Ɨ* –water- and *kira* –fat or grease-) and is a reference to the iridescent water that is said to flow in the creek that runs near that settlement. It is said that the iridescence in the stream is caused by the vast amounts of oil that are present underground some of which seeps up to the surface and into the stream. Many years ago, reports of this oily water reached the *ingenieros* or 'engineers'[14] of the American Standard Oil who decided to begin extraction in the region. To do so, however, they first had to make an agreement with 'the Owner of the Petroleum' (*el dueño del petróleo*). Initially, the owner of the oil asked to be given '50 heads' of workers to eat. The *ingenieros* acceded to the Owner's demands and brought him the 50 '*aborígenes*'. However, the owner then raised his asking price and demanded an extra 50 workers. This time, he wanted *criollo*s. Ultimately, the price was deemed to be too high and Standard Oil decided not to go ahead with its work in the region. For this reason, I was told, no one had ever exploited the oil reserves in Ikira.

Running through the story of Ikira is a commentary on the underlying structure of the regional economy as it is experienced by a local indigenous population. Inequality runs through the narrative as *aborígenes,* who appear as passively devoured fodder for the Owner of Petroleum, are distinguished from *ingenieros* – who make pacts with the Owner – and *criollo* workers – who are deemed to be too valuable to be used as bargaining chips. The story of Ikira clearly echoes themes that have been recorded in other parts of Latin America where cannibalism and diabolic figures prominently within local representations of capitalist production (Taussig 1980; Gordillo 2004; Walker 2013a). This also seems to play out with the Guarani, many of whom seemed to agree that the places where they sold their labour were suffused with eerie beings and suspicious happenings. Whether it was the siren from the gas plant near Aguararenta that signalled the feeding of a worker to the 'Owner of the Plant,' the presence of shadowy figures in a thermoelectric plant, the Owner of the Forest (*dueño del monte)* or a big black dog known as *El Familiar* in the sugar cane plantations, the hierarchical and fantastically wealthy undertones of capitalist spaces of production often shone through. However, the complexity of the relations that the notion of the Owner

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[13] Tuyunti is one of the few settlements that pre-dates the Chaco War. In his *Indianerleben*, Nordenskiöld describes the time he spent in Tuyunti. Vicente himself traces his genealogy back to Vocapoy, a Chané chief and one of Nordenskiöld's main interlocutors.

[14] White people who work in companies are often referred to as 'engineers' or *ingenieros* – a label that connotes their enviable education and authority more than the actual work they perform.

implies, suggests that we cannot simply understand this as a denunciation of these inequalities. Instead, I think it tells us more about how many Guaraní think that they can relate to these Owners through acts of labour. In other words, through the notion of Ownership we can begin to understand the complex and ambivalent ways in which Guaraní workers' understand the role they play within the regional economy.

The Guaraní seem to be aware that their acts of production do not occur in empty or unappropriated spaces – whether it be the forest or a gas plant, I was often reminded that 'everything has an Owner.' However, currently, the Guaraní never describe *themselves* as Owners outside the very particular time of the harvest feast. That is, the Guaraní live in a world populated with Owners who are in control of abundant resources but only grudgingly redistribute them. Gaining access to the coveted resources of Owners requires an act of exchange, as this is the only way that one can gain the recognition of an Owner. Thus, a logger might regale the Owner with coca and alcohol in exchange for timber. Crucially, however, in places like refineries, oil wells, or sugar cane plantations Guaraní workers themselves become the objects of exchange. This is clear in the story of Ikira where *criollo* bosses and *ingenieros* who stand to gain from this exchange of workers for oil; the Guaraní are potential fodder for the Owner.

The story of Ikira hints at an understanding of the regional economy in which Owners of abundant resources control spaces of production and where Guaraní workers occupy a dependent position. However, it is also worth pointing out that the Guaraní do see themselves as being able to participate in this realm of abundance. More generally, this access is achieved through labour and materialised in wages. As Marx argued, a worker does not produce for himself 'the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is wages, and silk, gold, palace resolve themselves into a definite quantity of the means of subsistence, perhaps into a cotton jacket, some copper coins and a lodging in the cellar' (2010: 276). While Marx draws attention to the discrepancy between the valuable objects produced by labour and the relative pittance the labourer receives for his efforts, I would to suggest that, for the Guaraní, this pittance is often experienced as a kind of desirable participation in the abundance of an external, *criollo*, world. In this sense, we can describe labour as a mediating form of action through which ethnic and material barriers can be surpassed, at least momentarily. With this mediating potential of labour in mind, we again find certain echoes of the *arete* celebration: just as collective *motiro* work allowed individuals to participate in the *arete iya's* celebration and thereby partake in his abundance, so we might say that waged labour provides a form of access to the abundance of the economy's Owners. In this sense, labour is a form of mediation (see also Bear 2014c) that blurs hierarchies and dependencies because it establishes the ground for some kind of exchange.

Now, one of the questions this raises concerns the kinds of expectations that insertion into the labour market raises. As we saw in Chapter 2, people's sense of ethnic worth has been historically associated with the ability to work and to acquire cash and goods. During my time in the field, ideas about wealth and worth were also often spoken of in the same breath. For instance, a teacher who had not received his

salary in months poignantly made this point when he told me despairingly that, 'one is not a person without money' (*uno no es persona sin dinero*). In a similar way, a young man who had two children and lived with his partner invited me to visit his house, but warned me that I would be shocked by his humble house (*casa humilde*) and the plastic sheet he used as a roof. He qualified this statement, though, by informing me that, 'at least I have a motorcycle, TV, and sound system.' As with the teacher, these items, which he had purchased thanks to the money he received for working as a logger, could be said to have made this young man 'a person' and, throught he dignity these goods provided, redeemed him from his poverty. These comments are not only a reflection on the fact that money is necessary to survive, they also express a more profound sense of what kinds of life are worth living. Put differently, if money helps individuals to 'become people,' then perhaps it is worth asking what *kinds* of people it helps them become.

This is a difficult question to answer, but some of the things I heard over the course of my fieldwork suggest that many Guaraní aspire to gain some sort of entry into the world of *criollos*. This is a recurrent theme in Guaraní history. Guaraní workers coming back from sugar cane plantations in the late 19th centuries brought back 'knives, old uniforms, sugar, matches, and aniline dyes' but, importantly, 'they were able to do things not possible in their own country' – including, maintaining sexual relations with white women in brothels (Langer 2009). An older man once told me the story of one of his uncles who had left the settlement to go and work on a mine: when he came back 'he had a necktie and a briefcase, like a white man.' At another level, I often heard parents lament that they could not pay for their children to go to secondary school or university because it meant that they would not be able to 'be someone' (*ser alguien*), by which they meant that they would not be able to become engineers, lawyers or doctors and join professions that are typically associated with non-indigenous people. Today, the availability of money also allowed young men to go clubbing in the town of Tartagal. This kind of expenditure can also be seen as being intimately tied with a sense of belonging and social mobility in as much as these dance halls allowed Guaraní people to shed their sense of ethnic inferiority and join in with young people from all kinds of different backgrounds. In fact, one of the persistent fantasies that men associated with cumbia dance halls like 'El Gigante Bailable' in Tartagal was the possibility of seducing *criollo* women who would take them in and pay for all their expenses.

As in other indigenous contexts, work, its material affordances and the kinds of consumption it permits are closely linked to local 'hierarchies of civilization' (Gow 1991: 108-115) through which subaltern populations are able to imagine, express and redeem their standing despite prevailing inequalities. Moreover, if the relations of production in the Chaco can be expressed as a form of 'Ownership' then labour acts as a mediating form of action that enables workers to participate in the wealth that others accumulate. Mapped onto pre-existing Guaraní ethnic hierarchies, the experience of waged labour has given Guaraní people a sense of worth and belonging in as much it allowed them to be distinguished from other indigenous groups. Even more powerfully, work, money and goods had the potential to help

individuals become 'persons' in their own right and even to establish social relations with desired others by participating in their abundance. The problem, however, is that while waged jobs are desirable, they are simply not available on a regular basis.

THE CHALLENGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

If the availability of waged jobs on the plantations has been diminishing since the 60s (Gordillo 1995), the rapidly dwindling supply of valuable hardwood has also forced several sawmills in Tartagal to close down over the last couple of decades. The demise of these industries and the associated decline in the demand for physical labour has led to an increasingly meagre labour market. Strong broker figures who could mediate employment at a time of labour scarcity are no longer to be found. As a result there is now a surplus of cheap, unskilled labour flooding the market. Due to these broader conditions, intermittence has become one of the defining features of Guaraní waged labour, particularly the kinds of labour performed by men.
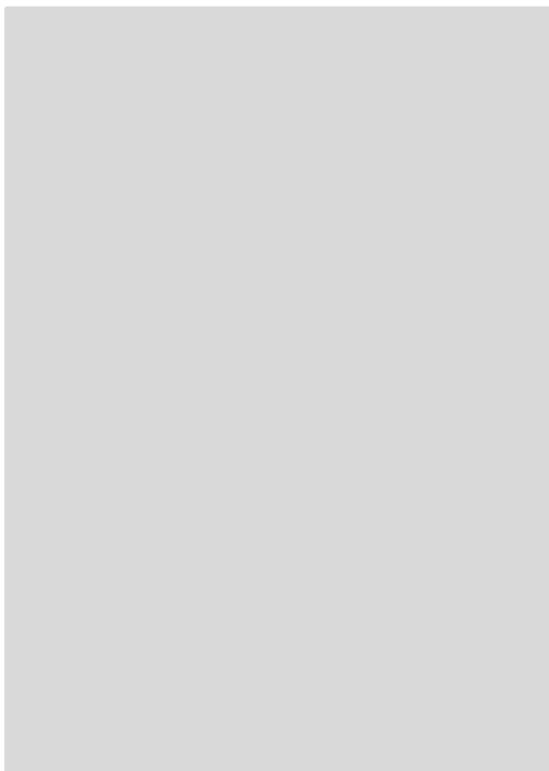
Figure 12. A Guaraní logger

The Guaraní refer to the temporal, informal jobs they work as *changas*.[15] Typical *changas* include seasonal harvest work as well as construction and masonry jobs. In the 1990s, men participated actively in a pattern of labour migration known in Argentina as 'swallow migration' (*migración golondrina*). As 'swallow migrants' Guaraní men performed harvest work on nearby farms and latch on to other harvests on neighbouring farms. Thus men would start working in the bean harvests in the *fincas* near their communities and end up harvesting apples and pears in the Patagonian provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro, more than two thousand kilometres away from their homes. However, due to recent labour regulations that have cracked down on informal hiring practices, this kind of migration is now less common. Informal employment in the agricultural sector has also dried up as a result of the advent of large agri-businesses that own or rent out large tracts of land and harvest several different kinds of crops on their land. Unlike the farms in the nineties, these businesses employ a more stable and specialised work force. In my host community, I knew of only one man who had obtained a job in one of these large businesses.

The availability of construction jobs was also distinctly intermittent. Politicians were typically the most common providers of this kind of employment, particularly when elections came around. These were

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[15] The use of the word *changa* is not restricted to the Guaraní. It is common throughout the region.

times characterised by what my Guaraní friends referred to as *'politiqueo'* (politicking), that is, politicians' act of giving away relatively cheap goods in an attempt to gain their votes. However, while politicking of this sort usually led to gifts of football kits or boxes of food, jobs were also sometimes distributed. In the community of Tranquitas, short-term construction jobs were handed out to the community for the completion of a sports court (*playón deportivo*). In Virgen de la Peña, the mayor of Tartagal hired a group of Guaraní men to build a new cemetery near the community. Similarly, in the months leading up to legislative elections at the municipal and provincial levels, the municipality of Aguaray hired Guaraní men to build cement flood banks along the edges of roads in a few communities that were vulnerable to flooding during the rainy season. But these jobs, as the Guaraní were very aware, tended to be short-lived and rarely led to more stable employment.

Although logging, agriculture and construction were all occasional sources of employment, short-term jobs with oil companies were particularly sought-after. The Guaraní, as discussed earlier, were mainly excluded from this sector until the 1990s. The jobs that Guaraní men performed for oil companies ranged from maintenance or catering jobs in camps, to mechanical and chauffeur jobs. But working as part of a seismic exploration crew was the most highly valued and best paid job of all. As members of these teams, the men cleared paths along pre-established lines. Along the line, at regular intervals, the workers used heavy but portable water or air rigs to drill holes in the earth. Specialists – my informants never performed this job – would then deposit explosives into the drilled holes to create readings for the seismic surveys that were sent abroad for analysis. The location for these jobs ranged from the nearby hills that surrounded the communities, to further afield in the arid Chaco and even further away in Patagonia. A handful of men had even participated in a job in Guatemala. As fly-in/fly-out (or more accurately bus-in/bus-out) workers, the men who landed seismic exploration jobs were paid very well, with monthly wages of around 10,000 ARS (750 GBP). These jobs were usually worked in what people call twenty/ten schedules, that is, twenty days of work followed by a ten day break. While the durations of work and breaks would vary, these schedules gave men a chance to spend their newly earned cash at home while on break. For many families, these jobs were associated with a time of tangible material gains and, in fact, most of the people in the community who owned cars had been able to purchase them after a spell of oil work. Similarly, many of the houses made out of bricks and cement (*casas de material*), rather than wood or adobe, had been financed with oil wages. For many Guaraní men, the work clothes they'd received during their time working for an oil company were a real badge of prestige. Though a few men wore the company's denim shirts or safety sunglasses when off duty, it was more common for men in non-work contexts to wear the leather safety boots that companies distributed to their workers. Although they were hot and heavy, these boots were a real fashion statement and many people even wore them to go dancing in Tartagal.

However, oil jobs were extremely hard to come by and rarely lasted more than six months. In spite of the apparent obsession with oil jobs in the settlement, during my stay only five people actually managed to be

employed by an oil company. I was told, though, that some years ago there had been a boom in oil employment, as several companies launched large exploration jobs throughout the country. In fact, the three men who were permanently employed at a nearby PanAmerican refinery had first obtained their jobs during this mini, local, 'oil boom'. But, by the time I arrived in the community, the oil job market had been quiet for about two years. At the national level, the Spanish company that had owned a majority of YPF's shares had recently been expropriated. As a result, the state regained its foothold in the national oil sector, which led many of my Guaraní neighbours to speculate about the jobs that would become available now that huge operations were expected to take place in the recently discovered shale gas reserves of Vaca Muerta in Patagonia. Over three years later, though, practically no employment opportunities had materialised.

For many of the men who had families the lack of jobs was particularly worrying. One of my friends admitted that he could scarcely sleep due to the anxiety that being jobless caused him. Those who could still afford to do so, travelled into town every two weeks or so to hear the freshest job-related gossip. They would seek out the unemployed *criollo* oil workers – many of whom they had worked with in the past – who hung out in the central plaza of Tartagal. It was said that these men had privileged access to information concerning upcoming jobs. Still, one had to tread carefully, as there were a few conmen among these old workers. They would promise to pass one's name to the contractor in exchange for a fee but would then disappear. Other people tried to use distant family connections in the hope that this might help them find a job in the oil industry. Growing desperate, a few of the younger men in Aguararenta planned to take a trip down south to a Patagonian oil town where one of their cousins lived. They hoped that with bit of luck, patience, and their cousin's mediation, they might get their foot through the door. They waited in vain for their cousin to call and give them the OK, and in the end the plan fell through.

In contemporary Guaraní settlements, peaks of waged employment are interspersed with drawn out troughs of waiting. It could be argued that Guaraní experiences of waged labour have historically tended to take place within similarly patterned time frames. Experiences of labour on sugarcane plantations, for example, were determined by the time of the harvest and implanted a seasonal rhythm of migrant labour for the indigenous population of the Chaco. Plantation work had the distinct advantage of having a regular rhythm to it, which would have allowed people to combine subsistence agriculture with dependable moments of waged work. Today, the labour market continues to be dictated by temporal rhythms but has lost some of the regularity that characterised it when the demand for sugar cane harvesters was at its peak. When demand for Guaraní labour was high, leaders like Mandeponay were able to exploit their position as brokers to mediate the employment process. Today, such a strategy is ineffective as contractors simply do not come looking for Guaraní workers. But as I show over the course of the next sections, politics in Guaraní settlements remains finely attuned to the labour market and conditions of labour surplus have led to significant political innovations.

MOBILISING AROUND UNEMPLOYMENT

A couple of kilometres outside of Tartagal, near the Guaraní settlement of Cuña Muerta, burning tyres intensified the heat of the merciless Chaco sun as it beat down on the smouldering asphalt. Tree trunks and branches were strewn across the highway and, behind them, a petrol tanker, its doors open and no driver in sight, was parked haphazardly across the highway's two lanes. Between the tanker and the barricade, stood a group of about twenty masked men, a handful of Molotov cocktails at their feet. Silent and threatening, they waited for negotiators to appear. I had been travelling from Aguararenta into town on a public bus, but now that the road was blocked the driver asked us to exit the vehicle and walk across the blockade to the other side where an empty bus waited to take us to the terminal. Behind us, a line of cars and trucks had started to form. Some drivers honked their horns angrily; others stuck their heads outside of the windows and shouted, 'Lazy bastards, ¡vagos de mierda! Get to work!' In the distance, the sirens of a gendarmerie vehicle could be heard approaching. As I walked across the blockade to get onto the new bus, I was both afraid and exhilarated, and couldn't help but stare wide-eyed at the blockaders. Noticing me, one of the masked picketers who stood closest to me threatened, 'don't stare so much or you'll get yourself mugged (te vas a hacer asaltar)'.

Over the last few years and in response to the dearth of employment in the region, several indigenous settlements created what are known as Unemployed Workers Centres. These Centres, like the one from Cuña Muerta described above, borrow from a regional history of piquetero mobilisation among criollo unemployed workers (Chapter 2). Like the criollo piqueteros, the Guaraní Centros use roadblocks to force the hand of politicians and private companies and pressure them to deliver quotas of waged jobs, known as cupos. The work of the Centres is facilitated by the fact that the settlements lie along National Highway 34, the main transport artery in the region and one that connects the markets of northern Argentina and southern Bolivia. Some Guaraní settlements, like Piquirenda or Campo Durán, enjoy particularly strong bargaining positions because they straddle secondary roads that lead, respectively, to PanAmerican Energy's exploration camps and to the Refinor refinery. As a result, both of these companies have developed close relations with the leaders of the Centros in those settlements and often appease them by offering small employment quotas as well as other donations.

In Aguararenta, a man by the name of Diego Romero had created the settlement's Unemployed Workers Centre. In his late thirties, Diego had small bloodshot eyes and all but slept with a huge acullico of coca leaves tucked into his left cheek. Like many other habitual coca chewers, his lips were permanently stained with dark green blotches. He walked with a slight limp because of a poorly healed childhood infection, and his unhurried gait seemed to match his gentle body language and hushed voice. At our first meeting, Diego hardly spoke and seemed timid. However, I soon learnt that, when it came to Diego, there was always more than met the eye. As a younger man he had proved to be one of the community's best goalkeepers, compensating for his lack of speed with feline reflexes and outstanding courage. Just as his slow, limping gait belied a surprising agility, his apparently laid-back demeanour concealed a shrewd

political mind and an ambitious personality; as one woman confided in me, 'he looks like he doesn't know, but he really does!' Indeed, Diego seemed well versed in the most recent legal debates, he had multiple contacts in the municipal government, and was familiar with the institutional layout of indigenous politics in the region.

Here and there, Diego had worked a few *changas*, but, his increasing involvement in local politics left him little time for work. According to Diego, he and a few of his followers had actually participated actively with the *criollo* Unemployed in the early 2000s. However, growing dissatisfaction soon prompted them to create their own, separate Centre. In Diego's own words:

> The idea first came to our mind (*nos vino a la cabeza*) when the people of Aguaray formed as a Centre for Unemployed Workers. They demanded work from any institution, be it a company or the municipality. We participated with them for two years, but they didn't give us work in the way that we wanted, they would just give us one job, and kept the majority. Let's say they got fifty jobs, one or two was the maximum we would grab from that. So then, when there was a seismic job with PanAmerican, we were still mute (*mudos*) then, but we fought with the company and we said that we also had a right to have large quotas. So that's how me and my companion [Amado] Sosa came to be the Centre for Unemployed Workers (December 2012)

In Diego's recounting of his experience several things stand out. The first is the way in which he situates the origins of the Unemployed Workers Centre squarely within a broader, *criollo*, unemployed workers movement. The town of Aguaray (currently the self-proclaimed 'national capital of the fight against drugs') originated as a residential settlement for the YPF labour force that worked in nearby Campo Durán. As such, the town was particularly hard hit by the privatisation of the oil company in 90s and saw the rise of a strong *piquetero*[16] movement in the early 2000s. By the time of my fieldwork in 2012, I was often told that the current mayor had rallied the support of these *piqueteros* and relied upon them as a dependable pressure group. However, Diego claims that his relationship to the Aguaray *piqueteros* was short lived. For Guaraní men who had been relegated from both the bonanza of the YPF oil economy and its associated trade union movement, the liberalisation of the country's oil market created unprecedented opportunities. While ex-*ypfeanos* drew on their experiences of political mobilisation and created unemployed workers groups that would have huge repercussions throughout the country, the Guaraní, as Diego pointed out, joined the movement but were once again treated as second class members. Ultimately, what was perceived as a maldistribution of jobs ultimetly motivated Aguararenta's split from the *criollo piqueteros*.

But perhaps the most interesting point Diego makes relates to his claim that, early on, the people in the Unemployed Centre were 'mute'. Given the importance of speech as a technique in Guaraní politics and in Amerindian societies more broadly (see Chapter 3), this self-characterisation as mute, and therefore speechless, is noteworthy. In fact, I often heard this expression used by many of my informants.

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[16] *Piqueteros* have gained a reputation as violent trouble makers who are unwilling to work and prefer to simply make demands, and Guaraní prefer to refer to their blockades as *cortes de ruta* (literally 'road cuts') rather than the more controversial *piquete*.

Typically, labelling someone as 'mute' implied the establishment of a hierarchical relation achieved through the skilful use of authoritative speech.[17] For instance, when people talked about confrontations they had had, they would often claim that their words had left a rival 'mute,' or that, unable to retaliate, their rivals would just stare back blankly (*se quedó miraaando*). In Diego's account, muteness refers to the Centre's inability to successfully confront the oil company they were demanding jobs from. In other words, the fact that they were 'still' speechless suggests that Aguararenta unemployed were still unexperienced in the political work of confrontation. By contrast, many people I spoke to said that the people were now 'awake' (*despiertos*) suggesting that they had gained an understanding of how things worked and that they could now take action appropriately.

Roadblocks in this part of the country have become so routinized that whenever the *Centro* of Aguararenta decided to blockade the highway, Diego would first write a letter to the police department of Aguaray to notify them of the date and time of the planned blockade. The police presence was not there to repress the Unemployed, but rather, it seemed, to guarantee that the blockaders did not get into fights with the annoyed and often belligerent road users. For all their latent violence, perhaps even because of it, many men were eager to participate in roadblocks. If the waiting implied by unemployment posed a threat to their sense of worth by marginalising them from circuits of desirable wealth, participation in road blocks vindicated their lack of productive engagement. I remember distinctly the image of about a dozen men from Aguararenta piled into the back of a pickup truck, laughing and singing as they zoomed past me and called out for me to join them on the tarmac. These road blocks punctuated the day-in, day-out grind of everyday life and contained elements of confrontation, performance, and solidarity which made them exciting and fun, particularly to young men who were quick to say that they were actively 'pushing' (*pechando*, literally, to push with one's chest) for jobs. After a roadblock people will remember how so-and-so was yelling right up in the gendarme's face or how someone else almost got into a fist fight with an angry truck driver. On the asphalt, individual Guaraní men contributed to the collective success of the Centre. Crucially, they did so on an equal footing. Although there was a representative, each member of the Centre was there as an individual, equally vulnerable to violence or imprisonment. They were there together even though the outcome of their actions was not clear and the extent to which participants participated equally was demonstrated by the fact that any *cupos* that were achieved were expected to be distributed by lottery.

The blockades themselves offered a kind of space of appearance in which a sense of productive engagement emerged. As Sian Lazar has written, gatherings such as these allow 'groups to construct collective and relational sense of self among their members' and, in so doing, they develop 'notions of reciprocity, authority, hierarchy, and obligation' (2008: 4). On the road, the blockade demonstrated a solidarity of a mechanical kind, a 'solidarity that derives from similarities' and in which the mass of

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[17] Nicknames among the Guarani are often used as joking names and are originated as taunts. Perhaps because of the hierarchy the word implied, 'Mudo' was a common nickname.

blockaders became a unit, in which their 'individuality is zero' (Durkheim 1984: 84). In taking over and interrupting a quintessentially public space like the highway, the concerted action of the roadblock gave the Centre members a sense of longed for unity and purpose in the face of potential violence. As a result of this 'collective acting' a '"we" [wa]s enacted by the assembly of bodies, plural, persisting, acting, and laying claim to a public sphere by which [they have] been abandoned' (Butler 2015: 59).

If men are to act politically, if they are to find jobs, they must increasingly do so collectively, forcefully demanding to be given work while also demonstrating their capacity to act as a united community. Within that community they act as equals, without superiors. They achieve things as a collective, and distribute the benefits of their collective action equally. The relations of job production require the unity of the group, even though the outcomes of these actions are never guaranteed. Yet at the same time, this emphasis on collectivity and equality is underpinned by an uneasy awareness of the fact that the resources that political unity *can* bring about are not enough for everyone to benefit from them. In one case, a few months after a couple of jobs had been distributed, I joined a group of men who were drinking after a game of football. Many of these men participated actively in Aguararenta's Unemployed Worker's Centre, and one of them began bragging about his job with the company (*la empresa*). The show-off was quickly interrupted by one of his companions who clarified that he had received the job only because of a road block in which many men – including the speaker – had participated. The show-off responded that he had been fairly chosen by lottery, and after having one more drink left the party. Once he'd left, the remaining men began grumbling about how this man never participated in the meetings and hadn't even shown up for the road block. 'When has that one ever *pechado* for work?' one of the men yelled out. Another suggested said that they should kick the show-off out of the Centre and give his job to someone else.

DEMANDING ABUNDANCE

In a rare instance of televised press coverage, a group of Guaraní men from Zanja Honda are seen dragging flaming tyres and large thorny branches across Highway 54. Seconds later, a journalist asks the blockaders a few questions concerning the reasons for the picket. The representative explains,

> The thing is we've been working a long time; we've been making the mini hospital in Yacuy and, more, the local cemetery for Tartagal. And well, what we want is for the mayor to see our situation, because we've signed a minutes book (*libro de actas*) where he said he was going to give us more work, and to this day nothing happens. […] Look, it's a week now, a week that we've been fighting (*luchando*), passively, you know? And we, even the police are [inaudible] and we would do just one lane, and we got tired of it. It looks like the mayor likes this, that we block the highway so that he gives us jobs, you know? And it looks like he doesn't want to have a dialogue, we are a Native People (*Pueblo Originario*) and we have the capacity to work. You yourself can see that we that we are doing a good job [waves hand in direction of the cemetery]. He's giving more possibility to the people from town than to us the Native People.

This statement from the representative of a Centre for Unemployed Workers is telling in as much as it sets the blockade firmly within the regional political economy of labour. The man identifies the group as having participated in two important, previous public works; the hospital in the Guaraní community of Yacuy - which was a large public project, inaugurated by the provincial governor himself - and the new, municipal cemetery which was built alongside the community of Zanja Honda. Both of these public works came near election time and therefore corresponded to what people defined as the 'time of politics' (see also Lazar 2008 for a similar Bolivian case regarding the cyclical temporalities associated with elections). From my own fieldwork, I know that within the community of Yacuy the hospital had been a highly contentious project since credit, and control over the assignment of job posts was given to one of the community's factional leaders rather than to the other. The Zanja Honda representative also points to the fact that he and the mayor had at some point made an arrangement for the continued supply of job posts, a fact which he claims to have documented in a meeting minutes book. As we will see in Chapter 5, meeting minutes are often used to both document and elicit favours from politicians and local employers. However, the apparent lack of supply of jobs leads to a breakdown in the 'dialogue' between the blockaders and the mayor. At first, the men attempt a partial solution by blockading only one of the highway's two lanes, however, when this tactic prompts no response from the mayor, the group resorts to a full blown blockade. The representative ends his statement by claiming that the distribution of 'possibilities' is favouring non-indigenous people from the town and, crucially, suggesting that as Native People who have the 'capacity to work' they are worthy of the mayor's full recognition.

This statement is remarkable in as much as it highlights the temporality of the labour market, suggesting both its troughs of unemployment and its politically-mediated peaks of employment. It also suggests that the roadblock is itself a tactic devised to confront this temporality – if jobs are not forthcoming, then the roadblock is an attempt to make them materialise by force. As Sebastián Carenzo observed in the nearby Chané community of Campo Durán, young men constantly navigate their ambiguous 'employed-unemployed' status and their everyday lives are 'marked by their unremitting efforts to obtain, maintain and re-actualise their condition as temporary waged workers' (Carenzo 2010: 154). The confrontational demand for work does not quite express a sense of belonging to a project of citizenship, instead the demand is for a fair redistribution of 'possibilities' and to be treated on par with people 'from town'. At its core it is a demand for the recognition that Guaraní people are also 'capable of work' and a claim that these labouring bodies are useful and ought to be reinscribed within those relations of labour which mediate access to wealth.

In other words, what we find here is a lived tension between the time of waiting and the time of action, both of which are related to the temporal dynamics of the regional economy. In a recent article, Laura Bear exhorts scholars to explore the social experiences of time and inequality that accompany processes of capital accumulation (2014a: 640). As Bear explains, '"the conflict of temporalities" […] exists at the level of experience' and 'is generated from the divergent rhythms of the institutions of: production,

consumption, finance, social reproduction, and governance' (ibid: 642). Here I would argue that, at the level of Guaraní settlements, we also find a socially experienced conflict of temporalities. For someone like Lucas in the vignette that opens this chapter, waiting, sitting, and boredom, are a lived temporality that stems from the lack of employment. The day to day life and the long term goals of a young man like Lucas clash with the temporalities that inform decision-making in the distant headquarters of a company like PanAmerican Energy or those of governance that condition the supply of jobs during the time of politics. In contrast, the experience of mobilising around work becomes an active engagement within a time of waiting. The inconstant temporalities of employment have brought about a situation where the rhythms of political mobilisation have gained salience in the face of waiting and unemployment. Roadblocks become productive endeavours, perhaps even a form of labour, in as much they are a kind of 'creative, mediating action in the world' (Bear 2014b: 20) that seeks to materialise socially productive wealth through the active demand for employment. Such a tactic suggests that Guaraní men do not see the allocation of jobs within the labour market as the result of the inscrutable laws of supply and demand, but rather as the result of the volition of powerful actors.

At a deeper level, we can begin to think about the Unemployed Workers Centres as a novel kind of engagement with the regional economy. In a sense, we could say that this is an aggressive response that challenges the kind of passivity implied by stories about Owners in spaces of production. As one man told me while explaining the justice of pilfering tools and syphoning off of fuel from highway paving machinery that was stationed just outside his settlement, 'the people from the south [of Argentina] who work in the companies take advantage' (*la gente del sur en las empresas se aprovechan*). Or as another person pointed out with an angry wave in the direction of a nearby refinery, 'these people are making millions everyday, how can they not even give us a few jobs?' In a context of labour surplus, there is a growing awareness of the growing wealth disparities that result in spite of – perhaps even thanks to – widespread unemployment. The road block is perhaps the equivalent of the collective rounds of work that used to support the production of maize for the *arete*, it is an effort to produce – in fact, to demand - abundance. As a *demand* for inclusion within the realm of abundance, it presupposes that the members of the Centre are 'awake' instead of 'mute.' If *arete iyas* ought to be generous with their abundant resources, the Centres are a response to what is perceived as the market's stinginess.

CONCLUSION

For men, the experience of organising around unemployment has provided an important political platform. Thanks to their ability to organise around unemployment, men have become central political actors within their settlements. I have argued that these mobilisations actively confront the temporal cycles of unemployment in as much as they engage directly and confrontationally with the regional economy. Bolstered by an awareness of the wealth inequalities that characterise the region, the roadblocks seek to draw resources from 'stingy' politicians and companies even as they demand recognition of people's physical capacity to labour. At the same time, these engagements are socially

productive in that they create a space of appearance in which an egalitarian and embodied collectivity emerges. In the heat and violence of the roadblock and in the planning and discussions that take place in meetings a group of politically mobilised men becomes constituted as a collective, brought together in action and with a shared purpose.

Even when roadblocks were not organised the Centre's activities were often at the heart of settlement life. In Aguararenta, the men regularly met outside of their leader's house, standing in a circle, and people peeked out from neighbouring houses or turned a curious head as they walked past. The members themselves often talked about when the next meeting would be held or considered the value of rumours regarding the fresh availability of *cupos*. In fact, however, actual confrontations were rare. Many Guaraní were concerned that they might be the victims of violence during a *corte*, and this was often an important consideration in the time leading up to a road block. Ensuring that the *Centro* would be able to gather sufficient people on the day of the blockade was another form of garnering some sense of security for the blockaders. In Aguararenta, as the community planned a large blockade to denounce PanAmerican's failure to distribute employment quotas, meeting after meeting was called over the course of a week. Although many of the younger attendees called out for a roadblock, others were more cautious. Those more reticent to start the blockade reminded their belligerent companions that blockades could be dangerous. People are angry and the blockaders might get hurt, an older leader reminded them, the only way to have a successful *corte* would be if everyone showed up. Strength in numbers would be a deterrent to any angry road users and would keep the blockaders safe. In the end a middle-of-the-road decision was reached and I was asked to write a letter that would be sent to the company demanding their presence between ten in the morning and three in the afternoon on a given day. The letter threatened that if the company representatives failed to show up the community would convene a roadblock. This solution had the advantage of delaying the immediacy of a blockade and leaving the company to make the next move while still carrying the threat of a *corte*. This was a typical, compromise solution and, in fact, during the course of my fieldwork only two roadblocks were actually convened, even though the threat of them lingered constantly in the air.

Nevertheless, and as I will explore in detail in Chapter 7, there is a crucial, gendered, caveat to this story. These mobilisations, which are ostensibly about work, ignore the fact that, like the old men who go out and sit on the fields, most men's contributions to the household are minimal, in terms of both labour and money. Subsistence, in other words, is not ensured or jeopardised by the success or failure of these political acts. Contrary to what Judith Butler has argued about mobilisations that seek to confront precarity, this is not 'a struggle over how bodies will be supported in the world' (2015: 72). Although they seek to demand opportunities for labour, these mobilisations are to a great extent unsuccessful in accomplishing that goal. At the heart of young men's Unemployed Worker's Centres is a highly significant disavowal of women's labour and their monetary contributions to the household. Butler has rightly critiqued Arendt for 'relying on a disctinction between the public and private domains that leaves

the sphere of politics to men and reproductive labor to women' (2015: 75). However, the Guaraní case demonstrates how the pursuit of abundance through waged labour has precisely led to this kind of gendered distinction on the ground. We will see in Chapter 7 that, even though the pursuit of abundance at the local level ends up de-emphasising the struggle for subsistence, in fact, the 'private domain' is fundamentally attached to the state and to public forms of political recognition. This, of course, is reminiscent of a long-standing feminist critique regarding the not-so-private nature of the 'private' sphere (e.g. Harris 1981). My point is a parallel one: both men and women are engaged in public, political, forms of action, all of which require certain forms of access to and engagement with the regional economy and with the various levels of the state. However, given both local and state-defined notions regarding the sexual division of labour, there is a widening disjuncture between the production of desirable abundance and the provision of subsistence.

The next chapter considers how the rise of Unemployed Workers Centres have affected the development of local politics at the settlement level. As will become clear, the ways in which these settlements are being drawn into the regional economy ends up creating a series of tensions that exacerbate local conflict. To explore these processes, the chapter develops an analysis of the moral economy of *divisionismo*, a local form of factionalism.

CHAPTER 5
DIVISIONISMO: CONFLICT AND CONCEALMENT IN AGUARARENTA

Over the course of Chapter 4, I described the ways in which unemployment spurred on mobilisation in Guaraní settlements. In this chapter, I show how those mobilisations contributed to processes of internal factionalism in my host community of Aguararenta. As I will show, factionalism, or *divisionismo* as the Guaraní call it, is closely entwined with the other aspects of local life that I have discussed thus far. In particular, these local conflicts concern the ways in which leaders are able to gain control over resources and the ways in which they then distribute them. At one level, my account suggests that there are certain continuities between current practices of leadership and the brokering role that Guaraní leaders have historically occupied. However, where leaders in the past seem to have benefited from conditions of labour scarcity that strengthened their position in the face of external actors, contemporary leaders operate in a setting that is marked by labour surplus and a general lack of resources.

As in so many Amerindian societies, the Guaraní expect their leaders to know how to 'speak well' (*hablar bien*) and, increasingly, how to produce effective documents (*hacer papeles*) (see Chapter 6). These skills are useful in as much as followers also expect leaders to be *encaradores* (from the Spanish verb *encarar,* meaning to face off), implying a sense of courage and assertiveness when dealing with external actors. Ultimately, it is the ability to effectively 'face off' that allows leaders to 'bring down' (*bajar*) resources for their followers. This use of a spatial metaphor for describing political leadership reinforces the idea that the Guaraní feel themselves to be at the margins of an external *criollo* world of abundance – a world of non-indigenous politicians, *ingenieros*, lawyers and company representatives that need to be pressured, spoken to, and faced off against. As a result, leaders must be unafraid to *pechar* (to push) in the figurative sense of being unremitting and assiduous in their attempts to gain resources for followers. A good leader must therefore be tireless and willing to *caminar* (walk) constantly; the verb designates the political action of travelling from one office to the next in search of political resources. However, what we will see in this chapter is the extent to which this ideal form of leadership seems to be practically unattainable. Differences in wealth which arise from the scarce resources that leaders are actually able to elicit from external actors, lead to suspicions over the necessarily concealed and concealing nature of politics. In this sense, the everyday realities of *divisionismo* seem to stand in the way of achieving abundance.

In a number of Amazonian societies, similar kinds of conflict are put to rest through settlement fission (Santos-Granero 2000). For the Guaraní, however, fission is not an option because the land that surrounds them is either owned or occupied. Moreover, while some people in divided communities did consider the possibility of starting a new settlement, few of them seemed willing to abandon the houses they had painstakingly built or to give up the comfort of running water or electricity. Beyond these material considerations, people also identified strongly with their communities and, as I explore in this chapter, they lamented that 'unity' was so hard to achieve. The fact that these communities are embedded

within broader political and economic structures and that most Guaraní are unwilling to resolve internal conflict through the splintering off of new communities has created a situation where conflict becomes a motor for crucial political transformation. As I will show in Chapter 6, these transformations are due to the confluence of legal projects of recognition and local politics: as the state becomes increasingly preoccupied with solving these conflicts and with establishing new forms of leadership, the very process of factionalism effectively furthers the institutionalisation of Guaraní settlements and thus transforms the political playing field.

Drawing primarily on my experience of factional conflict in Aguararenta, my analysis of *divisionismo* aims to shed light on some of the key aspects of leadership and power in contemporary Guaraní settlements. My account reflects a tension that arises from the interplay of 'unity' (*ser unidos*) as concerted action and the ways in which these forms of action also allow 'personal ambitions' (*ambiciones personales*) to develop. With this in mind, I argue that *divisionismo* reflects a strikingly Clastrean logic that revolves around redistribution, surveillance, and fragile leadership. At the same time, this form of conflict reveals a particular sensitivity to local inequalities that seeks to inhibit the rise of strong leaders (P. Clastres 1987; Deleuze and Guattari 2010). Unlike Clastres, I do not aim to demonstrate that this political culture takes place in isolation. Instead, I will show that factional conflict can only be understood with reference to the Guaraní's entanglements with the regional political economy of the Chaco. Specifically, I show that, while political leadership is expected to be a constant act of disclosure, whereby wealth is made visible and shared, the necessity of engaging with an 'occult economy' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) means that leadership must also become a practice of concealment. To develop my argument, I begin by presenting the key actors involved in Aguararenta's factional conflict.

THE ARRIVAL OF '*LA EMPRESA*' AND HERNÁNDEZ'S FALL

This first section traces the rise to leadership and eventual fall of Rogelio Hernández, a long standing leader in Aguararenta. It first shows how his position of leadership was tied to his ability to marshall external resources from the state at a time of incipient multicultural reforms, and then demonstrates that Hernández's legitimacy suffered when people began to feel that he was not securing sufficient resources from newly established energy companies.

Rogelio Hernández had a broad face and a winning smile. Obstinately curious about how much money a doctoral student might earn in London, he was convinced that I was making millions. Hernández himself was industrious and full of energy and, when he wasn't working at the municipal office where he held a menial job, he could usually be found fiddling with a number of tools in the makeshift mechanical shop that he and his sons had set up in the back of his house. In fact, Hernández and his sons were consummate, self-taught, engineers and had designed and successfully constructed a drill that could draw groundwater from depths of up to thirty metres. The Hernández family was, by far, the wealthiest

Guaraní family in the community and their partially air-conditioned brick house and three cars, seemed slightly out of place in Aguararenta.

Some of Aguararenta's inhabitans said that Rogelio Hernández had been *presidente* of the community for twenty years. But the specific steps he took to become *presidente* were never clear to me. One informant claimed that Rogelio Hernández had learnt how to 'do papers' by being the right-hand man of the first mission appointed cacique, Benito Segundo. 'That's why he became *presidente*,' one informant told me, 'Benito's sons weren't interested in the papers, but Hernández was more cunning (*pícaro*) because he used to walk with Benito everywhere.' The fact that Rogelio's father and Benito Segundo had been *compadres* lends credence to this hypothesis. As further evidence of the close relationship that existed between the Segundo and Hernández families, three of Benito's sons married Rogelio's sisters and built new houses on what that had originally been the Hernández's agricultural land.

Now in his fifties, Rogelio was an articulate interlocutor, and would masterfully brandish the buzzwords of pro-indigenous political movements: 'culture', 'tradition', and 'authenticity' were staples of our conversations. He often reminded me that he was the most legitimate leader in the settlement because he knew how to speak 'diplomatically' and argued that this had allowed him to bring running water and electricity to the community. He also claimed to be the first person that managed to initiate legal proceedings for the community to obtain land rights[18] and assured me that he was working closely with a lawyer to bring the matter of Aguararenta's land claim to court. As mentioned earlier, he intended to establish a soya plantation on the communal land once he obtained the land deed.

The articulation of processes of de-missionisation, multicultural recognition and indigenous activism and the positions (Li 2000) that this combination of broader factors created facilitated the rise to influence of Rogelio Hernández and other leaders of his generation. In the mid-1990s, new legislation recognised indigenous people's rights to conform and govern their own political bodies and the missions were dismantled. It was at this point that Rogelio Hernández emerged as the recognised leader of the community of Aguararenta. In all of the Guaraní communities I visited, this moment of de-missionisation and incipient legal multiculturalism favoured the rise of a new crop of indigenous leaders. These new leaders tended to have more knowledge of the legal framework than their predecessors and several had been educated in the militant and explicitly pro-indigenous Guaraní institutions of Bolivia. Central to the ascendancy of the new crop of leaders was the availability of new state-sponsored resources. For instance, leaders were able to distribute *Plan Trabajar* positions - state subsidised employment plans meant to ease the pains of unemployment caused by structural adjustment measures – and, more visibly still, the creation of teaching and nursing jobs within each community allowed leaders to

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[18] I was never able to find evidence that the community of Aguararenta had initiated any legal action to obtain land, so I'm not sure whether Hernández was bluffing or whether what he meant by legal action was something less formal than I had in mind. When I asked him about it he said that the papers were in the courts, but put on hold because of the community's in-fighting.

redistribute jobs among their closest supporters. In fact, I found that most of these new leaders, including Rogelio Hernández, had children who were employed as bilingual intercultural auxiliary teachers in communal schools. These leaders were effectively able to capture a variety of new state resources that had not been available to their predecessors. Importantly, they were also able to gain legal and administrative recognition as 'legitimate' leaders of their communities – a process I will explore in more depth in the next chapter.

At the same time, Rogelio also developed political alliances with other members of this new crop of leaders. For instance, he was allied with a man from a neighbouring community who had attempted to create a pan-Guaraní organisation tellingly called the *Centro Único Guaraní*[1] (which translates as the 'Only Guaraní Centre'), who was also a member of the *Consejo de Participación Indígena* (CPI, or Indigenous Participation Council) – an official body composed of representatives from each of Argentina's indigenous groups meant to allow indigenous voices to be heard in the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI). Both the *Centro Único Guaraní* and the Guaraní delegates of the CPI were heavily influenced by the example of the successful Guaraní People's Assembly of Bolivia (Gustafson 2009) which explicitly make indigenous land tenure a policy objective.

Nonetheless, just as Rogelio Hernández was able to rise to a position of leadership thanks to the availability of new resources, he would find his position imperilled when state resources were no longer forthcoming and a new source of jobs and goods suddenly became available.

In the late 1990s, PanAmerican Energy, an Anglo-Argentine oil and gas company, set up a gas treatment plant very near the community of Aguararenta. So near, in fact, that its gas flare – the 'lighter' or *mechero* as people call it – can be seen from the community. At that time, Diego Romero, who we met in the last chapter, formed the settlement's Centre for Unemployed Workers (Chapter 3) along with a group of young men allied to Hernández. One of the people who had participated in the creation of the Centre told me how he used to stand beside Aguararenta's only dirt road, counting the number of pick-up trucks that drove through the community on their way to the new PanAmerican wells up in the hills. He would make a list of how many people travelled in each truck and note whether they were *oficiales* (bosses) or *ayucos* (helpers). By making these lists, the Centre estimated how big the job in the hills was and how many people the company was hiring. Based on this information the Centre would then carry out road blocks to pressure companies into granting them *cupos*.

These early mobilisations led to a time of plenty. Several people I spoke to had fond memories of their participation in these first pickets. Participation was so high that they did not even have to burn tires or use logs to blockade the road. It was not just that the large number of picketers gave a sense of longed-for unity. The pickets were actually effective in that many were awarded contracts that lasted several months. 'It was nice in those days,' one woman remembered, 'the company gave 40 *cupos*, all the men would wake up at dawn in their uniforms and go to work, it was nice back then (*era lindo en esa época*).'

Several families were able to use the money from that time of employment to buy the materials with which to build brick and mortar houses. The time of abundance was short-lived, however. The company gradually appeared to become less receptive to the community's demands and fired some workers it accused of not showing up to work or of drinking on the job. Some of Hernández's allies became disillusioned and ceased their involvement with the Centre.

Several years later, in 2009 Hernández was approached by an energy company that planned to build a thermoelectric power plant a kilometre away from the community. Among the people of Aguararenta the rumour grew that, although the company had approached him, Hernández was not 'pushing' hard enough for the community's interests and that he was not trying to gain a sufficiently large number of jobs for the men. This perception was aggravated when *criollo piquetero* groups blocked the highway just outside the community of Aguararenta. When the gendarmes cracked down on the blockade, the *piqueteros* hid in the community. This brought the conflict home to the people of Aguararenta who began to think that, given their proximity to the plant, they were more deserving of jobs than the people from the *criollo* towns some twenty kilometres away. So, people thought, why wasn't Hernández managing to land more jobs for the community? Rumours began to spread and it was whispered that Hernández had given away communal land to the *empresa,* and that he had received money to stop the community from demanding more jobs. Whether or not these rumours were true, Hernández's legitimacy as a leader began to crumble.

In the view of a number of people in Aguararenta, Hernández had been unsuccessful in 'facing off,' *encarando*, with the *empresa*. He seemed unwilling to 'walk' and to 'push' and was therefore incapable of 'bringing down' jobs for the people. To make matters worse, he seemed to have been bought off by the energy company. Hernández's apparent ineptitude as a leader gradually became associated with a series of other perceived moral failings. During my stay, I heard countless stories about how Hernández had apparently misappropriated a communally owned tractor, how he had pocketed money from various projects and used the community's name to take out loans he then defaulted on. One informant said, 'we used to have a little saw mill here in the community, can you believe that he wouldn't let us use it (*la mezquinaba*)? It was for the community, and he wanted us to pay him for it!' For his detractors, Hernández had lost all credibility as a leader. As we shared *mate* in his patio, one man explained to me that it was simply impossible to get across to Hernández, 'he gets upset, you can't talk with him!' ('*se altera, no se puede hablar con él*'). With a knowing nod of the head, his wife agreed, 'he'd go as far as disrespecting the priest' ('*es capaz de faltarle el respeto al cura*'). If a good leader must have the ability to elicit resources for his followers, Hernández seemed to have lost the knack for doing so and, to make matters worse, his angry demeanour and lack of respect even rendered him incapable of speaking in the way a leader must.

Whenever I asked him about it, Hernández seemed as startled as I was by the way in which the community had turned on him. He speculated that greed motivated his rivals and insisted that they were upstarts who had gone as far as attemtping to burn down his house after false accusations that he had taken the community's money for himself. 'How could this be true?' he asked me rhetorically in

reference to denunciations of embezzlement, 'I've had people come to my house in the middle of the night with briefcases full of money who wanted to buy me off, but I always turned them away.' Hernández turned the accusations of corruption on their head and argued further that, in fact, his rivals were in the pay of oil interests and politicians who sought to deepen the community's conflict as a way of weakening its claim to land. Hernández's supporters similarly claimed that these rivals were a bunch of drunkards who did not lead by example, and that all they did was block highways and look for fights. Although he always received me with a smile and seemed to enjoy our long conversations, I found it hard to shake the impression that Hernández behaved like an increasingly beleaguered man. He would half-joke about how I was secretly allied with his political rivals, the 'transversals' as he called them[19]. Although he made these accusations in good-humoured jest, he would often hide any documents he was working with when I stopped by for a visit.

A NEW GENERATION

Diego Romero – the leader of Aguararenta's Unemployed Workers Centre – had taken his first political steps at the age of twenty when he fell in with a pro-indigenous Catholic NGO that sought to identify and train potential young leaders. Thanks to his contacts with bilingual teachers in a neighbouring community, he worked with this NGO for about four years, learning about pro-indigenous legislation and participating in youth meetings in several different Guaraní communities. Along with a few other people from Aguararenta, most of whom went on to work as bilingual teachers in the community's school, Diego was also exposed to Bolivian Guaraní activist organisations who sent representatives to communities in Argentina.

Diego's debut on Aguararenta's political stage was not entirely unannounced. In fact, Diego was Hernández's maternal cousin and for a long time the two had worked together very closely. Perhaps because Hernández was Diego's senior by twenty years, their relationship could be best described as the more hierarchical relationship between an uncle and his nephew, rather than the more egalitarian cousin-to-cousin relationship (see Susnik 1968). Diego was also considerably poorer than Hernández. His household - made up of his wife, five children, and elderly father - relied heavily on state subsidies. Including a subsidy for Diego's minor physical disability, his father's non-contributory pension and his wife's monthly child allowance. During my time in Aguararenta, the only *changa* I saw Diego work was a short, three-day stint as a lawn mower at the nearby thermoelectric power plant. This left him vulnerable to accusations of laziness and, worse still, seemed to confirm some people's suspicions (notably similar, of course, to those held in respect of Hernández) that he was siphoning off money from communal funds and projects.

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[19] I never managed to obtain a clear explanation for the origins of the label of 'transversales', which to Hernández was synonymous with *piquetero*. There is, however, a *Frente Transversal Nacional y Popular* which is a political grouping associated with a Kirchnerista labour union that at some point had initiated a few development projects in the region. During the course of my fieldwork this organisation did not conduct any work in the settlements.

In the crisis that erupted over Hernández's mishandling of negotiations with the thermoelectric company, Diego saw a political opportunity. While the Romero family was not very large, Diego managed to advantageously ally himself with young men of the Sosa family – one of the largest families in the community. As employment opportunities became increasingly rare, the younger Sosa men – and many of their close cousins – found themselves unemployed. Amado Sosa, a forceful young man in his thirties, was one of Diego's close friends and relatives. Although Diego is Amado's uncle, they are of similar ages and treat each others as equal (see Figure 13 below). Amado was known for his hot temper and his propensity to aggressively face off against politicians and oil representatives. As Amado himself was proud of saying '*yo les grito sin aca*' a phrase that translates roughly as 'I don't give a shit about yelling at them [the oil company representatives]'. In a way not unlike what has been observed in other parts of lowland South America where fierceness is an desirable political quality (e.g. Cepek 2008), Amado's ability to *encarar* established him as an admired leader among the group of unemployed young men. Amado's closest followers were often described as *pesados* or 'heavies' because they had a knack for ending up at the centre of brawls and because it was said that they would carry concealed knives and guns when we went to play football in other communities.

But Amado was not only a leader because he was feared. As a single man, he had few familial responsibilities and was therefore very generous with his cash. At parties or drinking sessions he would often pay for most of the alcohol. This seemed to make his constant teasing and joking bearable for the rest. Among the young men he was admired for his penchant for partying, going out to clubs, and sponsoring cock fights. He was also very proud of his reputation as a bit of a local Don Juan. Amado's prestige and influence made him an ideal ally for Diego. While they were on friendly terms, Diego would tell me in private that he preferred not having Amado meet with company representatives because he would yell at them and make them less receptive to his demands. By contrast, Diego explained that he took a calmer and less confrontational approach. While he was not afraid of threatening the company with a road block, he felt that he had more of a talent for 'speaking well' (*hablar bien*). From Diego's perspective, Amado lacked the mediatory skills – document writing skills, legal knowledge, and oratorical ability – necessary to occupy a position as communal leader, but he was instrumental in maintaining the allegiance of the rowdier young men. Additionally, unlike Diego, Amado had a broad base of support as a member of the large and influential Sosa family.

Diego had not only allied himself with a large group of young unemployed men, he had also managed to break one of Hernández's key elements of support. Thanks to his friendship with Lidia Segundo, an impressively outspoken person and the only woman who was active in local politics, Diego managed to gain the support of a segment of the large Segundo family. The Segundo were not only one of the largest of the community's families. They were also descended from Benito Segundo, Aguararenta's first mission-appointed chief. As we have seen, Benito Segundo and Hernández had been allied through close family ties which had granted Hernández an important basis of support early on in his political career.

Breaking this alliance was a crucial move on Diego's part, particularly because he enlisted the support of Eliseo Segundo, one of Benito's sons, who was widely considered to be the settlement's informal *cacique*. In a way, this alliance provided a Diego and his followers with a healthy dose of widely recognised, 'traditional' authority.

But *divisionismo* in Aguararenta was constantly in flux and, just as Diego's tactics had undermined Hernández basis of support, the decisions of particular individuals often seemed to set the whole unstable system in motion once again.
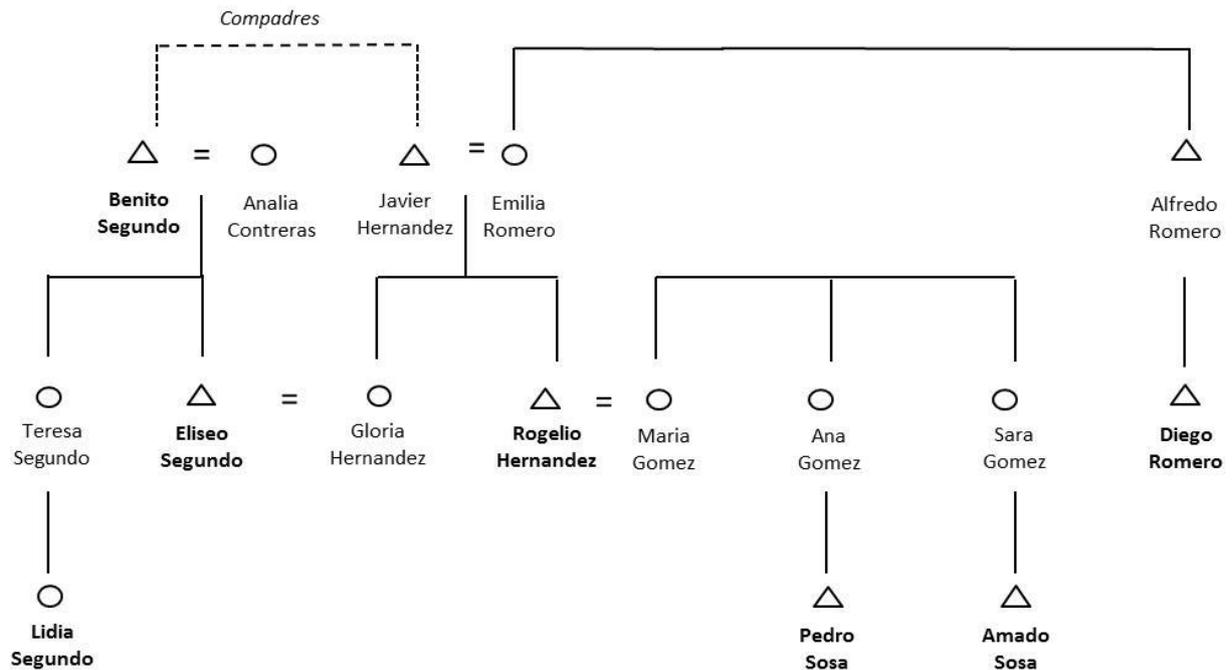
Figure 13 Kinship relations between Aguararenta's principal faction leaders, allies and rivals. Key actors are highlighted in bold.

PEDRO'S DISCONTENTS – *DIVISIONISMO* IN MOTION

During my time in Aguararenta, factional conflict was a permanent subject of conversation. Moreover, tensions would often flare up unexpectedly as new actors attempted to become involved in the conflict. This was exactly what happened when one of my closest friends in the field, Pedro, decided to support Rogelio Hernández even though he was a member of the Sosa family that mainly supported Diego Romero and Amado. Pedro Sosa's involvement in local politics highlights the central tenets of *divisionismo* in Guaraní settlements. Here we find an unemployed man, who having benefited greatly from the availability of oil jobs in the past, now found himself weighing agricultural and oil jobs in the balance. Unable to source these jobs on his own, he decided to join the conflict to solve – as he would put it – the settlement's 'work issue', *el tema laboral.*

Pedro Sosa was in his forties. He had been a star student in the community's primary school and a protégé of the school's headmistress, a Catholic nun, who hoped that he would become a priest. When Pedro was fifteen, his mother died of tuberculosis. Like most of the men in the Sosa family, Pedro's father regularly worked in the tomato growing *fincas* some one hundred and fifty kilometres south of Aguararenta. Pedro had once accompanied his father on one of his annual labour migrations and made it all the way to Rosario, one of Argentina's largest cities, more than a thousand kilometres south of Aguararenta. Nonetheless, Pedro and his father had a distant relationship and, after Pedro's mother died, his father remarried and left Pedro and his brothers to fend for themselves. As the eldest sibling and the only one with a job, Pedro took up the responsibility of building a wooden house for himself and his brothers, but fate was not yet ready to favour Pedro. Some years later, he contracted tuberculosis and was unable to finish school. Once he recovered, a burst appendix nearly killed him.

Pedro's fortune changed when he married his wife, Mirta Segundo, one of Eliseo's nieces. Mirta, like Pedro, had also been an exemplary student and a devout Catholic in the good graces of the priests and nuns who ran the school. In fact, when I met her, Mirta was a leader of the small Catholic group in Aguararenta and organised Catholic services in the community when the priests could not do so themselves. Recalling the early days of their relationship, Mirta described Pedro as a responsible provider and someone on whom others could depend. 'I thought I was marrying a businessman (*empresario*)!' Mirta told me with a laugh as she remembered how her husband used to bring home large bags of food and goods (*mercancía*) for his younger siblings to enjoy.

By the time I met him, Pedro had been unemployed for over a year. Every morning he would wake up before dawn, unable to sleep because of the anxiety he felt at not having a job. Even so, Pedro's situation was not as drastic as it was for other families. To begin with, he only had three children, which was a relatively small number for a Guaraní family. Even more importantly, Mirta had become an auxiliary bilingual teacher in the school and the family had been living off of her salary for quite some time. As in other countries, Argentina has developed a Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) programme for its indigenous schools. Part of the programme includes the hiring of bilingual teachers who are meant to facilitate the education of children who are not native Spanish teachers. Auxiliary bilingual teachers are the lowest rung in the teaching hierarchy and are not required to have a degree. Mirta, as an energetic teacher and consummate student, was inspired by the EIB programme and was studying to obtain a teaching certificate that would allow her to be promoted to the position of full teacher. Pedro and his family, then, were in a privileged position with regards to the rest of the settlement and even now, with only Mirta's salary, they could afford to send two of their children to secondary school in the nearby town of Tartagal.

Still, Pedro worried that he was not a good example for his son. He was further frustrated by the fact that Mirta's job placed him above the position of the rank and file unemployed, and so prevented him from participating in any job lotteries with Diego's Unemployed Workers' Centre. His perceived duty to

provide for his family was compromised. In his self-awareness, Pedro's social life also suffered as he felt guilty for going out to watch football matches and was embarrassed to hang out with the men since he did not want to spend Mirta's money on *vicios* (vices) like alcohol and coca leaves. Realizing that Mirta could not be asked to work, study, *and* take care of all domestic chores, Pedro took it upon himself to prepare meals for his children even though he knew people gossiped about his effeminate work.

Increasingly frustrated, Pedro finally gathered the nerve to ask his father-in-law for a portion of land. Agriculture was a last resort for Pedro, not least because it meant he had to ask his father-in-law for a favour. Although Mirta lamented that Pedro had decided to work the land because of the *sufrimiento* or suffering it entailed, Pedro was optimistic. In high spirits, he told me that working the fields would make him feel useful and Mirta ultimately conceded that it would at least be nice to have maize again. Pedro fantasised about turning his *cerco* into a lucrative business and we often talked about the logistics of starting a papaya plantation. He worked the fields energetically and with discipline, and sought the aid of his less enthusiastic younger brothers, but it was clear that he would much prefer to be working for a wage. Any waged job would do, but he particularly dreamed of working as part of an oil exploration crew as he had formerly done. The oil crew job was not without its disadvantages. Pedro enjoyed comparing my feelings of homesickness with his own sadness when he worked in the oil fields down south. 'You don't eat when you're far away,' he would commiserate with me, 'you just work hard so you're tired and that way you don't think when you go to bed'. He would also describe the physical sacrifices of oil exploration and told me that he had damaged a knee while transporting heavy equipment in the Patagonian mountains – an injury which he felt might prevent from passing a physical examination should a new job opportunity materialise.

Despite the sacrifices associated with oil exploration jobs, Pedro abandoned work on the *cerco* when it became known that Diego had secured a few *cupos* from the oil company. The days dragged on, gossip mounted, and still Diego had not publicly distributed any jobs. Because he knew that I attended Diego's meetings, Pedro persistently asked me if I knew when the jobs would be distributed. When word got round that Diego was dispensing *cupos* to his closest friends, Pedro's anxious curiosity turned into outrage. He was particularly angry because he had heard that Amado, Diego's close ally and Pedro's cousin, was going to receive a cupo. 'Diego is afraid of Amado because Amado is bad (*malo*) when he drinks,' he told me, 'just the other night Amado was drunk (*machado*) and had been banging and banging on Diego's door trying to get him out. But Diego just stayed indoors.' To make matters worse, Pedro felt that it was unfair that Amado should be considered for a *cupo* since he already had a wage-paying job, menial though it was. His anger mounted. Diego, he told me, was the oil company's lackey, 'when there are meetings he doesn't speak'. He even suggested that Diego kept the company representative abreast of all the community's happenings – 'they probably even know all about you!' he concluded.

At the time of his outrage over Diego's *cupos*, I asked Pedro whether he ever considered becoming a communal leader. He would just shake his head and smile, 'No, no, I'm just interested in the issue of

work' (*la cuestión laboral*). True to his word he took it upon himself to go visit the oil company's offices in Tartagal and enquire about the availability of *cupos*. When I interviewed PanAmerican's representative some time later I was refused any information concerning the distribution of jobs among indigenous communities. However, Pedro, who claimed to have a good relationship with several company employees, reported that the company representatives had admitted that Aguararenta had received two *cupos* and that Diego had already allocated them.

Once Rogelio Hernández found out about Pedro's discontentment and subsequent investigations, the settlement suddenly sprang to life. The dullness of everyday routine was interrupted by a proliferation of meetings on both sides while the level of gossip reached unprecedented levels. Although members of the rival factions did not participate in each other's meetings, it was rumoured that certain people were acting as spies and conveying information to the opposite side. Some worried that the tension might lead to a fight, while others seemed to relish the very same prospect. A few of my informants thought that Pedro was staging a coup. Others whispered that Diego was charging people 1000 *pesos* for each *cupo* he distributed and that his following was falling apart because of infighting. Some of the rumours seemed to contain grains of truth: Lidia, one of Diego's closest supporters confessed that she no longer attended the meetings because 'Diego and Amado are acting badly;' she had heard the story about the *cupos* and was displeased that they 'have the *cupos*' but won't 'raffle them', 'that's why even the *chaqueños* who used to support them are changing sides'.

Emboldened by the recent activity he had almost singlehandedly sparked, Pedro petitioned PanAmerican's representative for a meeting. To give Pedro's petition an official aura, Hernández stamped it with seal that stated that Rogelio Hernández was the official 'president' of the community (see Chapter 6). Pedro beamed as he told me how Hernández had praised him as a person who 'starts and finishes things' (*empezás y terminás las cosas*) in contrast to being a mere troublemaker like Diego and Amado. Pedro also proudly boasted that the PanAmerican representative had congratulated him for being 'serious', 'hard working', 'honest', and 'a pleasure to work with' and he structured his discourse against Diego and Amado in opposite moral terms, referring to them as 'treacherous', 'rude', and 'threatening'.

Diego, Amado and the Unemployed Workers Centre were concerned with the recent turn of events. The morning after I spoke to Pedro, a group of Diego's supporters convened in the assembly hall. A rumour had spread that jobs were going to be distributed and many of the men present, who were not regular attendees of Diego's meetings, had come attracted by this promise. Diego reported that 'the others' had presented a 'nota' demanding jobs for their own group – rather than for the community as a whole – but that the company had promised to only negotiate with Diego's people. At this point, Eliseo, the old chief, spoke up, saying that he would go to the municipality the following day and ask to be allowed to make a call to the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI) in Buenos Aires, 'my thoughts are these,' he said, 'we pressure at the top so that they come down and solve this' (*mi pensamiento es este,*

presionamos arriba para que bajen y solucionen esto). Another man spoke up 'When has that one [referring to Hernández] ever pushed for jobs? Here, only the lads [and he pointed at Amado] push for work!' It was ultimately decided that the only course of action was to block the highway so that the authorities from Buenos Aires would come to Aguararenta and resolve the conflict.

Throughout this crisis there was a palpable sense that the conflict would eventually come to a calamitous end. Some people drew comparisons to another community where a similar factional dispute had ended up with two rival leaders brawling in the street. But just as suddenly as the conflict had erupted, it simmered down. Pedro unexpectedly found a job working construction for a nightclub in Tartagal through one of his brothers-in-law, stopped participating in meetings with Hernández and ceased contact with PanAmerican's offices. As a result, Hernández was no longer able to count on Pedro's support and, more importantly, his access to PanAmerican was hampered, since its representatives shunned him. The tension inherent in the conflict that Pedro had instigated soon blew over and the highway picket never took place. Nevertheless, it would have a transformational effect upon the community.

As a direct result of the road block threats, the constant traffic of notes, documents, text messages, meetings and phone calls, that representatives of the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI) finally decided to travel from Buenos Aires to Aguararenta. Ultimately, an internal controversy over the distribution of jobs could not be solved internally and it was only through the mediation of external state and company representatives that Aguararenta achieved some sense of tranquillity. But as we will see in the next chapter, the apparent resolution of Aguararenta's conflict simultaneously implied the further institutionalisation of the settlement. For now, however, I want to further unpack what we might call the moral economy that underlies *divisionismo*. As we will see, the fact that leaders like Diego and Hernández were accused of only helping their own people was problematic because leaders ought to 'bring down' resources for the entire community, rather than restricting these to particular groups of related kin. At the same time, most Guaraní understood that this sort of politics could not be an individual effort: leaders were only able to bring down resources if they had the people's support.

SER UNIDOS: COLLECTIVE POTENCY AND ITS LIMITS

I was once told the story of a witch who was 'catching' (*atajando*) the rain and ruining other people's crops. Faced with this, a powerful leader from another settlement gathered the people and enjoined them to smoke and create rainclouds. The leader asked his followers to keep smoking while it rained on the fields. This story was recounted to me as an example of how powerful people in the past had been, but it seems to me that the story also contains a perfect illustration of how a desirable state of unity might be achieved and enacted. Faced by the selfishness of a witch, the people turned to their powerful leader who, with his ability to use *secretos*, was able to enjoin them to work collectively for the common good. In the story, the rain clouds – an aggregate of individually-produced smoke - demonstrate the power of concerted action and the way in which the collectivity emerges through unity. Ideally, the role of the

leader is that of a convenor and mediator who, thanks to his knowledge, facilitates the emergence of unity.

The kind of leadership that this story describes demonstrates what my Guaraní neighbours described as a state of 'being united' (*ser unidos*). *Ser unidos* in the Guaraní context was a demonstration of power in Hannah Arendt's sense of a 'potentiality in being together' (1958: 201). In this sense, it expressed a collective and non-coercive form of power that thrived on feelings of mutuality and kinship solidarity. Anecdotally, this potency of unity was illustrated to me by the teenage football team I attempted to coach during my fieldwork. These boys, under the age of fifteen, claimed that the school director was 'being stingy' (*las mezquinaba*) with the school's football kit and one of the boys offered to 'face off' the director but said that he needed the others to go with him for support. In a similar story, a young man named Cristian told me how, while working as a part of a highway paving crew, he tried to face off against the boss (*capataz*) with the goal of obtaining extra benefits, such as spare work clothes or 'gifts' of fuel. Cristian's attempts failed, though, because someone from the other working crew, who was loyal to a rival faction, had not supported him. Cristian compared Aguararenta's inability to secure resources to the success enjoyed by the working crew from one of the neighbouring communities who always received things because they were 'united' (*unidos*).

These stories neatly sum up the logic of Guaraní leadership: the leader must 'face off' against an external actor – the owner of an abundant resource. During this intersubjective encounter the leader must 'push' and 'speak well' to ensure that resources are 'brought down'. But the stories also point to two more crucial aspect of Guaraní politics. First, that, although factions have leaders, leaders are nothing without their followers. This was expressed in the local idiom of 'having people' (*tener pueblo*), which suggested that a leader must have a visible following in order to be politically effective. And second, that the most effective way of eliciting resources from external actors is by 'being united.' In Spanish, the notion of 'being united' was expressed as *ser unidos* rather than the standard Spanish formulation *estar unidos*. In English, both *ser* and *estar* are translated as 'to be,' but in Spanish *estar* reflects a temporary state or condition – being hungry – whereas *ser* expresses an essential one – being Guaraní. My informants did not usually confuse the verbs *ser* and *estar* and I therefore found it highly significant that people spoke of 'being united' in the sense of an essential condition rather than as a temporary circumstance. While the latter might have expressed the almost tactical need to be united for the satisfaction of a particular goal, the former expresses a much more profound, existential condition of unity.

Paradoxically, in my experience, unity in Guaraní settlements only occurred temporarily and was not, as the expression might suggest, a profound existential condition. However, this discrepancy actually captures the deep desire that people felt for a kind of political unity that they expected to be given. In fact, although the achievement of unity was decidedly hard to engineer, most people I spoke to seemed to know exactly what it was that brought about the failure of unity. For instance, I once asked a leader who was telling me about the need to be united how unity might actually be achieved. 'I don't know!' he

exclaimed with frustration. Then, after a pause, he elaborated 'the problem is that personal ambitions (*ambiciónes personales*) stop people from working together.' It is perhaps no surprise, then, that *ser unidos* became an almost utopian and unattainable condition in Guaraní communities. However, my Guaraní friends and neighbours did not meekly accept the transitory nature of unity. On the contrary, they experienced *divisionismo* as true tragedy. In part, I think, factionalism was seen as particularly disastrous because, as people said of their communities, 'we are all related here' (*somos todos parientes*) and the appeal to kinship unity implied a strong sense of fairness, equality, and the absence of conflict. For this reason, close family members, especially brothers and close cousins, tended to provide a leader's core kernel of support. Unsurprisingly, factional allegiances and rivalries quite neatly mapped on to divisions within kinship units that could be traced back to the first generations that settled in Argentina after the Chaco War. However, as we saw with Diego, leaders must also be able to branch out and attract followers from other kinship units. The most successful leaders appeared to be those who could carefully construct a wider network of allies, an alliance that bridged across different kin groups.

It was this prevalence of family loyalty over 'communal' bonds that frustrated the Franciscans when they tried to set up agricultural cooperatives in Guaraní missions. According to one missionary who started working with the Guaraní in the 1950s: 'Community is a pretty word, there's been a lot of talk about the aboriginal Community. It's true, they [the Guaraní] live in a community, they have things in common of course. But the individual part (*la parte particular*) has much more importance: the family, the clan.'[20] In line with this Franciscan priest's observations there is little evidence of what might be called 'communal life' in day to day life and even visits between related families are few and far between. Thus, while there is certainly a local idea of and desire for the united community, each family cluster retains some autonomy. However, just as the inherent tension between obligatory amity and actual conflict is common to kinship relations everywhere, these kinship alliance networks among the Guaraní were volatile and, as Pedro's involvement showed, not even kinship provided a sure-fire guarantee of support.

Leaders, we have seen, are placed in the difficult position of eliciting sufficient resources and redistributing them satisfactorily as they mediate between the centripetal desire for unity and the centrifugal force of 'personal ambitions.' Crucially, these were not simply opposing tendencies, but could become complementary ones in the sense that promoting unity would actively allow leaders to further their own personal ambitions. Indeed, this simultaneous mediating yet contradictory position often shone through in the kinds of rhetoric leaders employed. Leaders, I was once told, 'cannot make decisions for others.' Perhaps for this reason they would often mark their speeches with phrases that expressed the individuality of their statements and an unwillingness to speak for others. Thus a leader might say, 'this is my thought (*este es mi pensamiento*), we need to blockade the road so that we gain more *cupos*, I don't know what the rest of you think (*no sé que piensan ustedes*)'. However, in order for people to be united it was often said that the community had to have 'one thought' (*un solo pensamiento)*, which could

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[20] María Luisa Jalil, headmistress of the school in Yacuy, generously shared a transcript of this interview with me.

be translated as 'being of like mind.' A successful leader needed to foster a 'likeness of mind' among his followers because, as one aspiring leader told me, 'you can't get anything done on your own.' It was for this reason that Diego once told his followers that 'when the *ingenieros* come I need for you all to speak and not to stay quiet so that they see that these jobs are something that we all want.' Of course, Diego's own political legitimacy rested upon his ability to elicit these jobs and, consequently, on his ability to instill at least an appearance of unity of among his followers. In sum, the promotion of unity may, in fact, go hand in hand with the furtherance of personal ambitions. One disillusioned person captured this point quite bluntly when he blurted out 'the leaders only help their own people' before adding 'people are like this [they don't collaborate]; if I could I would take a machine gun and shoot everyone who doesn't share or collaborate!' The paradox here, of course, is that the resort to extreme violence and coercion was seen as the ultimate means to achieve unity even though it also exemplified a very radical form of 'personal ambition'.

POWER AND CONCEALMENT

In 2015, after a two-year absence, I returned to the field. I met with Hernández who spoke freely, but with obvious disappointment, about the 'new commission' that had supplanted him – an admission of defeat he never would have uttered before. To all intents and purposes it seemed as though conflict in Aguararenta had come to a peaceful end. Assuming that, like Hernández, most people had simply accepted the new leadership, I began to co-operate with Diego, helping him write project proposals, writing letters to functionaries, and accompanying him to meetings with NGOs. However, I gradually became aware that the situation was not as clear as I had originally imagined. I started hearing complaints that Diego was not 'working well,' and that he wasn't letting people participate; 'he wants to do it all by himself,' one person protested. I was even cautioned not to spend so much time with Diego and was startled to hear rumours accusing Diego of trying to learn 'secrets' and engaging in witchcraft. *Divisionismo* – it seemed – was alive and well.

As we have seen, Guaraní leaders' ability to extract resources from external sources is inextricably linked to the broader, regional economy and, as Joan Vincent observed at a general level, 'factions emerge when the environment provides some new kind of political resource which existing groups cannot exploit' (1978: 187). But the problem that Guaraní leaders ultimately face is that the resources they *are* able to elicit are never enough to go around. As we saw with Hernández, many Guaraní leaders felt that *criollo* politicians purposefully fomented factionalism because they made promises on which they then did not deliver. The failure to deliver, however, ended up reflecting negatively on the leader who was accused of not distributing the resources. Rumours of company representatives paying visits to leaders in the middle of the night with briefcases full of cash were also common. How else, people would ask, had so-and-so paid for that car? However, even when leaders made more visible deals with companies, they were almost inevitably accused of not securing sufficient resources or of pocketing money for themselves. In the community of Yacuy, for example, a telephone company representative had come looking for a place

to set up an antenna. After the community's leaders reached a deal with the company, their main political rivals called for an assembly and denounced that telephone company had secretly paid the commission two months worth of royalties. 'People are so stupid,' one of the accused leaders told me, 'that they believed the lie and kicked out our commission. They believed that we were receiving the royalties (*regalía*) for ourselves.' Whether or not the leaders had pocketed any money is almost beside the point. A deal had been made but most people had not benefitted from this exchange: where had the wealth gone if not into a leader's pockets?

Because leadership can always potentially be abused, leaders often find that they are under constant surveillance. One man told me that in his settlement a group of people called a meeting to try and 'topple' (*derrocar*) him. At the meeting he was accused of secretly receiving ten *cupos* from an oil company so, in his defence, he showed him 'all of [his] documents and paperwork. They stopped talking after that (*se quedaron muditos* – lit. they kept mute).' However, sometimes the pressure on leaders could force them to quit. Jacinto Segundo, Eliseo's brother and aa descendant of Aguararenta's first *cacique*, occupied the position of communal leader for a short period of time before he quit, distanced himself from communal politics, and dedicated himself fully to working on his *cerco*. As he remembered his experience as a *cacique*, Jacinto showed no regret for having given up. 'People are never happy and they always criticise you. You're on everyone's mouth (*estás en boca de todos*): 'This one is lazy! He doesn't do anything!'"

The constant surveillance of Guaraní leaders means that their position is often quite vulnerable and I heard accusations of leaders behaving improperly throughout the entirety of my fieldwork, no matter which community I visited. Typically, these accusations related to the hidden transactions that leaders engaged in. For instance, one of my closer informants, Don Aparicio, told me that while leaders don't get paid a regular salary, they get wealthy in unofficial ways. They get gifts from *la empresa* or from politicians, he explained, or they'll get money in the name of the community and buy things but then apparently forget to report the amount received. The difference between income and expenses, they keep for themselves. It was this hidden side to communal politics – and not the act of theft itself – that Aparicio found morally reprehensible. As he put it, had the leader of his community continued 'working well' – that is, continued bringing down resources and redistributing them – he could have kept on stealing and no one would have complained. Don Aparicio then went on to contrast this, with his deceased father, whom he characeterised as a well respected and admired man: 'my father had many things, and he always showed them (*lo mostraba*) he never hid them, but he would always distribute these things (*lo repartía*) and would be left with nothing (*no le quedaba nada*). He did this to avoid envy (*envidias*) and attacks from witches. He was good (*era bueno*).'

This is surprisingly reminiscent of Pierre Clastres' assertion that a chief must 'exhibit at every moment the innocence of his office' (1987: 45) and must satisfy the chiefly 'obligation to give' which, as in the case Aparicio's father, is often experienced as 'a continuous looting' (ibid: 30). More generally it seems to show that 'the tribe keeps the chief under a close watch; he is a kind of prisoner in a space which the tribe

does not let him leave' (Clastres 1987: 207). At another level, we can liken this to the actions of the *arete iya* who, figuratively speaking, opens the doors of his *oka* to his guests and allows them to consume his maize and *chicha* until there is nothing left. By contrast, perceived stinginess and a reluctance to satisfy this obligation to give typically led to outrage. As in the case of Diego, people often expressed this sense of outrage in terms of witchcraft accusations. In a sense, it is no surprise that leaders were accused of being witches since both roles are closely associated with knowledge and invisibility. Indeed, the Guaraní word for witch –*mbaekuaa* – literally refers to one who 'knows (-*kuaa*) things (*mbae*)' and it is often said that witches have 'secrets' (*tienen secreto*). This occult knowledge is inherently powerful and often deadly. In the case of Diego, it was whispered that his 'secrets' had helped him win the communal elections and that they somehow strengthened his grasp of the position of president. Even more poignantly, Hernández alleged that Diego's occult powers had been directly responsible for a motorcycle accident that had killed his son at the height of Aguararenta's conflict.

Just as with witches, the ability to 'bring down' resources, the crucial skill of a leader, was often framed in terms of a leader's knowledge and leaders themselves were also aware of how their position was linked to knowledge. Rogelio, for example, once told me that, 'Diego thinks he learnt everything he could from me and now he wants to work on his own. But he doesn't know everything yet. He wants me to give him all the papers. He thinks that after all these years working, I'm just going to give everything up just like that.' Ultimately, the kind of knowledge that leaders accrue relates to a world outside of the Guaraní community and can only be gained through experience, and as Rogelio's words suggest, this kind of knowledge often required familiarity with documents (see Chapter 6). Diego, for his part, had essentially come to 'know things' by 'walking' with his elder cousin and getting to know how one goes about 'pushing' and 'facing off.' It was therefore perhaps unsurprising that he was the person who rose to challenge Hernández's leadership. The kind of knowledge Diego had garnered is learnable, but not necessarily easy to acquire. As a younger man in Diego's following once told me, 'it's hard to *caminar*. If I went into an office right now, I wouldn't know who was who. Maybe the person I needed to *encarar* would walk right past me and I wouldn't know it.'

According to Lowrey, the Isoseño Guaraní of Bolivia accept - and even approve of the fact - that inter-communal leaders must be involved in 'shadowy transactions' with 'distant and mysterious (…) government buildings, urban offices, even foreign countries' (2007: 13 - 14). However, they become suspicious when leaders fail to make the results of their shady dealings visible. In other words, people become suspicious of their leaders when, like witches, they keep 'the results of [their] transactions as hidden as the transactions themselves' (2007: 14). As among Bolivia's Isoseño Guaraní, witchcraft accusations provide a template for people to criticise their political leaders. Perhaps unsurprisingly in some of the settlements where I conducted fieldwork, factional leaders also accused each other of involvement in the drug trade. With its connotation of occult yet fantastic wealth, involvement in the drug trade could explain why some leaders were suddenly driving fancy cars and building new houses

while their followers went on empty handed. Like witchcraft, the drug trade provided a similar platform for the moral condemnation of the individual accumulation of wealth and a position from which to denounce unjust distribution.

In egalitarian societies, witchcraft and sorcery often highlight the contradictions that inequalities create. In such societies, 'greater visibility, prestige, wealth, or knowledge - even when acquired by much work - are not tolerated' (Buchillet 2004: 120; see also Geschiere 1997; Wright and Whitehead 2004). Witchraft as a political discourse is often used to mark out those spaces and behaviours that are not social (Geschiere 1997). Writing of the Upper Xingu, Heckenberger similarly argues that witchcraft can be seen as 'the antithesis of society, its dark side or alter ego' (Heckenberger 2004: 179) and that 'witches lack empathy for other humans and act for purely personal motives' (Heckenberger 2004: 179). Hélène Clastres in a discussion of Guaraní notions of justice distinguishes between the notions of *teko achy* or 'the sick life' and *mborayu*, that is, 'reciprocity.' A sick life, she writes, is characterised by the avoidance of exchange and associated with an animalistic way of life (1995: 82). By contrast, 'the person possessed by *mborayu* is indeed described as the exact opposite of a selfish hunter, as one devoting his efforts to obtain, for the pleasure of others, foods that he does not consume himself: the ideal partner who gives without demanding anything in return' (1995: 93-4).

Among the Guaraní of the Chaco, the asocial nature of witchcraft was often spatially and socially defined. Thus, witchcraft assaults typically occurred outside of domestic spaces. For instance, witches might leave cursed objects – like a toad covered in salt – lying on a path or in the overgrown spaces between houses, hoping that through contact the victim would succumb. Speaking of the past when, I was told, 'there were many witches,' one woman told me that her family would stay in their *oka* and rarely leave for fear of such an attack. Additionally, witches were said to become stronger and more powerful because they ate game from the forest. In general, witches were characterised as socially distant. For instance, people often told me that neighbouring settlements were full of *brujos*, that even the children knew how to cast spells, and that I ought to be careful. I was also often told that the most powerful witches were not Guaraní, but rather Wichí, an indigenous group from the Chaco who the Guaraní often looked down on. Witchcraft accusations in contexts of factionalism highlight the tensions that are inherent to the exercise of leadership – a practice that mediates between poles of visibility and invisibility, equality and hierarchy, individuality and collectivity.

The fact that Diego was accused of witchcraft is symptomatic of the hidden underbelly that is part and parcel of political leadership in Guaraní settlements today. It has to do with the fact that leaders engage with owners of wealth that are external to the community and with the fact that these transactions are necessarily hidden from view. Jean and John Comaroff might argue that the Guaraní's sensitivity to their leaders' shady dealings is yet another example of what they call the 'enchantments of modernity'. Indeed, in the Guaraní context, oil companies and municipalities are understood as repositories of 'vast wealth' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 284), or what I call abundance, and it is the job of the leader to elicit this

wealth for the community. However, there are no formal means for rendering leaders accountable and people keep a close eye on their leaders instead. It is precisely because leaders in Guaraní settlements are expected to obtain and redistribute wealth from powerful, non-indigenous institutions that political leadership always has the potential to be morally dubious.

DIVISIONISMO RECONSIDERED

> A.D: Would you want to be *cacique*?
> L.H.: [Laughter] *¡Más vale!* Of course! I'd sell the community and escape to another country!

This brief exchange captures the dangers and potentialities of political leadership in today's Guaraní settlements. The young man who made this joke was, of course, playing on the disjuncture between his response and the kinds of behaviour that are normally associated with *caciques*. A 'good' leader ought to create unity by constantly attempting to 'bring down' projects, jobs and goods and distributing them to his followers. He must be willing to disclose, in Don Aparicio's words to 'show everything', and 'exhibit the innocence of his office' (P.Clastres 1987: 45). However, the joke is effective because it also hints at the close association between the position of *cacique*, selfishness, and great wealth. In the Guaraní case, leadership is often murky, and allows personal ambitions to flourish to the detriment of others. As a result, in/visibility becomes a key a factor in local politics since leaders must engage in invisible negotiations, but also go to great lengths to demonstrate their transparency.

As we have seen, political leadership, ideally a practice of disclosure, often seems to be premised on concealment. The mediating position of leaders, between community and external actors and also between individuals, ultimately places them in an ambiguous situation. Because of this potential to both 'unite' and pursue 'personal ambitions' leaders live a life of constant surveillance. As a result, Guaraní leaders seem to totter unstably as they attempt to strike a delicate balance between disclosure and concealment that is acceptable to their followers. *Divisionismo*, in this sense, seems to constitute a reaction against the perception that leaders, who are positioned as intermediaries within an occult regional economy, can always potentially over-accumulate and further their own interests to the detriment of their followers.

While most Guaraní felt that the occurrence of *divisionismo* in their communities was tragic, we might also understand it as an instance of what Deleuze and Guattari, in their reading of Clastres, called a 'collective mechanism of inhibition.' As such, factionalism actually opposes the 'installation of stable powers' (2010: 13). Unlike Clastres, Deleuze and Guattari do not claim that there is an evolution from 'societies against the state' to 'state societies.' Instead, they argue that these impulses coexist at the same time within the same society (14-15). This *divisionismo*, as my informants themselves recognised, hampered the community's ability to progress materially, to obtain more jobs, houses or *proyectos* because it tarnished their standing vis-a-vis external actors. From an external observer's point of view, then, processes of

internal factionalism could be seen as a form of resistance to the accumulation of power by political leaders. However, the tragedy from the Guaraní perspective is that unity is necessary for the kinds of collective power that people feel their communities must have. Without it, Guaraní communities would be unable to elicit coveted resources from external actors. However, as we will see, the state's legal-administrative design of 'Indigenous Communities' furthers the centralisation of authority within the figure of the leader which is precisely what *divisionismo* resists.

CHAPTER 6
THE BUREAUCRATIC PRODUCTION OF 'INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES'

In light of the everyday political fragmentation of Guaraní settlements, this chapter looks at the way in which the extant legal framework affects the nature of political leadership in indigenous communities. Specifically, it focuses on the registration of indigenous communities as corporate legal persons and the everyday ramifications of this process. Here, legal personhood refers to a legal mechanism whereby the state institutes, entitles and recognises the legal fiction of the 'Indigenous Community' as collective legal person. The imposition of the law on Guaraní political bodies is a relatively new development, but, in some ways, it can be seen as one more step in a historical trajectory that has seen the progressive shaping of indigenous political bodies. However, at the same time, people on the ground actively grapple with the law as they seek to understand it and use it to their own advantage. This chapter therefore aims to explore the ways in which people are simultaneously implicated in and affected by the registration of their communities as corporate legal persons.

Rather than look at the full extent of Argentina's legal framework, however, I want to focus on the fact that the state requires indigenous communities to register as legal persons. This rather small detail has often been overlooked by scholars working with indigenous societies in South America. However, from the perspective of the Guaraní settlements, it is legal personhood that dictates the character of the interactions that exist between the community and the state and therefore has a profound impact on the way local politics unfolds. This is in no small part due to the fact that the conferral of legal personhood necessitates an act of recognition by the state. In the words of one eminent legal scholar, 'if the personality of the corporation is a legal fiction, it is the gift of the prince' (Maitland 1911: 144). In other words, corporate legal personhood is only created through an act of recognition. In a similar way, another legal scholarr argues that 'the law does not create [the corporation's] personality, but finding a group engaged in some common pursuit, endows it with a definite legal capacity' (Deiser 1908: 138). For indigenous people, international legal frameworks enshrine their presumed 'common pursuit', or at least their right to such a pursuit, through calls for self-determination. Within this framework, the legal fiction of legal personhood allows the state to delegate the internal organisation of indigenous communities on the basis of a separate, culturally-articulated and historically experienced identity. As a result, corporate legal persons are recognised by the state in as much as they are imagined to pursue common interests and to be held together by culturally-informed social ties: a concept that tends to stress communal ties in contrast to the perceived individualism of the West.

As Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) has shown for the case of Australia, the processes of recognition that lie at the heart of multicultural jurisprudence are contradictory in as much as they demand evidence of some kind of cultural authenticity even as they set the limits of what can actually be recognised in the first place. For Lucas Bessire, these processes of recognition allow the state to gain 'new moral authority to police

Indigenous populations through granting the rights to a symbolic cultural citizenship' (2014: 184). Among the Ayoreo of Paraguay, this project casts those indigenous subjects who do not conform to the authorised cultural modes into a state of 'hypermarginality' where socio-economic destitution gets conflated with unrecognizability (ibid). In these accounts, however, the state, the law, or the project of recognition, seem to be somewhat overdetermined in the sense that it seems as though it is impossible for subjects to live outside of the state's project of recognition. Similarly, such an approach assumes that all subaltern subjects are similarly positioned and equally susceptible to the state's onslaught. Ethnographically, however, this leaves little room to explore everyday acts of complicity and convergence between state projects and particular indigenous subjects.

With this in mind, the subsequent sections look at how complicity between Guaraní leaders and legal projects works through the medium of documents. These complicities demonstrate that processes of recognition are in fact constituted through a number of tensions and inconsistencies wherein different political projects both converge and conflict with each other. Importantly, I want to highlight the extent to which misunderstandings and the tactical usage of the state's bureaucratic media allow certain people to gain authority. At the same time, though, we must keep the backdrop of *divisionismo* in mind, for even as leaders gain authority, followers begin to reject them. What I describe, then, is a dialectical process whereby legal recognition and institutionalisation create conflict at the settlement level. In turn, these conflicts – which go against the impression of the legal framework on the territory – end up re-interpellating the state and thus furthering the project of institutionalisation.

The first section of this chapter discusses how the legal design of these communities establishes the need for representation as the primary space for community-level politics. I then examine an important meeting in which Guaraní leaders and state officials came together to discuss the issue of legal personhood. The meeting, I argue, illustrates the ways in which state functionaries and Guaraní leaders have converging yet contrasting interests in establishing the corporate legal personhood of indigenous communities. I then move on to discuss how the production of documents enacts corporate agency and, as a result, facilitates the empowerment of leaders even as it further entrenches the legally sanctioned nature of the community. However, while it is tempting to see the process of institutionalisation as a uni-directional, state driven attempt to impose the law, I show that in Aguararenta the legal imposition works through the conflicting agendas and strategies of a disjointed state and a conflict-ridden settlement. I conclude by arguing that if we are to understand how legal recognition works, we must be attentive to these inconsistencies and to how they pan out in the everyday.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AS CORPORATE LEGAL PERSONS

Argentina's National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI) states that its main objective is to 'ensure the exercise of full citizenship among the members of indigenous populations, [and] guarantee the fulfilment of the rights upheld in the constitution.' The Institute is officially a dependency of the Ministry of Social

Development[21] and is the only government body officially dedicated to dealing with indigenous people in the country. Unfortunately, during my fieldwork, I had very little success in contacting any of its members as my petitions for an 'audience' (*audiencia*) were apparently misplaced and my calls and e-mails rarely returned. In a moment of frustration, I decided to show up at the INAI offices without prior notice and managed to steal a few minutes of time from a recalcitrant INAI functionary (*técnico*).

As was to be expected, I received little more than suspicion and the rehearsed official line. This included an exposition of how, over the past decade, the government had promoted a new enabling legal framework for the country's indigenous population.[22] Although the exchange proved disappointingly short, it was not altogether unhelpful. Throughout our conversation the *técnico* made a rather illuminating distinction between what he called '*el territorio*' (the territory) and '*el marco legal*' (the legal framework). He seemed to take the two terms for granted as easily graspable realities and asserted that the INAI's mission was essentially to '*plasmar el marco legal sobre el territorio*', that is, to impress 'the legal framework' upon the 'territory'. In hindsight, it seems to me that the technician's word choice may have divulged more about the 'the spirit of the law' than he intended it to; not least because the precise definition of '*plasmar*' refers to the act of moulding a material so as to give it a determinate shape.

The construction of indigenous societies into collective institutions is perhaps the clearest way in which the state actively attempts to mould indigenous societies through the use of the legal framework. It is, moreover, a legal mechanism that has been employed in other parts of South America for the same reason (Veber 1998). In 2012, the president of the INAI, Daniel Fernández, gave a presentation before Congress in which he reviewed a set of proposed amendments to the country's indigenous legislation. Broadly speaking, the reforms were meant to enhance indigenous participation by enshrining them within a Civil Code that would gain precedence over legislation at the provincial level. During his presentation, Fernández stressed the 'collective nature of Indigenous Communities and reaffirm[ed] their right to participate in the management of their natural resources' he further claimed that, as legal persons, they have the right 'to decide the internal forms of coexistence and social, economic and cultural organisation' according to their own 'cosmovision, norms and customs' (Fernández 2012: 11). The language Fernández used in order to justify the proposed reforms lends insight into the INAI's conception of the legal status of indigenous communities. It is precisely because of this kind of language that some legal scholars have argued that current legal approaches to indigenous rights 'objectify and reify communal identities, treating them as monolithic and clearly delineated entities when in reality they are neither' (Holder and Corntassel 2002: 138).

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[21] Recently, the INAI head offices in Buenos Aires were moved from the Ministry of Social Development building to new offices near the Plaza Once train station, next door to Bolivia's consulate. This seems ironically fitting since Argentine society has historically seen its indigenous population as a foreign presence and discriminated against indigenous people in nationalist terms – including through the equation of indigeneity with Bolivianness.

[22] The past two *Kirchnerista* administrations have passed new, pro-indigenous laws in the context of broader progressive/populist legislation.

A sympathetic interpretation might argue that the INAI's instrumental use of the law seeks to empower indigenous people by recognising indigenous settlements, thereby allowing them, for instance, to participate politically, make legal demands for land, and receive resources collectively. This is, of course, in line with the INAI's stated objectives and is probably what the functionary I spoke to had in mind when he spoke about 'impressing' the law upon the territory. Nevertheless, this kind of sympathetic reading of the INAI's mission sweeps a host of assumptions and unintended consequences under the rug. After all, where do the ideas that inform the legal framework come from? How is the law actively impressed onto the territory? What territorial reality does the legal framework seek to mould? And how does the territory change as a result of the imposition of this legal framework?

To begin to illustrate the way in which these contradictory and incomplete legal projects work, I will begin by describing one of the most high-profile assemblies that I participated in during my time in Aguararenta. What we will see here is how the different actors invoke the fiction of legal personhood as a means through which to both demand the state's mediation while also drawing boundaries and responsibilities. Unexpectedly, it is the Guaraní leaders who demand more involvement from the state and the functionaries who attempt to distance themselves, albeit in a profoundly paradoxical way.

'HEALING THE INSTITUTION'

By Aguararenta's rather anaemic standards, the meeting I am about to describe was a notable affair. An impressive array of political authorities had shown up, including the mayor of Aguaray, the provincial secretary of state, a representative of the Province's General Inspection of Legal Persons office (*Inspección General de Personería Jurídica*) and the head of the municipal office for Native Peoples (*Pueblos Originarios*). The politicians' presence was the direct result of a highway blockade or *piquete* that had taken place a week earlier after Diego's faction protested its inability to depose the incumbent communal 'president', Hernández. Accustomed as they were to having their demands ignored, the arrival of the politicians – and their calibre – had taken the inhabitants of Aguararenta by surprise.

As people curiously peeked through their windows, attempting to make out who the newcomers were, the politicians' shiny 4x4 trucks drove through the settlement and parked beneath the gnarled carob tree that grew in front of the communal assembly hall. I had been inside the hall writing my notes when Diego, the leader of the picketing faction, came in bringing behind him a train of officials. He seemed pleased with the visit as it demonstrated his ability to draw the attention of high status politicians and a big grin played on his face as he introduced me to them. Diego hospitably pulled up white plastic chairs for the dignitaries and sent one of his young daughters to ring the school bell that called people to assembly. Slowly, a crowd began to arrive. All in all, roughly sixty adults came to the meeting. The women in attendance sat close together on chairs facing the authorities while most of the men, especially the younger ones, stood outside and aloofly leaned in through the windows to hear the proceedings. The audience all belonged to Diego's faction.

Diego situated himself at a table to one side of the dignitaries, purposefully going through the documents that he kept neatly arranged in a folder. After a satisfactory number of people had arrived, he proceeded to open the meeting. Nervously, he began by explaining to the authorities that, as an authentic indigenous community, Aguararenta depended on agriculture and access to land for its survival. However, he explained, in order to obtain land, the people needed to understand the laws. Moving closer to the crux of the issue, Diego pointed out that the co-existence of 'two legal personalities' (*dos personerías*) was the root cause of Aguararenta's conflict. Gaining confidence, he told the authorities that his *comisión* held the legal personhood granted by the province but that his rival, Rogelio Hernández, held the national legal personhood.

Moreover, he pointed out that the current conflict between the two factions prevented the community from progressing on its land claims. Diego then illustrated the negative consequences of internal division upon the community's material wellbeing. The people, he explained, were in a state of confusion (*confundidos*) and ignorance (*no sabían*). 'Every time we try to bring down a project (*bajar un proyecto*), *ese*, that one, [referring to his political rival Rogelio Hernández] comes from behind and destroys it.' To make matters worse, he detailed how the statute under Hernández's legal personhood made him *cacique* for life. Throughout, Diego punctuated his speech by taking papers from his folder and showing them to the dignitaries as though to prove the points he was making.

Several points from Diego's intervention are worth highlighting. Firstly, he decided to open the meeting by talking about land and agriculture. While, as we have seen (Chapter 4), there is a general lack of interest in actually using land for agricultural production, leaders like Diego are very careful to tap into what they feel *criollo* politicians expect of an indigenous community: that is, that it ought to be concerned with land, its ownership and its use. This may be related to the fact that the only article that mentions indigenous people in the national constitution practically defines indigeneity in terms of a relationship to the land,[23] as does international legislation. In this sense, Diego was demonstrating an awareness of the multicultural project that only recognises 'the permitted Indian' (Hale and Millaman 2005). In other words, even though Diego himself had very little interest in agriculture, he felt that he was under pressure to establish himself as an authentic, representative of Guaraní-ness by asserting the importance of land and agriculture as a way of life. In this way, the issues of unemployment and dependency, so crucial and pressing in day-to-day life remained unspoken in favour of the apparent desirability of autarkic agricultural productivity.

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[23] Article 75, Section 17 of the Argentine constitution states the government's intention to "Recognise the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Argentina's indigenous people. Guarantee respect for their identity and their right to a bilingual and intercultural education; recognise the legal personhood of their communities, and communitarian possession and property of the lands they traditionally occupy: and regulate the delivery of other lands that are apt and sufficient for human development; these lands will be unalienable, non-transferable nor will they be susceptible to taxation or embargoes. Ensure their participation in the management of their natural resources and other interests that may affect them. The provinces may exercise these attributions concurrently."

On a different level, Diego expressed the notion that corporate legal personhood is something that an individual can have. Technically, 'having' the legal personhood documents means being in possession of the official certificate that states that one is the 'official' authority of the community. Acquiring these certificates is a tedious bureaucratic process and involves writing letters, making phone calls and travelling to the provincial or even national capital. Needless to say, becoming the certified leader is a painstaking and financially costly endeavour. In any case, Diego's rival Rogelio *possessed* the national legal personhood and his faction was incapable of taking it away from away from Rogelio. In part, this was because legal personhood itself was often seen to be encapsulated within documents, hence the expression 'having the papers of the [legal] personhood' (*tener los papeles de la personería*). The option of physically wresting the documents from a rival was never considered; instead, the documents needed to be elicited, 'brought down', from external bureaucracies and politicians. This, as we will see below, requires a bureaucratic performance that recreates the corporate 'will' of the community on paper. Finally, Diego demonstrated how physically having the required paperwork was indispensable for a leader to successfully help his community by 'bringing down' resources. This is, as suggested above, perhaps the crucial function that leaders perform. The inability to get rid of a leader by any means, other than through legal and bureaucratic paperwork, potentially invests a leader with considerable power, as demonstrated by Hernández's legally instituted claim to a life-long investiture as cacique. On top of this the coexistence of two simultaneous yet conflicting levels of legal personhood (the national and the provincial) already throws into relief the contradicting ways in which this legal project of recognition works.

Once Diego had finished speaking, the secretary of state said a few words. It soon became evident that, as a state employee and politician, his interpretation of the 'problem' being discussed in the meeting was different from Diego's. Where Diego had asked for arbitration and involvement from the state, the politician sought to establish distance between the government and the settlement. His first point reflected the fact that the government's main concern was not with the internal struggle of Aguararenta, but rather with a more general problem of governance. He therefore explained that the provincial government emphatically opposed the use of road blocks as a political strategy. He insisted that roadblocks were unnecessary because all government functionaries could be reached through a simple phone call. Here, the man sitting next to me scoffed, 'yes, but they only ever come when we block the highway.' The secretary of state went on to argue that the provincial government's main concern was with the 'institutional health' of the communities. He explained that the province cannot dictate the content of the community's statute. In support of this argument, the representative of the Legal Persons Registry explained that the statutes may include any articles the community wants it to and that they ought to be informed by 'cultural values'. To illustrate his point, he gave the example of the *'cacique'* and pointed out that this is a 'cultural' role that lies outside of the community's legal personhood. He stated that while a cacique's position may be held for life – given the 'cultural' norms of a community - the members of a governing council are legally obliged to run for re-election at periodic intervals. The secretary of state further stressed that the government cannot decide who the governing council should

be because the government has no jurisdiction over the communities themselves as they are private organizations. However, he pointed out that the provincial government is interested in 'clarifying' (*aclarar*) the community's internal structure and healing it as an institution (*sanear la institución*) by ensuring that there are no duplications of legal personhood.

One of the final points made by the politicians concerned not only the relationship between the legal and the cultural but also the importance of documents in establishing authority over the community. Thus, the head of the municipal Office of Indigenous Affairs – himself the president of a neighbouring Guaraní community – explained that, although in his community there were three *caciques* who had tried to sabotage his projects, he had been able to render his rivals powerless by obtaining the required documentation that confirmed him as the community's *presidente*. This statement captured the extent to which documents were essential to Guaraní politics since, through control over the pertinent documents, a leader could render his rivals powerless.

Several of the comments made by these functionaries demonstrate the ways in which legal personhood effectively renders the internal arrangements of the community 'opaque' (Riles 2011: 35) to external agents. For instance, the repetitive allusion to cultural norms suggests that the state cannot get involved in the community's affairs. In Riles' terms, we may argue that the state 'looks no further' and 'delegates' the internal organisation of indigenous communities to its own members. Thus the state ostensibly chooses not to become involved in the organization of indigenous communities, which is deemed to be an internal affair. Nevertheless, the actual practice of politics on the ground intermittently increases and decreases the opacity of the community as legal person. The ambivalence of these claims shows the existing strain between the 'cultural' and 'private' nature of the community, on the one hand, and its 'legal' and 'public' status, on the other. As the politician's distinction between culture and law during the meeting demonstrated, the ambiguity between delegation and control is built into the idea of the legal person, and the extent to which the state has in fact fully delegated its internal management to the community needs to be questioned. The authorities' position was therefore ambivalent. On the one hand, they invoked the corporate veil by arguing that communities are private organisations that should solve their own internal affairs. On the other, they wanted to 'heal the institution' as a way of rendering it legible to the state.

In some senses, the secretary of state's words reveal a different set of concerns from those that Diego had enlisted. However, we might say that both were concerned with issues of governance. Duplicate legal personalities and the presence of multiple leaders certainly complicate the state's ability to relate with the community as corporate body. Furthermore, it seems clear that, from the perspective of the secretary of state, a 'healthy' community is one where representation is effectively monopolised. From a Guaraní leader's perspective an unhealthy institution similarly undermines his authority and threatens his ability to 'progress'. In this sense both the state and community leaders seem to hold confluent interests in the resolution of communal factionalism. Indeed, as we saw, Guaraní leaders themselves are constantly

attempting to get the state involved in their internal management. In a sense, people actively try to 'lift the corporate veil' of the community so that the state can become involved. Partially, this tactic is born from the sense of futility that people often feel with regards to internal conflict, but it is also one of the ways through which leaders can further their 'personal ambitions' most forcefully while side-stepping crippling *divisionismo*.

REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL ALIENATION

Here it is worth returning to the issue of corporate legal personhood to see how Indigenous Communities, as legal creatures, are constructed. This idealised conception of the indigenous community is illustrated in the statutes that are meant to structure the communities I worked with. These documents are legally required and specifically delineate the nature and form of indigenous political communities. Most communities are registered as legal persons under both national and provincial legislation, which means that communities have two separate legal personalities and two corresponding sets of statutes[24]. While the statutes of different communities differ slightly, the ones I was able to see were broadly similar and contained analogous descriptions of how a community ought to work, giving a sense of the kind of autonomous economy that is often presumed to be appropriate for indigenous populations. These objectives are phrased in a general way as having to do with the community's 'development', with the defence of the right to land and the management of natural resources at their heart. In another sense, the statutes also defend the principle of cultural autonomy by promulgating intercultural education and stating the value of customs and traditions. These objectives are in tune with the idealised tenor of both national and international legislation and they also echo popular representations of indigeneity as intrinsically tied to the land and to the natural environment. Thus, while the conferral of corporate legal personhood entails the state's recognition of indigenous rights to cultural difference and self-determination, it also reifies the nature of sociality that can take place within communities.

However, legal personhood does not merely define the internal nature of the community. In fact, 'when the law states that the corporation is a person (…) it is simply outlining a relationship among legal orders' (Riles 2011: 35). In other words, the conferral of legal personhood actively establishes a relationship between two reified entities, the state and the community. For Guaraní communities, the legally defined relationship between state and community is reduced to one of representation. The act of representation is meant to be carried out by a governing council (*comisión*) 'in accordance with the community's cultural and organizational norms' (*de acuerdo a sus pautas culturales y de organización*). At the head of the community council we find the *mburuvicha* (chief) and *ñeerenduka* (spokesperson) who make up what we might call the 'executive branch' of the council. The statutes clearly state that the chief and spokesperson are 'the sole representatives of the community before official and private organisms' (Article 13).

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[24] Proposed reforms intend to limit the recognition of Indigenous Communities as legal persons to the national level.

In order to become legitimate representatives, Guaraní leaders are expected to receive the community's popular support. In this vein, the statutes presuppose that leaders will be legitimated by a certain kind of public sphere, one that is best, and most legitimately, embodied in the assembly. That being said, the statutes present what can only be described as a schematic vision of what the assembly must look like and how it must operate: 'the assembly is the supreme organism where the most important issues that face the community are resolved definitively.'[25] The 'supreme' nature of the assembly presumes a public assembly where free deliberation should foster the creation of consensus and mutual understanding. For the case of Aguararenta, this is made explicit in section (b) of article 17 that states that 'members of the community above the age of 18 with apt mental faculties for taking decisions on their own (…) will have a valid voice and vote (*voz y voto válido*) in the assembly'. Adult community members are therefore expected to participate in assemblies by voicing their opinions and casting their votes; always, the statutes are quick to stress, in accordance with the 'cultural and organizational norms' of the community.

The idea of representation through popular support as it is presented in community statutes is often linked with democracy, liberty and justice (Pitkin 1967). However, it is an inherently paradoxical idea (Runciman 2007). The Roman notion of representation implied 'the literal bringing into presence of something previously absent, or the embodiment of an abstraction in an object' and it was not used to describe political institutions or the act of a person acting in lieu of another (Pitkin 1967: 3). It is only in its more modern usage that representation has come to designate the act of being 'made present in some sense while not being present literally or fully in fact' (153). Drawing on a similar insight, Bourdieu argues that within institutions 'isolated agents (…) cannot constitute themselves as a group (…) unless they dispossess themselves and hand over their power to a political apparatus' (Bourdieu 1991: 249). A community representative is therefore in a 'metonymic relation with the group; as part of the group, he functions as a sign replacing the group as a whole' (ibid). Thus, we might say that through a legitimating assembly the representative comes to constitute 'the pure serial diversity of separate individuals into a moral person, (…) a *corporatio*, a constituted body' (Bourdieu 1991: 248-249). In other words, representational politics may potentially create an environment where groups of people are, in Bourdieu's terms, 'politically alienated' (ibid).

As a result, the representative empowered by the group becomes 'the group incarnate' (Bourdieu 1991: 248). Moreover, since the leader's authority stems from his ability to relate to the state as indigenous representative, it also means that the community is imagined as the ultimate source of power: 'The authorized spokesperson is only able to use words to act on other agents (…) because his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him and of which he is the *authorized representative*' (Bourdieu 1991: 109 – 111, emphasis in the original).

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[25] In the statutes of Guaraní communities in Bolivia communal assemblies are similarly considered to have 'the final word on all decisions' (Combès 2005: 28)

On the ground, however, this kind of absolute form of political alienation does not take place. How does a leader actually go about materialising the alienated authority vested in him? If communities are imagined as sources of authority, where does authority actually come from? Here the realities of everyday *divisionismo* and the fact that overbearing leaders are resisted come into play. In order, to monopolise representation leaders must find ways of recreating a collective will in a way that resonates with the requirements of the law and the state. In the next section, I argue that this is achieved through the production of documents.

THE BUREAUCRATIC MEANS OF PRODUCTION

I have argued that, because of the requirement to register as legal persons, the internal relations of communities are reimagined as the source of political authority. In this section, I argue that this has an impact upon the way in which people engage with external entities, including the state and corporations. Among the Guaraní, as for so many people throughout the world, documents have become central to these engagements. Even as the document itself has become a 'source of action' (Hull 2008: 35) it also bears the marks of 'asymmetrical interactions' (Allard 2012) and embodies the 'interpretive labour' (Graeber 2006) that subalterns perform in their engagements with bureaucracy, the state and capitalist corporations. In this section, I therefore look at how leaders enact the legal personhood of their communities through the medium of documents. In particular, I pay attention to the petitions and minutes that leaders produce in order to harness the potential of the institution. In doing so, I show how indigenous leaders use documents to create the illusion of 'corporate agency' as a way of rendering their engagements with external entities more productive. I end the section by discussing how this strategy further entrenches the nature of the *comunidad* as institution.

While most people in Guaraní communities can read and write basic Spanish, not everyone is expected to write politically valuable documents like meetings minutes or petitions. Writing this kind of document is a specific prerogative and responsibility of the leader, and people express their admiration for this skill when they observe that a leader is 'good at doing papers' (*bueno haciendo papeles*). It is indicative of the particular skills leaders are expected to have that followers ask leaders to write and sign petitionary notes for both collective and individual demands. The self-inking stamps that leaders employ with a certain flourish and sense of self-importance seem to objectify their mastery of the penmanship required for effective political authority.

That being said, people often delegated note-writing tasks to me although I had never written these kinds of notes. This was because, as one cacique told me, I had 'experience'. The assumption that I was 'good at doing papers' stemmed from the fact that I was a '*criollo*' and therefore expected to be highly literate. This suggests that people who are able to write well are seen as potential leaders because they master what is seen as a somewhat foreign skill, one achieved primarily through extensive contact with powerful

criollos.[26] Indeed, when asked point blank what the difference between a Guaraní and a *criollo* was, many of my informants suggested the importance of education as a contributor towards ethnic boundaries. One older man, for instance, told me that 'whites are more intelligent, more cunning. They are more educated, they have the alphabet and the laws. Aborigines[27] are slower, they don't understand' (*Los blancos son más inteligentes, más pícaros. Tienen más educación, tienen el alfabeto y las leyes. Los aborígenes son más quedados, no entienden*).

Education and writing are therefore seen as an area of technical competency that criollos are believed to have mastered, much more so than their indigenous counterparts. The ability to write is a politically valuable skill in as much as the production and exchange of written documents is central to community-level politics. Not unlike the mastery of the Spanish language was for earlier Guaraní leaders, the ability to write documents - that are effective in the sense of being capable of eliciting results and behaviours from politicians, bureaucrats, patrons or employees - is essential to a leader's claim to authority. Santos-Granero has argued that power in Amerindian contexts is the result of control over the 'mystical means of reproduction', by which he means control over the kinds of ritual knowledge that allow for a political body's social production and reproduction. To paraphrase Santos-Granero (1993), who himself paraphrases Marx, we might say that a leader's ability to write effective documents implies his control over the 'bureaucratic means of production.' But what goes into the documents that leaders produce and what makes them efficacious?

At one point during my fieldwork, a nascent inter-communal association of Guaraní communities (*Agrupación de Comunidades Indígenas del Departamento San Martín*) circulated a template for a petitionary note among its allied communities. This association was attempting to depose the current delegates at the Indigenous Participation Council (CPI)[28] and ostensibly trying to replace them with delegates from its own ranks. The petitionary note was addressed to the President of the INAI and was meant to be a denunciation (*denuncia*) of the current delegates who were accused of 'dividing the communities, failing to acknowledge (*desconociendo*) the authorities that were traditionally elected by general assembly'. As a result of this state of affairs the current office holders were accused of 'provoking malaise, uncertainty and erosive infighting that do not contribute to the collective growth (*provocando malestar, incertidumbre e internas desgastantes que no aportan al crecimiento colectivo*).

In this note we see the way in which leaders, in this case of an inter-communal association, invoke the power of the legitimating assembly and the desire for unity and 'collective growth' as a way of enhancing the potency of their documentary agency. Tellingly, the leaders of the association did not want their

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[26] This is not unlike the way people spoke about how healers and flute players achieved the ability to speak healing words or play their instrument through dreams in which entities, often forest animals, taught them.

[27] Throughout the region, criollos use the word "aborigine" to refer any indigenous population. The Guaraní generally use it to refer to Wichi people.

[28] The CPI is supposed to be a consultative body internal to the INAI. It is composed of elected delegates from the different ethnic groups in the country. Only legally recognised community leaders are allowed to cast a vote in the name of their community – the community's vote is meant to be decided by popular assembly.

move to look like an individual initiative. Instead, by having several community leaders produce copies of the same note, they attempted to demonstrate to the state authorities that this was a widespread and 'polygraphic' (Fraenkel 2006) demand. At the same time, the petition invoked the same kind of language and concepts that are encapsulated within community statutes and indigenous legislation. These strategies are similar to the ones that are being used at the local level when leaders exhort followers to speak up so that they might demonstrate a collective voice – like the leader that confronted the witch, these documents were meant to be like rain clouds produced by a group of individual smokers.

The surprising thing about the manipulation of these documents is that these notes were assumed to have an 'automatic efficacy' (Allard 2012: 235). Thus, after a meeting a cacique confidently claimed that 'the document is done, so they [functionaries] must come [to the community]' (*Ya está el papel, asi que tienen que venir*). As another leader put it, 'today [projects] are not by word anymore, but by document. Sometimes we don't have the words, but there are notes (*notas*) and letters that must work, *sí o sí*, yes or yes. That's what the *ingeniero* told me, 'write it like this and they have to give you [what you ask for], *sí o sí*.' While a document is necessary for the political act of elicitation, it may not be sufficient. Thus when a document proved not to be efficacious it was reasoned that a rival faction must have submitted contradictory papers, that the documents themselves were not formatted correctly or, most often, that supplementary documentation was missing. However, I would suggest that the reason why leaders felt that their documents had such 'automatic efficacy' was not because of any mystical qualities attributed to the document. Rather, leaders had undertaken the 'interpretative labour' (Graeber 2006) that the legal frame required and concluded that they were in fact conforming to the requirements of bureaucracy by invoking the institutional traits and ideals that made up the community as corporate person. In other words they are subscribing to the legalese included in community statutes and conforming to the language of multiculturalism, because it is felt that doing so will elicit the desired results.

In every Guaraní community I visited, the *libro de actas* (minutes book) was a necessary accoutrement of power, regardless of whether or not the commission at hand was legally recognised as legitimate. In meeting minutes, leaders were attempting to express themselves legitimately in order to participate in the authority of the institution. To give an example, in the meeting I described above, after giving his speech and while listening to the politicians express their views, Diego was busy summarising the proceedings in his meeting minutes book. In writing these minutes, Diego was not merely describing the meeting events. He wrote, for instance, that 'the representative of the Legal Persons office alludes to the organization of a meeting to unify statutes, *which will give as a result the approval by assembly of the new commission*.' At no point in the meeting did any of the politicians assure Diego that they were unequivocally granting him their support or approving his claim to authority. In another passage, Diego ascertains that 'in synthesis, a general assembly in our community is fixed for the first week of February of this year. Beforehand the national and provincial authorities, as well as those of the Indigenous People's Council (CPI) and Provincial Institute of Indigenous Peoples (IPPIS) and the people in general are committed to participate

in the assembly.' While Diego did in fact call up the INAI to schedule a meeting in February, the IPPIS and CPI had never committed to a meeting. Additionally, Diego's exposure to politicians meant that he knew how fickle these promises actually were. In fact, it was only nine months after this meeting that Aguararenta held elections with the oversight of INAI representatives. Even then, the issue of dual legal personalities was not resolved. Considering that this specific conflict had begun in 2008, the certainty that Diego expressed in his minutes can only be said to have jarred with the realities of actually engaging with politicians and bureaucracies.

Other meeting minutes capture a similar tendency to idealise the community. On paper, Aguararenta becomes a cohesive unit. Thus the first minutes that Diego wrote after the road block that set off his conflict with Hernández in 2008 claim that the community in its entirety attended the assembly, and that 'after coherent opinions from all those who live in this place a consensus is reached'. The list of signatories under the minutes proves, however, that only those people who supported Diego had actually attended the assembly. Nevertheless, the picture that emerges from reading Diego's minutes book is that of a united community that holds healthy debates in large assemblies. This view is in accordance with the vision set out in the community's statutes. These examples of meeting minutes suggest that the minutes were written for an external audience. Internally, however, leaders were not keen on sharing their minutes book with other members of the community and people were often surprised that I was interested in reading through them. That being said, it is not clear who their external audience might actually be. The fact that the minutes are written in impressively formal and formulaic language hints at the fact that these documents are essentially a bureaucratic performance. The content of the minutes shows that they are a performance of cohesion and unity - a desirable and legally valuable state of being - that glosses over the internal factionalism inherent to the communities.

Judging by their process of production, the minutes are also a performance of the author's command over the politically valuable technique of document production. Usually the minutes were written by the leader himself or by a trusted follower during the course of a meeting. Unlike other documents, like petitionary notes, the minutes are not generally read out loud, but leaders often explicitly insisted that the attendees at a meeting make sure to sign before they left. Even so, many attendees deliberately chose not to sign. As far as I could tell people were more likely to sign minutes after meetings where the promises of obtaining goods or jobs seemed most likely to materialise. Similarly, during big moments of crisis, attendees would make sure to sign. Signing seems to be seen as an explicit endorsement and also as a way for followers to ensure that they are kept in mind when goods are redistributed. From the perspective of leaders, however, maximising the numbers of signatories helps to render their legitimacy plainly visible. As we have seen, leaders often beseech their followers to speak up at meetings where politicians are present so that the politicians can see that discontents or petitions are held collectively and are not simply the initiative of an individual leader.

Presenting the community as a cohesive unit had practical and political implications that in turn legitimated the leader. Thus, when I interviewed a representative of the oil company that was in constant negotiations with Aguararenta, I was told that 90% of Aguararenta's population backed Diego and that that was why the company had decided to work closely with Diego rather than his rival. While I am positive that Diego was not even close to marshalling that kind of support, it is noteworthy that in creating this fiction he had managed to gain a monopoly over negotiations with the oil company. It is, of course, also highly likely that the company was happy to sustain this fiction as long as it preferred dealing with Diego rather than his rival. In any case, Diego's recognition had practical implications as it meant that the company handed all donations and job positions to Diego's council, in turn bolstering his own internal power and legitimacy. This relationship with the oil company further evidences the disjunctures created by the idea of indigenous communities as corporate persons. In defending the company's relationship with Diego, the company representative was following the logic set out in the statute whereby the *mburuvicha* and *ñeerenduka* are the only people allowed to negotiate with external actors. However, this relationship also subverted that very same statute by acknowledging the authority of a leader who was not yet in possession of the required documents. In a way that is reminiscent but completely different from the kinds of tactics that 19th century brokering leaders like Mandeponay employed, the success of the political leader therefore hinges upon his inventiveness and ability to marshal the ideal of the cohesive community-as-corporate-legal-person through the media of writing.

Documents are also useful for the management of internal politics. In one case, Diego had the members of an Unemployed Workers Centre sign a 'letter of support' (*aval*) certifying that the people of the community backed the elected members of the Centre – which included the leader – as the only members of the community responsible for finding jobs for the unemployed. However, there were only a handful of people at the meeting, so, in order to grant the letter full communal support, Diego used the community stamp in which the name and legal personhood number of the community was included. Diego argued that, this way, potential employers would offer less resistance and be dissuaded from taking legal action against any of the community members over unlawful demands. Linking the Unemployed Workers Centre to the community council was a clever move that was intended to strengthen the council's monopoly over the acquisition of politically valuable jobs. As a final touch, internal rules for the Centre were drafted; these included an obligation to keep records of attendance at meetings, a stipulation that 70% of employment positions would be distributed by lottery, while 30% would be granted to the most disadvantaged individuals (at another time Diego told me that he thought 30% should be reserved for the most faithful supporters). Contributions of between one hundred pesos and fifty pesos would be demanded from each person who received a job. This shows that Guaraní leaders have realised that the document, as a bureaucratic format, is extremely malleable. Or at least that it can be rather 'opaque' (Allard 2012) and therefore useful to their own purposes.

It is precisely because of their malleability and opacity that documents have become the quintessential medium for the political agency of community leaders. If the statutes discussed earlier represent a reification of the community that rests uncomfortably with the actual political experience of the settlement, the documents discussed in this section show how political leaders engage with the idea of the community-as-legal-person through their own writing. I therefore suggest that we look at the content and production of meeting minutes and petitionary notes as particular kinds of 'writing acts' (Fraenkel 2007; Allard 2012). As writing acts, the 'truth value' (Austin 1962) of the documents I have presented is ambiguous. Moreover, I would argue that the documents were never intended as a means of faithfully recording events. Instead, the documents, are a politically valuable form of action that is of central importance to Guaraní leadership because it allows them to elicit responses from external entities. In other words, and to continue within Austin's framework, the importance of documents as acts lies in their perlocutionary nature (Austin 1962). This is because, while documents are useful for the elicitation of politically valuable goods (such as those petitioned through notes), they are, most importantly, crucial for the creation of the community as institution and instrumental to the creation of the relations of authority that the institution requires.

The best way to understand the fact that documents are intrinsic to the creation of the community-as-institution is to pay attention to the conditions under which documents are produced. As I have previously pointed out, documents are rarely produced in accordance with the dictates of a popular legitimating assembly, and unanimity is practically non-existent. Nevertheless, leaders invoke the assembly, or claim the backing of the entire community. While these conditions do not exist, leaders must somehow create them so that their documents become effective. If the document *is* successful it simultaneously confirms the legitimacy of the document and of its producer. In other words, documents as writing acts retroactively achieve the 'felicitous conditions' required for their effectiveness (Austin 1962). That is, once the document is successful, its claims to legitimacy are borne out. For example, if a leader sends a document claiming that his community's assembly has convened in full to request the presence of INAI authorities and the authorities show up a few days later, then that leader will have successfully legitimated his position in the face of both political functionaries and followers, even if only a handful of people had actually showed up at the original assembly. Thus, while a leader's documentary agency is individual it has the simultaneous effect of creating a collective agent for the purposes of inter-institutional relations; a collective agent that, literally, papers over internal conflict. The implication here is that the legal corporate personhood of the community can only be enacted in documentary form.

However, it cannot be ignored that, if a community wishes to enjoy legal rights or receive benefits, the state legally requires it to act as corporate person. This means that the corporate agency of the community ultimately comes about as a result of a highly unequal relation between indigenous people and the state. The resulting bureaucratisation of indigenous politics requires that leaders learn to write

effective documents and these documents, in turn, become effective thanks to the 'interpretive labour' (Graeber 2012) that leaders put into them.

In sum, through documents, Guaraní leaders wield the corporate agency of their communities in order to elicit responses from the state or corporations. However, for these documents to be successful, they must demonstrate their accordance with the legal frameworks that are meant to structure indigenous life. This means that documents are perlocutionary in the sense that they elicit the legitimation of the community as institution. As a result, leaders who are bureaucratically skilled are also legitimated. As Bourdieu puts it, 'access to the legitimate instruments of expression, and therefore the participation in the authority of the institution, (…) makes all the difference' (1991: 109). However, where Bourdieu's account posits an absolute act of representation on the leader's behalf, the Guaraní case shows how that ability to represent others is constantly being challenged and chipped away.

RELEVAMIENTO – CONTRADICTORY INSTITUTIONALISATION

It was precisely during my return visit in 2015, that the INAI began the next stage of institutionalisation in Aguararenta. As ever, the process filled the inhabitants of Aguararenta with uncertainty. Diego, who by then possessed all of the documentation that legitimated him as the settlement's rightful authority, had heard rumours that the INAI *técnicos* were coming to perform a *relevamiento territorial* or territorial survey. In case they came, a fellow leader from a neighbouring community had encouraged him to make his demands as expansive as possible, 'don't do like those *barrios* in Tartagal who only make demands for small lots of land, you've got to ask for 4000 hectares!' Diego, however, was cautious. Similar rumours about the imminent arrival of state functionaries had circulated before. Taking manners into his own hands, he rang up a contact at the INAI offices only to be told that they had no knowledge of whether surveys were in fact being conducted. To make matters worse, they informed him that he should be careful because the provincial authorities were conducting surveys without the INAI's approval. Diego let out a weary sigh, 'you see why I always have to be *despierto*, awake?'

In the face of such uncertainty, Diego decided it was best to be ready and began preparing a series of documents that he'd heard were required for the INAI survey. To this effect he enlisted my help to draw out a map of the settlement on a computer that had been donated by an NGO. Painstakingly, we drew out squares for the houses and traced the lines of the main roads and paths in the settlement. As we sat in the stuffy hall, Eliseo, whose alliance with Diego was beginning to weaken, barged in asking whether Diego was in possession of a number of documents – he too was preparing for the arrival of the INAI technicians. When Eliseo left, Diego turned to me, 'he never walks with me…and then he thinks papers are done in just a little while! He doesn't understand anything.' For his part, Eliseo later confided that Diego did not take care of him even though he knew that he suffered from high blood pressure. More importantly, he accused Diego of not letting him 'participate' (*participar*).

The next morning the INAI's Operative Technical Team (*Equipo Técnico Operativo* or ETO) drove up in a pair of new 4x4s. Weary and overworked, the all-*criollo* ETO was composed of a lawyer, a geographer, and a social psychologist. They were accompanied by a Guaraní representative of the CPI and his son who had been employed to help with the process of drawing up a map of the territory through the use of GPS devices. An assembly was called and the ETO was given the opportunity to explain the purpose of its visit.

The *técnicos* began by invoking the representational logic of the corporate person and explained that 'our work must be approved and ratified (*avalado*) by the entire community.' Further, they clarified that 'the community is the one who gives the orders through the *cacique* (*la comunidad es la que manda a través del cacique*).' On the following day, they explained, a group of them would carry out a survey of Aguararenta's houses while the others would venture out into the forest to mark the usual places where the people of the settlement grew crops, hunted, gathered, and logged. The purpose was to provide a broad picture of the territory that the people of Aguararenta employed. They made no promises regarding the actual delivery of land titles, but argued that the fruits of their labour – a series of maps and documents – would provide a tool for the community if it ever made the decision to begin legal proceedings to demand territory.
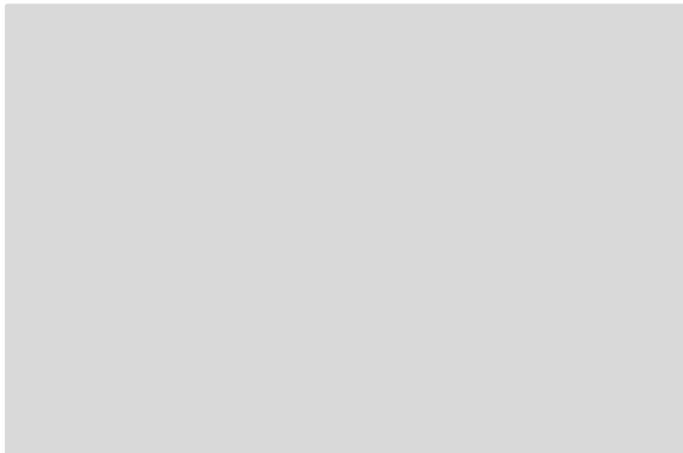
Figure 14. The khaki-clad members of the INAI's ETO question a local regarding the use of an agricultural field during the relevamiento *of Aguararenta*

As promised, the technicians returned the next day - this time in full khaki forest gear. While Eliseo and a close group of kin waited anxiously at the assembly hall, Diego and his brothers sat at home, drinking wine. They were, in their own words, 'gearing up for the forest'. Tensions between the two leaders were high and Eliseo feared that Diego's arrogant nonchalance would jeopardise the settlement's ability to gain a land title. Diego for his part seemed unwilling to be told what to do and was doing his utmost to demonstrate his autonomy. The CPI representative and his son were given the task of charting out the forest in the company of Diego, three of his brothers, Eliseo and a few other men who all clambered onto a pickup truck, armed with shotguns. The lawyer, geographer, and psychologist chose to take on the less arduous task of charting the settled area of the community. Lidia, the only female member of the Communal Commision, accompanied them and asked me to tag along. Over the course of a blistering hot day we walked throughout the entire settlement. At each house, the geographer asked whether its inhabitants were 'communitarian' or '*criollo*' and clicked the appropriate button on his GPS device. This distinction was meant to protect indigenous inhabitants from criollo encroachment. However, it ignored the subtle histories that make up a place like

Aguararenta. Here, the houses that were being marked as *criollo* were the houses of *chaqueños* who had settled on this land at about the same time as the Guaraní. Nonetheless, by being excluded from the 'communitarian' category they were effectively marked as having a less legitimate claim to the land.

In the meantime, the social psychologist took the opportunity to ask how many people lived in the house and what they did for a living. The ETO marked the churches, the school, the first aid building, the assembly hall, and even an NGO sponsored apiary. In between houses, the technicians asked questions about the community, its social customs and its history. We visited the local cemetery where we tried to find evidence of old burial grounds. The purpose was to begin to provide a sense of how long the community had inhabited this particular territory and to give a sense of the kind of socio-economic activities in which its inhabitants were involved. The *técnicos* asked questions about crops and livestock, about local celebrations, and stories form the past. Curious about the political structure of Aguararenta, they asked Lidia whether the chieftainship was a hereditary position. In response, she answered, that 'that's what the statutes say'.

This briefest of exchanges is illuminating in as much as it sheds light on two converging yet contradictory logics on 'authorized culture' (Bessire 2014). Throughout the survey process, the technicians were attempting to aid the people of Aguararenta by providing them with a tool that would eventually help them gain full legal multicultural recognition. To do so, they interrogated an indigenous inhabitant of the settlement in an effort to gain insight into the true, 'authentic culture' of the place. In so doing, they quite often managed to erase the lived history of the settlement by creating a strong division between '*criollos*' and 'communitarians'. At another level, the exchange regarding the hereditary nature of the chieftainship perfectly captures the extent to which the legal logic of the Indigenous Community interacts with attempts at multicultural recognition. While the ETO sought an 'authentic' cultural response regarding the settlement's political culture, Lidia, presumably having performed some interpretative labour of her own, responded by invoking the very statutes on which the corporate institution of the Indigenous Community was built.

It would be mistaken, however, to assume that this process was a monolithic imposition by the state. Upon further questioning, the ETO members explained that the INAI, the CPI and the provincial government of Salta, simultaneously financed the *relevamientos* under the umbrella of the National Ministry of Human Rights. One technician explained that the provincial government ultimately had the upper hand because it was the main funder of the surveys, but that the CPI, which had its own budget, also pushed to prioritise the survey of certain communities over others. Here again it is worth recalling the mixed and cautionary messages that Diego received over the phone when he spoke to INAI offices in Buenos Aires.

Although my relatively bounded fieldwork methodology did not allow me to explore these institutional intricacies much further, this data suggests that we need to be attentive to the various competing logics

that are at play in contexts where the law becomes 'impressed' upon territories. It is tempting to see the state as a coherent Leviathan, one that imposes its will upon an unwitting territory. By contrast, the process of *relevamiento* I describe here sheds light on the various strategies and motivations behind the various actors that are involved in the process of institutionalisation. However, beyond the political intricacies involved, the process itself is concerned with the objectification of Indigenous Communities as particular social forms. As such, communities are imagined as being characterised by certain kinds of economic activities, and even particular kinds of people with specific 'permitted' histories. On the one hand, the documentation and cartographic representation of this data becomes 'evidence' meant to enhance the Indigenous Community's (future) juridical potency. On the other, it is also a technique through which the historical experiences and social specificities of communities are flattened in accordance with pre-existing models of what indigenous settlements ought to be like. Put differently, state functionaries, in spite of their competing and contradictory political agendas, are also involved in a bureaucratic means of production of their own. In time, these bureaucratic artifacts are likely to wield significant power not least because they will stand as seemingly coherent documents, produced by authorised technicians, from which competing political agendas will be erased.

CONCLUSION: 'IMPRESSING' MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which legal frameworks are 'impressed' upon territories in order to create new kinds of communities. Through various competing processes of documentary production the process of impression reifies political arrangements and creates a space for political alienation. I have also argued that state bureaucrats and Guaraní leaders have converging interests in strengthening the institutional nature of Indigenous Communities and suggested that documents are central to the enactment of corporate agency. The way in which leaders produce documents lends insight into the way in which leaders use the legal fiction of the community as a way of strengthening their own position. Similarly, the state-sponsored production of documents is also a potent form of objectification where social arrangements are rendered more or less visible depending on their affinity with the state's a priori definition of the Indigenous Community. In this sense, the documents that leaders produce allow them to achieve a state of being united (*ser unidos*) that is more permanent than those that might emerge in transient spaces of appearance such as road blocks or meetings. Moreover, it is the way in which the statements contained within documents are presumed to be durable that makes them efficacious tools for engaging with the state. As Walker recently argued for the case of Perú's Urarina, the law 'necessarily concentrates authority (…) and works toward political centralization' (2015b: 49). However, the Guaraní case is one where the law works toward centralization in contradictory and disjointed ways, and where the process of institutionalisation is furthered by the fact that it is actively rejected.

Although it is a contradictory process sponsored by various different state offices, institutionalisation in Aguararenta marches on. The key thing to point out is that the advances in the process have often come as a direct result of local conflict within Guaraní settlements. This is crucial because, as we saw in the

previous chapter, *divisionismo* itself is essentially a reaction against leaders' accumulation of authority. The state's processes of institutionalisation, on the other hand, create a situation where leaders are able to present themselves as monopolising representation. As instituted leader, the chief is no longer simply 'the effective instrument of his society' (P. Clastres 1987: 209) but becomes an 'authorized representative' (Bourdieu 1991: 111). It is in this sense that the 'community' effectively becomes the source of political power and one that a leader must be able to harness in order to act politically. However, because the 'community' is essentially a legal fiction, documents are the only medium through which corporate agency can be politically enacted. But while this process strengthens leaders, it also fuels resentment against them. As a result, as with Diego, the cycle starts over – a new leader, administratively legitimated as the settlement's sole representative, is faced by mounting discontent and resorts to documents to strengthen his position.

In spite of this, the legal framework is indeed being 'impressed', *plasmado*, upon the territory. My notion of legal impression, however, is perhaps messier and less linear than the one the INAI technician had in mind. In fact, what seems to be happening is that the process of institutionalisation gains momentum through the very contradictions it creates. It is not so much a smooth, homogeneous process being foisted upon a group of people as much as it is a series of stops and starts, each of which brings variously converging and contradictory interests and motivations to the fore. It is precisely because of these disjunctures, that the Guaraní resort to documents. In this sense, the use of documents in the Guaraní reflects a materially-mediated and communicative form of governance (Hull 2003). In these documents the 'individual agency' of leaders seeks to construct 'collective agency' through 'graphic artifacts' (Hull 2003: 288), but unlike the case that Hull describes, however, the effect of the bureaucratic means of production does not simply 'diffuse the agency of individuals' and allow document producers to escape blame (ibid: 290). Instead, the documents become boundary objects that mimic the brokering position of Guaraní leaders: at the level of the government office they seem to have the perlocutionary effect of creating desirable states of collective unity that echo the language used in multicultural jurisprudence and Community statutes, while at the level of the settlement the documents and their efficacy are intrinsically tied to the political agency of their individual producers

Crucially, we have seen that, despite the expectations of many Guaraní, these very documents are being read and acted upon in contradictory ways as different state offices and agencies, each with different sets of goals and priorities, attempt to make sense of the social situations they encounter. At the same time, as we saw with Diego and Eliseo during the *relevamiento*, the ways in which state officials, politicians, and bureaucrats act to 'heal' settlements or even to provide them with tools, ends up providing the basis for further political disjunctures. In sum, processes of multicultural recognition in the Guaraní case demonstrate a contradictory logic of 'impression' which nonetheless succeeds in creating communal institutions in which leaders are administratively recognised as representatives of the collective.

In the next chapter I consider state welfare programmes that constitute an altogether different project of enfranchisement. Specifically, I look at conditional cash transfers where the emphasis is on individualised redistribution rather than collective recognition. Nonetheless, although these state projects have drastically different logics and methods of implementation, we will see that they both contribute to the current form that Guaraní political economy takes.

CHAPTER 7
DEPENDENCY AND THE NEW WELFARE STATE

'…and then I saw Evita in the clouds with trumpets all around. She invited me to play football and I went to get my boots, but, just as she reached out her hand for me, I noticed that my boots were wet and I woke up.'

Don Antonio, in his 80s, was one of the oldest people living in Aguararenta. According to his own estimates, he must have been around five years old when he and his family escaped from Bolivia during the Chaco War. He told me about this particular dream on several occasions. Although one could probably undertake a psychoanalytic exploration of Don Antonio's dream, here I will simply draw attention to its protagonist - the beatific Evita. Evita, of course, is none other than the legendary wife of Argentina's most famous president – Juan Domingo Perón – who has cast a long political shadow over the nation ever since his rise to power in the mid-twentieth century.

Don Antonio himself proclaimed himself to be a staunch Peronist supporter and his dream captures the effect that Evita's charismatic allure had on him. His Peronist allegiance also stemmed from the fact that, in one way or another, the Peronist government had been present during many key moments in his life. It was the Peronists – through the mediation of the Franciscan missionaries - who had brought the functionaries of the Civil Registry to the community and granted the Guaraní their first national IDs. It was the Peronist-backed state oil company, YPF, which paid for and built the first school that people like Antonio had ever attended and it was also thanks to the Peronists that Antonio had been able to perform his military service, an experience he remembered fondly. Not least, Antonio explicitly remembered that Perón was the person responsible for the bonus (*el aguinaldo*) he received while working for a sawmill in his youth.

Don Antonio's fond memories are indicative of the ways in which the state expanded its influence under the aegis of Perón and his followers. Indeed, Peronism's persistent populist influence derived in part from the ways in which it managed to enfranchise previously marginal populations. Many of these Peronist sponsored policies, including ID papers and military service, transformed the life of people like Don Antonio. However, Peronism also brought about new developments in welfare policies that were tied to inclusion within the wage economy. However, as we have seen, the regional economy of the Chaco has oscillated between times of labour surplus and of labour scarcity. As a result, a sizeable portion of the Chaco's population has historically found it hard to gain access to formal work and therefore to welfare benefits. This has always been particularly true for indigenous populations who had a weak presence in local trade unions and were often side-lined from sources of formal labour. As a result, most of the Guaraní I met during the course of my fieldwork had lived at the edge of the Argentine welfare state for most of their lives, at times benefitting from it, but generally surviving without it.

This, however, has begun to change over the last few years. In this chapter, I will explore how, in spite of widespread unemployment, Guaraní families have managed to gain access to new forms of welfare. In particular, I will focus on cash transfer programmes (CTs), which are the most widely available source of income for families today. The Guaraní's contemporary access to cash transfers is in fact illustrative of an economic pattern that is having a transformative effect in various parts of the world. Cash transfer policies originated in Latin America where Mexico's *Programa Oportunidades* and Brazil's massive *Bolsa Familia* blazed the trail for subsequent policies like the PANES in Uruguay or the Argentine programmes I will discuss here. If 'old' welfare systems, like the Peronist programmes, were imagined as a safety net that was financed through contributions made by wage earners, the new welfare programmes are paid out by treasury funds and without reference to previous contributions or employment histories (Ferguson 2015: 15). At most, conditional cash transfer programmes require keeping tabs on school attendance, health check-ups and nutrition (Valencia Lomeli 2008: 476). The logic behind these plans, then, is not to supplant income lost, but to render active those people who have been economically marginalised (Ferguson 2015: 16).

My aim in this chapter is to shed light on the ways in which access to these novel sources of state-sponsored of income have implied a shift in the organisation of household labour relations and also a change in the way that citizens relate to the state. As I will show, the regularity of cash transfer payments over the past years have transformed consumption in Guaraní households – a fact which, as we have seen, is of no little importance to the Guaraní. At the same time, the fact that it is women who collect and expend cash transfer money marks them off as what Zelizer calls a 'special money' (1989). The effect that this has had on women is an ambiguous one: on the one hand their 'managerial' control over cash has increased; but, on the other, their 'discretionary' ability to spend money is still confined within gendered assumptions about the appropriate roles of women and motherhood. This fact is compounded by the kinds of assumptions regarding care and nurture that the state has built into cash transfer policies themselves. Given widespread unemployment, the picture that emerges is one in which Guaraní families increasingly depend upon female kin's access to state benefits for their subsistence. While this dependency was associated with the presidential figure of Cristina Kirchner and acknowledged as desirable during the presidential elections of 2015, it is also received with a certain sense of unease as a kind of undeserved gift that is assumed to have led to a degree of moral laxity among women – and young women in particular.

Through their participation in these new welfare programmes, the Guaraní present a parallel case to those found in other parts of the global south (Ferguson 2015) but also, increasingly, in advanced post industrial economies where 'economic citizenship' (Dickinson 2016) is being redrawn through new distributive mechanisms. While, on the one hand, cash transfer programmes have enfranchised previously marginalised populations, the kinds of demands that these newly enfranchsied citizens can make of the state are also being redrawn. In the Guaraní case, this new form of economic belonging

coincides with the multicultural projects of recognition discussed earlier. Although the two are not necessarily related to each other at the policy level, they seem to articulate in surprising and contradictory ways at the level of the Guaraní settlement: while the institutionalisation of indigenous communities that determines who can 'bring down' (often unavailable) resources fuels *divisionismo*, the receipt of cash transfers, which actually ensures everyday subsistence, does not raise political concern at the local level. In part, this has to do with the fact that individuals collect cash from bureaucratic offices without requiring any form of mediation or collective organising. However, it also has to do with the sexual division of labour in Guaraní settlements and with the ways in which the pursuit of abundance is associated with masculinity. Ultimately, the Guaraní case shows the limits of the new 'politics of distribution' (Ferguson 2015) that CT's implies and questions the extent to which a 'politics of entitlement' (Li 2009) provides an adequate response to the conditions of surplus populations.

FROM MAIZE TO BREAD: THE NEW WELFARE STATE

After the political and economic meltdown that engulfed Argentina in 2001, a neo-Peronist party, under the guidance of Néstor Kirchner and his wife Cristina Fernández, gained influence and occupied the presidency between 2003 and 2015. This new centre-left political force, known as the *Kirchneristas* in reference to their first leader, has often been associated with the so-called 'post-neoliberal turn' in South America, more colourfully known as the 'pink tide'. To cite a recent article: 'Post-neoliberalism is (…) an evolving attempt to develop political economies that are attuned to the social responsibilities of the state whilst remaining responsive to the demands of "positioning" national economies in a rapidly changing global political economy' (Grugel & Riggirozzi 2012: 2). One of the ways in which the *Kirchneristas* catered to demands for a more socially responsible political economy was through the design of new welfare policies, including cash transfer programmes.

Of all the new policies, the one that my informants associated most strongly with the presidential figure of Cristina Fernández was the one they called the *salario universal* (universal salary). Officially known as the Universal Child Allowance (*Asignación Universal por Hijo* or AUH), the *salario* was one of President Fernández's greatest political achievements. Unlike its predecessor, the *Asignación Familiar por Hijo*, which provides a stipend for *formally* employed registered workers, the AUH provides a cash allowance for the children of unemployed and informally employed adults. The new cash transfer scheme specifically targets 'historically vulnerable' populations, including children, single mothers, and large families (Agis et al. 2010: 14). As is the case with other cash transfer schemes in the region, the conditionality attached to the *salario* – mandatory school attendance, regular health check-ups, and up-to-date vaccination plans – is also intended to increase the 'human capital' of impoverished sectors and thus, in the words of President Fernandez, to 'break the reproduction of poverty' (Fernández de Kirchner 2015; see also Eger and Damo 2013: 254 for the case of Brazilian *Programmea Bolsa Familia*). By 2013, four years after the programme was inaugurated by presidential decree, the AUH provided coverage for roughly 3.6 million children

nationwide (Isla and Vezza 2013: 8) and received praise from multi-lateral institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations.

The AUH and a number of other new welfare plans are distributed via the Social Security National Administration (ANSES) office – which works within the ambit of the national Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Security. Unlike previous welfare programmes that were typically redistributed through local municipal offices, the new cash transfers are distributed in a very bureaucratic and centralised fashion via local ANSES offices. This is meant to preclude opportunities for personalising benefits at the local level and thereby pre-empt the development of patron-client relations. That being said, just as in Brazil, where beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Familia* associated the scheme with President Lula (Eger & Damo 2014: 252), in Argentina many voters strongly associate cash transfer policies like the AUH with President Cristina Fernandez.

Given the historically novel aspects of welfare policies under the Kirchnerista government and their massive scale of implementation, policies like the AUH were bound to have far-reaching impacts upon beneficiaries. This seems to be particularly true for indigenous communities in the country since, according to a recent Unicef report, indigenous families in Argentina are 'significantly younger than the general population [and] (…) the proportion of indigenous households with unsatisfied basic needs is sensibly greater than that of other households' (Isla and Vezza 2013: 5). This context, coupled with the high rates of unemployment discussed earlier, partially explain why most Guaraní families benefited from the *salario universal.* Unsurprisingly, when presidential elections came around in 2015, the issue of access to the AUH became a central concern for Guaraní voters.

In the part of the country where I conducted fieldwork, the *Kirchnerista* party enjoyed a huge amount of support. This was made patently clear during the presidential elections of 2015 - which, incidentally, the *Kirchneristas* eventually lost. The Guaraní communities I lived with are located within the Departamento San Martín, an administrative sub-partition of the province of Salta that covers an area of 16,000 square kilometres and is populated by more than 150,000 inhabitants. Like most of the territory of Argentina's impoverished north, this Departamento has been a stronghold of the *Kirchnerista* party - the *Frente para la Victoria.* Indeed, according to the results of the elections more than 70% of the population of San Martín voted for the *Kirchnerista* candidate. (*La Nacion* November 22nd 2015). Among the Guaraní communities I worked with, practically everyone I spoke to before the elections took it for granted that the *Kirchnerista* candidate Daniel Scioli – 'Cristina's wingman,' as one man put it – would win by a landslide. In fact, the results of the elections at the level of the polling station confirmed people's expectations: in the polling station where most of the people from my host community voted, Daniel Scioli won an impressive 86% of the votes during the run-off election (*La Nacion* November 25th 2015).

Among the Guaraní, the *Kirchneristas* enjoyed support because, as one woman said, 'Cristina is the only one who worries (*se preocupa*) about the poor'. More specifically, my informants agreed that Cristina

enjoyed such huge popularity because of '*los planes,*' that is, the subsidies, cash transfers, and allowances that many Guaraní families relied on for their daily subsistence. Without a doubt, the welfare benefits available to the Guaraní had increased dramatically over the course of the last twenty years and particularly during the twelve years of *Kirchnerista* governments.

In a number of ways, however, the kinds of political manoeuvres that are found in other, typically urban, parts of Argentina did not characterise the distribution of welfare plans in Guaraní settlements. Indeed, while militant *Kirchnerista* organisations such as *Kolina* or *Movimiento Evita* often mediate the distribution of welfare plans in many parts of the country, this was not the case in the settlements that I lived in. On the contrary, it was typically social workers and functionaries who were in charge of registering beneficiaries and distributing welfare. When these functionaries travelled into the settlements, their operations were notable for the lack of propaganda that might associate their work with a particular political party. For instance, during the distribution of food relief, the only visible political marker I observed was the small 'Government of the Province of Salta' decal that was stuck to the door of a white pickup truck. The absence of political proselytization during these events was significant because it meant that Guaraní welfare beneficiaries were not as exposed to the sorts of political patronage that Argentine militant organisations often undertake in their attempts to gather votes elsewhere (see for instance Auyero 2000 for a description of Peronist patronage networks in Buenos Aires). Although I did observe some forms of 'political work' (Gaztañaga 2008) in Guaraní settlements – for instance the mayor distributed crates of raw chicken to be barbecued on election day and provided a bus that transported people from Aguararenta to a rally in town, similar kinds clientelistic exchanges did not occur during the more routine distribution of welfare. While welfare beneficiaries probably undertook some form of interpretative labour of their own during the collection of *planes*, the bureaucratised distribution of benefits furthered the particularising experience of welfare collection for the Guaraní who were thus enfranchised within a new politics of redistribution, even as they continued to inhabit the margins of Peronist militancy.

Nonetheless, enfranchisement within a new politics of redistribution led to profound changes in the material lives of many Guaraní, a fact that was most forcefully reflected in the way that people talked about changes in patterns of food consumption. One family explained that, before, 'there was no food' and that they had been forced to exchange maize for bread with the *criollo* bakers. Now, by contrast, they could purchase bread with their own money. Others reflected on the difference between their own staple foods and those of their predecessors. Where meals formerly consisted of, or were accompanied by, some form of maize, people now preferred bread. Parents observed that their children scoffed at the thought of having maize as an accompaniment to a meal and if I excused myself from having bread my hosts often observed that, for their part, a meal without bread was unthinkable.

Figure 15 An impeccably clean oka*, a mango tree on the right, and, on the left, an abandoned and rubbish -filled maize mortar*

Maize, has historically occupied a central part of Guaraní life. Today, its continued symbolic importance is expressed during the annual maize harvest ritual, but its dietary significance has changed as a result of wider economic shifts. Abandoned maize mortars in many patios were visible reminders of this recent transformation. Made out of hollowed out tree stumps, these mortars had at some time been one of the key tools that women worked with. It was here that the kernels of manually threshed maize had temporarily been kept and where the toasted kernels were ground to make flour. Similarly, the dilapidated remains of small maize granaries known as *trojas* still stood in many patios. Elevated from the ground, the *troja* was originally meant to keep the maize dry and safe from vermin, but today they are usually filled with junk, tools, and, occasionally, a few ears of corn. Maize, sowed and harvested by Guaraní men, is no longer a staple of Guaraní diets. Its place has been taken by bread: a food that was purchased with money – and typically *salario* money.

People's sensibility to changing patterns of consumption is not a trivial matter since, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, new forms of consumption are indicative of what Gow calls 'hierarchies of civilization' (1993). In other words, the desire for bread, a food purchased with money, sheds light on Guaraní people's deep-seated aspirations for a kind of social mobility that would allow them to shed what they saw as a 'shameful' indigeneity. This has to do with the fact that memories of the 'maize economy' were associated with poverty, toil and hunger. When he was still a teenager, Pedro had lost his mother to tuberculosis and had himself contracted the disease along with two of his brothers. Now in his forties, unemployed, and a father of three children, Pedro would often tell me what it had been like to live in an

adobe hut and what it felt like not to eat regular meals. Once, upon concluding his story, Pedro remarked, 'I don't want my kids to live a childhood like mine.'

To quote Bear et al.'s manifesto, cash transfers have contributed to the Guaraní's 'pursuits of being and becoming particular kinds of people, families, or communities' (2015). Moreover, Guaraní's electoral behaviour suggests that they have felt enfranchised by the *Kirchnerista*'s redistributive politics. The new loyalty that many Guaraní felt towards the Kirchneristas was palpable in people's fear that the welfare policies would be cut after a centre-right party won the presidential elections. As a result, a new kind of relationship between citizen and state was, in fact, established as a result of cash transfer payments. However, this relationship has also created a number of tensions and opportunities at the more intimate level of Guaraní households. In the remainder of the chapter, I show how CTs have had an ambiguous impact upon gendered, household relations. I will begin by describing the case of one family, the Subirana, who depended almost entirely on cash transfers for their survival.

LIFE ON *LOS PLANES*

In 2014, Ana Subirana was widowed when her husband, who had worked on several horticultural plantations throughout his life, died due to complications resulting from diabetes. Ana had had two sons and six daughters. Five of her daughters were *juntadas,* literally 'joined', that is, they lived with their partners in houses of their own, but were not legally or religiously married. One of Ana's sons was single and worked sporadically as a logger, and the other suffered from a debilitating gastrointestinal condition that prevented him from working. As a result, the family depended heavily on cash transfer payments to which the women of the family were entitled.

Even though Ana's daughters had houses and children of their own, the extended family often gathered at the maternal house. For the women of the Subirana household, these family gatherings were occasions for both light hearted sociality and strenuous collective work. Ana's patio or *oka* was shaded by a couple of mango trees that her grandchildren gleefully raided when the fruit was ripe. Like many women, Ana took pride in the smoothness of her *oka* and she regularly swept and weeded it. The afternoon I stopped by to visit her, she was busy incinerating a neat mound of fallen leaves and rubbish that she had dutifully swept with a twig broom. The smoky fire filled the air with a strangely fragrant haze, while, some distance away, a couple of Ana's daughters washed clothes in a large plastic vat. One of their sisters was in charge of hanging the washed garments onto a clothesline that was attached to two upright posts. Within the patio also stood a lean-to kitchen that was roofed with corrugated iron sheets and walled with uneven wooden planks and branches. Inside, another of Ana's daughters tended to the contents of a bubbling pot. A handful of children ran amok, and were either ignored or berated by their busy mothers and aunts.

Standing a few metres away from the house I clapped my hands, the local equivalent of knocking on the door, and braced myself as a small pack of angry and malnourished dogs rushed out to receive me. Ana waved her broom at the dogs, cursed them, and then greeted me with a smile before calling out to one of her daughters, 'heat the water for the *mate cebado*!' She ushered me towards a small table where someone had placed a blackened kettle, a plastic *mate*, and two jars: one full of sugar, the other full of *yerba*.[29] Having had the first sip, Ana, as *cebadora*, passed me the plastic *mate* and, in a tone that was both an invitation and an order, she pointed to the table and stated, 'Agustin, there is bread.' Obediently, I reached out and took a piece as the other members of Ana's family pulled up chairs and stools and joined the *mate* round.
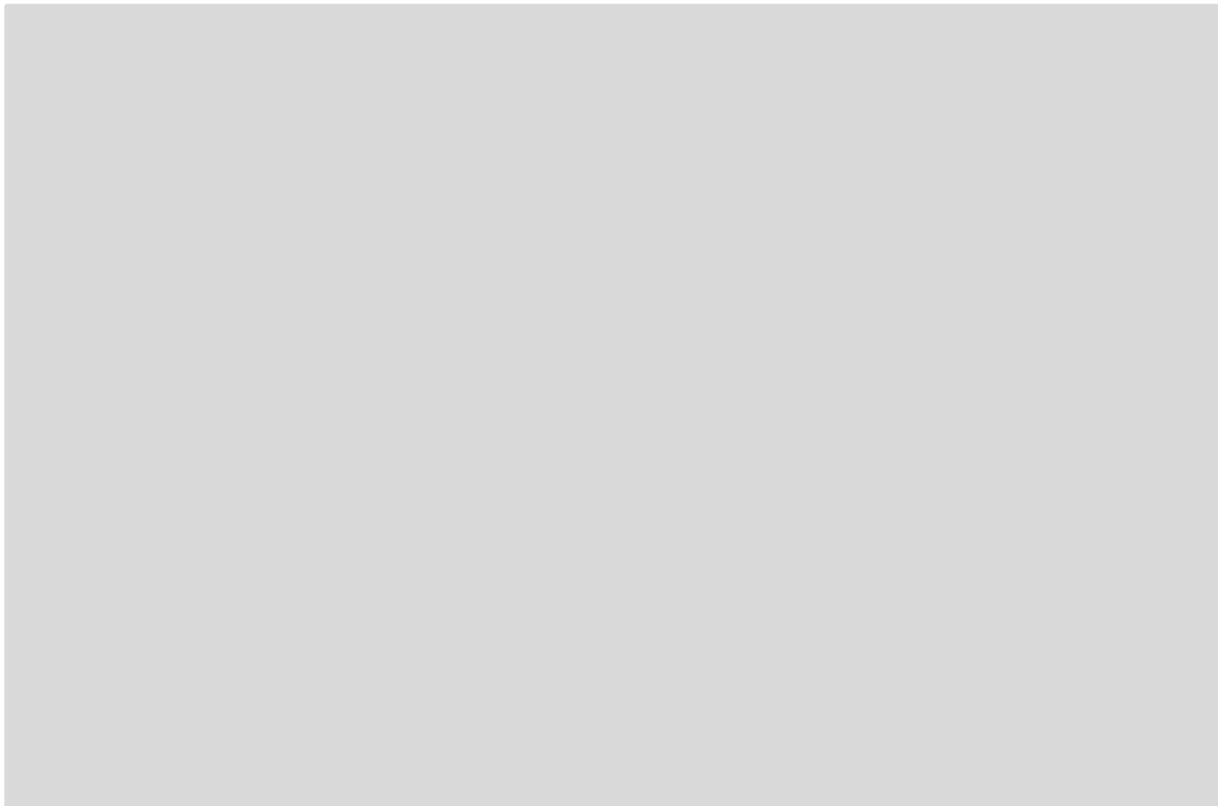
Figure 16. Two women at work in their oka

Our conversation soon turned to the matter of cash transfers. Elena, one of Ana's daughters and a mother of four young children, explained that she received 2680 pesos (670 per child)[30] from the AUH every month. She clarified, however, that she was also entitled to a number of other *planes* too. First there was the *tarjeta social* (social card), officially known as the National Plan for Food Security, which was actually administered by the provincial government. As part of this scheme, Elena was given a plastic bank card with which she could purchase 320 pesos worth of goods in certain supermarkets. She also

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[29] *Mate* is a kind of tea that is consumed widely in Argentina and in other parts of South America. Among the Guaraní it is a particularly feminised moment of social consumption.

[30] Subsidy amounts and exchange rates have altered significantly since the time of fieldwork. The values given here are from 2015. The maximum child allowance was for five children.

mentioned a plan called 'Salta Eats as a Family' (*Salta Come en Familia*), also referred to as the 'ticket', which provided a voucher worth 100 pesos per child. Finally, Elena received 154 pesos as part of the *Programa Hogar*, which subsidised the purchase of gas cylinders in houses without access to the gas network. The combination of these plans provided Elena's household with a monthly income of 3454 pesos (£234.8).

One of Elena's sisters, Julia, commented on a new 'plan' called *PROG.R.ES.AR.* (*Programmea de Respaldo a Estudiantes de Argentina*). The plan was inaugurated in January 2014 and paid a monthly stipend of 720 pesos for unemployed or underemployed youth who decided to go back to school or university. Julia still received this stipend even though she had stopped going to school because of what she called 'couple problems' (*problemas de pareja*). Her husband, who was unemployed, had become jealous because of the time that she was spending away from home: deciding that this domestic strife was not worth her energy, she stopped attending class, but was glad that, for now, she still received the money.[31] While it was not discussed that afternoon, I was later told that Ana also collected a disability pension that was paid to her sick son and another for one of her granddaughters, who had Downs Syndrome, and for whom she had taken responsibility.

Officially, the money from many cash transfer programmes is meant to help families cover the costs of feeding their children and sending them to school. Guaraní mothers were aware of the stated objectives of these programmes and they often told me that 'the money belongs to the children'. In Elena's words, 'the money from the *salario* is for the children's milk. We spend it on that and also on school materials for the kids.' However, most Guaraní families, including the Subirana, did not restrict the expenditure of CT money to their children. Instead, the money from these state-sponsored sources of income was used to cover a whole variety of expenditures, which included things like food and school materials, but also covered electricity bills, satellite television, clothes for adults and cosmetic products. In addition, the regular cash meant that Guaraní women were increasingly able to purchase consumer goods on credit, a pattern which Deborah James has also observed among grant recipients in South Africa (James 2015).

To think about the extent to which plans like the AUH do in fact subsidise everyday life in Guaraní communities we can look at the scene I described at Elena's house and point to all of the different things that were paid for (or provided by) various *planes*. The bread we ate was paid for with AUH money. The *yerba mate* we consumed was included with the last '*bolsón familiar*' – a monthly food package distributed by the provincial government. Later in the evening, when Elena's unemployed husband came back from the forest after an unsuccessful day of hunting, the meat that we ate was paid for with money from the *Salta Come en Familia* plan and fried in oil purchased with the *salario*. The electrical light we ate under was also paid for with money from a pension. One of Ana's infant granddaughters was wearing a pair of pyjamas and being put to sleep in a crib that had been provided as part of the government's recently implemented

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[31] Beneficiaries of this programme must prove to the ANSES that they are still enrolled in an education programme three times over the course of a year. It is probable that Elena's sisters would soon stop receiving the stipend.

Plan Qunita that supplied mothers of young children with a basic kit. In fact, few everyday household items were not somehow subsidised by the state. As a result, life in contemporary Guaraní households is practically unimaginable without the intervention of the state.

The different forms of benefits were also enabling new patterns of consumption that held the potential for transforming pre-existing patterns of work and relatedness within the family. For instance, Maria, a forty-year-old mother of five who received the AUH for her youngest fifteen year old son as well as a disability pension for her daughter, had saved up her welfare payments over an extended period of time until she had enough to buy bricks, cement, and tiles with which to build a new 'first class bathroom' (*un baño de primera*) and an extension to the house. With the money in hand she hired the services of her uncle, an excellent but unemployed builder and bricklayer. Maria's capacity to save up this money depended on her ability to hide cash from her husband who had a tendency to drink it all away. In doing so, she was also challenging traditional gender roles. In a society where men were typically in charge of providing and building the new conjugal house, Maria had managed to secure the construction materials and the labour for the new extensions without relying on her husband.

In a context where men are hard pressed to find jobs, it is not an exaggeration to say that Guaraní household economies are increasingly, if not almost completely, dependent on the relatively new sources of income that the state's welfare plans provide. As I will show in the next section, the availability of this new source of cash is beginning to alter important aspects of household relationships. Not only are some women taking on new responsibilities as a result of their newfound position as main breadwinners, relationships of care and relatedness are also being transformed as new kinds of goods become available.

TRANSFORMING HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS

People's dependence on state benefits did not go unnoticed in the communities I worked with. Many of my informants wondered aloud about the moral implications of receiving this money and on the effects that it had on social relations across the board. For example, as I discussed the matter of *los planes* with Elena and her family, they concluded that, yes, the benefits had changed their lives but also that President Cristina Fernández had gone too far – in their words, '*la presidenta se bandea'*. Although the family had clearly benefitted from these new sources of state welfare, they felt that policies like the *salario universal* incentivised unwanted behaviours and claimed that the AUH actually encouraged young women to become pregnant because it rewarded their promiscuity. Of course, when I asked Elena and her sisters whether they themselves would consider seeking out a pregnancy for the sake of the *salario*, they laughed in amused denial. One of Elena's sisters pointed out that the money from the *salario* was not enough to cover the expenses associated with raising a child anyway. That being said, she waved her hand in the direction of her neighbour's house – where two teenagers below the age of eighteen had recently given birth and quit school – and suggested that for her neighbours the *salario* had been a big consideration. Similarly, the nurse who worked in the community's First Aid Centre, herself born and raised in

Aguararenta, argued that although the *salario* had helped families to improve their diets, it had also caused too many underage pregnancies.

My own observations after a two year absence were that the number of pregnancies had not really risen drastically. What did strike me was that the young women who had had children had not, for the most part, moved in with the fathers of their children. On the contrary, these young mothers were raising their children in their parental homes and, in the three cases I knew best, the fathers had not taken responsibility for the children. While I doubt that these young women had purposefully become pregnant with the *salario* in mind, it is certainly the case that becoming a mother and collecting the AUH afforded young women a chance to enter a recognised realm of 'social adulthood' that did not exist before. In particular, this was because it created a sense of entitlement to state resources and because it allowed women to make tangible monetary contributions to their household's economies.

In many ways, young girls are trained for the social role of maternity from a very young age. For instance, I observed that many girls cared for their younger family members, looking after them, feeding them, carrying them and washing their clothes, whereas boys were not charged with similar duties. This kind of care is often closely associated with motherhood and, as Silvia Hirsch writes of a neighbouring Guaraní community, 'socialisation in the process of being a mother begins so early in the life of a woman that it is difficult to determine when the learning of motherhood actually begins. Maternity, moreover, is 'constitutive of their role in society, and children (…) grant legitimacy and status to women in the family' (Hirsch 2008: 240).

If maternity marks the entrance of young women into 'social adulthood', then the crucial monetary contribution of state-granted child allowances renders them income-earners in their own right. In this sense, too, maternity seems to bolster some women's self-regard. Yoana, a young woman of fifteen who had given birth when I first arrived in the field, provides an illustration of this. Even though the father of her son did not recognise the child as his own, Yoana registered her son with the ANSES office and began receiving her monthly child allowance. Yoana gave a portion of her allowance to her mother – a hard- working woman who spent most of her time in town where she was employed as a domestic worker and whose abusive husband only lived with her sporadically – and also managed to pay instalments towards a shiny new mobile phone that she was very proud of. Whereas a young, single mother might previously have been turned out by her parents (Hirsch 2008), the availability of subsidies currently allows mothers to tangibly valorise their contributions to the family. In fact, a couple of young single mothers who still lived with their parents told me that they did not keep the AUH money themselves but turned it over to their mothers who were in charge of managing the household budget. No longer ostracized by their parents, these young women have become productive members of their

families even though their ability to set up households of their own seems to be compromised by men's unwillingness to *juntarse*.[32]

The association of women with food and nurturing has also led to the feminisation of other forms of aid. For example, children in elementary school are fed in school, and private companies donate food to communitarian soup kitchens (*comedores*) to help feed seniors and children below schooling age. Women are always in charge of preparing and handing out food in the communal kitchens, even though male leaders secure the donations. I observed similarly gendered patterns during the collection of food donations from the national government. Although not always dependable, these monthly packages of food known as *bolsones* include staple items like *yerba mate*, rice, noodles, sugar, and flour. Originally, the *bolsones* were delivered to combat malnutrition among children. Perhaps for this reason, the *bolsones* were associated with women rather than men and, when the government vehicles arrived, the crowd that gathered before the communal assembly was entirely made up of women and children. The few men who were present loitered on the sides, but would not attempt to collect the packages themselves. Instead, they waited until the women collected the packages and only then helped to carry the heavy loads.

As a result of the scarcity of male employment and the rarity of agricultural profits, discussed in previous chapters, women currently make greater contributions to household subsistence, both in terms of income and labour input, than men do. Additionally, the state, as a source of food and cash, has transformed women's ability to provide for their households. It is no surprise that Hirsch's female interlocutors complained that 'men don't give importance to women, but there are women who support (*mantienen*) their homes' (Hirsch 2008: 231). It is still early to assess the long term impact of these policies but, given the importance of motherhood for Guaraní women, recent cash transfer policies have affected the organisation of work within Guaraní households. Additionally, under conditions of high male unemployment where marriage is seen as an unattractive life choice, young women appear more likely to raise their children in their parental homes; this suggests a new, but potentially profound, transformation of kinship structures in Guaraní households.

Although the links between motherhood and social adulthood are not new among the Guaraní, what seems to be different is that women are now able to become productive family members not only as wives and mothers but also, potentially, as single mothers within their natal families. In other words, while Guaraní gender roles in the past highlighted some sort of complementarity between men and women, the new kinds of gender roles that can be observed today are eroding such complementarity while strengthening new and creative forms of household organisation. These include all-female, multi-generational households as well as those comprising young, single mothers who remain at home and

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[32] For a similar case of young women in Buenos Aires being brought into the parental household's economy thanks to CT programmes see Hornes 2013.

contribute to the parental house. In a setting where male unemployment is rampant, what makes this kind of arrangement possible is the availability of state benefits that specifically target women as mothers.

The advent of CTs presents continuities with traditional welfare policies associated to formal employment but also important breaks. Certainly CT programmes effectively subsidise the labour of care and, since they primarily benefit women, the new welfare policies continue to characterise women as reproductive labourers within the family. What is different, though, is that the men in many of the families that currently benefit from CTs are *not* employed. In other words, women are assigned the task of 'reproduction' – of caring for the family - in a context where men are rarely able to provide it with any income.

In the next section, I will explore how money from *los planes* is earmarked as what Viviana Zelizer would call a kind of 'special money' (1989): a money that comes from distinct sources and expended within distinct circuits. In doing so, I will highlight some of the political implications that stem from the fact that CT income is not entirely equivalent to other kinds of money that are in circulation within Guaraní communities.

THE SALARIO AS 'SPECIAL MONEY'

The AUH programme does not stipulate who should manage the money or how it should be spent. Women are given preference in terms of collecting payments but this does not always translate to control over the money. In Tartagal, I met a social worker who had worked with marginalised women in the city of Tucumán, a densely populated city in north western Argentina that lies nearly 600 kilometres from my field site. According to this social worker, the women she had worked with often had no capacity to decide how to use the AUH payments because the fathers of their children, with whom they often no longer maintained a relationship, would take control of the bank card that was used to collect the cash at the ATM. This sort of appropriation of the *salario* did not occur in Guaraní communities. In part, this was because most women did not have a bank card. Instead, they collected their payments at a post office where they were required to present their national identification documents. Under this arrangement, a man would not have been able to collect payment in his wife's name without doing a substantial amount of additional paperwork.

Within housholds, the expenditure of *salario* money was itself highly gendered and favoured a particular kind of division of labour within the household. Elena, for example, told me that her husband once complained that the money from the benefits was disappearing too quickly and suggested that he should start managing the money instead. For Elena, these complaints were her husband's way of accusing her of misspending the money on 'pleasures' (*placeres*), or superfluous items, including clothes for herself. Undaunted, Elena told her husband, 'If you don't believe me, go do the shopping yourself'. The problem, she explained, is that women know 'what is needed' (*lo que hace falta*) but men, on the other

hand, are clueless and likely to purchase things without thinking. After that exchange, Elena said with a smile, her husband never again asked to take any of the *salario* money.

The bureaucratic specificities that accompanied the collection of the AUH currently restricted men's access to the *salario*. Additionally, since this money was often seen as being 'for the kids,' and more generally for the household, it was also, as Elena's story demonstrates, best managed by women who know 'what is needed.' As a result, both in terms of its supply and expenditure, the *salario* was marked off as a 'special money:' 'obtained in special ways' and 'used for designated purposes' (Zelizer 1989: 344). In many ways, early 21st-century Guaraní families have similar arrangements to those typical of American working class families in the early 20th century. In both cases, there was an expectation that working men should turn over the money they earned as a wage to the women of the house who, in turn, would manage the household budget (Zelizer 1989: 364). However, as also happened with the American families that Zelizer studied, whenever there was 'surplus income' Guaraní men were unlikely to turn it over to their wives and mothers. Instead, men would typically provide their wives with a small allowance earmarked for the feeding of the family.

In the previous section, I suggested that the money that women currently receive through cash transfers has lessened their reliance on men as providers. However, the kinds of work deemed appropriate for women remain largely unchanged. These state-granted benefits are still primarily used to feed and clothe the family. In other words, it seems that women's 'managerial power' over household money may have increased thanks to state sponsored cash transfers, but that their 'discretionary power' (Zelizer 1989: 369) remains essentially unchanged – at least in those households where men are still present.

This last qualification is necessary because the only women I knew who spent their *salario* on so-called 'pleasures', particularly to go out dancing in the cumbia clubs of Tartagal, lived in all-female families where fathers and husbands had either died or left. Many people felt that these women were irresponsible mothers who allowed their badly behaved children to spend too much time on the street ('*callejeando*') – similar accusations, however, were not directed at many fathers who also spent considerable amounts of money to go clubbing. The fact that women who apparently ignored the 'special' nature of *salario* money were accused of being bad mothers sheds light on the kinds of pressures and responsibilities that ended up stigmatising those women that did not conform to certain social roles. As Clara Han has argued concerning poverty programmes in Chile, one of the risks incurred when 'the notion of an individual tied to legible family bonds is advanced as the basis for achieving dignity' is that '"the family," and particularly the mother, is assigned blame retrospectively for its inability to take responsibility for its members' (2012: 234).

In fact, while women's expenditures seemed to be under surveillance, men were able to spend their wages without having to endure similar forms of social pressure. Young single men, in particular, might give a portion of money earned to their mothers or grandmothers but they also typically spent a large

proportion of their wage on alcohol. Importantly, this was not an individualised expenditure, rather, the alcohol was usually shared among a cohort of similarly aged men. As one informant put it, 'drinking like this is about sharing, clearing your mind, and friendship.' Then, drawing a distinction between family-oriented sharing and in-cohort sharing, he added with a laugh, 'you already know that the Guaraní, when he has money, he drinks it all away and forgets about his family.'

Men as waged workers (or at least potentially waged workers) and women as 'plan' beneficiaries must engage in very different relations of monetary production: if men come together visibly and politically to push for jobs, women gain access to their money as individuals who engage with state bureaucracies. Where men must confront and push for jobs, women must form long qeues and wait to be paid. People are aware of these differences. As one man said, 'the *salario* money comes from above' (*la plata viene de arriba*). This suggests that people did not work for the *salario* and, therefore that a person's claim to the money was tenuous since it was essentially a 'free gift' from President Cristina. For their part, many women were loath to search for waged work because they feared that they would lose access to the *salario*. This became very clear when I helped a communal leader draw up a 'project proposal' that he wanted to present to the provincial ministry of work. The project was meant to provide work for women through the creation of a communal flower nursery. In spite of my misgivings, the leader I was helping included ten part-time salaries as part of the proposed budget and said that these would be paid for by the ministry. A small group of women was summoned to the assembly hall and over the course of several hours of discussion the group decided that the only people who would be able to work in the flower nursery would be single, childless, women because any mothers who accepted these jobs would be forced to forfeit the *salario*.

Here perhaps it is worth comparing this 'money from above' and the 'bringing down of resources' that leaders are meant to undertake. Both expressions imply a spatial relation in which abundance is located above and somehow comes down to people like the Guaraní. The acquisition of the resources and jobs is active in the sense that people must 'push' to have those resources delivered, this ultimately instilled a sense of ownership for, as I was once told, 'when one works, one is the owner of the money.' By contrast, receipt of *salario* money is described as passive waiting, as wealth that falls from above. Unease about this free gift stemmed from the fact people did not know how long they would be able to count on this source of income. As the same man wondered, 'what will happen when the government's money runs out? What will we do then? We are not used to working any more'. In fact, during the presidential elections of 2015, one of the reasons my informants gave for *not* voting for the anti-Kirchnerista candidate was that they thought he would cut *los planes*. Still the question lingered, would the government be able to pay out these benefits indefinitely?

The *salario* – as a special money – is determined by its bureaucratic method of collection and its gendered patterns of expenditure. However, it is also affected by its temporal rhythms and its quantity – both of which are determined by the state. In terms of its temporality, Guaraní women collected the *salario* every

month, in an extremely dependable manner. The regularity of this benefit stands in stark contrast to the irregular and unpredictable temporal rhythms of men's wages. In this way, the AUH was possibly one of the most stable sources of income most Guaraní families had ever enjoyed. In terms of its quantity, the AUH was specifically designed as a contribution to the household that was meant to increase a family's 'human capital', particularly by enhancing the family's ability to educate and feed its children. As a supplementary income, the AUH was not designed to provide a living wage: at 616 pesos per child, the AUH is equivalent to ten percent of the Argentine minimum wage which currently stands at roughly 6000 pesos. When we contrast this quantity to the kinds of wages men received, for example 10,000 pesos for a man working in seismic exploration for an oil company, we can see that the difference between a man's potential wage and a woman's *salario* is as much quantitative as it is qualitative.

However, as Simmel pointed out, large quantities of money are more than mere quantity and are 'imbued with that "super-additum," with fantastic possibilities that transcend the definiteness of numbers' (Simmel 1978: 440; cited in Zelizer 1989: 352). As a result, this quantitative difference also adds to the qualitative difference between wages and *salarios*. As I argued in the previous chapter, men's money is more clearly associated with what I have been calling moments of abundance. This is not only because a man's wage is exponentially greater than a woman's welfare benefits. It is also because the relations of monetary production are entirely different. Men organise collectively to demand employment quotas vociferously, but women engage with bureaucracy in an individualised and individualising manner. Moreover, while men feel that they are justified in making their demands, women (and also men) cannot help but feel that the new welfare benefits are like an undeserved gift – one that they enjoy, but feel strangely unentitled to.

This feeling that one does not deserve the money being received is perhaps one of the most difficult things about the new welfare benefits. Although apologists and government functionaries insist that the cash payments of the AUH are an inalienable right, Guaraní beneficiaries feel uneasy about the extent to which they actually deserve this money. Perhaps this is because welfare benefits have always had a gift-like 'flavour' to them. Writing of 'social insurance legislation' in Europe, Marcel Mauss pointed out that the logic behind these welfare arrangements was that 'the worker has given his life and his labour, on the one hand to the collectivity, and on the other hand, to his employers,' as a result, 'the state itself, representing the community, owes him' (2002: 86). Later, Mauss claimed that in order to merit this care, 'the individual must work' and that 'over-generosity' was potentially harmful to the individual and society (88). My informant's unease concerning *los planes* stemmed from the fact that CTs were not counter-prestations, and also from that feeling that there was no clear way to return a gift which was given to them as a 'right' because they were poor.

Although CTs like the AUH seem to have fulfilled one of their objectives of reducing poverty, they have had less success in their efforts to empower women. At the level of the indigenous community, the quantitative and qualitative differences which mark off CT benefits as special monies have the effect of further marginalising women from local politics. In as much as the new welfare state has rendered

mothers the key beneficiaries of cash payments, it has also saddled women with the responsibilities of ensuring that children are fed and taken to school. In a sense, by providing for the costs of everyday subsistence through cash payments 'that come from above' and by explicitly linking women to this 'special money,' *los planes* have had the unintentional effect of liberating men's work from the responsibility of providing for the family.

CT proponents have 'argued that households and families are central to the reproduction of poverty from one generation to the next [and CT programmes] focus on mothers as key actors determining the nutrition, health, and education of children' (Valencia Lomeli 2008: 479). However, if these programmes set out to redress gender inequalities by making assumptions about the social roles that women play, then we must also be attentive to the ways in which they have served to reinforce particular gender roles. In a report on Conditional Cash Transfers, Maxine Molyneux wrote that 'one clear effect of the design of these programmes is to reaffirm and strengthen gender divisions of responsibility and care' (2008: 52). For Molyneux, as a result of CT's, 'women have (…) acquired more recognition as mothers along with more responsibility, but not significantly more power or autonomy [and] few, if any, new rights' (53). She goes on to argue that if these policies empower women, it is only within the established boundaries of pre-existing gender roles.

Similarly, I have suggested that, in the Guaraní case, cash transfer policies have strengthened the association between women and motherhood in as much as mothers have now become the primary income earners within their households. However, what the work of people like Molyneux and Valencia Lomeli do not capture is the extent to which these gendered relationships are themselves being transformed by women's access to cash transfers. Women seem increasingly reliant upon the state in order to perform the traditionally female work of housekeeping, feeding and care and they have transferred dependency from their husbands onto the state. In so doing, however, new gendered relations have been generated. The possibility of being a single mother is no longer as morally reprehensible as it once was and, with the relative lack of pressure to move in with the fathers of their children, new forms of kinship solidarity are gaining strength.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter has been to explore how families get by in a context where there is very little work and where people do not seek out opportunities for self-subsistence. What I have shown is that household economies are increasingly reliant on income collected directly from the state in the form of pensions, subsidies, and cash transfers. While men continue to search for employment in the regional labour market, women have increased their capacity to secure money without the mediation of men and have come to enjoy what James Ferguson calls 'the social role (...) of grant-recipient' (2013: 230). Something similar occurs in the Guaraní case, however, I want to stress the extent to which CTs create a

tenuous sense of entitlement and economic citizenship that has not yet contributed to new forms of political mobilisation.

One of the unintended effects of CTs in Guaraní communities has been to liberate local politics – and, by association, men's work – from the responsibility of providing for families. Due to the feminisation of welfare programmes under the new welfare state, women have begun to earn income for their traditionally unpaid work of social reproduction. This provides a number of continuities with older forms of the welfare state but also some significant discontinuities. For example, writing primarily about the welfare state in the USA, Wendy Brown claims that capitalism historically depended on women's availability to engage in 'reproductive work', thus 'freeing' men to sell their labour. As a result, she writes, as long as domestic labour remains outside the wage economy and as long as women bear responsibility for this kind of work, they 'will be economically dependent on someone or something other than their own income-earning capacities.' With the rise of the welfare state, Brown continues, women are increasingly dependent on the state rather than on individual men (1995: 185). In this regard, we can see current state CT programmes as having similar effects to older forms of welfare in as much men are 'freed' to engage in waged work while women are able to perform reproductive labour thanks to input from the state. Thus, in Brown's view, 'a large portion of the welfare state is rooted in capitalist development's erosion of the household aspect of the [sexual] division of labor, in the collapse of the exchange between wage work in the economy and unpaid work in the family and the provision of household care for children, old, and disabled people that this exchange secured' (1995: 184). However, in this account of the previous welfare state the gendered roles of (male) provider and (female) carer are maintained intact. By contrast, the Guaraní's experience of the new welfare state shows a case where the roles of provider and carer have been combined within the - bureaucratically defined - figure of the mother who cares for her children. As a result, CCTs make women income earners in their own – even though not through waged labour. This, I suggest, has had a depoliticising, or perhaps even anti-political, effect. While securing subsistence by subsidising the work of motherhood and care and associating this work with women, the CTs have also had the effect of de-politicising the struggle for subsistence. By contrast, the kinds of work that men (hope to) perform relies upon explicitly political tactics and, in as much as CTs cover family subsistence, waged work has been liberated from the duties of household provision.

I am not suggesting that women's current withdrawal from local politics is entirely new. Both earlier and more recent ethnographies attest to the fact that this is not the case (De Nino 1912, Métraux 1935, Hirsch 2008). However, evidence suggests that Guaraní political economies were historically organised around patterns similar to those described by Rivière as a 'political economy of people'. In such a system, men's control over the work of women was crucial to their political prestige and this was primarily reflected in polygynous marriages. Today, men are hesitant to partner with the mothers of their children. Not only are they not compelled to do so, but the lack of work also makes it very hard for them to be

able to support a family. For their part, women's provision of reproductive labour within the household is facilitated and subsidised by the state in a way that makes complementarity between husbands and wives possible, but not indispensable for survival. The marked distinction between wages and *salarios* as two different 'special monies' has, however, furthered the association between women and reproductive labour while also making them less likely to attempt to engage in waged labour since doing so puts their access to CT programmes at risk.

While scholars like James Ferguson are generally optimistic about the impact of cash transfer programmes, others have been less hopeful. Among other criticisms, cash transfer programmes have been accused of reinforcing pre-existing gender roles (Molyneux 2007) and of reinforcing neoliberal modes of governance while ignoring the structural dimensions of poverty and inequality (Corboz 2013). My chapter has sought to capture the productive ambiguities that are at the heart of new welfare state policies. I have sought to show the Guaraní increasingly rely on the state for their everyday subsistence, but also that this dependency has led to the generation of new social relations. Women in this situation bear more of the responsibility for the survival and reproduction of their households, but are increasingly unable to rely on the input of their unemployed husbands or fathers. The extent to which this new conjuncture has empowered women is hard to determine. Certainly women are increasingly likely to be the main household providers but this has not led to an increase in local political influence.

Ferguson writes, that 'insofar as today's social protection programmes do support a sort of social reproduction, it is the reproduction of precisely that class of people who have increasingly slim prospects of ever entering the labor market at all' (2015: 12). Simultaneously, though, this same class of people 'have acquired other forms of power – specifically, political rights within a democratic regime' (ibid). In other words, Ferguson argues that while many poor people are becoming unable to participate as productive members of society, they are also gaining a sense of enfranchisement in terms of feeling entitled to make demands on goods and services that are delivered on the basis of citizenship. However, as I have shown, cash transfer policies often impinge upon more intimate sets of relations and it is through these that the power of new distributive policies runs its course. In the Guaraní case, CCTs created a sense of entitlement and people acted upon this sense by casting their ballots during 2015 presidential elections. However, for now at least, this is the only kind of political reaction that CCTs have created.

This is not, in itself, an unimportant finding. As Henrietta Moore has argued, anthropology is particularly well suited to study 'the interrelations between kinship structures and state structures in order to emphasize the mutually determining nature of kinship-state relations' (Moore 1988: 184). In this chapter, I illustrated how cash transfer policies under the new welfare state have had a direct impact upon Guaraní women who 'are located on a boundary between kinship relations and state structures in a way that men are not' (ibid). As recent work (e.g. Li 2009; Ferguson 2015) suggests, it is important to stress the fact that mass unemployment and new welfare programmes are affecting the lives of surplus populations at

the same time. Tanya Li has suggested that state programmes that grant citizens rights to the state's resources may provide the groundwork for a 'protective biopolitics' (2009: 82). However, in the Guaraní case this has not led to a new politics of entitlement.

Nonetheless, CCTs do imply some important shifts regarding the ways in which Guaraní people participate in broader political and economic structures. These revolve around the fact that the Guaraní are in demand, not as labourers, but as voters and consumers. This represents a significant change in the history of the Guaraní who now find themselves inscribed within a national project of economic and political citizenship. At the same time, it is likely that the regular availability of cash will make Guaraní individuals –women in particular – more able to access credit in ways that have been observed in other parts of the global south (e.g. James 2015.) They are finding that their lives are being reinscribed within new circuits of political and economic value. This process of reinscription will present the Guaraní with new challenges in the future and we are already beginning to see some of the gendered impacts it is having on econonomic and kinship relations in the household.
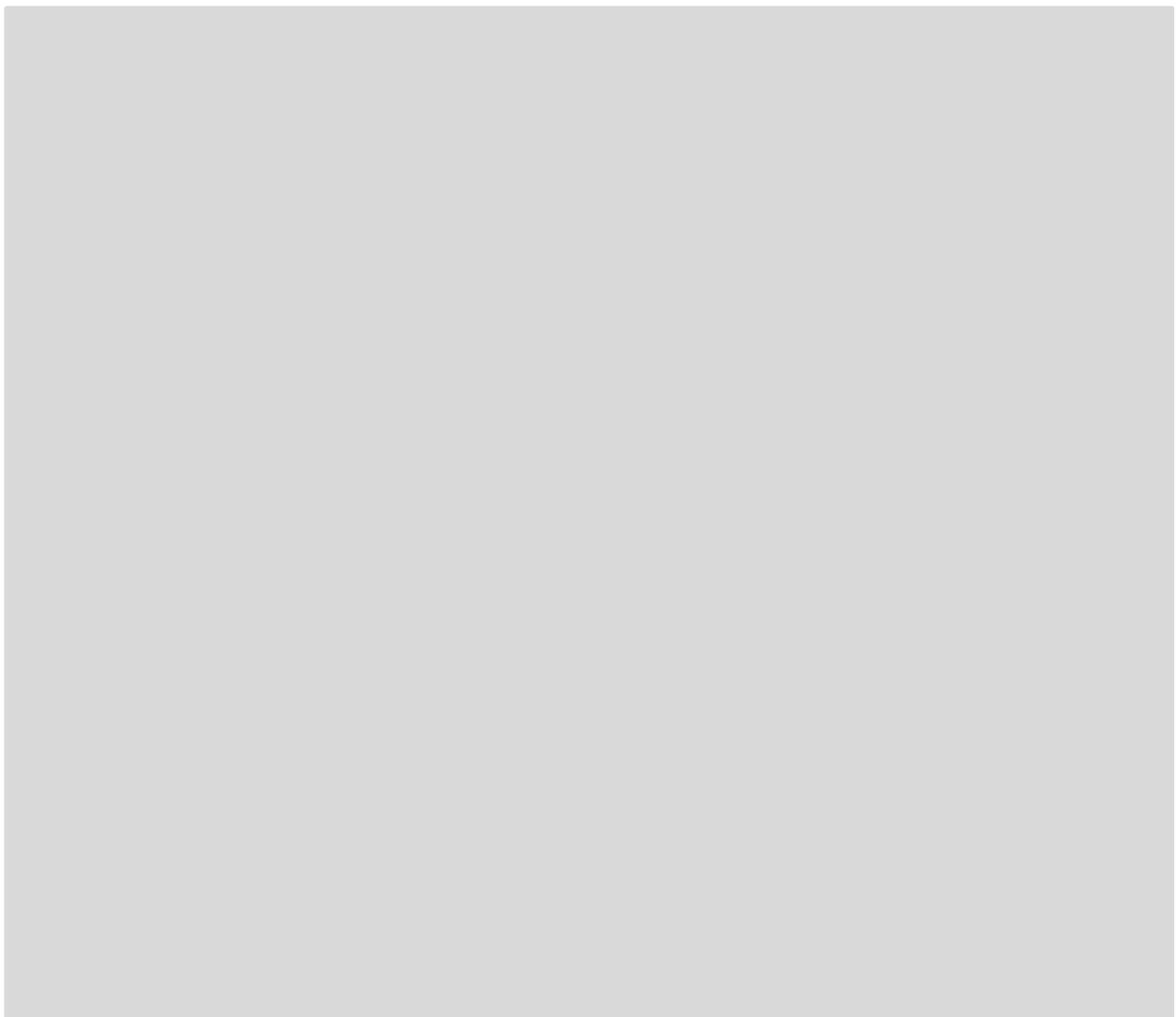

Figure 17. A domestic scene in a Guaraní household

CHAPTER 8
MASCULINITY AT PLAY

While the sun had been at its zenith, the eight hundred inhabitants of the settlement appeared to have vanished. There'd been no groups of women sharing gourds of sweet mate in the dirt patios that surrounded their houses, no unemployed men blaring cumbia out of ludicrously large speakers, and no children chasing after their pet dogs armed with sling shots. In this distant corner of Argentina where temperatures can climb well into the high 40°C, only the roaring cicadas seemed to ignore the sanctity of those quiet hours of the early afternoon. But now that the sun had begun its slow descent, the community was gradually coming back to life.

From the relative cool of the assembly hall where I lived, I watched a couple of trucks, property of the PanAmerican Energy oil and gas company, rumble through the settlement. Laden with machinery, the trucks were on their way to the seismic exploration camps situated further up the lush Andean foothills. In the meantime, some of the rowdier children had begun to gather under the partial shade of a gnarled and sprawling *algarrobo* tree that grew at the doorstep of the assembly hall. Today, however, I would not be joining in their bottle cap games nor giving in to pressure and teaching them to translate obscene words into English. Today I would be playing, as they say, with the big boys.

At any moment, my friend Chente would be picking me up to go play in my first ever inter-communal football tournament. The *changos*, or lads, of the community played football assiduously and I saw the invitation to play as an opportunity to become better integrated with them, a task which was proving harder than expected. Perhaps, I thought, football would give me a chance to prove myself. But my dreams of acceptance were soon shattered as, with evident malice, one of the children asked me what I would do if someone called me '*puto*' during the match. Before I could answer, the child's younger brother chimed in with a laugh, 'they're going to beat the shit out of *Inglaterra*!' I was already nervous about my footballing debut and this little exchange did not help. Fortunately any further blushes on my part were spared, as the sound of a spluttering motor coming up the road interrupted the children's bullying. Riding in his beat up moped, my friend Chente pulled up beneath the shade of the old tree, 'Hey, *Inglaterra*,' he called, 'ready to play ball?'

We rode over to the neighbouring community and, when we arrived at the pitch, the other two teams had already begun the first match. If I was uneasy before the game, watching the speed, dexterity and physicality of the game that preceded our own only made things worse. But it was too late to back down and I dutifully began warming up, hoping not to make a fool of myself. I soon realised, though, that I was the only person engaged in this kind of pre-game preparations. Bemused, I returned to the shaded spot near the side lines where my teammates sat. To my surprise, the men were sharing a carton of wine and some of them were carefully picking out leaves of coca from a green plastic bag and placing them in their mouths. 'Don't you warm up?' I asked. Several of the men grinned and in answer Chente held up

the wine carton, 'wine gives courage' he explained. Judging by the tenor of the game that preceded our own, courage was just what I was going to need.

This chapter analyses the way in which the young unemployed men create and negotiate forms of collectivity and masculinity through the game of football. As was the case in practically every Guaraní settlement in the region, the young men of Aguararenta played football almost every day of the week, they avidly participated in weekend matches against other Guaraní communities, and enthusiastically joined in formal tournaments organised by the municipal government. While players' ages ranged from about fifteen to nearly thirty years old, most did not have families of their own. They were also, for the most part, chronically unemployed. Without a steady source of income, they relied on their parental families for food and shelter and, in particular, on their female relatives who benefited from state-sponsored cash transfer programmes and were more likely to be employed.

The anthropology of football has typically been interested in the ways in which the game of articulates with broader social realities, and includes explorations of the game's relationship to the rise of modernity, nationalism, identity, patronage, local politics, and processes of subjectification (Elias & Dunning 1986; Da Matta 1982; Jeffrey 1992; Archetti 1999; Vianna 2008; Rollason 2011; Erikson 2013; Pires Rosse 2013; Walker 2013b). Although this work clearly shows the multifaceted power of football as a social phenomenon, relatively little attention has been paid to what it is about the game that lends itself to such various interpretations, interpellations, and appropriations. In most cases, I would argue that this shortcoming in the anthropology of football stems from a reluctance to explore the game as a form of human play (but see Walker 2013b), which in turn is a symptom of the under-theorisation of play in anthropology as a discipline. To address this gap in the literature, I will explore the subjunctive or *as if*, qualities of human play (Huizinga 1955; Seligman et al. 2008, Hamayon 2012) to suggest that when Guaraní men play football they are also simultaneously creating distinct forms of 'collective intentionality' (Searle 2002) that are bracketed off from everyday social life.

I begin this chapter by situating the lives of young Guaraní men within the everyday life of their settlements. I argue that games of football allow men to come together while simultaneously heightening competition, and that this is possible because players accept the meta-communicative frame (Bateson 1972) of play. The second dimension of play I look into concerns the ways in which teamwork is established through disjuncture (Levi-Strauss 1966). I show that teams as collectivities are provisional in as much as they are bracketed off by the temporality and the rules of the game. Thirdly I analyse particular styles of play and the emergence of gendered forms of collective intentionality.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIVES OF *LOS CHANGOS*

As we have seen in Chapter 3, young men had become some of the more vocal and active participants in the settlements' Unemployed Workers Centres and were often the most eager to join the roadblocks.

However, in spite of the aggressive way in which young men demanded jobs, the actual results obtained by the Unemployed Workers Centre were at best minimal. During my stay in Aguararenta, of the roughly eighty young men who made up the Unemployed Worker's Centre only six received temporary positions as part of a seismic exploration team with PanAmerican Energy, eleven worked for two-weeks as part of a highway repaving crew and five performed construction work for a month-long project building a new bus stop. Young men's very public political engagement contrasted starkly with the small political role that women played. Although women ensured the subsistence of their households through access to cash transfer payments, they had not organized collectively at the local level. By contrast, men, who found it increasingly hard to provide for their households, organized collectively to make demands that were rarely met.

Moreover, male unemployment and the ubiquity of feminized cash transfers were having an incipient impact on kinship relations in Guaraní settlements. Unlike older men who seemed to take pride in the large families they had fathered, young men - in a way that echoes observations in other parts of Latin America (Gutmann 2003: 15) - appeared unwilling to take on these obligations. I knew of several young men who refused to acknowledge (*reconocer*) the paternity of their children by alleging that the women had had sexual relations with other men too. Simultaneously, a sense of resentment was beginning to emerge; as one man told me during the course of a conversation regarding men's reticence towards the use of condoms, 'you can do whatever you want to a girl [sexually], all they want is the child allowance.'

Young men's social lives were often tainted with moral ambiguity. This was because the spaces in which they took place were seen as separate from, and even corruptive of the domestic moral order. Mothers, for instance, often complained that unruly children learnt to misbehave when their parents allowed them to spend too much time on the street (*callejeando*), a favoured hanging out spot for young men. Similarly, older adults often warned their younger daughters not to frequent the pitch because young men had a tendency to be 'mischievous' (*pícaros*) when they were hanging out and drinking. Indeed, the consumption of 'vices' (*vicios*) like coca leaves and alcohol was one of the defining features of young men's haunts. In spite of the Catholic overtones of the term 'vice', young men themselves did not feel that they were acting immorally by consuming them. In fact, for many, the consumption of vices was practically a demonstration of masculine virtue. Men typically consumed alcohol and coca when they worked in the fields or in the forests because they said these substances instilled courage and strength and contributed to making them *guapos* or hardworking. While *guapo* usually means 'good looking' in Spanish, in this part of the Chaco it is used to imply the capacity to work hard. At the same time, the word connotes a certain sexual attractiveness. Similarly, on the football pitch, men chewed coca leaves while playing in order to maximize their endurance and, like Chente in the opening vignette, they 'warmed up' their sense of bravery by drinking alcohol. Women in Guaraní communities very rarely partook in the social life of *los changos*, and they never participated in men's football matches. Instead, their social lives

tended to transpire within the confines of their homes where they bonded closely with their kinswomen as they shared the work of household chores.

Some scholars have used the notion of 'waithood' (Dhillon and Yousef 2009: 16) to describe the kind of social situation that men like Chente found themselves in. Waithood is meant to express the ways in which broader patterns of unemployment and marginalisation have stunted social trajectories of young people. Anthropologists, however, have tended to problematize this notion by suggesting that, although young people may be suspended in a state of waiting, 'youth in waithood are dynamic and use their agency and creativity to invent new forms of being and interacting with society' (Honwana 2104: 20). What stands out in the literature on waiting is the extent to which un(der)employed youth face the challenge of waiting and boredom by imaginatively creating new collectivities that grant them a sense of purposeful action (see for instance Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013). Football, as I will show here, is one of the ways in which young, unemployed, Guaraní men creatively engage with the broader political economic conditions they face.

'APART TOGETHER'

On most afternoons during my stay in Aguararenta, the young men of the settlement played informal matches of football. The number of players varied each day, but usually about fifteen players between the ages of fifteen and thirty participated. There was no official meeting time and players casually dropped by. The matches would take place in the afternoon just before sunset, as the sun dropped behind the verdant hills, the heat subsided, and the temperature became bearable.

The matches were relaxed, informal, and played for fun. Instead of using the iron goal posts installed at each end of the pitch, the players used empty plastic bottles to delineate the playing space. Considering the limited numbers of players participating in the game, the makeshift goals were set surprisingly far apart. This created a large playing field where the abundant space favoured sprints, long balls, and one-on-one displays of dexterous footwork. In these games, players rarely worried about defending, and passing the ball to a teammate was a last resort, rather than a central part of the game. The matches were cheerful affairs and I was at first struck by how loudly the men laughed when a player pulled off a nice trick, was tripped, fouled, or hit with the ball. These games involved a heightened sense of playfulness and were unhindered by the constraining effect of rules or tactics. Instead, they drew on the exultation of healthy bodies pitted against each other and the team as such barely mattered. The general sense of joy that accompanied the match suggests that these games were also an opportunity to create 'feelings of affective closeness' (Walker 2013b: 387).

In part because they were all members of a similar age group, the young men who played football were, as people said, 'all cousins' (*todos primos*) or 'all related' (*todos parientes*). This had to do with the Guaraní's emic conception of their communities as exogamous, kinship bound entities. While the Guaraní

employed rather generic kinship terms, the fact that the men were classified as being 'all cousins' suggested that they were in a relatively egalitarian relationship, one that contrasted with the more hierarchical relationship between 'uncles' and 'nephews'. Although people treated members of older generations with respect (*con respeto*), the relationship between members of the same generation had a much more relaxed feel to it. This distinction was emphasised, for instance, through the recurrent use of joking nicknames (*apodos*)[33] that were the main form of nomenclature between young men.

Even without paying attention to the gender segregated nature of young men's informal matches, it would be easy to see these forms of sociality as expressions of egalitarian conviviality. After all, these 'pick-up' games also provided a platform for the constant confrontation and shaming of other players through the expression of individual skills. For instance, the most humiliating skill a player could be subjected to is what in English is called the nutmeg. This is when a player manages to slip the ball through his opponent's legs before regaining control on the other side. After a successful 'meg' the flow of the game would typically stop as everyone laughed at the shamed player who, in turn, had no option but to run after his tormentor and, if all else failed, cynically trip him. Playing football in this way is not dissimilar to classical anthropological descriptions of joking relationships as simultaneously affording space for friendliness and antagonism (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 197). As Emmanuel De Vienne notes, among the Amazonian Trumai, 'the explicit intention of these interactions is (…) to embarrass and destabilize the other' (2012: 165), but at the same time, 'joking is a powerful tool of social integration' (175) the aim of which is 'to accept both laughing with and being laughed at' (176).

Just as with joking relationships among the Trumai, the Guaraní's playful games of football simultaneously produced 'affective closeness' while creating a space for competitive autonomy. Indeed this sense of playful competition permeated the sociality of young men. And it was also evident in the practice of constant jokes that forced men to be very careful of what they said and how they said it, lest they be ridiculed for suggesting any sort of participation in illicit sexual encounters. Other jokes would seek to undermine a man's position by suggesting that their partner was cheating on them. For example, men might greet each other by asking, 'how is our girl?' (*como esta la nuestra?*), or by calling each other 'partner' (*socio*), suggesting shared sexual access to the same woman. The capacity of players to accept shaming others and also being shamed, required an awareness of what Gregory Bateson might call the 'paradoxical frame' of play (1972: 190).

To explain play, Gregory Bateson famously drew a comparison between play and maps as instances of communication. Maps, he explained, can only be understood to denote a territory once we have apprehended the 'metalinguistic rules' that determine how maps - as representations - relate to the territory. So, while map and territory can sometimes be equated, they can also be distinguished in the

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[33] Apart from the fraternity of men, otherinformants used the word *apodo* to refer to the 'ancients' ' Guaraní names; that is, names used before the Civil Register issued national identity documents to indigenous citizens under Perón's government. They refer to body parts, physical traits, and animals.

sense that the map is not really the territory. What is interesting for our purposes, however, is that in play, map and territory are both equated and discriminated at the same time (1972: 191); thus, in Bateson's words, 'the playful nip de-notes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite' (1972: 189). Not unlike a 'playful nip,' shaming a rival through a demonstration of footballing skill not only denotes a sense of masculine superiority, but also does not denote that which would be denoted by such a superiority. This is because the potential instability that such superiority might cause is pre-empted by the players' recognition that 'this is play.' Here, as is often the case with joking relationships, shaming and being shamed through superior skill heighten the individual's prestige while simultaneously providing a tool of social integration. Integration through play, however, requires that the people involved recognise what Bateson calls the 'metalinguistic rules' of play. During the Guaranís' informal matches, competitiveness was heightened but the laughter and banter ensured that everyone was aware of the playful nature of the game.

Even though they were potentially embarrassing, I never witnessed men actually fall out as a result of these joking forms of sociality. As I will discuss later, these social relations only seemed to unravel when men engaged in heavy drinking. Young men's ability to frame their potentially insulting forms of sociality as play formed part of what Searle has called 'we intentionality,' that is the conscious notion that an individual is entering into a type of joint engagement with others. In Bateson's terms the frame of play 'delimits' a set of 'meaningful actions' and 'is involved in the evaluation of messages which it contains' (1972: 193-4). Entering such a frame 'means accepting the social conventions that define how we get into and out of that world' (Seligman et al. 2008: 89). In the Guaraní context, young men entered the frame while playing football by accepting that this was a space and a time of their own. Here women and older relatives would not be involved. The nicknames, sharing of vices, and playful competitiveness all gave this space a distinctively symmetrical feel, in the sense that there was a constant tension between the expression of superiority (through jokes and skills) and a recuperation of equality (through comebacks or fouls). This competitive, potentially undermining, sense of egalitarianism was at the heart of the social lives of young men and they managed to heighten it by accepting that their actions transpired in the frame of 'play'. In this way, informal matches produced 'the feeling of being "apart together" […] of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world' (Huizinga 1955: 12).

The young unemployed men who came out to play football were ambiguously positioned within their communities. This was not only because they were unable to participate as social adults, but also because by socialising on the pitch they were coming together in a space that was quintessentially their own; a space that was located outside the patios where families socialised. On the pitch, similarly-aged young men who were stripped of family obligations and expressed symmetrical relations to each other in ways that simultaneously created affective closeness while permitting a degree of competitive autonomy. Although they always blurred the line between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, these same relations also provided a space for joking integration. In the next two sections, I show how, as

playfulness becomes more formalised, the ambiguity of play solidifies and brings the disjunctive nature of games (Levi-Strauss 1966) to the fore. I will argue that this process furthers the development of collectivity while also enforcing certain kinds of masculinity over others.

TEAMWORK

In inter-community football matches, the laughter and playfulness of pick-up matches gives way to more serious competition. It is in this register that what Levi-Strauss terms the 'disjunctive effect' (1966: 32) of games truly comes to the fore. While the playful 'pick-up' games were also disjunctive in the sense that they pitted individual players against each other, there was a sense in which these interactions were not final, shamed players could retaliate and, eventually, they too would have an opportunity to shame their opponents. Moreover, 'pick-up' games occurred practically every day and the relations between teammates and rivals ('all cousins'), were not confined to the pitch. By contrast, inter-community games had a clear beginning and end, and non-footballing relations between rival teams were rare. As a result, in these matches it actually *did* matter who won. This finality had the effect of creating a productive disjuncture between the two teams, one that allowed for the social reproduction of male fraternity but also, as I show in the next section, for the policing of masculinities.

On most weekends, team 'representatives' (*representantes*) organised matches against teams from other communities. The teams would meet on the pitch at a pre-determined time. The game, however, did not commence immediately and there was a long period of banter, drinking and coca chewing before the match. The teams did not mix and each team kept to itself in a different corner of the pitch. Team representatives would set out the team shirts on the grass, their numbers facing up, and the eleven starting players would choose a strip. Decked out in their uniforms, infused with courage-inducing alcohol and chewing on endurance granting coca leaves, the players would take the pitch. They arranged themselves according to pre-determined positions and the game commenced. Players exerted themselves to their full capabilities and played with great energy and strength. On the sidelines, supporters called for players to run more and to play harder. Although players nominally adopted specific positions such that the team was organised into defenders, midfielders and forwards, these distinctions generally broke down during the course of the game. The result was that teams were roughly split into two distinct blocks – a more numerous attacking block, and a defending block. From a tactical perspective, this meant that the midfield became a vast no-man's land. The empty space facilitated an 'explosive' game (Pires Rosse 2013: 180) that favoured fast players with good ball control who were able to burst into space to create goal-scoring opportunities. By contrast, and particularly striking for anyone who has played in a European context, it also meant that there was little use for more tactically minded midfield players.

Although the game was played in a way that maximised the expression of individual talent, collective betting practices allowed teams to experience victory as a communal achievement. Betting was so important to the experience of football that men were not interested in playing against other communities

if money was not involved. Before matches began, one of the non-playing men who accompanied the team collected money from each player. Only players and a few male spectators participated in the bets. The money collector would write down how much each player had contributed, He then added it up and shouted the total amount to the rival team who typically sat on the opposite side of the pitch. This sum of money was the team's collective bet, called a *parada*. While the *parada* was composed of individual bets of varying value, the collective *parada* itself was a team bet. After some bantering and negotiating, the rival teams would agree upon a figure so that both teams were playing for the same amount of money. The exact equivalence of the stakes meant that these bets were not about playing the odds but about developing a literal sense of investment in the team and in the match itself.

During the game, each team held on to its own money. This was important because games were usually played without a referee. Although teams often tried to have someone in the crowd arbitrate the game, most onlookers were extremely reluctant to take on the responsibility of refereeing. During one memorable match, the referee – who was of the same age as the players and often played with them – angrily took off the whistle that hung around his neck, threw it to the ground and stomped off in frustration after his some-time teammates repeatedly accused him of favouring their rivals. Given the difficulty of finding a willing referee for these matches, most games were played without an arbitrating figure. Instead teams had devised a clever way of collectively making decisions by clapping their hands and interrupting the flow of the game. In this way, if a player was clearly fouled his teammates would all clap together and stop playing as a way of calling for a free kick. However, when decisions were not as clear only some members of the team might clap while others might continue playing, as a result the free kick would not be granted. This was particularly difficult when calls might have a big impact on the game, such as in the case of granting a penalty. In these cases, the offending team would often disregard their rivals' claps. Arguments ensued. Although there was no clear way to determine who would win the call, the most emphatic team typically did. Alternatively, fights might break out or, if all else failed, the offended team might simply forfeit the match. Fights and forfeits, however, were generally avoided because, if the game was abandoned, the bets were called off and no money was made. The investment made, thus helped secure the teams' commitment to the game. Moreover, if a team won, it was entitled to take the collective bet of its rival team. The winnings thus amounted to twice the stake. In the case of a three-team tournament, the winnings were tripled as the victors took the *paradas* of their two rivals.

The combination of betting and refereeing practices helped 'to determine what "holds" in the temporary world circumscribed by play' (Huizinga 1955: 11). The refereeing practices of the Guaraní were meant to ensure that the rules were not transgressed and thus attempted to avoid the collapse of the play-world (Huizinga 1955: 11). Although the particular manner of collective arbitration was a rather fragile one, it had the distinct effect of enforcing the sense of teamwork that players engaged in. Here, as in the game more generally, each individual contributed to the collective success of the team. Simultaneously, the possibility of a monetary prize kept both teams interested in the outcome of the game and (usually)

served to prevent the outbreak of violence. Playing for money also meant that the spoils of victory provided a tangible sense of collective success. The placing of bets of equal value ensured that both teams were all playing for the same prize, but in the end only one team would take the spoils that victory afforded. As Levi-Strauss noted, games typically commence under the presumption that both teams are equal, however, once it is over, the game ends with a victor and a loser. In this way the game produces disjuncture (Levi-Strauss 1966: 32). Both refereeing and betting practices contributed to the disjunctive effect of the games because they sought to establish equality between the teams – same investment, same rules – but also afforded a space for distinction – only one team takes the *parada*, and the rules must be enforced by each team. These forms of team-work thus consolidated the collectivity of the team in the time and space of the game. However, the formation of teams through disjuncture was eminently short-lived.

After a victory, each player might potentially have received the amount of his original bet multiplied by the number of rival teams but, in practice, the team pooled the money it won and effectively crowd-funded the post-match drinking sessions. The bonhomie achieved during the match was typically prolonged into these sessions as some men played the latest cumbia hits out loud from their cell phones. It was in these moments that something like the kinds of celebrations of abundance that I described in Chapter 3 emerged but on a smaller, all male, scale. Drinking was nonetheless marked by a certain tension. Initially, the aggression was latent but could be picked up through the constant joking and teasing which became increasingly insulting as time went by. The tension gradually intensified as the amount of alcohol consumed increased. It was therefore no surprise that many drinking sessions ended in fights among teammates. Perhaps for this reason, inebriated men often prefaced statements that might be interpreted as confrontational by clarifying that they were speaking respectfully (*con respeto*). Also during drinking sessions, it was common for men to become very concerned with making clear that what they were saying was the truth. So, during the course of a conversation a man might make an emphatic statement and then look around and exclaim 'is it or is it not like this?' (*¿es así o no es así?*) or 'listen to me, I'm telling you the truth' (*Escuchame a mi, yo te digo la verdad*).

The striking thing was that these oratorical formulations, lacking during non-drunken, everyday conversation, added to the competitive sense which developed during drinking. This was also a time when past offences would resurface and open invitations to fight abounded. Successfully evading conflict was an art form that hinged on a delicate balance between making fun of the person who wanted to fight and ignoring him. These drinking sessions often had a very similar feel to the kind of joking informal matches I described earlier, however, here there was no pretence of play and the sort of collectivity that had emerged through teamwork on the pitch gradually broke down. This was no longer about a collective effort to win the game, but rather about individuals asserting their claims to truth and attempting to establish dominance through jokes and threats that were no longer made in jest. If the

match had created a disjuncture that separated the two teams into bounded collectivities, the drinking sessions provided a space where disjuncture between teammates became possible.

Inter-communal matches were therefore very different from everyday informal games. When a group of young men from one community went to play somewhere else, they solidified as a team. This was not because the style of play was more team oriented, indeed the Guaraní's style of play would seem individualistic to a European observer. However, in these matches individual actions were coded as collective efforts. To some extent, the codification of collectivity took place through visible markers like uniforms and was informed by the awareness that the rival teams hailed from different communities. Collective betting and refereeing practices furthered the sense of cooperation and investment in the team. The match became framed within a narrative of collective action and in these matches victories belonged to the team as a 'provisional collectivity' (Vianna 2008: 180).[34] The provisionality of the team became particularly clear during post-match drinking sessions as the boundedness of the game came to an end and the pretence of shared intentionality lost force. In the next section, I look into the ways in which games of football prized certain styles of playing the game and thus favoured the production of recognisable masculinities.

RECOGNISABLE MASCULINITIES

Football, of course, can be played in many different ways and styles of play are likely to change over time and space. Typically, these variations in styles, 'depend upon collaborative forms of agreement about what a particular play or movement means and how it might best be produced, as well as on collusion about what remains unsaid and undone' (Dyck & Archetti 2003: 11). In the Guaraní case, the style of football that players favoured emphasized a kind of physicality and endurance that was associated with local ideas of masculinity. Mauss called these sorts of dispositions 'techniques of the body' and argued that they are 'imposed from without, from above,' (1935: 73) even as they are learnt through observation, imitation, practice and education. The process of learning the 'correct' bodily disposition thus typically includes a degree of coerciveness since, in sport, 'physical action is subject to continuing assessment and correction that seeks to replicate recognized and valued patterns of movement' (Dyck & Archetti 2003: 10)

As an assiduous football player myself, I felt this 'imposition from without, from above' - and also from within - as I joined my Guaraní teammates on the pitch. Before the first match I played, my teammates had high hopes that I would perform well. Because I was relatively taller than most of the other players, they assumed that if I played as a forward I would be able to use my height to score plenty of goals by heading the ball into the net. Early on in the match, one of my teammates made a blistering run down

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[34] These adult games can be contrasted to matches played by children where the game is not coded by narratives of collectivity. In these games children get into discussions primarily over the fact that their teammates refuse to pass the ball and as a result the matches almost never have a well-defined end. Instead they peter out as children abandon the game or self-consciously sabotage it.

the side line and curled in a beautiful and perfectly aimed cross to where I waited in the box. I can only imagine the disappointment of my fellow teammates as they watched our rivals' short central defender soar above me and clear the ball with an authoritative header that sent me clattering to the ground. In the next games, I tried playing as a midfielder but found that I did not have the pace or stamina to cover the vast expanse of midfield pitch that typically emerged as the matches progressed. Over the course of my fieldwork I played many matches but, even though the *changos* of Aguararenta always graciously invited me to play, I gradually began to suspect that I really did not possess the agility, speed or strength to make a significant contribution to the team. During the last months of fieldwork I stopped playing altogether and restricted myself to the role of supporter and observer. Although none of my teammates ever told me that I was no good, I experienced a sense of emasculation that stemmed from my own sense that I was incapable of matching the style of play that Guaraní men favoured.

This was not, I think, an experience restricted to outsiders. Indeed, the footballing trajectories of two fifteen year olds are good illustrations of how conformity to the preferred style of play helps enforce certain kinds of masculinity while disavowing others. Although football is not an institutionalized rite of passage, a teenager's acceptance into the community's 'first team' (*la primera*) is recognition of his ability to demonstrate virile qualities. One of the teenagers, Lidio, was a technically gifted player and an assiduous participant in the informal afternoon matches described previously. In these matches, he excelled at shaming opponents with his fancy trickery. On the weekends, however, he would often sit on the side lines but was rarely asked to play. This puzzled me, since I felt that he would have been a great addition to the team. I once voiced this opinion to Lidio's father – a man reputed for the powerful shooting skills displayed in his youth – and asked him why his son did not play more often. Lidio's father shook his head and told me that his son 'lacked courage' (*le falta coraje*). In fact, the few times that Lidio did play in the inter-community games, he was often muscled off the ball and seemed to have lost some of the lustre of his twinkle-toed style of play.

By contrast, Lidio's cousin, Carlos, managed to gain a foothold on the 'first' team even though he rarely showed up on the pitch on weekdays. He was also less skilful than Lidio was. However, when given a chance to play as a defender during an inter-community match he put in a stellar performance, tackling older and stronger opponents hard, chasing down every ball, and successfully challenging for headers. While Carlos was not always asked to play, other players kept him in mind when there was a shortage of available players.

Lidio and Carlos' respective failure and success to join the football team shows how football allows for the public display of courage and strength in the face of opposition. Without opposition – as in the daily informal games – football is 'mere' play. As a more serious 'game', however, the sport takes on a new significance and becomes a prime site for men to gain recognition as possessors of essential virile traits – including strength and courage. When I returned to Aguararenta two years after my initial spell of

fieldwork, Lidio had given up any pretence of joining in the inter-communal matches, while Carlos had become a mainstay of the community's first team.

What Lidio's experience and my own show is that participation in football matches meant 'open[ing] oneself to potential public humiliation' (Dyck & Archetti 2003: 12). While in the cases described above, this humiliation was often experienced privately, its public dimensions emerged during the games played by 'veterans' (*veteranos*). Veterans' teams were composed of men over the age of thirty-five and they participated in an organized league – with an external referee - that played every weekend. Although the veterans' matches usually drew larger crowds than the young men's, it was striking that the attitude of the people on the side-lines tended to be more mocking than supportive. People laughed at the veterans' lack of pace or their fumbling of the ball, almost as though they were cheap imitations of the real thing. This may explain why some of the older men who played on the younger men's teams – because they were still good enough to do so – showed little interest in joining the veterans' team and were often taunted for not doing so. If young men had the strength and agility to play 'well,' the attempts of 'veterans' fell well short of the ideal. In the subjunctive (Seligman et al. 2008) space of the football pitch, spectators teased and mocked men who were typically afforded 'respect' within their households. Here again, people's capacity to enter the frame of play allowed them to engage in novel forms of relations. In this case, these relations also served to bolster the masculinity of young men and undermine that of their elders. If football provided a space for young Guaraní men to gain recognition, it was also a place where it became clear that older men no longer possessed the masculine virtues required to excel on the pitch.

In a game like football, where physical skill and styles of play are important, people like Lidio, the 'veterans', or myself felt – or were made to feel – that we lacked the skill and strength required to make an effective contribution on the pitch and we were therefore more of a curse than a blessing to the team. Within the frame of the game, certain forms of masculinity were prized while others were felt to be detrimental to the possibility of victory. There are 'schemes of recognition that determine in a relative sense who will be regarded as a subject worthy of recognition', argues Judith Butler in a recent interview (Willig 2012: 140). Football, in the Guaraní context, is one such scheme in as much as it allows men to perform techniques of the body that render them recognisable to others. The fact that these techniques are coded as demonstrations of 'courage,' inscribes them quite explicitly within a local register of masculinity that is associated, for instance, with drinking alcohol or consuming coca leaves and also by association with the experience of labour.

CONCLUSION

It is noteworthy that when people play they are very often also embracing, creating, resisting and destroying a social world that exists beyond the 'magical world' of the game. Play, in this sense, becomes one of the ways in which humans confront the world around them and creatively redeploy it. This is clear when we look at ethnographic studies of play. In many cases anthropologists are able to show the

way in which human games and play simultaneously relate to and also go beyond people's lived experiences. Similarly, my discussion of playing football gains purchase when we consider the broader context of unemployment that young Guaraní men live in. Where their fathers' ability to find jobs in the regional labour market had provided many of them with the means for subsistence, young men now find themselves in a situation where jobs are not forthcoming and where women are increasingly becoming the main providers. This is a common theme in the 'masculinity in crisis' literature (e.g. Bourgeois 1996), and it is also common for men in such situations to reject mere, passive waiting and become engaged in collective forms of action instead (Jeffrey 2010, Masquelier 2013). One of the things that I have tried to show in this chapter is the way in which play and games are crucial conduits for these collective forms of action to emerge. It is within these games that young men found a way of bracketing themselves off from others and it was here that certain forms of masculinity gained traction as valuable modes of action.

Just in the case of the *arete guasu*, the game of football provides a temporary moment of cohesion that quite poignantly contradicts the realities of *divisionismo* in the everyday. In part, I would argue that this is because the game is experienced as a moment with minimal established hierarchies among players. Beyond their abilities on the pitch, players strive with and against each other but there is a noticeable lack of captains or coaches who attempt to dictate the play of others. In a way the game of football, seems to provide a space where *ser unidos* is achieved without the need for a mediating leader who might potentially fall foul of the group. Football, as a space of appearance, is one where players disclose their skills to their teammates and rivals and where concealment is not possible. The game creates a purposive, generative collectivity that manages to gain resources through its concerted bodily action.

The parallels between the game of football and the political lives of Guaraní settlements are striking – but so are the ways in which this moment of play creates a world of illusion. Through the game, Guaraní men occupy a space of appearance of their own; in it they come together as a provisional collectivity that bears the trappings of valued forms of masculinity while disavowing other social relations. The emphasis on strong and agile masculine bodies on the pitch stands in stark contrast to the broader context in which it is precisely these bodies that are no longer in demand and which are no longer able to produce wealth. The successful collectivity that maintains the individuality of its component members seems to contradict the institutionalisation of Indigenous Communities that necessitates the presence of legitimised representatives. Here, at last, personal ambitions and a sense of unity match onto each other thanks to the disjunctive experience of the game. It is through this kind of egalitarian yet selective collectivity, one that is reminiscent of the kinds of plural and embodied groups of young men that blockade the highways, that bets are won and drinking parties financed. Not insignificantly, women are literally sidelined during these games and their most visible role is that of supporters. But when a victorious team gathers to celebrate and drink through the night, these female supporters seldom, if ever, participate.

Figure 18. A ritual mask made for the arete guasu.

As night descended, contrasting sounds clashed in the twilight. The Catholic chapel's bells rang and summoned a small group of people to mass. A memorial service was being held in honour of a man whose wife had stabbed him to death some years ago. She had had enough of his drunken abuse. Above the clanging bells, the bellows and anguished cries of a Baptist preacher echoed over the community; amplified, they were heard by the subdued supplicants who prayed with lowered heads in the chapel. Next to the assembly hall, a group of young unemployed men sat up against the wall. They were bored, and shared wine as they listened to cumbia so loud that they had to shout at each other in order to be heard. Ten metres down the road, Federico, whose grandfather had taught him to play the flute, listened to recordings of *pim pim* music he had bought in a Bolivian border-town market. The music, stripped of its intrinsic sociality, echoed off the bare brick walls of the house as Federico sat and listened on his own, yearning perhaps for next year's *arete*.

<center>***</center>

At times during the course of my fieldwork, I found it hard to envision how a settlement like Aguararenta might endure the social, economic, and political pressures of the Chaco for much longer. Would its bored youth ultimately decide that it wasn't worth sticking around any longer and move to the city? Maybe the settlement would finally manage to receive a land title that would spur on a new form of political and economic organisation in the region? Or would the land be bought off and its inhabitants evicted before that happened? My Guaraní neighbours often asked me how I would go about 'solving the problem of the community' (*el tema de la comunidad*). How would I overcome *divisionismo*? How would I help the people get jobs? I had no answer to these questions. At times I thought that autonomous agricultural projects might work, at others, that a united federation of Guaraní settlements could provide a basis for stronger forms of collection action. But my interlocutors patiently explained that most of these projects had been attempted in the past – very often at the behest of outsiders like myself.

Eighty years ago, Métraux predicted the 'disappearance' (1929: 1) of Guaraní society. Given the poverty, inequality, and oppression that Guaraní people have endured over the last centuries it is tempting to see their lives today as reaching a dead end. There is no doubt that the 'society' I encountered in 2012 had little to do with with the one Métraux observed in the 1930s. The 'disappearance' of society, however, often depends on one's frames of reference. History demonstrates the impressive resilience and adaptability of Guaraní populations in the face of colonialism, conversion, war, missionisation, and segregation. Today's Guaraní face a contradictory process of political conformation where the resistance to internal authority combines with an external process of political institutionalisation. They struggle to partake in the abundance of the extractive economy that surrounds them while embracing new forms of economic citizenship. All of these processes are having a profound impact upon the life of people who live in settlements like Aguararenta and there is no doubt that the future will continue to present them with new challenges.

One of the key themes that runs through this dissertation concerns the intrinsically political nature of life generation in the margins. At a time when opportunities for particular forms of waged work are increasingly unavailable throughout the world, and when reproduction is often ensured by external providers including welfare states and NGOs, it seems legitimate to ask what kind of life subaltern populations are currently able to live. In particular, we might ask what kinds of political lives can emerge within such conditions. My objective has been to describe these lives without resorting to ideas about waste, disappearance, and death. Instead, I have explored the daily struggles through which people generated their lives in spite of the great constraints that surround them.

Specifically, I have paid attention to how marginalised Guaraní settlements strive to engage with broader political and economic structures while also being attentive to the ways in which certain gendered relations of subsistence have become 'the unseen condition of what appears as political' (Butler 2015: 79).

I have argued that capitalist expansion in the Chaco has brought with it a waxing and waning labour market that currently has no demand for Guaraní labour power. This led me to characterise Guaraní lives as wageless lives – lives where waged labour and production no longer ensure subsistence. I have suggested that the quantitative and temporal dimensions of programmes like the *Asignación Universal por Hijo*, compounded by their individualised forms of collection render them less valuable as a basis for political struggle. Perhaps, we might say that this is because the collection of CCTs does not occur within an embodied 'space of appearance' (Arendt 1958) and does not therefore produce the kinds of potency that people associate with 'unity' as the coming together of people in concerted action. In making this claim I am not aiming to romanticise collective forms of action and devaluing the work of reproduction as somehow individualised. Instead, I want to argue that the fashioning of 'collective selves' (Lazar 2008), requires a realm of illusion, in which we can imagine new social possibilities even though we run the danger of potentially disavowing many of the 'conditions of possibility' (Butler 2015) that enable those possibilities to emerge. My argument then is that understanding the constitution of these illusive collectives requires attentiveness to the projects of materially generative action that underlie them, even when these are not based on waged work.

Historically, labour provided the Guaraní with a site of convergence, perhaps even of complicity, through which cross cutting dependencies bound people together. These convergences, complicities, and dependencies transformed (and are still transforming) the social and political landscape of the Gran Chaco and dramatically redefined the place that indigenous populations occupied within the state's national projects of enfranchisement even as they transformed the ways in which these populations engaged in the regional economy. In more general terms, this thesis has traced the ways in which the everyday life of a surplus population interacts with an extractive frontier economy and with expanding projects of state recognition. However, as I argue, waged labour has become decreasingly important in Guaraní contexts and this forces us to rethink the ways in which we write about the indigenous populations of the Chaco. With this context in mind, each of the ethnographic chapters in this dissertation concerns different moments in which a series of social relations were brought together to enable different kinds of social and material generation that were *not* mediated by waged labour. As my ethnography shows, these moments constitute nodes in which ideas about human creativity, gender, state-citizen relations, collectivity, and ethnicity were all brought together as people attempted to materially generate their lives in the day to day.

In describing and analysing these moments, I have shown how contemporary Guaraní political economies articulate with state-sponsored projects of enfranchisement, including multicultural recognition and CCTs. While these are both projects of enfranchisement that seek to incorporate citizens, the political dynamics they imply contrast starkly with each other. Where multiculturalism seeks to create space for collective autarky and autonomy that is (seemingly) separate from the state, cash transfers attempt to enhance economic citizenship through redistributive practices that are individualised

and individualising. To invoke Nancy Fraser's (2000) terminology, we might argue that where multicultural jurisprudence presents a project of collective cultural 'recognition', CCT programmes constitute a project of individualised material 'redistribution'. In the Guaraní case, collective recognition and individualised redistribution have both transformed and reinforced local political and economic practices. To begin with, multicultural recognition determines which individuals become legitimated representatives of the collective and is an issue that is at the heart of local politics. Arguably, this has become a prime concern because representation is currently associated with the capacity to elicit resources from an external world of *criollo* politicians and companies. By contrast, CCTs, which regularly and dependably redistribute the state's resources, are apparently forgotten in day-to-day politics and only briefly brought to the fore during national elections. We have seen that CCT's have transformed patterns of consumption at the heart of Guaraní settlements. However, contrary to Ferguson's expectations, CCTs have not succeeded in giving Guaraní women 'a positive relation to the state, making them into rightful claimants, provid[ing] a new ground for mobilization and open[ing] up a new kind of politics' (Ferguson 2015: 207). In fact, the opposite seems to be true. For a marginalised people like the Guaraní, a population that has had very tenuous claims to the state and its projects of belonging, a sense of entitlement has not accompanied the implementation of CCTs. This seems problematic because, as we saw, entitlement is one of the ways in which scholars have envisioned that surplus populations might escape their plight, a kind of biopolitical response to the 'letting die' that unemployment implies (Li 2009).

Drawing on my experience of the tantalising *arete guasu*, I have suggested that one way we might be able to understand these different modes of generation and their interaction with state projects of enfranchisement is in relation to notions of abundance. Abundance among the contemporary Guaraní is not given by nature, nor is it a kind of abundance premised on the limitation of needs and desires. Abundance does not describe a state where Pareto optimality is met, that is, where a finite number of resources are allocated in the most efficient way possible. Instead it seems to describe a very social state in which resources are seemingly infinite. The distribution of these resources seems to necessitate particular forms of social relationships that are orchestrated by ambiguous Owners. In everyday settings an abundance of resources seems to allow political leaders to attract allies and support. Conversely, however, the lack of abundance – or at least its maldistribution – seems to fuel local *divisionismo*. At another level, I have argued that the desire for abundance helps explain part of the attraction of waged labour for Guaraní workers who aim to participate in the material plentifulness the shadowy Owners of the economy control. Nonetheless, these resources need to be striven for and accessing abundance requires the presence of others – as in the roadblocks or on the football pitch – who 'push' together, *unidos*. When successful, these forms of collective and embodied action can lead to moments of collective consumption, during which radical forms of egalitarian conviviality are achieved and hierarchies can be disregarded.

In a way, Pierre Clastres captured some of the key aspects of abundance when he wrote that among so-called 'primitive societies' 'the quantity of cultivated plants produced […] always exceeds what is necessary for the group's consumption.' 'That surplus,' he elaborated, 'obtained without surplus labor, is consumed, consummated for political purposes properly so called, on festive occasions, when invitations are extended, during visits by outsiders, and so forth' (Clastres 1987: 196). I would agree with Clastres that, among the Guaraní, abundance contributes towards political purposes. However, I would also argue that his description fails to acknowledge the crucial importance that dependent labour, what Clastres misconstrues as 'surplus labour,' actually plays in the elaboration and political usefulness of abundance.

My emphasis on abundance seeks to rectify this oversight, one that has characterised several efforts to understand politics in lowland South America, by remaining attentive to those social relations that do not 'appear' during moments of abundance. In doing so, I aim to highlight the extent to which autonomy and dependency appear to be mutually constitutive relations in the Guaraní case. This insight, which has its roots in the works of people like Brown (1995) or Butler (2015), has rarely been explored in the context of lowland South America where there has been a tendency to emphasise either gendered complementarity or political autonomy. Over the course of this thesis, we have seen that the Guaraní present a case where autonomy and dependency are interrelated, but where the reliance of the former upon the latter is fundamentally disavowed. We have seen, for instance, that abundance was historically produced by captive and dependent labour but that these dependencies were disavowed in political and ritual settings that emphasised ritual leaders' acts of generosity instead. As Guaraní workers became increasingly incorporated into the labour market, labour became the mediating act that allowed them to become recognised as valuable resources in a labour scarce extractive economy. In a parallel way, abundance today seems to be located in the apparently inexhaustible store of wealth that characterises the world of *criollos* - an abundance that men hope to participate in through acts of waged labour – but has become harder to access given the prevalence of labour surplus in the region. In a way that is reminiscent of historical celebrations of abundance, today's mobilisations for work disavow the reproductive labour that maintains those struggles and makes them possible, but they also signify a new kind of relationship between Guaraní workers and the broader political economy of the Chaco.

A transforming state and a shifting economy are likely to create new pressures on settlements like Aguararenta. As state sovereignty re-shapes itself into new projects of enfranchisement and exclusion and as the Chaco's economy reinvents itself in a context of dwindling resources and a changing climate, Guaraní populations will also find ways to continue generating livable lives. The challenges ahead will be daunting and, in the years to come, I suspect that we will eventually find out whether the *arete* constitutes a realm of illusion filled with radical potential for this world or whether it is a mere shadow of an afterlife of abundance.

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