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'We Have Always Lived Here':
Indigenous Movements, Citizenship
and Poverty in Argentina

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Abstract

This paper explores the new politics of difference in Argentina since the 1994 constitutional reform, and its ramifications for citizenship and indigenous wellbeing. Through a comparison of land struggles among the Mbya Guaraní in Misiones and the Diaguita Calchaquí in Tucumán it is shown that new collective rights only gained traction once indigenous social movements employed the language of 'differentiated rights' and pushed for the implementation of multicultural legislation. At the same time, local indigenous communities continue to face adverse socioeconomic incorporation, and the new legal frameworks focus on land rights, thereby foreclosing the establishment of indigenous control over territory. The current politics of recognition in Argentina thus plays a crucial role in deepening cultural and political citizenship, while its impacts remain limited for addressing broader issues of social justice.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Over the last two decades Latin America – following a global pattern – experienced a major cultural and political sea change. Ethnicity gained importance in political activism, state policies, and public discourse (Jackson and Warren, 2005; Stavenhagen, 2002; Van Cott, 2000; Yashar, 2005). Across the region indigenous movements demanded self-determination and autonomy and envisioned more inclusive nations that recognised ethnic, cultural and linguistic difference. In many Latin American countries, constitutional reforms adopted pluri-ethnic understandings of nationhood that granted legal status to indigenous communities and established collective rights. These changes mark a dramatic departure from previous discourses and political practices. For most of the 20th century, class structured political identities and the organising efforts of local communities, corporatist arrangements channelled the intermediation between states and their citizens, and official nationalism emphasised cultural homogeneity and assimilation as the basis of national unity and progress (de la Peña, 2005; vom Hau, 2008; Quijada et al., 2000).

Argentina was no exception to this trend. Similar to other countries in the region, ethnic mobilisation was a relatively rare phenomenon until the 1980s, and public discourse and state policies encouraged class-based political identification, contributing to the 'invisibilisation' (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003) of indigenous people. Yet, from the 1990s onwards, indigenous movements gained increasing relevance as political actors and engaged in the reconstruction of native languages and cultural practices. The 1994 Constitution defined Argentina as a multi-ethnic nation and granted a number of special rights to indigenous citizens, representing a dramatic turn from previous conceptions of nationhood, which envisioned Argentina as a 'white nation' of European migrants.

While research on indigenous movements and citizenship in the Andean countries, Mexico and Guatemala has become a virtual growth industry (e.g., Brysk, 2000; Stavenhagen, 2002; Wimmer, 2002; Yashar, 2005), Argentina has been largely ignored in this literature. As such, the country provides an ideal case to assess the numerous arguments about the broader *implications* of the new politics of difference for citizenship regimes and indigenous wellbeing. Some analysts argue that multicultural constitutionalism and indigenous mobilisation deepen citizenship. Over the last decades indigenous peoples overcame the assimilationist national projects of the post-war period and became political subjects in their own right, without having to give up their ethnic identifications and collective demands, a major advancement over corporatist citizenship and its often authoritarian and racist underpinnings (e.g., Briones, 1997; de la Peña, 2005; Díaz Polanco, 1997).

Other scholars notice a disjuncture between the rhetoric of cultural rights and persistent inequalities. In this perspective, multicultural constitutionalism and indigenous

mobilisation are closely entwined, with neoliberal projects of decentralisation and state reregulation (e.g., Postero and Zamosc, 2004; Sieder, 2002; Yashar, 2005). Governments tolerate and sometimes even encourage ethnic mobilising efforts, as – compared to class-based mobilisations – indigenous social movements pose fewer challenges to the existing political and economic order. Similarly, the constitutional recognition of ethnicity appears as a deliberate strategy of 'good governance' to appease citizens and remove the state from its responsibilities to remedy durable inequalities and racism, bearing the danger of shifting the responsibility for overcoming adverse incorporation and social exclusion to local communities (Radcliffe et al., 2002; Van Cott, 2000).

This study explores the insights and limitations of these distinct perspectives through a comparative analysis of ethnic mobilisation in Argentina since 1994. Specifically, we focus on recent land struggles among the *Mbya Guaraní* in Misiones and the *Diaguita Calchaquí* in Tucumán. The two groups constitute likely extreme points in Argentina, as they are situated in very different environmental and socioeconomic contexts, and exhibit very different histories of engaging the state and larger society. Mbya communities, historically highly mobile horticulturalists having only sparse contact with outsiders, live primarily in the lowlands of Northeast Argentina, where the expansion of commercial agriculture led to the almost complete deforestation of the rainforest and the disappearance of small-scale agriculture. Diaguita communities, pastoralists with a long history of interaction with majority society, are situated primarily in the Andean valleys of Northwest Argentina, and only a decade ago began to engage in the reconstruction of their ethnicity, in an economic context patterned by the rise of tourism and the expansion of mining.

Our perspective on the politics of recognition combines a focus on social movement struggles that challenge existing citizenship regimes from below, and on state-led, top-down attempts to redefine citizenship from above. We trace how the implementation of the 1994 constitutional reform at the *national* level interacted with specific socioeconomic contexts, institutional frameworks, power configurations and identity repertoires at the *provincial* level to affect indigenous mobilisation around the new legal resources.[1] In recent years Mbya and Diaguita communities increasingly drew on the new multicultural rights and sought to obtain formal titling and territorial rights for spaces they have historically used and occupied. By comparing local communities with and without access to land, we also assess the implications of access to land for the livelihoods of indigenous people and their experience of citizenship.

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[1] For a methodological discussion of a subnational comparative research design see Snyder (2001).

This comparative research design – in particular the focus on the national and provincial scales of governance and their often contradictory implications for Diaguita and Mbya land struggles – also constitutes a novel approach to the study of indigenous social movements in Argentina. Over the last decades, a number of studies have examined recent changes in national jurisdiction (e.g., Carrasco, 2000; Lenton and Lorenzetti, 2005), explored the relationship between indigenous movements and the national state (e.g., Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Radovich and Balazote, 1992), and identified crucial variations in state-movement dynamics among different provinces (e.g., Briones, 2005; Escolar, 2007; Occhipinti, 2003). Yet, there is a relative absence of studies whose comparative approach systematically unpacks subnational variations and examines the contestations for differentiated citizenship in Argentina at multiple scales.

To foreshadow our argument: we suggest that the current politics of recognition in Argentina play a central role in deepening cultural and political rights, while its impacts remain limited for addressing broader issues of social justice. The constitutional recognition of communal lands only gained traction once indigenous social movements actively pursed formal titling. Similarly, ethnic mobilisation around communal lands introduced a new language of 'rights', used even by communities without property titles to protect their access to land.

At the same time, the activation of those new multicultural rights has not changed the adverse incorporation[2] of indigenous peoples. The underlying dynamics of the political economies in Tucumán and Misiones – in particular the intensified commodification of land, highly concentrated private land holdings, and clientelist ties between provincial state agencies and local communities – constitute major challenges to indigenous land struggles. Only a fraction of local indigenous communities has obtained collective land titling that provides them with a certain degree of economic security and access to special social rights. Moreover, national and provincial legal frameworks abstain from including more fundamental territorial rights that would establish indigenous governance over territory and its environmental resources (e.g., water, the subsoil), thereby opening up new possibilities to address the sources of adverse incorporation.

The methodology employed in this paper combines primary documents, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and basic statistical information. We visited local communities in Tucumán and Misiones in October/November 2008 and February 2009 and conducted 38 interviews in total, 18 with indigenous activists (12 in Tucumán/six in Misiones), eight (six/two) with non-activists, four (two/two) with provincial state officials, four with national state officials, and four with economic elites, most importantly large landowners. These interviews were complemented by frequent consultations with

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[2] The concept captures the (often negative) *terms* of inclusion into wider economic and social networks faced by subordinate groups (Du Toit, 2004).

anthropologists, sociologists, and regional planners from various universities and research institutions in San Miguel de Tucumán, Posadas and Buenos Aires.

The subsequent parts of the paper are organised as follows: the next section focuses on the recent constitutional reform and indigenous mobilisation at the national level in Argentina. The third section moves to the provincial level and compares Diaguita and Mbya ethnicities and livelihoods, their mobilisations around land and territory, followed by a discussion of the socioeconomic and ecological contexts and the political challenges within which these mobilisations unfold. A final section concludes by revisiting the central findings of our analysis in light of broader debates around property rights in development and the role of ethnic mobilisation and multicultural legislation in the government of poverty.

Multicultural constitutionalism, indigenous mobilisation and adverse incorporation

During the 1980s and 1990s, indigenous mobilisation in Argentina reached unprecedented levels, indigenous peoples gained increasing visibility in public discourse, and state policy moved towards extending special rights for these populations.[3] Several ethnicities that had been considered extinct since the colonial period, such as the *Huarpes* or the *Ranqueles*, filed for legal recognition and organised around the reconstruction of their culture and past. Similarly, communities that previously mobilised as peasants or workers started to identify as *Kolla* or *Diaguita* and made claims on state authorities as indigenous peoples (Briones, 2005; Escolar, 2007; Hermitte et al., 1995; Lazzari, 2007). These pueblos and their organisations were able to draw on new legislations, organisational resources, and framing strategies. For the first time in the modern history of Argentina, provincial and national laws recognised special rights for indigenous citizens, culminating in the 1994 constitutional reform.

Significant transformations in global and national opportunity structures facilitated indigenous mobilisation and the changes in state policy during the 1980s and 1990s. Democratisation ended massive state repression that took place under the military regime (1976-1983). After 1983, in light of the unclear fate of many victims of state terror, new social movements such as the *Madres del Plaza de Mayo* sought legal guarantees that would secure the fundamental right to have an identity (Jelin and Hershberg, 1996). Similarly, state authorities sought to improve the human rights record by forming special commissions and opening up police and secret service archives from the military period. These pressing concerns for human rights in public discussion and

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[3] For an excellent historical overview of indigenous mobilisation in Argentina see Gordillo and Hirsch (2003). The history of *indigenista* state policies in the country is well documented in Carrasco (2000) and Quijada et al. (2000).

policy making provided indigenous activists with a new rights-based language to frame their identity claims.

Global and regional changes proved equally important. Across Latin America states adopted multicultural constitutional frameworks that established models of how to legislate ethnic rights (Van Cott, 2000). Similarly, international institutions and transnational advocacy networks became involved in the protection of indigenous rights and provided crucial support for national policy making and the legitimation of local claims (Brysk, 2000). Indigenous activists in Argentina could draw on documents like the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169, approved in 1989, or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved in 1994, and pressure the national government to adopt the legal principles encoded in these documents, such as the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of indigenous peoples, their right to self-determination, and the recovery of communal territories (Carrasco, 2000).

During the 1980s and early 1990s, indigenous mobilisation increasingly transcended distinct local communities and their specific demands. These national-level mobilising efforts benefited greatly from increased media attention to cultural diversity and the strategic alliances indigenous activists formed with student groups, unions, academics and neighbourhood associations. While no single organisation emerged that could claim to legitimately represent the various indigenous groupings in Argentina, this did not become a barrier for the articulation of shared political, economic and cultural interests. Activists from distinct ethnic backgrounds coalesced into a movement that engaged in sustained political action, ranging from specific-purpose rallies and demonstrations, such as nationwide protest marches against the 1992 *Quintenario* celebrations, to more prolonged campaigns and lobbying efforts.[4] The latter included the continuous presence of indigenous lobby groups in the Santa Fe Constitutional Assembly that preceded the 1994 constitutional reform (Carrasco, 2000).

Intensified indigenous mobilisation was closely entwined with dramatic legal changes. During the 1980s policymakers enacted several laws that treated indigenous communities as legal subjects and granted them a number of special rights. A new national legislation, the *Ley de le Protección y Apoyo a las Comunidades Indígenas* (23,302), passed in 1985 and ratified in 1989, established indigenous communities as carriers of specific rights, guaranteeing them, among other things, the possibility to recuperate lands to which they had historical claims (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003). The 1994 constitutional reform confirmed these new norms by depicting Argentina as a pluricultural nation and encoding the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of indigenous peoples. This 'multicultural constitutionalism' (Van Cott, 2000) established distinct indigenous forms of political authority and self-organisation. Obtaining legal status

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[4] Our conceptualisation of social movements draws on Tilly (2004) and Tarrow (1994).

(*personería jurídica*) became uncoupled from registering as civil association, resulting in a dramatic increase of officially recognised indigenous communities in Argentina.[5] Similarly, the constitutional recognition of communal property set the stage for intensified mobilisation around land and territorial rights. Across Argentina local indigenous communities invoked the new right to reclaim communal lands.[6]

The constitutional reform also established new forms of governance to regulate the relationship between the national state and indigenous peoples. The *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (INAI) was confirmed as the main national state agency responsible for the implementation of the new legislation. In 1996 and 1997 the INAI supported the *Programa de Participación de Pueblos Indígenas* (PPI), which established a platform for indigenous communities to elaborate shared demands. The organisational structure of the INAI itself became tailored towards indigenous participation. The *Consejo de Participacion Indigena* (CPI), formed in 2004 and composed of indigenous representatives from each province, has advisory and supervisory functions. The expansion of indigenous representation within the agency coincided with an increasing focus on land rights. In response to a recent law (26,160) that stopped the expropriation of lands occupied by indigenous communities and mandated a nationwide land survey, INAI technical teams seek to collect the necessary information on indigenous land use to establish current and future land claims.[7]

Simultaneously, the 1994 Constitution also established major limitations to indigenous mobilisation around land and territory. The right to claim communal lands is associated with indigenous *communities*, defined as 'groups of families,' and thus ultimately linked to a specific location or settlement. Such a focus on local communities, and not on indigenous groups, prevents land claims covering large surfaces – that might crosscut national boundaries. The treatment of indigenous communities as bearers of special rights also contributes to the political fragmentation of indigenous groups. From legal status to land claims, it is local indigenous communities that negotiate these rights with state agencies.

Moreover, the INAI also does not have much political weight within the national state apparatus. As a result, the recent history of the state agency is marked by frequent personnel turnovers and repeated moves between different ministries.[8] This instability

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[5]The national-level *Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas* is administered by the *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (INAI).

[6] The systematic provision of legal training and advice through NGOs also contributed to the intensification of indigenous land struggles.

[7] Interview with INAI official Emiliano Reynoso, Buenos Aires, 9 February 2009.

[8] As of February 2009, INAI officials report to the Ministry of Social Development.

probably contributes to often unpredictable policy making. Indigenous activists report that, in some cases, officials provide communities with far-reaching legal and material support to secure land titles, while other communities are largely left on their own. Similarly, the majority of the INAI personnel remains non-indigenous, and participation mechanisms such as the CPI are poorly funded.

The multicultural constitutionalism and ethnic mobilisation also stand in tension with the continued marginalisation of indigenous peoples in Argentina. Over the last two decades, in a macroeconomic context marked by repeated crisis and neoliberal structural adjustment policies, inequality and poverty increased in Argentina, even in periods of economic expansion. The Gini coefficient for the distribution of per capita household income shows unequalising tendencies, increasing from 0.45 in 1992 to 0.49 in 2006.[9] Similar patterns can be detected for poverty. When measured in absolute terms, by using $2 a day at purchasing power parity (PPP) prices, poverty increased from 1.9 percent in 1992 to 3.7 percent in 2006. This means that the number of Argentines living in extreme poverty more than doubled, from 1,400,000 persons in 1992 to 3,400,000 persons in 2006. Relative poverty followed a similar trend. When setting the poverty line at 50 percent of the median household income, 6.6 percent of Argentines were poor in 1992, compared to 9.9 percent in 2006 (Gasparini, 2007).

For most of Argentina's modern history, those who identify as indigenous were among the most marginalised sectors of society (see also Hall and Patrinos, 2005).[10] The last two decades did not reverse this pattern. National-level data on indigenous income poverty in Argentina is not available,[11] yet complementary information indicates that the overall decline of socioeconomic conditions in Argentina had equal, if not worse, effects on indigenous wellbeing. In general, poverty is much higher among rural residents than urban residents, and the majority of indigenous communities continue to be concentrated in rural areas. In 2001, based on data collected before the 2001-02 economic crisis, 33 percent of the rural population had unmet basic needs, compared to 14 percent in urban areas (Verner, 2006). Social indicators reveal a similar picture. Census data from 2004-05 show that 7.8 percent of indigenous peoples are illiterate, compared to a 2.6 percent rate for the whole country. In other words, illiteracy among Argentineans who self-identify as indigenous is three times higher than the national average (INDEC, 2004-05). Moreover, 71.6 percent of indigenous Argentineans aged

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[9] The Gini coefficient for income distribution reached its peak with 0.53 in 2002, right after the 2001-02 macro-economic crisis.

[10] This assessment obviously does not take into account indigenous conceptualisations of wellbeing and poverty, which will be discussed in the next section.

[11] Census data do not include information on income, whereas the *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares* (EPH), the main household survey in Argentina, only covers urban areas.

15 years and older completed primary education, compared to 81.1 percent as the national average (INDEC, 2004-05).

Socioeconomic transformations and political obstacles: Provincial patterns

In a federal state like Argentina each province enjoys substantial autonomy and provincial legislation, and juridical boundaries tend to shape the articulation of indigenous demands and identities. Similarly, the underlying dynamics of provincial political economies often vary dramatically, setting the stage for distinct forms of economic subsistence and state-movement conflicts. Thus, to more fully explore the implications of constitutional change and ethnic mobilisation for citizenship and indigenous wellbeing in Argentina, it is crucial to connect the analysis of national patterns with subnational variations. This section explores these dynamics for the Diaguita Calchaquí in Tucumán and the Mbya Guaraní in Misiones.

Diaguta and Mbya identities and livelihoods[12]

The majority of citizens who self-identify as Diaguita live in the Andean valleys of Northwest Argentina. National census data from 2004 indicate that 31,753 individuals in Argentina declare themselves as belonging to this group (INDEC, 2004-05). Half of those, around 15,000, are concentrated in Tucumán.[13] Each of the 16 Diaguita communities located in this province includes between several hundred and 2,000 *comuneros*, that is members with voting rights and (potential) entitlements to communal lands. According to census data, 8,223 individuals self-identify as Mbya Guaraní in Argentina (INDEC, 2004-05).[14] The majority of them, around 4,500, live in approximately 100 communities in Misiones, a province bordering on Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay.[15] The size of Mbya communities varies between 50 and 450 members.

In both cases, identity construction is profoundly racialised (see Omi and Winant, 1994). Those who identify as Diaguita and Mbya highlight shared phenotypical characteristics,

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[12] The discussion of ethnicity in this section draws theoretical inspiration from Jenkins (1997) and Rueschemeyer and vom Hau (2009).

[13] Significant numbers can also be found in the neighbouring provinces of Salta, Jujuy, Catamarca, San Juan and La Rioja.

[14] There are also Mbya who live in Brasil and Paraguay. Among the three countries, the total Mbya population is approximately 20,000 persons.

[15] The precise number of Mbya communities is difficult to determine. We draw here on numbers from the INAI. The *Dirección Asuntos Guaraníes* (DAG) officially recognises 93 communities, while an unpublished study by the *Universidad Nacional de Misiones* speaks of 104 communities in 2008.

most prominently facial features and skin colour, as crucial markers of ethnicity.[16] This emphasis on phenotype is entwined with references to a common ancestry, invoking the imagery of a physical connection, of 'having the same blood' that links co-ethnics together. Diaguita and Mbya identity making also builds on discourses that associate indigeneity with special forms of knowledge about nature and an ecologically sound way of life (Cebolla Badie, 2000; Gorosito Kramer, 1982). Another boundary marker of Mbya identity is language. Most of those who identify as Mbya are Guaraní native speakers and use this language in daily interactions.[17] In the case of the Diaguita, the vast majority are monolingual and use Spanish in daily life.[18] Diaguita activists claim that their historical ancestors spoke a distinct language – *kakan* – before Inca and Spanish colonisation, yet this language does not operate as a sign of ethnic difference.

There are also stark differences in the material conditions. Both individual- and community-level evidence shows that poverty among the Mbya living in Misiones is generally worse than the national average for indigenous peoples in Argentina. Around 29.4 per cent of those who identify as Mbya are illiterate, compared to 7.8 percent for all citizens of indigenous origins in Argentina, and a national average of 2.6 percent (INDEC, 2004-05). Similarly, only 31.7 percent of the Mbya aged 15 years and older completed primary school, compared to 71.6 percent of indigenous Argentineans, and a national average of 81.1 percent (INDEC 2001, 2004-05). Community-level data shows that most local Mbya communities lack infrastructural means to satisfy basic needs. In 2008, from the 93 communities recognised by the *Dirección de Asuntos Guaraníes* (DAG), 75 (or 81.6 percent) lack clean water, 63 (or 67.7 percent) do not have a primary school, 33 (or 35.5 percent) do not have any healthcare facilities within their community, and 30 (or 32.3 percent) lack electricity (DAG, 2008).

This aggregate information overshadows the fact that there are dramatic inequalities among Mbya communities in Misiones. The coverage of basic needs is highly skewed. Local communities with access to a health clinic are usually those that also have electricity, a primary school and a water dwell, whereas a substantial number of communities lack access to all of those provisions. In better-off communities, *caciques* and local council members we encountered usually have a professional education and actively maintain ties to INAI officials, municipal agents and NGO representatives, knowing whom to approach for what kind of issue. Worse-off communities tend not to

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[16] These classifications are highly flexible and context-dependent and thus best described as 'phenomyths' (Escolar, 2007).

[17] Census data indicate that around 97 percent of self-identified Mbya speak or understand Guaraní. Among the younger generation, there is a growing percentage that is fluent in both Spanish and Guaraní.

[18] According to census data, almost 100 percent of the Diaguita speak Spanish at home.

marshal similar 'development brokers' (Mosse and Lewis, 2006), who facilitate mobilisation for resources and social networks.

Comparable data for Tucumán indicate that poverty among the Diaguita is less extensive than the national average for indigenous peoples in Argentina, and more closely follows overall national-level trends. According to 2004-05 census data, 2.8 percent of the Diaguita residing in Tucumán, Salta and Jujuy are illiterate – significantly less than the 7.8 percent average for all citizens of indigenous origin, and only slightly below a national average of 2.6 percent (INDEC, 2004-05). Education levels show a similar pattern. Of the Diaguita aged 15 years and older, 84.2 per cent completed primary school, compared to 71.6 per cent of indigenous Argentineans, and a national average of 81.1 per cent (INDEC, 2004-05). While we were unable to obtain comparable community-level data, our fieldwork indicates that even remote local Diaguita communities have access to a primary school, basic healthcare facilities and electricity.[19] Thus, Diaguita communities belong to the comparatively better-off indigenous groups in Argentina, and are characterised by less pronounced inequalities among communities.

The accounts of Mbya and Diaguita activists are generally congruent with the picture derived from census data. Interviewees in Misiones identify access to schooling, healthcare and improved sanitary facilities as basic needs. Another major issue to be tackled is frequent incidents of malnutrition.[20] Diaguita leaders portray water supplies for themselves, their animals, and their crops, and the creation of alternative employment opportunities, as the most urgent communal needs.

Socioeconomic and ecological contexts
Indigenous identities and livelihoods need to be understood within the broader socioeconomic and ecological contexts of Tucumán and Misiones. Over the last three decades, the two provincial economies experienced dramatic transformations, which propelled accumulation by dispossession (see Harvey, 2003) and changed basic forms of subsistence.

Historically, the economy of Tucumán was primarily oriented towards agriculture. Sugar cane and citrus fruits dominated in the lowlands, while in the Andean valleys corn farming and cattle herding constituted the main economic activities. Over recent decades the lowlands experienced the large-scale mechanisation of sugar cane production, while in the highlands tourism and mining increasingly complemented the dominant

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[19] While most households have running water, interviewees report frequent service interruptions.

[20] Interviewees differ on whether to interpret these incidents as linked to public food supplies and their effects on subsistence practices and diets, or as a consequence of unemployment and lack of cash.

agricultural sector. A growing demand for summer homes and a booming hotel industry intensified land sales, and often entailed the enclosure of historically open pastures. While mining did not (yet) become a major economic force in Tucumán, the expanding 'frontier of extraction' (Bebbington et al., 2008) in neighbouring provinces had major ecological consequences, most importantly by engendering water scarcity.

For most of the 20th century, Misiones was characterised by the expansion of small-scale agriculture and the gradual decline of the Paranaese rainforest. Non-indigenous *colonos* settled on public lands and engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture to produce *yerba mate*. During the 1970s, the development policies of the military government – aimed at strengthening Argentina's border regions – increased land values and accelerated deforestation. Motivated by tax breaks, road building projects, and the massive sale of public lands, agro-businesses acquired major land holdings and invested in their commercial use. The result was that pine plantations and soy fields replaced most of the remaining rainforest.[21] This process also entailed the end of small-scale agriculture, as most *colonos* were forced to move and sell their plots (Gorosito Kramer, 1982).

These socioeconomic and ecological transformations greatly affected the subsistence practices of Diaguita and Mbya communities. In Tucumán, up to a generation ago most of those who identify as Diaguita engaged in a combination of livestock agriculture and farming, producing primarily for self-consumption. To obtain some cash, male household members also migrated for temporary work on the sugar cane harvest. Today, the importance of farming and cattle herding has declined, and subsistence strategies are primarily built around salaries and wages, most prominently through construction work, public employment, or fixed-term contracts in development projects. Households also frequently draw on the support of pensions and social assistance programmes, receive remittances from family members who migrate to major industrial centres, such as Buenos Aires, and derive income from selling handicrafts.

In Misiones, up to a generation ago Mbya households predominantly engaged in a mixed subsistence strategy that combined horticulture, hunting, and fishing in the rainforest, planting staple foods, and seasonal work as wage labourers in the *yerbales*. Especially in remote areas, indigenous communities often maintained a highly mobile way of life and frequently moved the location of their settlements. With deforestation, Mbya subsistence activities changed dramatically. Today, indigenous households tend to live off a mix of government-provided food supplies, small-scale farming, and salaried work as auxiliary teachers, sanitary agents or health mentors, and the sale of handicrafts. While communities receive increasing numbers of kin migrating from

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[21] Compared to 1900, only 1.2 percent of the Paranaese rainforest remained in 2000. Most of these 12,000 sq. km are situated in Misiones (Wilde, 2007).

Paraguay,[22] most Mbya communities now tend to remain in more permanent settlements.

Mobilisation around land and territory

Land commodification, increasing property values, and new subsistence strategies constitute a crucial backdrop for indigenous land struggles in Tucumán and Misiones. In the two cases, leaders highlight that changing land use – whether related to the expansion of commercial agriculture, tourism or mining – entails the enclosure (*arrinconamiento*) of local communities and the spaces they traditionally used and lived in. A female Diaguita council member emphasises that indigenous property rights would provide 'psychological security' to pursue their livelihoods, especially because the formalisation of tenure would help to secure the free movement of animals, which is increasingly hampered by the growing fragmentation of land ownership. A *cacique* points to the nexus between land rights and tourism: 'Having land would be beneficial for us on the day we start to establish our own tourism corridor. Today our artisans manage to sell some little things, but there is no hotel that is ours'. Thus, formal titling would enable Diaguita communities to partake in the overall transformation of the region, most importantly by providing the necessary planning security to pursue their subsistence activities and run their own economic enterprises.

In Misiones, Mbya leaders see land titles as crucial to secure the economic and cultural survival of their communities. Even if formal titling only means obtaining a few hectares, titles would prevent the sale of communal areas and thus provide a last resort against the literal disappearance of a community. Moreover, especially for communities close to the remaining rainforest, having a land title facilitates subsistence. A *cacique* suggests that:

> a community with land has the option to enter our rainforest and take out materials without being thrown out, because we have the land title. Those that don't have a title, in these cases the owner can say when we can enter, and if we can take out resources.

Similarly, altered Mbya livelihood strategies also entail a more settled existence. Among Mbya households, the growing prevalence of public employment and salaried work, combined with increasing educational aspirations for their children, makes living in a permanent settlement a more paramount goal.

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[22] There has always been substantial Mbya movement between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Over the last two decades, Mbya migration from Paraguay to Misiones increased, because in the former social assistance programmes are basically non-existent.

It thus comes as no surprise that Diaguita and Mbya communities are eager to draw on the new constitutional rights and actively seek the formalisation of land tenure. As a female *cacique* in Tucumán puts it, 'the constitution was the final push to be able to gain our rights'. In both cases, local communities increasingly pursue legal status, a precondition for the filing of formal land claims. Between 2004 and 2008 in Misiones, the number of legally recognised communities increased from 54, or around half of the Mbya communities, to 93 communities with *personería jurídica* (DAG, 2008). Over a similar time period Tucumán witnessed the increase from four to 16 recognised Diaguita communities.[23]

Securing land titling is a protracted process, which requires legal proofs to demonstrate a continued history of land occupation, and a link between land use and 'traditional' forms of communal organisation. A dominant framing strategy employed by indigenous leaders is to represent the Diaguita or Mbya as original inhabitants, who occupied the land long before the onset of Spanish colonialism. Land claims usually emphasise the continuity between precolonial and contemporary patterns of indigenous land use. As one activist emphasises, 'we have proofs, archaeological traces, that we existed before'. Also common is the preparation of maps. In Tafi del Valle, the *cacique* and various council members crafted a map that shows the settlements, ceremonial centres and pasture areas historically used by the community. Other forms of evidence include legal documents, kinship trees, genealogies of landmark names, and the projection of collective spatial memories onto satellite images and GPS-generated maps.[24]

Diaguita and Mbya activists argue that their main motivation for pursuing formal titling is economic security. Not having a title exposes communities to the risk of possible eviction, even from lands they lived on for generations. As a *cacique* in Tucumán puts it, this means:

> not to know whether in two or three years the landowner comes and evicts us, and this way I can't secure my existence or that of my children…[whereas] the knowledge that we are going to live here allows us to farm and raise cattle.

Land rights also provide the basis for claiming social benefits, such as public housing and infrastructural investments – resources that cannot be accessed in the absence of a title.

Another impetus for Diaguita and Mbya efforts to obtain formal titling is the nexus between land and territory. Land rights refer to the possession of a particular

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[23] Interviews with INAI officials María Paz and Matilde Sacco, Buenos Aires, 9 February 2009.

[24] For the production of the latter, local communities rely on support from NGOs and universities.

circumscribed surface, while indigenous conceptions of territory are broader and claim control over spaces used (or traditionally used) by a community and their environmental resources, such as the air, subsoil, arable lands, rivers and woods. In the words of a *cacique* in Tucumán:

> when the state says *land* it gives you a specific plot or maybe even the whole valley so you can plant and have your farm. Then tomorrow comes a mining company, and [the state] says 'I said land, not subsoil [rights]!', or they build a factory that contaminates the air, and the air is not yours. By contrast, with *territory* we can restrain these kinds of debaucheries.

Activists thus associate contestations for land rights with a more fundamental struggle for the recognition of indigenous territorial rights, which are seen as central to claims for political sovereignty and indigenous resource governance.

Yet, when guaranteeing indigenous communities 'the possession and property of the communal lands they traditionally occupied', the 1994 constitution speaks of land rights, and not territory, as demanded by Diaguita and Mbya activists. Moreover, the constitutional focus on land does not specify the rights of indigenous communities to control the exploitation of resources found within their territories, for example minerals or medical plants, and the potential future uses of these resources (Carrasco, 2000).

Territory also plays a central role in indigenous understandings of wellbeing. Mbya leaders question narrow definitions of poverty, and frequently emphasise that being poor is not confined to the absence of material status symbols. A female leader points out that, in the case of the Mbya, conceptions of poverty need to take into account that 'territory is life' and a fundamental source of identity. Poverty is thus closely related to the deforestation and commercial use of the rainforest, which undermines a self-sustained way of life grounded in the combination of horticulture, hunting and some salaried work, and which enhances Mbya dependency on outside support. 'One is poor because of not having [access to] the rainforest any more' – a conception that embraces a broader approach to poverty reduction, that cannot be reduced to specific targeted interventions and social programmes alone.

Similarly, Diaguita activists draw a close connection between poverty and environmental deterioration. A recurrent theme is the nexus between mining and water scarcity, with immediate effects on farming and cattle herding. The almost universal access to schooling, healthcare and electricity is seen as necessary, but by no means sufficient, to secure the wellbeing of community members:

> I believe that we are rich poor, we have all the natural resources and we could enjoy them in accordance with our worldviews, yet the sovereignty over natural resources

that accrues to us as indigenous peoples in our territories has not been recognised so far.

Interviewees thus associate poverty with the absence of indigenous control over territory, and oppose the increasing dependence on social assistance programmes. Again, this perspective suggests a broader approach to poverty reduction that focuses on territorial rights, environmental protection and the reorganisation of accumulation patterns.

Both Mbya and Diaguita leaders suggest that the formalisation of land tenure only constitutes a partial solution to improve the wellbeing of local communities. The most tangible outcomes provided by formal titling are new possibilities to demand and obtain basic infrastructure, such as public housing, roads, drainage or water dwells. More fundamental territorial rights are required to overcome the conditions of adverse incorporation associated with the dramatic socioeconomic and ecological transformations in Misiones and Tucumán. Diaguita activists mobilise for the reform of provincial and national laws, arguing that the ILO Convention 169 includes the notion of 'territory', and that this international legal framework – recognised by the national government – has priority over any other form of legislation. In their understanding, territorial rights are associated with unrestricted access to the spaces the Diaguita historically used and occupied, control over ceremonial sites and the archaeological ruins of their ancestors, and indigenous resource governance of the subsoil and water supplies. In Misiones, Mbya notions of territory are tied to the preservation of the rainforest:

> We occupy a cultural space with various ceremonial grounds and cemeteries…and there is respect towards nature…but we as indigenous peoples are not owners of these lands, we are part of a natural system and it is us who belong here.

Territorial rights mean control over the actual and potential resources derived from the rainforest. Mbya activists mention the local management of logging licences and the protection of indigenous knowledge about medical plants as possible benefits from territorial rights.

Indigenous mobilisation around land and territory remains an ongoing process. The majority of Diaguita and Mbya communities actively seek communal lands, yet so far only a fraction have obtained formal titling. In Tucumán, one out of 16 recognised communities, Amaicha del Valle, managed to obtain a title and received around 52,000 hectares of land.[25] Indigenous leaders in Amaicha had the advantage of being able to support their claims with a written legal document from the colonial period, a *Cédula Real* that documents the precise boundaries of the land title granted by the Spanish

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[25] Amaicha has around 2,500 comuneros and contains 14 base communities.

Crown. In Misiones, around 20 out of 100 communities successfully claimed titles, and even fewer actually received these lands.[26]

Challenges

Diaguita and Mbya land struggles also face distinct political and institutional challenges. In Tucumán, Diaguita mobilisations resemble an organised social movement. Claims for land and territory are grounded in collective action and a sense of shared mission that crosscut distinct local communities and their concerns. At the provincial level, the *Unión Diaguita* constitutes the main vehicle of interest representation and provides a platform for *caciques* and community delegates to meet on a monthly or bimonthly basis. The assembly has been crucial for Diaguita mobilisation, most importantly as a coordination mechanism for province-wide resistance against paying pasture rents to landlords,[27] and as a channel for support from external advocacy networks and NGOs. Under the umbrella of the Unión, various indigenous communities also work together to protest the environmental effects of mining. By contrast, Mbya mobilisation is more fragmented and does not scale up into sustained collective challenges. Contentious practices and a sense of common purpose only occasionally move beyond the local level, as for instance in the recent occupation of the central square in the provincial capital of Posadas. Usually Mbya mobilisation is more focused on community concerns, and indigenous activists cannot build on a coordination mechanism comparable to the Unión Diaguita.

These distinct patterns of Diaguita and Mbya mobilisation are connected to different state–movement relations. In both cases, indigenous leaders conceive of the national state as a potential ally, whereas the provincial state generally appears as a major opponent. Yet, the relative power of national and provincial state agencies varies. In Misiones the influence of the INAI is limited, and the main state actor involved in the governance of indigenous affairs is the DAG, which acts as the primary interlocutor between communities and the provincial state. The power of the DAG derives primarily from controlling the legal register of indigenous communities, and the relationship between this provincial agency and indigenous communities is marked by clientelism and cooptation. Interviewees report frequent incidents of DAG officials manipulating the legally registered size of local communities, with substantial consequences for the allocation of social assistance. Moreover, in response to attempts of Mbya leaders to

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[26] The DAG claims that 39 Mbya communities obtained formalisation of land tenure, yet several other sources, including anthropologists and officials from other provincial state agencies, treat this number as inflated and provide own estimates of around 20 communities with land titling.

[27] Up to a decade ago it was common practice for landlords to receive rents in staples from farm lands and they often charged indigenous communities for animals passing through their pastures. Today, almost all of those who identify as Diaguita have stopped paying these rents.

organise in a more autonomous manner, the DAG created the *Consejo de Ancianos y Guías Espirituales*, an assembly of supposed spiritual leaders that is without much legitimacy among local communities, yet acts as the official Mbya representative organ (Gorosito Kramer, 2007). Especially impoverished communities depending on social assistance tend to tolerate these blatant forms of DAG clientelism in exchange for material benefits, while better-off communities maintain a critical (and often mocking) distance to these DAG-sanctioned representatives.

In Tucumán, a comparable provincial state agency does not exist, and the INAI plays a more prominent role in managing state–movements relations. Similar to Misiones, Diaguita leaders report tactics of political fragmentation. In the Valley of Tafi, INAI officials encouraged the formation of several communities, apparently with the intention of preventing a larger community, representing the whole valley, from emerging. At the same time, political clientelism is less prevalent in Tucumán, and the Diaguita maintain a more autonomous position. The INAI often works together with representatives of the Unión Diaguita to support local land struggles, for instance by covering the legal costs of lawsuits with landowners.[28]

Yet, Diaguita mobilisation around land and territory faces other challenges. In Misiones, external ascriptions reinforce a stark distinction between Mbya ethnicity and white national society – ethnic and racial boundaries are taken to be natural and fixed. In the case of the Diaguita, indigenous authenticity claims are frequently contested. State officials, NGO activists and economic elites we interviewed tend to describe the Mbya as 'real Indians' and as a 'pure race', whereas the Diaguita are often framed as 'fake Indians' or a 'diluted race'. These representations feed on the imagery of the Mbya as hunters and gatherers, who only very recently entered the cash economy, and the portrayal of the Diaguita as settled agriculturalists and farmers, with a long history of exposure to national society. Opponents draw upon these imageries to challenge Diaguita claims-making, portraying communal territories as an invention, and not a legitimate claim.

Another major challenge to recent Diaguita mobilisation is the land tenure structures. Indigenous activists and external observers alike indicate that formal titling is more difficult to obtain if a local community is situated on private lands. Diaguita communities are predominantly located on lands in the hands of a few traditional families. These landholders frequently make use of their political connections in attempts to evict communities pursuing formal titling. The only community with formalised land tenure, Amaicha, was situated on public lands. Misiones is still characterised by mixed land

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[28] Similar patterns can be detected for the relations between indigenous communities and NGOs. In Misiones, NGOs – many of them with an explicit confessional orientation – provide important support, yet their involvement is concentrated on only a few communities, and often imbued with a paternalistic attitude. In Tucumán, Diaguita communities are less dependent on NGO support.

tenure. Private landholdings are on average smaller than in Tucumán, and especially in more remote areas land is public, or titles are in the hands of the Catholic Church, protestant churches, and universities – actors that often actively seek to transfer titles to the Mbya communities occupying these lands.

Conclusion

The paper has explored the new politics of recognition in Argentina through a comparison of ethnic mobilisation and its governance in two provinces, Tucumán and Misiones. Our analysis examined how indigenous social movements employed the new legal resources provided by the 1994 constitutional reform, and mobilised for multicultural citizenship. Diaguita Calchaquí and Mbya Guaraní land struggles provided a window onto the interactions between multicultural constitutionalism, indigenous contestations, and distinct state–movement relations, and the implications of these dynamics for citizenship regimes and indigenous wellbeing.

A central debate in development studies concerns the role of formal property rights in poverty reduction (Berry, 1997; de Soto, 2000; Mitchell, 2002). Our findings endorse arguments that view the formalisation of communal tenure as beneficial for the improvement of livelihoods, yet for different reasons usually given in the individual property rights literature (North, 1990). In Tucumán and Misiones, ethnic movements are eager to take advantage of the new constitutional rights and mobilise for collective land titling. Formal tenure protects local communities against possible eviction. Communities with titles report a greater sense of security and planning stability, and access to additional special rights, such as bilingual education, public housing, and sanitary infrastructure. Moreover, the formalisation of tenure grants local communities greater control and autonomy, enabling them to deliberate distinct forms of land use, and the (often conflicting) visions of communal development reflected in them.

The study also supports arguments that social movements form a critical force in the deepening of cultural and political rights (e.g., Bebbington, 2007; Hickey and Bracking, 2004). The constitutional recognition of indigenous lands became implemented once Diaguita and Mbya communities actively pursued formal titling by engaging provincial and national state agencies, fostering connections to potential allies, and framing their current situation as living on 'captive' lands. Indigenous land struggles also introduced a new language of 'rights'. Even communities without a title employ rights-based discursive strategies and emphasise historical use and possession to protect their access to land. Finally, Diaguita and Mbya mobilising efforts challenge dominant conceptions of nationhood that portray Argentina as a 'white' nation of immigrants, and make indigenous communities visible as bearers of rights and legitimate political actors.

At the same time, social movements are no 'magic bullet' (Franco, 2008). Our findings indicate that the powers of social movements are more limited in struggles for the extension of socioeconomic rights. Indigenous activists contest and politicise dominant meanings of 'poverty' by associating Diaguita and Mbya wellbeing with indigenous control over their territories. Yet, the expansion of tourism and mining in Tucumán, and of commercial agriculture and the deforestation of the rainforest in Misiones, not only contributed to ethnic mobilisation around land and territories, it also fostered the adverse incorporation of indigenous communities. In both cases, the livelihoods of local indigenous communities have changed dramatically over recent decades, largely because of land commodification, rising property values, and the enclosure of spaces these communities historically used and lived in. This intensified accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003) counteracts the material benefits derived from communal land tenure, and enhances indigenous deprivation.

Moreover, current forms of constitutional multiculturalism in Argentina constrain ethnic movements in their struggles for socioeconomic rights and greater equality. While there is no evidence of any direct causal links between neoliberal policymaking and the inclusion of multicultural legislation within the 1994 constitutional reform,[29] state authorities appear to be responsive only to those indigenous claims that do not pose a direct challenge to the established economic and political order. The exclusion of territorial rights from the 1994 Constitution forms a major obstacle to indigenous self-determination and the development of local communal spaces. The power to manage and control environmental resources, such as water and the subsoil, remains with the state. Our analysis thus supports claims that states are likely to be more responsive to 'integrationist demands' for the accommodation of cultural differences within the nation, yet not to 'autonomy demands' that would recognise indigenous governance over territory and imply a challenge to dominant models of economic development (Richards, 2004; Hale, 2002).

It is equally important to note that our focus on the politics of difference at the national and provincial levels also has its limitations. To begin with, this approach has led us to gloss over the implications of multicultural constitutionalism and ethnic mobilisation *within* distinct Diaguita and Mbya communities. As Mallon (1995) and Li (1996) suggest, the constitution of local communities is a contested process imbued with issues of power. What and who is 'the community' requires close analytical attention. Preliminary evidence indicates that indigenous activists with official posts (that is, *caciques* or council members), and those with close friendship or family ties to them, usually represent themselves as speaking in the name of the community. The same local activist networks

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[29] Carrasco (2000), for instance, argues that the inclusion of multicultural rights within the 1994 Constitution was the result of concerted lobbying efforts by NGOs and indigenous movements.

also tend to embrace the formalisation of land tenure and territorial rights as key to local development. By contrast, those situated outside these informal networks are on average more sceptical about the equation of communal land tenure with indigenous wellbeing, and sometimes advance alternative visions of local development centred on individual property rights.

Moreover, the analysis presented here has also privileged indigenous social movements in rural settings, largely because the majority of those who identify as Diaguita and Mbya are (still) located in the countryside. Yet, our impressions from fieldwork implicate that Diaguita and Mbya mobilisation also unfolds in urban areas. Interviewees frequently mention indigenous hometown associations, interest groups and social clubs in Buenos Aires and other industrial centres, while INAI officials report claims for the legal recognition of Diaguita and Mbya communities in these cities. Similar to studies on other indigenous groups in Argentina and Latin America (e.g., Escolar, 2007; Radcliffe et al., 2002) we found that activists in urban settings employ the language of indigenous identity and territorial rights when demanding participation in issues such as urban planning or municipal development. Further research is needed to unpack the contrasts and similarities in rural and urban indigenous mobilisation.

Beyond these limitations, what this paper does provide is an empirically informed argument about the politics of recognition and its implications for the government of poverty (e.g., Fraser, 2000; Young, 1998). Our findings suggest that the empowering effects of multicultural citizenship are primarily located within the cultural and political domains. Mobilisation around cultural differences and the legal recognition of diversity enable disadvantaged groups to gain public visibility and extend their status as members of the political community. At the same time, these gains remain shallow if they are not coupled with a project of social justice that addresses the conditions of adverse incorporation and engenders a reorganisation of accumulation patterns. Such a task requires the enforcement of a minimum standard of social and economic rights at the local, national and global levels to counteract the overlap of cultural differences with material deprivation and economic privilege.

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