

Connecticut College

Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

Anthropology Department Honors Papers

Anthropology Department

2020

The Altar of National Prosperity: Extractivism and Sacrifice Zones in Argentine Patagonia

Jonathan Gomez-Pereira

Connecticut College, gomezperjd@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/anthrohp>



Part of the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gomez-Pereira, Jonathan, "The Altar of National Prosperity: Extractivism and Sacrifice Zones in Argentine Patagonia" (2020). *Anthropology Department Honors Papers*. 18.

<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/anthrohp/18>

This Honors Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology Department at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Department Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

*The Altar of National Prosperity: Extractivism and Sacrifice Zones in
Argentine Patagonia*

Jonathan Gomez-Pereira

2020

Honors Thesis

Presented to the Department of Anthropology

Connecticut College New London, CT

Thesis Advisor: Professor Catherine Benoît, Department of Anthropology

First Reader: Professor Leo Garofalo, Department of History

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Chapter 1.....	9
From Imperialism to Neo-Imperialism: Extractive Industries and Indigenous.....	9
Deconstructing the Indigenous Monolith: Representation and Performance.....	17
Chapter 2.....	29
From the Spanish Period to the Rise of the neo-imperial Argentine State.....	29
The Altar of National Prosperity: Contemporary Sacrifice Zones in Argentina.....	34
Patronage Politics and Agribusiness: Campesino Resistance in Formosa.....	35
Setting a Precedent: Patagonian Resistance in Esquel, Chubut.....	46
Chapter 3.....	54
Disputed Territories, Disputed Identities: Megamining in Río Negro.....	54
El Agua Vale Más Que El Oro (Water is Worth More Than Gold).....	67
Conclusion.....	78
Bibliography.....	83

Acknowledgements:

There are an innumerable number of individuals who have made this work possible. I would like to start by thanking Mercedes Pico, one of my professors in Buenos Aires who prompted this inquiry with her course on Indigenous histories in Argentina. It was through this introduction to the histories of Indigenous Peoples that allowed me to begin disentangling systems of power that I have been able to trace back to global and local actors. I am also immensely grateful for her introduction to organizations that operate at the grassroots level like Piuke. I am grateful to both Marta and Alejandro and all of the other *Piukeros*, who graciously welcomed me into their mobilizing efforts in January. My short experience with them in Bariloche has demonstrated to me the potential for change that ecological militancy offers. As I near the end of my undergraduate career, I hope to capture that resilience and bring it with me as I move forward. Other members of the Bariloche community that I would like to thank include Adrián Moyano, a Mapuche historian, activist, and journalist who took the time to speak with me on one of the nicer days in January.

At the College I would like to thank Professor Benoît, who supported my idea of writing an honors thesis in the Fall of 2019. Her support and encouragement is something I am especially thankful for as the global pandemic has changed the course of both my life and career. I am also immensely grateful to Professor Garofalo, with whom I've had the opportunity to take courses with during both my sophomore and junior years at the college. These courses have also

prompted me to look at the history of colonialism, which has better equipped me to face its legacies today. I would of course like to thank my friends who have supported me up until this very moment as they witnessed my moments of doubt, frustration, and elation that come with the process of writing an honors thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents who have supported my academic journey since the very beginning. Their unwavering support of my studies has allowed me to travel to various parts of the world. It was during these travels in which I had the opportunity to practice introspection and reflect deeply on our shared histories and our trajectories.

Abstract:

The advances in extractive technologies in the 21st century has led to the creation of a new powerful global actor, the Multinational. These multinationals have no allegiance to a state, as earlier forms of capitalism did, rather they are ventures in the industries of agribusiness and mining that operate in countries throughout Latin America. These global actors are able to effectively dominate economies through the reprimarization of the countries that host them. Countries like Argentina have welcomed multinationals like Monsanto and Patagonia Gold into their territories, which has proven to be a detriment to the communities and environments in which they take place. These industries promise the creation of jobs, development of economies, and state revenue through taxes and royalties. Upon further inspection of these promises, it is revealed that these goals are misleading and these extractive operations are only able to succeed by preying on the preexisting social, political, and economic inequalities of communities in Argentina. I offer a vignette of socio-environmental conflicts that take place in rural, urban, and Indigenous communities. By analyzing these conflicts across space, identity reconfiguration and articulation such as that of the Mapuche in Río Negro is visibilized. As Mapuche and non-Mapuche community members come together to contest their positions within this extractive paradigm, the persisting logic and legacy of colonialism is revealed.

Introduction

The following pages explore life in the anthropocene, a newly proposed geological epoch that is meant to reflect the impacts of human activity upon the Earth and the interconnected nature of biotic and abiotic systems. With the concept of the anthropocene in hand we are enabled to explore the social dimensions that interact with this new stage in human history. We witness effects and transformations of imperialism, capitalism, industrialization, patriarchy, and racial formations that layer their consequences to the shared global experiences of the climate crisis. With the convergence of these systems of power, notions of disposable territories and people arise. This is witnessed in the many sacrifice zones that have emerged as a result of the expansion of extractive projects in the 21st century as countries of the post-industrial west attempt to reassert their domination on their former colonies and colonized subjects. The scope of this work is limited to communities in South America, both rural and urban, Indigenous and non-indigenous. By setting these parameters, I highlight the mechanisms that allow these processes of domination to be executed in the contemporary.

The first chapter of this thesis traces the history of capitalism and its evolution up until its contemporary configuration. I note how the history of socio-environmental conflicts that are witnessed today are merely evolutions due to the advances in technology that has allowed capitalism to evolve from colonial rule and mercantile capital, through industrial capitalism to the contemporary age of novel multinationals. I focus on the contemporary age of capitalism

which employs neo-extractive methods for accumulating wealth through practices such as agribusiness and megamining. The current form of capitalism is highly disruptive to both societies and the environment, facilitating this model as a possibility are the multiscalar alliances between multinationals and governments that host them. As a result of this new implementation, we witness the reprimarization of South American economies in which commodities such as gas, oil, minerals, and genetically modified plants become primary the exports of these dominated economies. Following this genealogy of capitalism, I offer a range of experiences of interactions between Indigenous Peoples and extractivism. This is done in order to expand the view of Indigenous Peoples and their methods of resistance, identity articulation, and active participation in extractive industry as they seek to be respected as valid social actors in their respective contexts. In doing so, a disruption of the Indigenous monolith occurs, this creates the space for a novel kind of identity politics to emerge.

The second chapter of this work identifies some of the key interlocutors who constructed the discourse of empire in Argentina and the persistence of this colonial logic today. By focusing on prominent Argentine officials, I highlight how colonial knowledge produced during this time was essential in the construction of disposable Indigenous subalterns and their disposable territories. By doing so, I vinctuate how this colonial logic is borrowed from in the contemporary as Indigenous Peoples and rural communities and their life making projects are framed as incompatible or obstacles to the advances of modernity in the form of neo-extractive projects. In this chapter I focus on the unsuccessful resistance of agribusiness of the rural farmers in the Northern Argentine province of Formosa, examining the language they use in order to articulate their grievances and the survival tactics they employ that align with the social, political, and

economic realities of their subordinate position within the neo-extractive paradigm. This case is then compared to a successful socio-environmental movement in Patagonia in which the residents of Esquel, Chubut mobilize their social capital and political clout to reject the implementation of an open-pit mine. Contrasting these two reveals how historical inequalities have deemed certain populations and territories as disposable for the sake of economic development.

The final chapter of this work examines how the Argentine state's history of invisibilization and domination of the Mapuche people in the province of Río Negro has had the opposite of its intended effect. These efforts aimed to essentialize the Mapuche as rural and practitioners of imagined traditions in order to delegitimize claims of Indigeneity and the rights that Indigeneity demands. The rise of an Indigenous self-affirmation movement in the urban context of Bariloche has resulted in youth reconnecting with their heritage through a variety of cultural practices. In doing so, they were able to connect their lived experiences as working-class urban Mapuches to the struggles faced by the Mapuches in the rural areas of the country. Drawing from my field experience, I go on to explore the contemporary mobilizations against open-pit mining in Bariloche Argentina and how non-Mapuche allies work in solidarity to demand dignity. By exploring the connections across time and space, I reveal the dynamics of sacrifice zone creation and implementation in Argentina.

Chapter 1.

From Imperialism to Neo-Imperialism: Extractive Industries and Indigenous Peoples

The socio-environmental conflicts that are witnessed throughout Latin America began with expansion of European empires in their quests to find precious metals. This early form of European imperialism was one of the earliest versions of extractivism in the Americas as Europeans sought minerals such as gold and silver. These extractive endeavors would later expand as these imperial powers sought to find the appropriate lands to produce and export commodities such as sugar, petroleum, natural gas, copper, and bauxite, which would eventually become the motors of this early form of extractive imperialism. As a result, extractive imperialism has taken on different forms throughout the multiple ages of conquest: colonial rule and mercantile capital, through the succession to industrial capitalism and the emergence of monopoly capitalism, and finally the present age of global mega-corporations that are allied to finance capital (Veltmyer and Petras 2014).

Each stage of capitalism can be characterized by the multiple forms of labor exploitation that they employ. These forms of exploitation included the *encomienda* system, racialized plantation slavery, indentured servitude, and industry-based wage labor. These transformations from one stage to the next have been fueled by both advances in technology that make these systems of exploitation more expedient in addition to the international interstate restructuring (Veltmyer and Petras 2014) through policy development. The ways in which imperialism has evolved can be observed in capitalist development in the Americas from direct colonial

administration to the era of state independence, during which former colonies became the locations of indirect control by extractive-imperial states due to the potential exploitation of raw materials. These changes have created an axis of power in which bargaining power oscillates between multinational corporations and the imperial states and the newly independent states of the global south (Veltmyer and Petras 2014).

The dynamics of twenty-first century imperialism, which can be understood as extractive economies, is robust in the countries in which these economic projects take place. Extractive activities occur as the sub and supra-level resources are harvested and exported. This extraction occurs as governments respond to this new stage of capitalism which promotes a reliance on foreign direct investment (FDI) in order to introduce foreign capital that enables extraction.. This process allows governments in the Global South to acquire a minimal percentage of the revenues derived from this economic system. This turn to extractivism in the twenty-first century can be understood as a tonic sold to Latin American governments and its peoples in order to alleviate the economic stagnation that countries like Argentina experienced during the end of the twentieth century. The products of extractive economies are the commodities that are produced for and demanded by Western countries, this occurs as Western neo-imperial states and collaborative governments in the Global South accumulate capital through dispossession. The motor of these neo-extractive efforts are the tremendous profits that can be made from this growing global demand for non-renewable resources in emerging markets in regions of the world such as Asia (Veltmyer and Petras 2014: 4). These extractive projects are sustained as States and their collaborators employ a diverse array of tactics which includes intervening in domestic political processes; engaging in counter-insurgency practices; the destabilization of governments;

bribery and leveraging the debt of nations in the Global South in order to push for FDI dependence from transnational organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Veltmyer and Petras 2014).

These extractive endeavors are not solely due to the influence of international actors, but rather are facilitated by governments in the Global South. The governments of these peripheral states aid multinational corporations in securing access to minerals and other resources. In the context of resistance and the claims for civil rights of both farming and indigenous communities, these governments strategically deploy a repressive apparatus of armed forces in order to dissipate resistance. Justifying the actions of these governments is the potential of these extractive models to be used in order to finance 'transformative' economic and social projects. These contemporary extractive projects have similar characteristics of older forms of capitalism that generated profits. David Harvey (2004) argues that this occurs by the accumulation by dispossession. State and multinational dispossession led to the proletarianization of direct producers: rural farmers and Indigenous communities. This dispossession leads to the abandonment of subsistence agriculture and traditional territories as rural populations migrate in search of waged employment (Veltmyer and Petras 2014). Defining these extractive endeavors as imperial requires noting that states such as The United States, Canada, and other Western countries, wield and employ a variety of strategies (see above) in order to secure access to raw materials that are found in countries in the Global South. When combined with collaborative regimes of Latin America, states and governments are efficient in securing, primarily through force, access to the resources using their arsenal of weapons demanded by the situation.

From this perspective, neo-imperialism can best be understood as one of the most advanced forms of capitalism in the contemporary. This shift from industrial capitalism to finance or monopoly capital, was what Marx described as ‘primitive accumulation’ which refers to the process through which direct producers are separated from their means of production and as a result proletarianized; they are forced into a class for hire. The proletariats are then forced to exchange their labor for a wage, effectively constructing and solidifying wage relations. These changes from pre-capitalist, traditional agrarian societies into the contemporary industrial capitalist system has led to four major consequences. This includes the merging of industrial and bank capital in the form of finance or monopoly; the export of capital (raw goods, labor, products of labor); the territorial division and colonization of non-capitalist societies by capitalist states; and lastly a clear international division of labor that is grounded on an exchange of raw materials for goods manufactured by industries that are central to this system (Veltmyer and Petras 2014). With the consequences and motivations defined, extractive projects can be understood as also a geopolitical one. It seeks to secure the conditions necessary to further capitalist development of the commons. From this point of view, the reason for these extractive endeavors, which in this case are synonymous with imperial ones, aim to secure access to extracted resources (mineral, timber, petroleum, etc.), land and labor, in order to further develop a form of capitalism that generates exorbitant amounts of private profits. The argument proposed by Harvey (2004) is that the forces of colonialism and the expansion of empire that led to the accumulation of capital in the nineteenth century and earlier are still at work, this new form of land enclosure comes as a consequence of privatization and commodification of the commons (land and water) through which socio-environmental conflicts arose.

This shift can be observed during the 1970s as the transition from state-led capitalist development to the shift to *laissez faire* capitalism and neoliberal globalization. Hardt and Negri (2000) have argued that the shift to this new neoliberal world order has weakened the state and its relation to capital to the point where new global actors have entered the world economy, this actor namely being the multinational corporation. The novel elements of this new global actor, the multinational corporation, is that they are in the service of and instruments of a transnational capitalist class that has no allegiance to a nation or state. This argument advances that imperialism understood as geopolitical project of world domination, or colonialism, has passed, and that a new era of empire, that of the multinational corporations has resulted in the shifting of power from the state to the multinational corporation. As a result of this, bourgeoisie are no longer found or controlled by nation states at the center of a system, but rather it is shifted to a transnational capitalist class (Robinson 2007; Sklair 2001). These changes in the world order have furnished the conditions for neo-imperialism. This takes on a multitude of forms such as the influence of globalization in the development of structural reforms imposed upon governments in the Global South for the interest of neo-imperial countries (and the capitalist class within those countries), which is presented as the only way forward to a condition of economic development and general prosperity. This is often developed with the international cooperation and social mobilization as a means of weakening resistance by demobilizing social movements by enticing the rural poor (semi-proletarianized or landless peasant farmers) with an illusory alternative to grassroots mobilization and conflict with class power in order to prevent substantive social change (Veltmyer and Petras 2014). Veltmyer and Petras (2014) indicate other changes such as the economic liberalization and market deregulation that is designed to remove obstacles for the

free movement of capital, facilitating the extraction and transfer of (imagined) surplus from the periphery, the Global South, to the center, within imperial states.

Other methods of exercising neo-imperial power include the direct intervention in the politics of capitalist development by the promotion of coups d'états and the financing of electoral campaigns of members of the political elite who are supportive of this extractivist system. This system is cemented by US interest which when coupled with state power translates into active support of the private sector operations of extractive capital in the countries in which they take place (Veltmyer and Petras 2014). The neo-imperialism of the contemporary is the convergence of both old and new forms of exploitation, domination, and subjugation. This is evidenced in the reversion to an international division of labor which was a hallmark of colonialism. Western neo-imperial states have contributed to this new form of imperialism in the way of 'developmental assistance', such as the promotion of free markets and democracies, and in some instances more coercive measures are employed, this has included the projection of military power (Veltmyer and Petras 2014).

Other scholars such as Maristella Svampa (2005) argue that the extractivism we are witnessing, which she denotes as the commodity consensus, is a "reprimarization" of Latin American economies towards primarily extractive (logging, mining, fracking) or rent-based activities (agribusiness). This is reflected in the exports of the countries of South America with 76% of exports in 2011 being composed of agricultural, mineral, and other commodified raw materials (Svampa 2014). The consequences of this reprimarization from the social perspective is that it deepens the dynamics of dispossession. These extractive industries occur as land and its sub and supra level resources are accumulated which is made possible by large corporations that

engage in bilateral alliances with state governments. The novel elements of these forms of extractivism include the overexploitation of nonrenewable resources by the expansion of extractive frontiers towards territories that were previously unproductive. The expansion of extractive capital entails a movement toward the territories of Indigenous and rural communities. The emblematic features of the commodity consensus is the tendency for monoproduction or monocultures; in Latin America this primarily takes the form of gold or silver mines and soy farming. These extractive activities are primarily capital intensive as opposed to labor intensive. Typically extractive industries promote their operations as generating jobs for local economies, however in the instance of mining, for every 1 million dollars that are invested, a range of 0.5 - 2 jobs are directly created (Svampa 2014). The commodity consensus is underpinned by the idea that these extractive industries are irresistible due to the global demand for primary materials, by adhering to this logic, resistance to extractivism is conceptualized as antimodern, negating progress, or infantile environmentalism. Even progressive governments embrace this model due to the potential revenue that can be generated from these activities in order to bring about socio-economic changes. This top down logic which is supported by both conservative and liberal governments in South America with the support of multinationals have created a backdrop in which the advancement of participatory democracies are limited and as a result there is a shift to a criminalization of resistance that entails the violations of human rights.

The shift to the commodities consensus has resulted in the increase of socio-environmental conflicts, galvanizing ancestral struggles for land by both rural and Indigenous communities. These socio-environmental conflicts have entailed new forms of multiscalar class alliances and new forms of mobilization in the defense of the commons,

biodiversity, the environment, and human rights (Svampa 2014). These socio-environmental conflicts are characterized by ideological differences by those vinculated to the access and control of territories and their natural resources. These differences originate from divergences between social, economic, and political interests in addition to the values between the social actors involved. These conflicts demonstrate different conceptions of territory, nature, and ownership in addition to the incongruent understandings of development and democracies. In response to these neo-imperial projects, new socio-environmental, rural and urban, multiclass struggles are characterized by autoconvocated assembly formats that demand both autonomy and dignity. Further adding to these characterizations is the collaboration between indigenous-campesino movements, socio-environmental movements, environmental NGOs and networks of intellectuals and experts and cultural collectives that recognize the struggles of those affected. These new partnerships seek to valorize the people and the languages used to articulate these concerns of environmental stewardship, democratic participation, and social wellbeing (Martínez-Alier 2003). These collaborations have consequently led to the creation of expert knowledge that exists outside of the dominant discourse, it valorizes the local knowledge which oftentimes is grounded in campesino and Indigenous cosmologies. As a result of this valorization, there has been a promotion of new laws, norms, and even legal frameworks that seek to present alternatives in opposition to extractive policies and the dominant culture itself (Svampa 2014).

Grounding these changes are the right to *buen vivir*, which proposes new forms of relationships between human beings and nature and among human beings (Acosta 2010A). South American governments such as that of the plurinational state of Bolivia and Ecuador have

codified autonomy, *buen vivir* (living well), and the rights of nature into their constitutions. This framework is distinguished by numerous features such as: the abandonment of the idea of development in being a source of unlimited economic growth; a sustainable economy, and the egalitarian prioritization of other activities and goods that go beyond extractivist financial considerations, this is essentially the strengthening of democracies (Svampa 2014). This framework of *buen vivir* entails the recognition of the rights of nature, not as one that is untouched, but rather a respect for the right of nature to exist and its maintenance, allowing for the regeneration of its vital cycles, structures, functions, and evolutionary process (Gudynas 2011a). If this framework is adhered to and development is characterized by the homogenization of lifeways by forced participation in global capitalism, then *buen vivir* champions diversity that valorizes and respects other (non-western or capitalistic) modes of being (Acosta 2010b). Thus adhering to this paradigm would entail the decommodification of the commons in addition to the foregrounding of human rights and that of nature. This paradigm shift would suppose that all humans have an intrinsic value while also recognizing the intrinsic value of nature that exists independently from the valorization of humans (Gudynas 2011A; Svampa 2014). These shifts away from neo-imperialism or extractive industries have begun to occur among South American governments (Bolivia and Ecuador), however these values are not always shared globally. As a result we witness the dynamics of extractivism and its consequences on Indigenous, local, and rural communities as the disregard for the social wellbeing becomes glaringly apparent due to the large scale and the rate at which these new extractive enterprises take place.

Deconstructing the Indigenous Monolith: Representation and Performance

With the shortcomings of neo-imperial extractivism outlined above, ethnographies provide qualitative evidence of how Indigenous People's life making projects are compromised. These life making projects are the ways in which Indigenous communities sustain themselves, these acts are embedded in local histories and cosmologies that diverge from those upheld by the state and global markets (Andía and Ødegaard 2018). These Indigenous life projects are typically invalidated by the state and its global allies, these projects encompass the politics of nature, which can be understood as *buen vivir* (Living well) that seeks to democratize the commons. A clear example of this are the *'runakuna*, the Indigenous people of Cuzco. Recognizing their life projects and the politics embedded in them would require social, political, and economic transformation, which would result in the undoing of the state (Andía and Ødegaard 2018). Consequently these ontological conflicts are the result of incongruencies of what the world is made of, what is considered valuable and why (Andía and Ødegaard 2018). In the context of representing Indigenous struggles by anthropologists, ontological differences must be recognized in order to avoid the mystification of these struggles that "standardizes multiplicity and fetishizes alterity" (Bessire and Bond 2014a: 449). In order to combat this, anthropologists are called upon to draw from different modes of being in order to rethink Euro-American categories of oppression (gender, class, religion). In doing so the ethnographer has the ability to discern the various dimensions of oppression and how this results in the creation of sacrifice zones. These sacrifice zones are areas in which extractive projects take place (Jalbert et al. 2017; Lerner 2010), in the environmental, physical, and mental landscapes. Turning to ethnographies indicate

how “the modern world or ontology sustains itself through performances that tend to suppress and or contain the enactment of other possible worlds” (Blaser 2009:16).

The ethnographies are presented in order to demonstrate the plurality of experiences of Indigenous and local populations and their encounters with neo-imperial extractivism. These experiences illustrate how Indigenous and local communities do not adhere to Western imaginings of Indigenous peoples, rallying with spears or megaphones. Rather communities mobilize through a variety of different ways, and in doing so they actively deconstruct the Indigenous monolith. Indigenous and local responses to extractivism demonstrate their ability to exercise agency and articulate their intersecting identities on their own terms, thus disrupting Western perceptions of passive victimhood in the new neoliberal world order. These documented experiences are by no means exhaustive, with the development of globalization Indigenous peoples and local communities have become adept at navigating a highly globalized world; constructing alliances with international actors for their claims for civil rights and territory. The experiences of the Sanema and those in the Southern Peruvian Andes demonstrate an experience that is often invisibilized; they are an Indigenous community that actively participates in extractive industry. In the twenty first century Latin America, it is difficult to disentangle local and Indigenous life making projects from extractivism. If one places these two as purely oppositional, agency is denied to local and indigenous populations by the discursive power of the West. These multiple experiences must be recognized as they allow us to begin to make sense of the complexity of neo-imperial extractivism on local and Indigenous communities and their territories.

Resisting the homogenization of Indigenous Peoples interests globally must be avoided when depicting socio-environmental conflicts. Penfield (2018) notes how visions of Indigenous resistance are generally composed of some Indigenous peoples wielding spears, some wielding megaphones, others upholding banners, denouncing mining. In her ethnography of the Yanomami subgroup known as the Sanema, she illustrates how divergences from the outright rejection of extractivism are often eclipsed, leaving little room for the recognition of the constellation of interests that are held by Indigenous Peoples. The Sanema do not wholly reject extractivism, but rather they interact with it, as it was centered in their emerging relationship with the state. The Sanema example demonstrates how some Indigenous people may want access to some of the wealth that is derived through oil extraction and mining activities. In the case of the Sanema, natural resources are the basis for political encounters between marginalized groups such as the Sanema and the Venezuelan state. With the discovery of oil at the beginning of the twentieth century, it became the source for the financing of the Bolivarian revolution by Hugo Chavez who used it to generate social welfare reforms that entailed poverty-reduction measures such as subsidizing education, healthcare, and food for the entire Venezuelan population. This would allow the Venezuelan state to redistribute wealth to citizens who's access to resources had been limited, such as Indigenous Peoples (Penfield 2018).

Furthering the support for what can now be conceptualized as a *perto*-state were the social changes that accompanied the access and redistribution of wealth. Changes to the Venezuelan constitution in 1999 recognized Indigenous Peoples and their rights to distinct cultures, languages, schooling, traditional health practices and territories (Penfield 2018:78). With this recognition from the state, the Sanema aligned themselves with other Indigenous

groups such as the Ye'kwana as they were politically savvy and established their own tribal council for the protection of Indigenous peoples in the region they inhabit. The Sanema did this due to the lack of political cohesion among the group, in joining the Ye'kwana they were able to vocalize and expected to mobilize in order to address their specific concerns. This would result in the Sanema attempting to become active participants of the Bolivarian revolution as petro-citizens of the wealthy oil state. Penfield notes that as the Sanema aligned themselves with the petro state, petro-citizenship would become a political identity through which they were able to claim rights to the benefits entitled to with a national citizenship (Penfield 2018: 79). Under the Venezuelan petro-state, Indigenous peoples such as the Sanema are entitled to monthly allocations of 200 liter drums of gasoline which they are allowed to transport within their territories. Gasoline as a commodity is then used to support the increasing reliance on machinery within their communities. Other forms of direct benefits from the petro-state include the funding of what Penfield denotes as petro-projects in which grassroots projects such as the development of water purification systems, tools for farming cooperatives, boats, school buildings, and clinics are financed by the Venezuelan state that derives its funding from extractive industry. These funds are administered by *consejos comunales* (communal councils), however they are not always administered productively. In some instances these funds fail to meet their end goal due to the hiring of inadequate labor or the mismanagement of funds. The depositing of funds from the petro-state directly into Indigenous bank accounts complicates the relationship between this Indigenous group and the extractive state.

Extractivism, specifically mining has become an intimate encounter for the Sanema, in 2005 small-scale clandestine mining began to occur on Sanema territory. Although the Sanema

do not engage in mining directly due to cosmological differences, there is mutual exploitation that occurs in these spaces that operate on the premise of extracting gold. With the encroachment and eventual installation of small scale mines, the Sanema men journey to these locations in order to provide food and gasoline to laborers and owners of mining machinery in exchange for gold, further complicating the relationship between the Sanema and extractivism. In this case, there is a desire for material wealth, Penfield notes that Sanema men who make the effort to trade petro-funded supplies to gold mines to buy their kin material goods are thought to be admirable, caring individuals. Those who fail to do so are seen as lacking or poor, which links the deficiency of material goods to an emotional sadness (Penfield 2018: 86). The effects of extractivism has positioned the Sanema into one of ambivalence; traditionally providing for their kin meant providing sustenance, however this has changed with the availability of material goods. Nevertheless the Sanema people participate in this activity due to their sense of responsibility and devotion for their kin. Further driving this is the desire to establish a convivial and self-sufficient unit, resulting in their participation in the wider national and extractive economy, which has a trade off. The distribution of oil wealth and the preceding distribution of gasoline results in large quantities of fuel entering mine sites, as a result, the Sanema would not be able to acquire gold and its benefits if the subsidies from the petro-state were not present. The case of the Sanema is useful in disrupting Western thought on Indigenous Peoples and their relationship to extractivism. The distribution of products and benefits derived by the extractivist petro-state would make it difficult for Indigenous groups like the Sanema who have begun to develop a relationship with the state. Their position of ambivalence is one that is not one that can be illustrated as being good or bad, but rather their situation and that of Indigenous Peoples is

complex as they navigate the realities of a highly globalized and extractivist society. The Sanema demonstrate the extractive pluralities that are imposed upon Indigenous Peoples, however their participation demonstrates their ability to agency.

Other ethnographies that document the encounters between Indigenous Peoples and extractivism represent other reasons for opposing these neo-imperial projects. One of these encounters occurred in the 1990s in Peru where the extraction of minerals affects more than half of Peru's campesino communities (Li and Peñafel 2018). With the neoliberalization of Peru's economy, mining has expanded into territories that were formerly devoted to agriculture and subsistence farming. In *La Hija de la Laguna* (2015), Máxima and Nélide are two campesinas who are featured and denounce the abuses of mining companies in the defense of Conga's lagoons which are found in the highlands of Cajamarca Peru. These women were against the Yanacocha Mining Company, their opposition is noteworthy as they challenge the fabricated and essentializing tropes of Indigenous Peoples in framing their views of nature or 'mother earth' as sacred, one trope that is critiqued is that of universal 'Indigenous Wisdom', which is not shared among all individuals within Indigenous communities. (Li and Peñafel 2018). This is illustrated during the Conga conflicts that manifested in 2011 when the multinational Yanacocha Mining company announced a proposal to construct an open-pit mine that would be located at the head of a water basin of 3 provinces. This project would require draining 4 lagoons in order to create the proper infrastructure for this mine. In *La Hija de la Laguna* the relationship between Nélide and water is imbued with a spiritual quality (Li and Peñafel 2018), this is common practice and has damaging effects as socio-environmental conflicts are oversimplified in these representations of nature and the people's relationship with it. Li and Peñafel critique this representation as it

minimizes the divisions within communities, these divisions occur along the lines of those who support these projects and those who do not. There are others who are also ambivalent towards these extractive projects, their position may oscillate depending on the needs and benefits that can be acquired from these extractive projects.

In Máxima's case, she refused to move from her plot of land which was at the site of the Conga project. The company claimed to have bought the rights to the land in 1996, however she asserted that she bought it two years prior from relatives and did not relinquish her right to the land. There were multiple attempts to dispossess her and her family from their land, as a result she was portrayed as a stubborn campesina who prevented her community from the benefits of the advance of Western 'modernity'. She was sanctioned by the state and given a prison sentence and ordered to vacate and pay a fine. This was eventually overturned, however her specific role in the context of extractivist discourse challenges the reductionist ideas of resistance. Máxima was fighting for the right to *her* property. In a news profile of her, she explains that she sought to preserve her life-projects, she wanted to continue to "preserve the only life she knows and that belongs to her: harvest potatoes, milk cows, knit blankets, drink water from the springs and fish for trout in the Laguna Azul without a guard telling her 'that's private property'" (Li and Peñafel 2018: 231). Her form of activism should be highlighted as it does not align with the values or discourses of international environmental concerns of indigenous movements, her actions challenge simplistic narratives of traditional knowledge and stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples in the present.

Other representations that challenge these essentializing representations is that of Mária, a Brazilian campesina who did not invoke an Indigenous identity when rejecting extractive

projects. In her instance, she articulates Indigeneity in a way that allows her to generate “authority for making claims on institutions and forging alliances” (Li and Peñafel 2018: 234). Doing so has allowed her to draw parallels with other communities that have been affected by extractive industries. Mária, who is also affected by mining projects articulates her claims through singing, this performance of indigeneity, an identity she did not claim until beginning this struggle, allows her to prompt her audience to reflect on how they have been affected by extractivism. She goes on to describe how the operations of Yanacocha have affected her community’s life projects. The experiences of these three women are notable as they defy the position of subalternity imposed on them by the state. Máxima refused to sell her land defying the logic of capitalism, she was able to do so through legal channels whereas María is able to articulate her feelings through songs, captivating her audience and articulating the struggles of a campesina while also galvanizing the suffering of the lagoons that play a central role in her communities life projects (Li and Peñafel 2018). There is also use in exploring these experiences through an ecofeminist perspective that highlights the parallels between the exploitation of women and that of nature. In response to this, Svampa (2014) argues there should be an elimination of the marginalization of women through the recognition of values attributed to women and the recognition for the need of those values, this would provide the foundation for a new paradigm that would challenge the current state of the relationship between humans and nature. Regardless of whether these three women would identify as ecofeminists, their responses to extractivism highlight the pluralities of Indigenous and local interaction with this new form of economy. They do not appear as opponents of extractivism wielding megaphones or banners,

but rather they articulate their unique experiences (as campesina or Indigenous women) in ways that are often invisibilized by Western perceptions of Indigenous and local resistance.

Extractivist projects endorsed by the state are often promoted as the advance of modernity, this logic positions the advance of these neo-imperial industries as antagonistic to Indigenous and local communities and their life-making projects. This view is reflected by the lead engineer of the Majes irrigation project (MIP) in Peru in which he stated that “In Majes we are at war against a hostile and tough topography, against a nature that we must change, we are at war with the underdevelopment” (Stensrud 2018: 143). The MIP consists of a dam at nearly 4,200 meter of altitude tributary of the Colca-Majes watershed in the southern Peruvian Andes. This particular project aimed to commodify water through a hydropower plant that would create a network of irrigation systems on nearly 50,000 hectares of desert flatlands in Majes (Stensrud 2018). The MIP illustrates both the multinationals and state governments goal of taming nature in order to exploit and use it to make previously unproductive desert flatlands into land that would generate as much economic profit as possible. This view which is commonly shared among the political and economic elites of the country frame the Indigenous life projects, such as subsistence farming, as backwards and an obstacle to modernity and the subsequent capitalist development. In the case of Peru and the advancement of the MIP, some rural poor areas welcome the advancement of extractive megaprojects due to the hope that these new activities may bring benefits such as employment, improved roads, and the construction of schools, however there is ambivalence as they are also perceived as intrusive and sources of trouble.

The campesinos of the Colca valley are not new to the use of canals, they derive water from mountain springs to use in their fields, however the source of contention with the MIP is

the large scale of this new project and the incongruent distribution of benefits and power (Stensrud 2018). With the MIP's commodification of water, those who would gain access to water distributed by this new canal are forced to pay higher tariffs than they would if they received their water from a natural source, however if they do so they are offered the ability to extend their areas of cultivation resulting in increased economic benefits. Further complicating the relationship between campesinos of the Southern Peruvian Andes is that their life making projects are entangled with that of the development of extractive industries; farmers may participate in extractive mines while also sustaining their own life-projects. The point of divergence are the implications of the appropriation and commodification of water. The MIP is a neo-imperial project that seeks to colonize water, which marks the environment and its resources as disposable material used for the production of goods in the international market. This neo-imperial project adheres to the logic of capitalism which champions income generating efficiency that results in profitability and economic growth; consequently it alienates Indigenous life-making projects as Other.

As the MIP colonizes water as a resource, it subsequently colonizes life-making projects that use water in ways that diverge from the logic of extractivism thus resulting in the socio-environmental conflicts that arise. Life making projects that are threatened include the ability to engage in subsistence farming due to market competition as well as irregular and harsh weather conditions that are linked to climate change. These weather patterns translate into unstable seasons, extreme temperatures, in addition to water related issues such as the decrease of water availability in springs, dry pastures and irregular rain. Further adding to this issue are the false promises that these extractive projects offer, in the district of Callalli, where the

Condoroma dam is located, there has not been an increase in supply of water. The inhabitants of Callalli are among the poorest in the region and make their living on alpaca pastoralism in addition to selling their wool and meat. Their mountain environment has been impacted as glaciers have begun to disappear, springs have dried out, and irregular rain that oftentimes precipitates so heavily that soil is eroded. The Southern Peruvian example demonstrates how the state and its international allies view Indigenous and local life-making projects as obstacles to the development of extractive industries that can be overcome through education, economic persuasion and even force.

Chapter 2.

From the Spanish Period to the Rise of the neo-imperial Argentine State

Tracing back the roots of the rise of the nation-state that is Argentina today allows us to make sense of the rise of neo-imperial extractivism that is present in the twenty-first century. During the end of the 19th century the Argentine state began its nation building project during which it incorporated what is now known as Patagonia into its official territory. This incorporation was conducted by force during *La Conquista del Desierto* (The Desert Campaign) which employed genocidal military tactics upon Indigenous populations in order to establish dominance over Indigenous peoples and their territories. Prior to this military campaign greater than half of the territory that constitutes Argentina today were politically autonomous and populated by a diverse group of Indigenous Peoples (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003). The state sanctioned campaign aimed to consolidate economic and political power through the expansion of national borders, they aimed to secure a position in the increasingly global economy and viewed the existence of Indigenous peoples and their politically autonomous territories as an obstacle that required their physical and social annihilation in order to meet their goals. Once lands were appropriated they were converted into *estancias* (estates) in which cattle herding and other agricultural endeavors ensued.

During the end of the 1890s dominated Indigenous communities were deliberately fragmented and eventually redistributed as *azucareros*, *peones de estancias*, forcibly conscripted into the military, and were forced into domestic servitude. These acts of genocide were

sanctioned by the Argentine state in order to exalt the Argentine Republic into “one of the leading countries of the world, for God’s grace and the vision and action of its men” (Briones and Delrio, 53). This justification by the Military Minister of Internal Affairs, General Albano Harguindeguy, remembers this event as necessary to “expel the foreign Indian who was invading our Pampa [as well as] to dominate the territory politically and economically to multiply the companies and the yields of work to assure the south border and populate the inner lands” (Academia Nacional de Historia, 1980). These quotes from an Argentine official demonstrate how the genesis of the Argentine nation-state was premised on the subjugation and domination of Indigenous Peoples and their territories in order to leverage the position of the burgeoning country onto the global economic stage. The paradigm established during the Spanish period was one in which economic goals preceded human rights. With the genocide of Indigenous Peoples and the denial of their human rights becoming policy of the state, other elites such as the *los estancieros* (the land owning class), sought to capitalize as the Argentine state expanded its borders throughout the Southern Cone.

This is reflected in *The Landowner’s Petition* in which Mariano Moreno, an *estanciero* (owner of a *estancia*), encourages Independence from Spain in order to solidify the position of estancias in the global market. These estancias were social and economic institutions that were based on cattle raising, which were immensely profitable, however, in order for these activities to occur it would require the dispossession of land. Furthering this agenda was the goal of solidifying the land owning class’ position in national politics, resulting in the violence towards Indigenous Peoples where the establishment of capitalistic enterprises took place. These genocidal practices would serve two functions: it would be used to clear lands that invading

settler colonialists wished to set up their capitalistic enterprises while also seizing and coercing labor that settlers could not obtain by less violent means (Maybury-Lewis 2002).

The colonial discourse presented above reveals the logic of the construction of the Indigenous subaltern in Argentina. Further examination of texts produced by purveyors of this logic in early Argentine history such as President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-88) demonstrate how he and the Argentine state equated city life and European culture as civilization in contrast to barbarism which took the shape of Indigenous customs. In Sarmiento's description of Indigenous cultures and their inviting landscapes, his writing employs an imperial gaze in which the Argentine landscape is viewed as a dormant desert awaiting the fruitful seeds of imported early Western capitalism. In *Civilization or Barbarism* (1845) Sarmiento characterizes Indigenous Peoples as living in a state of "idleness and show themselves incapable, even under compulsion of hard and protracted labor" (Sarmiento 1845: 86). He goes on to contrast the Indigenous populations and their settlements to European colonies and cities in Southern Cone as productive ones that have an appearance of regularity. He writes of how the importation of Western institutions such as churches, shops, schools, and colleges exist in urban oases of civilization, encircled and threatened by a desert that requires domination. Sarmiento's writing epitomizes the discourse of empire that was prominent during this period; this imperial discourse suggested that these "primitive" landscapes are to be tamed and "unruly" natives are meant to be domesticated for the purpose of expanding western civilization. If the metaphor of an unproductive desert is followed, it suggests that the desert is made to bloom with the implementation of western dynamism and enlightenment (Shohat 2009). This metaphor can also be read along the lines of a quasi-divine process of endowing life upon wasted soils, bringing

order to spaces that according to European criterion, lacked it. It was through the writing of Sarmiento and other colonial interlocutors who constructed the discourse of colonialism that justified the dispossession and domination of Indigenous Peoples and their territories. The domination of these landscapes would allow these spaces to become subjected to the capitalistic enterprises mentioned above and in the previous chapter. This form of settler colonialism and ensuing capitalism would continue to evolve as advances in technology were made that would expedite the exploitation of land, at the cost of human well being, beginning in the 19th century up until the contemporary.

The transition to neo-imperial extractivism became clear as President Carlos Menem took office in Argentina in the 1980s. His ascent to the presidency was largely due to the socio-economic crisis that the country was experiencing during the decade. The country and its residents experienced material loss in addition to increasing inflation with previous failing Peronist governments. This Peronist movement was initiated by Juan Domingo Perón in 1943 when he assumed the position as the Secretary of Labor during which he enacted socio-economic legislative reforms. These revisions to the traditional economy addressed the industrial proletariat's exploitation during the 1940's and 1950's during which Argentina began to nationalize its industries (James 2002). The legacy of Juan Domingo Perón, the three time president of Argentina, was his commitment to including the industrial working class into the state by recognizing the increasing number of state supported Unions and their (non)members. The Peronists who were tremendously popular would face challenges as their economic policy of protectionism failed as global economic depressions challenged their approach. This became an issue towards the end of Perón's third presidency in which his policies could not respond fast

enough to the dynamic economic landscape which led to a shift in state approaches to economic policies. As a result, Menem attempted to seek a solution that was a radical departure from previous governments. In doing so, he aligned himself with a number of international financial institutions closely following the model of the US (Palermo and Novaro 2002).

Menem and his opponents in the Peronist party took the advice of foreign institutions which resulted in the virtual elimination of inflation in addition to the reform of the welfare state, however his shortcomings during his tenure was the massive unemployment and corruption that came as a result of embracing a neoliberal approach (Palermo and Novaro 2002). Since his departure from office there has been a flagrant disregard of Indigenous rights even with the rise of seemingly popular governments in Argentina. This is epitomized by the decades of local conflicts related to megamining being rendered invisible by Peronist governments. These Peronist governments who have branded themselves as egalitarians have explicitly expressed their support of megamining, as a result, these conflicts are contained within provincial borders (Svampa 2014). Further compounding these issues are the policies of harassment and even murder that have been tied to the expansion of extractive industries; resistance efforts are met with repression as these responses are demobilized under the guise of laws against “sabotage and terrorism”, with over 200 people being processed because of this. As a result of this Indigenous and local communities are forced to struggle against two groups: large transnational corporations in addition to confronting the politics of popularly elected governments. The transnational corporations have become hegemonic global actors in the extractive industry whereas local and national politicians justify the use of extractive industries as being the most expedient and sole path towards progress and development. Examples of these can be found throughout Argentina

from as far north in the Gran Chaco region in the province of Formosa to as far south in the Patagonian provinces of Chubut and Río Negro.

The Altar of National Prosperity: Contemporary Sacrifice Zones in Argentina

With the adoption of neo-liberal policies by the state and its support from multinationals, sacrifice zones have emerged throughout Argentina. As discussed in the previous chapter, governments like that of Argentina have become trapped in the neo-extractivist paradigm. Within the matrix of a neo-extractivist system, sacrifice zones emerge regardless of the ideological stances of these governments towards neo-liberalization. This is due to the governments increasing reliance on the exploitation and extraction of non-renewable sub and supra level resources for exportation, refinement and eventual manufacturing elsewhere. The reprimarization of many South American economies, such as that of Argentina, has resulted in the creation of multiple sacrifice zones that are shaped by the colonial history of power differentials. The term *Sacrifice Zone* is an elaboration of “National Sacrifice Zones”, a term coined by U.S government officials employed in order to designate an area of land as heavily contaminated as the result of mining and uranium refinement. These National Sacrifice Zones were established in the U.S as test and refinement sites for nuclear weapons during the cold war, these zones were sacrificed in order to secure national security. The case of sacrifice zones in Argentina is paradoxical; those who are sacrificed at the altar of national prosperity are primarily Indigenous, local and rural communities that progressive governments intend to assist through

the socio-economic reforms funded by the extractive projects that take place within their territories.

Those who inhabit these zones are low-income and marginalized populations who live adjacent to heavy industry, in the case of extractivist Argentina this takes the form of genetically modified plants in Formosa and mega-mining (also known as open-pit mining) in Chubut and Rio Negro. As a result of this intimate proximity, those living in these zones are forced to make disproportionate health and economic sacrifices that their affluent and oftentimes white counterparts can afford to avoid (Lerner 2010). Land that is designated as sacrificial by the state with the guiding influence of multinationals are often established in locations in which marginalized communities do not have the political organization necessary to reject the implementation of these industries. Sacrifice zones have diverse geographies, their locations can be in the rural zones in addition to urban ones in which existing community members face economic, social, and political marginalization. As residents of these sacrifice zones, they become subjected to elevated rates of respiratory disease, cancer, reproductive disorders, birth defects, learning disabilities, and in short, an early death (Lerner 2010). When community members challenge their status as sacrifices in this capitalistic extractive system, state officials and the multinational industries fail to give straight answers or rarely give comprehensive information. Residents do not realize that they are on the altar until they are made aware by a rude awakening. The lack of transparency results in the inability of residents to make timely and informed decisions about whether they should relocate, stop drinking water from natural sources, keep windows closed or avoid eating homegrown vegetables. This rude awakening came to the residents of the rural town of Monte Azul in the northern province of Formosa.

Patronage Politics and Agribusiness: Campesino Resistance in Formosa

On March 25th 1996 the trajectory of the Argentine agricultural sector changed as Felipe Solá, the Argentine Secretary of Agriculture signed a resolution that would change the landscape of the agriculture industry. The resolution signed by Secretary Solá would allow the production and commercialization of glyphosate-resistant soybean seeds, these genetically modified soybeans would soon expand throughout the northern Argentine countryside, covering close to 19 million hectares of Farmland (Lapegna 2016). These new policies furnished the conditions for the marketing and implementation of technological packages sold by multinational corporations that sold herbicides, fungicides, fertilizers, and heavy machinery. These changes coincided with the high demand from global markets for soybean production, thus soybean production became an attractive venture for the state that sought to generate an income. Multinational corporations such as Monsanto Company sold these packages, marketing them as extremely productive due to their highly standardized process that made previous methods of agricultural production obsolete. Soybeans could be sowed without tilling the land due to the use of Roundup, a pesticide used to eliminate weeds. This novel form of agriculture is straight forward; the step-by-step process would eliminate the traditional methods of assessing the need of agrochemicals, the regulation of pests or the stimulation of growth. With this uniform process, soybeans could be harvested on a shorter agricultural cycle, allowing two yields per year in order to satisfy global demands for fodder and vegetable oil in the growing markets in Asia.

The geographical expansion of soybeans in northern Argentina is the result of both global and local actors who adopted the model of agribusiness, these included mega-agricultural firms, agribusiness contractors, and a small group of medium-scale farmers. These ventures are composed of investors in both the agrarian and non-agrarian sectors who contribute capital in order to rent out plots of land for two or three harvests. This model requires the hiring of local agronomists to manage fields and soybean growers who are responsible for the sowing, application of pesticides and their harvesting. These short-term investments are alluring due to the minimum investment of 15,000 USD, which agribusiness contractors estimate a return between 15 and 25% (Lapegna 2016). This model is based on the *renting* of vast amounts of hectares rather than buying as it allows capital to remain mobile. This model is one that facilitates the creation of sacrifice zones, with those being affected in the northern provinces who are primarily descendants of Indigenous populations who traditionally engaged in agrarian production for the domestic market. With the inability to compete with the global market, small-scale farmers and the inhabitants of these areas are forced to cope with the implementation of the extractive agribusiness model that compromises sub-level resources in addition to generating adverse and oftentimes deadly health effects in these Indigenous and rural communities.

The rude awakening that comes with living in a sacrifice zone occurred in February 2003 when herbicides used in neighboring soybean fields rented by agribusiness men drifted into the rural community of Monte Azul. The rural small-scale farmers awoke to an environmental disaster in which they found their gardens of cassava, beans, pumpkin dead and withered. In addition to the destruction of their foodstuffs, the toxic drift from neighboring soy farms induced

artificial abscission of cotton bolls. Prior to the implementation of genetically modified soybean farming, the *campesinos* (rural farmers) of Formosa had a history of producing cotton. The acute exposure resulted in the inhabitants of Monte Azul to experience fevers, headaches, muscular pains, and episodes of nausea and vomiting. This toxic exposure resulted in the organization and mobilization of campesinos, their direct actions included taking over the local airport in which the planes used for fumigation were housed. The peasants of Monte Azul demanded reparations for the corporeal and material damages that had been induced by the agrochemical drift. The campesinos of Monte Azul found their livelihoods at stake as their plants were destroyed. The articulation of their grievances as campesinos were conveyed to provincial and national politicians in addition to the local representatives of agribusiness, however efforts made by the stakeholders of extractive agribusiness were able to successfully demobilize the efforts of the campesinos. The case of Monte Azul in Formosa illuminates the interconnected nature of patronage politics and social movements that result in their eventual demobilization.

The campesinos of Monte Azul began their attempt at resisting the neo-extractive model of agribusiness by mobilizing through the grassroot organization *El Movimiento Campesino de Formosa* (MoCaFor; The Agrarian Movement of Formosa). MoCaFor emerged during Menem's neoliberalization of Argentina in the 90's and their goal was to address the lack of access to land and the resulting difficulty of the rural populations ability to make a living. As a grassroot organization that sought to challenge the extractive policy of the state, it was forced into a defensive posture that intended it to remain autonomous from the provincial government. MoCaFor developed a far reaching web of alliances with National social movements, MoCaFor would eventually contribute to the creation of *La Federación de Tierra y Vivienda* (FTV; Land

and Households Federation). It was through this national level organization and alliance that allowed the campesinos of Monte Azul to secure immediate access to resources and unemployment subsidies, however the dynamics of these alliances would operate in a fashion similar to clientelism (Lapegna 2013) as the rural farmers of Formosa attempted to create a political network that connected it to larger national social movements. These entanglements began in 2003 as the Peronist Party under the leadership of Néstor Kirchner took office as president, during his ascent the FTV and by extension MoCaFor supported his candidacy. With this support came access to welfare resources that would be used to alleviate the issues that disproportionately affected the rural campesinos of Monte Azul. Support for the Peronist Party and Néstor Kirchner would allow members of MoCaFor to begin to engage directly with the national political system. The interactions of the campesinos of Formosa and the state are problematized by these entanglements as they are made possible through the use of patronage politics. In order for politicians such as Néstor Kirchner to gain the political clout to ascend to the presidency, the Peronist party is forced to negotiate with provincial governors in order to secure votes in the national congress. Doing so required peronists like Néstor Kirchner to approach governors who have held office for decades who firmly controlled the provincial legislature and the judiciary.

In Argentina this becomes an issue as legislatures owe their nominations to provincial governors. This puts those who live in sacrifice zones in a difficult position in which they are pressured to accommodate the symbolic violence enacted upon them; they are presented with the option to support a political leader that in turn negotiates with provincial governors who oftentimes have family that are business partners with soybean growers, agribusiness peoples,

and large landowners who provide the capital for this kind of extractivism. The options presented to the campesinos of Formosa allows them to exercise their agency, the decisions made by the members of MoCaFor also demonstrates their ambivalence to this extractive model. This becomes apparent in Lapegna's discussion of language in his ethnography in which participants conceptualized politics as "something dirty, driven by personal, selfish interests, and tainted by corruption" (Lapegna 2016: 66). This view of politics and *politicos* (politicians) becomes bitter as campesinos discuss the lack of resources, some of members of MoCaFor resented the existing model of patronage politics and the need to be politically connected in order to receive public resources. The diversity of perspectives towards politics becomes apparent as some of the leaders of MoCaFor viewed it as an avenue through which peasants could challenge the status quo through engaging with the political system. It is through their diverse views of the current political system that reveals the complexity of the political, social and economic reality. This ambivalence is captured by those who would criticize the practice of clientelism while also criticizing those who failed to deliver resources that were promised. It is through Lapegna's ethnography that captures the fragmented views of patronage politics with some condemning it while also complaining about its ability to function properly. These range of views and actions illustrate the complexity of inhabiting sacrifice zones while also attempting to negotiate with national actors in order to at minimum, receive material relief for their losses in addition to securing their economic livelihoods. In short these diverse views and actions illustrate the survival strategies employed by those inhabiting the fringes of society in Argentina.

The case of campesinos in Formosa is insightful as the actions and responses of the state and collaborative global actors demonstrate how they are able to successfully demobilize

communities that are involved in challenging their subjugated positions in this neo-extractive paradigm. The tactics employed by state and global actors echo Lerner's mapping of sacrifice zone creation and their perpetuity. As noted above, intentional misleading is common in downplaying the effects of harmful chemical exposure. This was no different in Monte Azul as MoCaFor members and other community leaders brought their grievances to authorities they were met with both denial and disrespect. As members of the Monte Azul came to learn about the toxic nature of the pesticides used for genetically modified soybean production, they were rightfully angry. The harmful nature of such intimate exposure (direct contact, inhalation, etc.) was not disclosed to those who came into contact with it. MoCaFor members mobilized tactics of resistance such as those Lerner outlines when combatting sacrifice zone creation, which included the use of media to galvanize the issue of agrototoxic exposure in Monte Azul. This tactic prompted a response from both the state and representative from the agribusiness. The response from the state was a slow one, over a month later doctors from the Ministry of Development arrived and tested blood samples and water in order to verify the campesinos claims of agrototoxin exposure, the results of these tests concluded that there were no organochlorides or organophosphate chemicals in the local water supply or blood samples (Lapegna 2016). The results of these tests were clear examples of disregard for the health of the campesinos of Monte Azul, according to the leaders of MoCaFor the chemicals tested for in these studies were not the agrochemicals identified by MoCaFor leaders as responsible for the damage to the environment and health of the residents. Further problematizing the response of the state was the slow response to test for exposure, agrochemicals are rarely detectable after 15 days of exposure. The time elapsed from their initial exposure and the level of chemicals found on their crops at the

beginning of February may have been washed away by heavy rainfalls. With these results made public by the state, the Ministry of Human Development cited that the symptoms (breathing issues, skin rashes, headaches, etc.) the campesinos were experiencing were due to their contact with dirt and their lack of proper hygiene. The demands of the campesinos who were affected by these drifts were flagrantly dismissed; both state and representatives of multinational actors were quick to vilify the victims of the drift. They mobilized a number of tactics in order to appease some of the community members who were impacted by the fumigations. These responses can be summed up as denial of contamination through selective testing, dismissal of demands and lastly the vilification of protestors by the mobilization of rhetoric intended to challenge the organizing campesino's credibility. This dismissal took the form of statements from numerous institutions of the state, the Ministry of Human development and the president of the Formosan Association of Agrarian Engineers, stating that the toxic chemicals that are used by genetically modified soybean farms do not affect human health nor that of animals or soil. This contention continued to build as they accused campesinos of tarnishing the image of the province. These statements were made in concert with CEFA's public statement only this time going a step forward threatening legal action for slander (Lapegna 2016).

The responses taken together use a rhetorical strategy that mischaracterizes the campesinos as deceptive and malicious and deceitful; this framing of campesinos by the state and global actors borrowed from the discourse of Argentina's military dictatorship in which dissent was equated with social disintegration. The dismissal of the contamination was given further weight with the institutional endorsement of the Argentine equivalent to the United State's Food and Drug Administration, SENASA, which suggested that the use of agrochemicals should be

kept at a technical level, this served to exclude campesinos and their organizations from engaging these conversations. By relegating conversations to a technical level it suggests that only those with the sufficient knowledge should be allowed to put forward opinions on these issues. In short, the rhetoric and actions taken by the state served as both a reminder of their status as subordinate in which there are institutionalized patterns of devaluation in which the campesinos of Monte Azul as social actors, are deemed inferior, excluded, and invisibilized. This makes them less than full partners within their social, political, and economic interactions with both the state and its multinational collaborators. As a result of this, the obstacles of in the quest for recognition for the campesinos of Monte Azul become clear. The subordination of the campesinos of Monte Azul by both the state and the multinationals with the practice of agribusiness, traditional life making projects are made obsolete. This is reified as those directly impacted forgo growing staples as they feared losing money that could be destroyed by future drifts. As a result of this, proletarianization follows as the decline of traditional agriculture forces those who are capable of moving to migrate in search of wage labor. These forced migrations are necessary as those who have been affected require work in order to feed themselves and their families. The preexisting social, economic, and political arrangements of extractivist Argentina makes the demobilization and reification of sacrifice zones possible in Formosa. This status of subordination is also made possible as members of peasant organizations such as MoCaFor engage with other national movements such as the FTV. The creation of these alliances allows the national and provincial governments to manipulate the trajectories of what would have otherwise been collective action through the regulation and endowing of subsidies.

The eschewing of collective action is best captured by what Lapegna describes as the concept of Dual Pressure. Dual pressure is the result of asymmetries of power in the social, economic, and political fields that create the conditions in which subordinated populations develop survival strategies that are akin to clientelistic arrangements that are grounded on expectations of reciprocity (Lapegna 2016). In doing so, economically marginalized populations volunteer and participate in social movement organizations, like MoCaF, or in order to voice their grievances that demand that they be recognized as legitimate social actors with the right to economic well being and dignity. As MoCaFor struggled to meet the material needs of their constituents, they aligned themselves with other national social movements such as the FTV. This allowed them to gain access to valuable resources, however this can be limiting as the grantor of these resources expect things in return. Although not explicitly stated, political support is typically expected of national politicians. As a result leaders of these social movement organizations are forced to accommodate pressure from above, the endowers of this aid, in addition to addressing the pressure from below, stemming from the constituents of organizations like MoCaFor. Further compounding this issue is the institutional recognition that comes with making alliances with other national social movements. As local-provincial organizations receive the support of national ones, they are made visible and granted a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the provincial government. In the case of the peasants of Formosa who sought reparations for the damages caused to livestock and agriculture, they were denied the monetary compensation they demanded, claiming that the claims were exaggerated. As a result MoCaFor leaders were forced to find the resources for their constituents elsewhere. With one national ally being the only source of support, they become cemented in a cycle of clientelistic practices that effectively

eschew collective action that would facilitate the contestation of the creation of a sacrifice zone in Monte Azul.

This situation changed with the presidency of Néstor Kirchner (member of the Peronist Party) in 2003, MoCaFor began to receive resources from the national government. This took the form of *planes* (unemployment benefits) that had high impacts in the livelihoods of campesinos such as scholarships for youths attending high school, food, and agricultural machinery for a cooperative (Lapegna 2016). With the distribution of these resources, clientelistic practices would be reproduced within MoCaFor, those who joined the organization intended to participate but this was highly informed by the context of patronage. As a result, the constituents from below would not challenge the clientelistic practices that came with this aid as it provided a lifeline that would otherwise not exist. Pressures from above would come as the provincial government, who originally denied the contamination of agrochemicals, were allies to the national government of Néstor Kirchner. It was eventually concluded that the provincial government could meet in order to negotiate the campesino's demands. As a result, the direct actions that previously prevented the conducting of soybean farming such as roadblocks and commandeering of planes used for aerial fumigation, were suspended. With these pressures being experienced from both dimensions, the constituents of MoCaFor find themselves obliged to lend political support for the national government. In other words, by engaging in the practice of patronage politics a web of symbolic violence is spun, forcing the peasants of the Monte Azul to accommodate the power differentials to the economic, social, and political realities of the province.

As these policies were practiced, the accommodation of power became prevalent. This was made clear years later as many of the campesinos of Monte Azul transitioned from their traditional life making project, transitioning to the production of genetically modified cotton. While large landowners are able to do so for profit, many of the smaller farmers and peasants did so out of necessity. In doing so they are legitimized as social actors; the government in collaboration with multinationals like Monsanto provide genetically modified seeds, fumigation with agrochemicals and the harvesting of cotton and selling was managed by the provincial government. By offering their lands up as sacrifice zones, they are allowed to receive whatever money was leftover after deducting the cost of labor. In accommodating power in order to meet the pressing and immediate needs of campesinos in Monte Azul, they are forced to cope with the fallout of this extractivist paradigm such as the detriments to the soil from monocropping in addition to the emergence of agrochemical resistant weeds. This establishment and subordination of Monte Azul and its inhabitants as sacrificial for the sake of national prosperity is consistent with the characteristics of sacrifice zones. This area is inviting for international actors like Monsanto that are able to collaborate with the provincial government in order to generate exorbitant amounts of wealth that are never sequestered in the regional economy, but rather are exported at the detriment of the population. The case of the campesinos in Monte Azul is one of many instances in which these practices take place, however there are other ongoing efforts to resist the implementation of other extractive industries such as those in Patagonia in southern Argentina.

Setting a Precedent: Patagonian Resistance in Esquel, Chubut

Communities like Monte Azul were unable to resist the implementation of an extractive industry due to the social, political, and economic dynamics within the province of Formosa. However, rejecting neo-extractivist models championed by provincial elites and their multinational collaborators is not impossible. An emblematic case in Argentina's history of socio-environmental justice is the case of Esquel (2001-2002) in the patagonian province of Chubut. Residents mobilized through *La Asamblea de Vecinos Autoconvocados de Esquel* (AVAE; Self-Organized Assembly of Esquel Residents) in which multiscalar alliances were formed in order to disseminate information about the risks of megamining. By making the perils of open-pit mining widely spread, AVAE was successful in halting mineral extraction in addition to setting a legal precedent for the rest of the province. The success of the struggle in Esquel was made possible by key differences in the social, economic, and political realities in the patagonian town. Instrumental to this was the heterogeneity of the constituents of AVAE in which some certain members had strong social capital, and greater economic and political resources available to them. In order to reject the extraction of gold in the region, the AVAE had to challenge the political apparatus which made changes to the Argentine constitution. These key changes occurred in 1994 in which the development of mining projects in the country in which the Federal state transferred its rights and ownership of sub-soil resources to the provincial level. In doing so the federal state effectively relinquished its rights to regulate or produce in this sector. This occurred as the Menem's state policy intended to reposition in the increasingly liberal global market. As a result mining operations became decisions of the provinces. Another notable change under Menem was the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and their rights within

Argentina. This constitutional amendment on behalf of the Federal government gave constitutional recognition to international treaties and conventions such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These changes to the Argentine constitution are key to understanding how economic and political recentering of natural resources were placed in the hands of provincial governments. The changes would become attractive to multinationals like Meridian Gold that saw these constitutional reforms as opportunities for potential ventures. Previously developed mining legislation made these foreign direct investments even more lucrative as provinces were left with little room to negotiate the percentage of royalties which were capped at 3% of the value of the minerals extracted (Schein 2016).

It was under these conditions under which Meridian Gold began to encroach upon the territory of the Huisca-Antieco Mapuche community in January 2001. In a colonial fashion traditional of the Argentine state, Meridian Gold began to explore the potential sites for ore extraction on the communal lands that were protected under the modifications to the constitution in 1994. These modifications to the constitution guaranteed Indigenous Peoples in Argentina prior and informed consent of operations that would affect their life making projects (Aranda 2015; Aliaga 2019). Their right to the participation in the management of the sub-level resources on their land were dismissed. As a result the Huisca-Antieco community were one of the first to warn of the encroaching of a multinational in the area. Prior to this there were rumors of the existence of a multinational megamining company, however it was not until the provincial government under the administration of José Luis Lizururume revealed that a megamining operation were to open 7 kilometers from Esquel. This was done in concert with Meridian Gold who mobilized their massive publicity budget to highlight the supposed benefits of this new

operation (Arranda). During their aggressive campaigning, Meridian Gold projected to create 400 new jobs for the residents of Esquel, a town of 30,000 people. Meridian Gold and the provincial government aimed to capitalize on the financial crisis that Argentina was experiencing in which 25% of the population in Esquel was unemployed and 40% experienced poverty (Abba 2005). Meridian Gold projected that this new mega-mining operation would contribute 120 million USD to the local economy. These lofty promises were contested by many of the residents of Esquel. As the publicity campaign unfolded, the AVAE was composed of over 2,000 residents from diverse backgrounds. Within the AVAE there was the influence and expertise of migrants from urban centers who worked as professionals (lawyers, geologists, biologists, chemists, etc.) choosing to live in Esquel for its proximity to nature. Esquel sits at the Andean foothills, with Los Alerces national park only 30 kilometers away, offering opportunities to easily connect with nature. The Indigneous Huisca-Antieco Mapuche community located 60 kilometers from Esquel was also instrumental in fending off the multinational as they denounced the clandestine invasion of their territories that violated their rights. Although their territorial rights were not recognized by the judicial system, they mobilized in concerted efforts with the various professionals of AVAE to level credibility that would politicize the use of toxic chemicals and massive water consumption that open-pit mining requires.

The daily requirements of conducting open-pit mining operations requires the use of 9 tons of explosives in order to extract sediment. Additionally 10 tons of toxic chemicals such as cyanide are used for the distilling of precious metals, this process also consumes 300,00 liters of potable water, which remains contaminated indefinitely (Abba 2005). Once potential veins are identified, both sterile and viable sediment are extracted; one ton of rock has the potential to

average 9 grams of gold that is found in trace amounts. The nature of mega-mining in the 21st century is one that is highly disruptive to the social fabric of the societies in which they operate in addition to causing irreparable harm to the physical landscape. This is due to the transition away from traditional mining that employed the use of shovels, pickaxes and hammers which were common during the colonial period in Latin America. With this knowledge AVAE's initial focus was to highlight the harmful effects of cyanide to the health of the population. AVAE constituents were teachers, researchers, students connected to *la Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia sede Esquel* (The National University of Patagonia, Esquel), and citizens from diverse class backgrounds. The AVAE was successful in articulating their skepticism of the allegedly expert opinions being disseminated by Meridian Gold. The Environmental Impact Assessment put forth by Meridian Gold was called into question as allies throughout the country and internationally lent their social capital and professional expertise such as Dr. Robert Moran of Greenpeace Argentina who wrote a report about the lack of shortcomings of Meridian Gold's Environmental Impact Assessment. Dr. Moran's report highlighted an anonymous leak of a recording of a Meridian Gold meeting in Buenos Aires in which they discussed the neglect to fulfil the regulations for an environmental impact study in addition to the neglect of social participation.

With this information made public and politicized the members of AVE would begin to hold weekly assemblies in which information was both presented and diffused. Doing so in this manner would prove successful to their rejection of the installation of the mine as information was made accessible to the residents of Esquel. The AVAE demanded institutional recognition and were compelled to conduct independent grassroots studies in order to assess the potential

impacts of toxic chemicals such as cyanide to local water supplies. With the deliberate neglect on behalf of Meridian Gold to the adhering of environmental regulations within the country, AVAE would continue their marches, protest meetings, and speeches advocating for resistance throughout the 7 month period. The AVAE demanded that the town be allowed to exercise their democratic rights, calling for the Mayor of Esquel to uphold provincial law N° 4,032 of Environmental Protection that called for the holding of public audiences in order to create the space for public feedback (Aranda 2015). With the AVAE fully mobilized with the support of their national and international allies, they engaged in direct democracy; a referendum was held in which they called for a non-binding plebiscite. There was resistance from the local government of Esquel in which it was able to prevent the conducting of a plebiscite, the local government was able to do this twice. The AVAE would continue to mobilize and they were successful on their third attempt and the results demonstrated that a majority of the population rejected the installation of the open-pit operation. Of the 30,000 inhabitants, 70% participated in this exercise of democracy; 81% of the voting population voted against the installation of the mega-mining operation (Schein 2016). Although this act of democracy was non-binding, the adamant rejection of the mine was clear, the majority of the population opposed the neo-extractive model and thus the local government had no choice but to recognize the legitimacy of the plebiscite and abide by the decision.

The successful mobilization in Esquel is emblematic due to the precedent it set for future socio-environmental movements in Argentina. The success of the AVAE in upholding democracy through the plebiscite, changes in legislation within the patagonian province of Chubut would soon follow. The new provincial legislation would go on to prohibit open-pit

mining and the use of toxic chemicals such as cyanide (Provincial Law N° 5,000 and 5,001).

With this success it is important to highlight the social, political and economic realities that made the rejection of the neo-extractivist model possible in Esquel and not in Monte Azul. When comparing these two socio-environmental conflicts, it is important to consider the constituents of both movements. In Monte Azul, those who made up MoCaFor were primarily rural peasants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who lacked access to state services such as education, a right guaranteed by the Argentine State. Their constituency did not have access to a high number of qualified professionals that would be able to validate their claims, thus they were forced to create national allies that would employ a form of patronage politics, which effectively altered the trajectory of the movement. In contrast, the residents of Esquel had access to both national and international allies who could lend their professional opinions, independent of the state in order to challenge the Environmental Impact Assessment put forth by Meridian Gold. The tactics employed by the Multinational that intended to install clientelism proved to be unsuccessful. Meridian Gold attempted to achieve this by distributing food, clothing, and school supplies to Esquel's most vulnerable residents, however this was not sufficient to influence the majority of Esquel's population. It is also equally important to note that Indigenous communities were disregarded by the local officials and their multinational collaborators in both movements; the Mapuche community in Esquel was able to create alliances with the non-Mapuche residents of Esquel, allowing them to galvanize the neglect of their rights as Indigenous Peoples. These differences serve to indicate the insidious nature of sacrifice zones; they are formed in locations in which there is little to no political organization or recognition (Lerner). Sacrifice zones and the multinational extractivist corporations that create them are particularly insidious as they operate

in locations that are home to Indigenous communities (Lerner 2016). The successful resistance of Esquel and the creation of a sacrifice zone in Monte Azul reveal another dimension of inequality, that of racism within the neo-extractivist paradigm. These two struggles exemplify how the neo-extractivist model borrows from the early colonial discourse in Argentina in which hegemonic forces determine what territories and peoples are deemed disposable by the state for the sake of national prosperity.

The success of AVAE in Chubut is still relevant today as the policies regarding mining in Argentina at the national level still invite the introduction of foreign direct investment. This is the consequence of the sweeping neoliberalization of economies that spread throughout much of Latin America. Under the guidance of the World Bank and the Bank of Inter-American Development, Argentina relinquished its right to its own sub-soil resources, provinces have the authority to grant concessions which would in turn encourage multinational corporations like Meridian Gold to access these resources. The laws established in Argentina endow multinationals like Meridian Gold with a number of benefits such as: tax stability for 30 years; the exemption of payments of import taxes and duties; a 100% deduction of investment costs from capital gains taxation; and in terms of royalties this percentage is capped at 3% prior to processing (Law No. 24,196). As provincial and local administration change, communities like those in Esquel find themselves continuously opposing the installation of multinationals throughout the province as political successors attempt to repeal provincial laws through the process of zonification. Esquel is not unique in its fight for economic justice, social participation, and dignity.

Chapter 3.

Disputed Territories, Disputed Identities: Megamining in Río Negro

The successful struggle against Meridian Gold on the national stage set off a chain of events in which *Asambleas de Vecinos Autoconvocados* (Self-Appointed Assemblies) became popular methods of organizing and mobilizing in order to reject open-pit mining operations. This was the case in the Patagonian province of Río Negro in which the open-pit Calcatreu project was stopped in 2005 by AVAs who worked in solidarity with the Mapuche community who invoked their rights as Indigenous Peoples, citing the modifications to the Argentine constitution in 1994. With the organizing of various AVAs who worked alongside the *Consejo de Desarrollo de las Comunidades Mapuches* (CODECI; The Council of Mapuche Community Development) were able to gain judicial recognition of the violation of the Mapuche's rights by putting forth evidence of contamination from adjacent mines. As a result of the collective mobilization across provinces and municipalities, the legislature of Río Negro approved provincial law N° 3981 which would prohibit the use of toxic chemicals such as cyanide and mercury. This legislative action took place in June of 2005 was a tremendous success as the life making projects of the Mapuche communities along the corridor known as *la línea sur* (The Southern Line) would be

threatened. This corridor along Río Negro is a part of the Patagonian plateau in which water scarcity is prevalent with an annual rainfall of 200 millimeters (Chávez and Wagner 2019). This is important to highlight due to the fact that the primary economy for the rural Mapuche community is based on cattle raising. Due to this scarcity, Mapuche cattle ranchers depend on both groundwater and streams to meet the needs for their life making projects. This concern was presented to provincial judiciaries alongside empirical evidence by the residents of a municipality, Ingeniero Jacobacci¹, that cited the chemical exposure of livestock from the Angela mine project in the neighboring province of Chubut. This open-pit mining project was located in the department of Gastre in Chubut, however the project's chemical waste was emptied into the waterways used by the populations of *La Línea Sur* (Chávez and Wagner 2019).

This was revealed when the meat packing plant *Frigorífico Aimar* bought horses sourced from La Línea Sur, they discovered that some of the horses contained high levels of cadmium, a highly toxic metal that when consumed repeatedly has the potential to cause damage to organs such as kidneys, liver, and heart. With heavy exposure cadmium it has the potential to be both cancerous and fatal. The livestock from the region were found to contain 1,367 milligrams of cadmium per kg in their livers, 18.25 milligrams in their kidneys, and 0.395 in muscular tissues (Pagina 12 2005). These alarming numbers exceeded the maximum tolerance established by the European Economic Community at 1 milligram per kilogram, while the Argentine Food Code established a maximum of 0.005 milligrams per liter of water. These levels of contamination proved to be alarming as the poly-metal (gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc) Angela mine was located 116 kilometers away from the town of Ingeniero Jacobacci. The Angela mine had been

1

operational from 1978 through 1992, however with its closure, the 1,500,000 tons of primarily toxic waste remained. This level of toxic waste proved to be a concern as the Director of Mining admitted to the *excess* presence of cadmium in streams that originated in the vicinity of the Angela mine.

In Río Negro, the exploration and establishment of open-pit operations prove to be problematic as they employ the contemporary tactics of mineral extraction while also borrowing from Argentina's early colonial discourse of invisibilization in order to dismiss Indigenous claims to their ancestral territories. Although Indigenous recognition and rights are codified into the Argentine constitution, multinationals like Patagonia Gold and their state collaborators are effective at continuing practices of genocide through the usurpation of ancestral Indigenous territories through the use of invisibilization, repression and in some cases fatal force. With the history of invisibilization and socio-economic marginalization, urban Mapuches who contest neo-extractivist projects find their identities contested as the state has historically defined Indigenous Peoples like the Mapuche as Others. Thus they are systematically prevented from invoking their rights as sovereign Indigenous Peoples. This is illustrated as Mapuches themselves and their territories are disputed by the historical violence of La Conquista del Desierto, while simultaneously challenging multinationals that usurp their lands in a neo-colonial fashion. In order to justify land dispossession and further a narrow the definition of Mapuche identity, a false dichotomy is presented with the rural vs urban schema. With the creation of cities on Mapuche land, cities are presented as dynamic environments in which progress and modernity are created whereas the countryside is imagined as static and behind in material culture and intellectual development (Szulc). This dichotomy, although false, perpetuates

harmful lived realities for Mapuches in both areas: in the countryside Mapuches are relegated as passive social actors whereas in the city this dichotomy is used to challenge or deny the authenticity of urban Mapuches. This dichotomy is further reinforced by the way in which the Argentine state continues to exclude Indigenous communities from the national history. This urban vs rural schema actively reproduces itself through avenues such as public education. Public education is free and guaranteed by the Argentine state, it has also historically excluded Mapuche history from the national history. Thus indigenous communities are relegated to a previous time period, prior to the formation of the Argentine Republic, in which they inhabited rural locations. By relegating the Mapuches to a previous time and different space, this denies them the agency to identify as Mapuche. By requiring rural lifestyle as a condition necessary for authenticity, the state is able to effectively craft an image of Mapuches who are either invisibilized or stereotyped as Others, trapped in the ways of the past in the countryside, destined to undergo extinction due to the inevitable advance of modernity in the form of neo-extractive projects. These narratives are contradictory to the realities of current Mapuches, who due to the violent processes of La Conquista del Desierto, there was an expulsion of Mapuches towards urban areas in which they were forced to assimilate as a means of survival. However, this survival tactic of migration brought on resistance into these urban spaces, the Mapuches who once felt disconnected began the process of reconnecting with their Indigenous heritage through the construction of a new identity: *MapUrbes*. These urban Mapuches sought to expand the definition of Mapuches in the 21st century. This identity was born out of resistance and allowed the young population to reconnect with historical struggles of dispossession, invisibilization, and sovereignty.

Aiding in these neo-colonial projects is the construction of fictional knowledge on Indigenous Peoples. The discourse that was defined by western hegemony has shaped the way in which extant Indigenous Peoples are conceptualized today, this discourse includes the framing of Indigenous Peoples as extinct, non-authentic, or on the route to extinction. In the context of Argentina, the Mapuche have been rendered invisible or essentialized by the neo-colonial state. Anthropologists in the contemporary explore the marginalization of the Mapuche and their relationship to the state such as Argentine scholar Laura Kropff. Positioning Kropff's work in the context of the previous anthropologists such as cultural evolutionist, Edward Tylor, demonstrates how contemporary ethnographies of the Mapuche are critical in disrupting persistent colonial thought. Kropff's contributions illustrate how identity and culture are flexible and respond to the global force of neo-colonialism. Doing so requires mapping how previous anthropological thought was used as a tool of colonialism, shaping the experiences witnessed today. Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) a proponent of cultural evolutionism, championed a hegemonic definition of progress, which he applied to the early concept of culture. Tylor defined culture in his text *Primitive Societies* as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1873:43). This early definition of culture cleaves the entangled elements of human experiences into domains that are believed to be separate, as a result decontextualized ethnographies that are composed of poor understandings of non-european lifeways are produced. Separating these elements of culture prevents the ethnographer from understanding how the various elements of culture are fluid and interact with each other. This lack of nuance that underpinned the foundation of cultural evolutionism, the comparative method, was flawed as it associated

material culture of extant groups with objects that resembled the material culture of extinct ones (Erickson & Murphy 2017). This eurocentric appraisal of non-european cultures is further problematized by the comparative method that bolstered these early approaches to culture as a value-based one that produced knowledge through superficial evidence that was drawn from disjunctured sources. These early approaches to culture would anchor the racist corpus of knowledge that justified colonial logic that deemed non-european cultures, specifically Indigenous ones, as obstacles to the rise of western civilization and empire.

Postcolonial scholars of the 20th century such as Edward Said grapple with the legacy of colonialism and the fictional knowledge that emerged from the century prior that constructed visions of the Other. Said does this in *Orientalism* (1978) in which he deconstructs the concept of the Oriental Other that was produced by western empire in order to circumscribe and objectify their subjects of imperial power. Said problematizes the knowledge produced from the comparative method that allowed early ethnographers to trace fictional histories such as the origins, prime, and decline (Said 1978). This colonial corpus of knowledge, which upheld constructions of the Other, is further problematized by way of being produced by individuals who were invested in the expansion of empire. The production of knowledge was deliberately produced during a time of western expansion from 1815 to 1914 during which European colonial domination expanded from 35 percent of the earth's surface to 85 percent (Said 1978). This knowledge was used as a justification to deny subjugated peoples their right to self-determination. Consequently western empire forced all Others into postures of submission, resulting in their internal affairs being administered, material wealth appropriated, territories seized, bodies governed, and labor managed for the consumption of the west. In order to do so,

colonial interlocutors like Estanislao Zeballos whose work, *La conquista de quince mil leguas* (The conquest of fifteen thousand leagues), labeled the Mapuche as savage nomads who plundered colonial borders in search of animals and captives, who were bent on inflicting harm on the lives and goods of Argentine citizens (Mandrini and Ortelli 1992: 14). As a result Indigenous Others were constructed as savages, incompatible with the advance of modernity. This colonial corpus of knowledge would then evolve as the military campaign evolved into a civilizing enterprise. As a result of this discourse, the Mapuche were labeled as Chilean invaders who sought to overtake the now Argentine territory. This expulsion of the Mapuche from their traditional territories and their forced migrations towards urban spaces conflicted with the belief that they only occupied rural areas, this movement was understood by the non-Mapuche and recognized by the state as acculturation to the dominant western culture and a shedding of Mapuche identity that was both cultural and biological (Kropff 2004).

One of the contemporary legacies of colonialism upon Mapuche identity is that the colonial knowledge from the past serves to gate keep and contest Indigenous identity in the present. This serves the state and multinationals in contesting the legitimacy of their Indigeneity and thus the right of urban and rural Mapuches to contest their subordinate position across both geographies are questioned. However in the 21st century urban Mapuche adolescents began to challenge these hegemonically defined conceptions of Indigenous Peoples as solely being folkloric, existing in the countryside and as defenders of imagined traditions who solely spoke Mapudungun. This social movement which originated in urban settings sought to create a space that would recognize the range of lived experiences of urban and working-class Mapuches. The movement Wefkletuyiñ (We are re-emerging) was established by Mapuche adolescents who

launched this self-affirmation campaign. The movement prompted public debates on Mapuche identity, by doing so urban Mapuche adolescents challenged the idea that one could not be a Mapuche and exist in an urban setting. As a result, this self-affirmation movement was carried out in a number of cities that were traditionally Mapuche territory. The primary mediums for this movement were through media (zines and radio) and art (music and theatre), the movements primary objective aimed to strengthen collective Mapuche identity (Kropff 2004), however it simultaneously introduced these self-affirmed individuals to the historical struggles of land reclamation in the context of an increasingly neo-liberal economy.

In Kropff's analysis of the self-affirmation movement, a focus was on age and how it influenced the production of Mapuche culture. Grounding this analysis of age was that life is organized by successive stages: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, late adulthood and how the mobility from one stage to another influences the specific rules of behavior and the roles fulfilled by those individuals (Kropff 2011). Following this logic, it is relevant to question the conditions that enable, promote, and limit the use of the category of adolescence, and in what contexts generate its use. The emphasis on this part of identity is central to the self-affirmation movement as it reveals how adolescence as a category results in interpellation and the articulation of their agency (Kropff 2011). Adhering to this logic, urban Mapuche adolescents resist cultural devaluation from both the state that does not recognize their existence in addition to challenging older and rural Mapuche to consider their experiences as urban-adolescents as valid. As a result, their practices can be understood as not simply adolescent culture, but rather cultural *practices* of adolescents. This emphasis on age-specific cultural production is relevant as it allows these

adolescents to make sense of their lived experiences while simultaneously challenging hegemonic definitions of identity imposed upon them during the Conquest of the Desert.

Many of the Mapuche adolescents who participated in this movement were engaging with activism for the first time, with their concerns as urban Mapuche adolescents were vinculated to the consequences of neoliberal policies that limited access to social programs such as healthcare and education, this was further compounded by the fact that these changes in economic model resulted in high levels of unemployment that would result in individuals seeking support from the state. These changes provided the backdrop in which these Mapuche adolescents made sense of their experiences of living in the urban periphery linking and articulating them within the context of counter-cultures that are oftentimes overlooked such as the punk and heavy metal scenes. With the rise of Mapuche self-affirmation, individuals who participated in the punk or heavy metal scenes had their indigeneity trivialized by both the Mapuche and non-mapuche members of the population (Kropff 2011). In one of Kropff's interviews with a *Mapuheavy*, a self-identified Mapuche who participates in the heavy metal scene, he noted that:

“Vos no podés ser mapuche y andar con cresta y borcegos”, “no podés ser mapuche y andar con la campera llena de cosas brillantes, tachas”. Es como que hay algo que no cuaja, pero volvemos al tema éste de qué es lo puramente mapuche. Esto es mapuche, esto no. Yo sé que le puede costar a mucha gente nuestra, a los mayores, inclusive que le produce un choque” (Kropff 2011: 82).

In this quote, the informant notes how he is told by society that limited conceptualizations of Mapuche identity frame his membership in the heavy metal scene as incompatible with his Mapuche identity. He notes that his Mapuche identity must be presented and performed in a specific way, he tells of Mapuche identity being delegitimized if one is aesthetically punk with stud covered jackets and boots. Furthermore, he notes that this emerging intersection of identities, punk and Mapuche, have been difficult for older generations of Mapuche to accept who insist that Mapuche identity must be embodied in specific ways. This view affirms that conversations on mapuche identity to be held in order to resist older definitions of Mapuche expression (NACLA).

This emerging identity fractures the limitations imposed upon the Indigenous Peoples during the expansion of empire, these Mapuche adolescents demonstrate a reclaiming of both their histories and trajectories as they employ discursive codes specific to their neighborhoods, from language to cultural production (zines, rock shows, recitals), which creates the possibility of Mapuche identity to be considered from various angles. Further challenging the fragmentation of the Mapuche nation and the construction of the folkloric other was the transformation between the relationships between the Mapuche adolescents of the city and those in the countryside. The *Mapunkies* and *Mapuheavies* who were a part of the self-affirmation movement were productive in that their embodiment and articulations of identity allowed them to rebuild broken social bonds while simultaneously creating new ones in these Urban spaces (NACLA), this commitment has allowed the urban adolescents to be incorporated into rural, communal, ceremonial, and political Mapuche spaces. This counter cultural identity is a liminal one, in which they challenge preconceived notions of Indigeneity. The Mapuche who participate in the

heavy metal scene are not found in fictional folkloric spaces, nor do they act in the way they are expected to. Rather than being circumscribed to playing traditional instruments, these Mapuche adolescents do something novel; they fuse elements of the heavy metal scene such as the electric guitar with traditional instruments, while simultaneously incorporating lyrics linked to Mapuche history that denounces historical violence and galvanizing issues of land appropriation and eviction (Kropff 2004). This form of embodiment is unique in that it demonstrates the fluidity of culture in response to global forces such as the legacy of colonialism.

The self-affirmation campaign of Wefkletuyiñ (We are re-emerging) may also be examined through the lens of gender and sexuality studies. Doing so allows depth to the contestation of power relations within and across societies while simultaneously addressing, historicizing, problematizing related concepts of gender and sexuality. This analysis through the lens of gender and sexuality is appropriate as the stage for the fieldwork is exceedingly complex due to Indigenous Peoples being obliged to change in response to the history of military, economic, and ideological domination from the age of colonialism which plays out in the public domain, in which social performance and meaning making occurs (Erickson and Murphy 2017). This theoretical background allows us to construct an analogy between the reasons for subjugation of identities that are embodied and performed such as gender and ethnic identity. Judith Butler's (1988) deconstruction of gender provides a starting point in which she defines gender as

“an identity tenuously constituted in time-- an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*... in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds

constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self... if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that a constructed identity, a **performative** accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief' (Butler 1988: 431).

Following Butler's logic we can begin to disentangle the complexities of (ethnic and gendered) identity, performance and embodiment as they respond to the legacy of colonialism and patriarchy. This is explored in in one of the productions of the Wefkletuyiñ self-affirmation movement in which *El Katango*, a Mapuche theatre group based in Bariloche, Argentina articulates Mapuche identity in a performance that disrupts the concept of the Indigenous/Non-Indigenous binary. This group sought to expand what it meant to be Mapuche in the contemporary while encouraging individuals to recognize themselves as belonging to a nation with the same history that has generated multiple trajectories (Kropff 2010). The genesis of this theatre group should also be highlighted as it started with a Mapuche actress who did not self-identify as Mapuche until she was in her 20's. This reconnection to Indigenous heritage is something that many urban Mapuche adolescents experienced, thus the need for this theatre group is justified. One of the more insidious goals of the Conquest of the Desert was to construct a national identity that was based on the binary of Indigenous and Non-indigenous Peoples (white), the state was successful in severing or diminishing connections to Indigenous heritage through multiple forms of violence and as a result, 'authentic' expressions of Mapuche identity and performance of identity have been limited (Kropff 2010). By forcing the Mapuche into this binary expressions or performances of their identity are met with punitive consequences. In

Butler's analysis of gender, she notes that the expected performance of womanhood or femininity is compelled by social sanction and taboo. The policing and construction of these hegemonically defined identities serve to dictate the social realities of the individuals who are subjugated, in Butler's example, women are subjugated to patriarchy whereas Mapuche are subjected to ethnic homogenization through state violence (symbolic, political, economic) which manifest in discriminatory practices carried out in public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and courts (Kropff 2010). Butler encapsulates this when she writes that "Actors are always on the stage, within the terms of performance...so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts its interpretations within the confines of already existing directives" (Butler 1988). In response to these limitations, El Katango uses theatre as a vehicle to challenge the limitations imposed upon them through didactic and critical performances that introduce new experiences, thus expanding definitions of Mapuche identity in the 21st century. This is critical during the 21st century land wars in Patagonia in which the erasure of Indigenous Peoples results in the erasure of legitimate resistance. These various acts within the self-affirmation movement are necessary as they present multiple experiences, both urban and rural, articulating that the Mapuche have now moved into a diasporic era that demands a reconceptualization and expansion of Mapuche identity and the rights that emerge with the expansion of the definition of Mapuche identity.

The theatre group El Katango embodies and practices decolonial thought from both Said and Butler, they demonstrate an understanding of the effects of colonial dominance and its consequential discrimination in the creation of the Indigenous Other. Through their theatre performances they articulate the subordination and erasure of indigeneity in order to invalidate

historical claims for rights. El Katango explicitly demonstrates how this colonial history had different, but equally intense effects on the Mapuche in both rural and urban spaces, and as a result, their goal did not become to attempt to find a fictional essence of Mapuche identity in rural spaces, but rather redefining the notion of the Mapuche People as a whole, by looking at all territorial spaces equally (Kropff 2010). Cementing this decolonial praxis was the idea that this redefinition of Mapuche did not consist of centering reified cultural content such as language and ceremonial rather, but rather considering the social memory that is present in the everyday practices and embodiments of the current generation of Mapuche adolescents.

When the efforts of contemporary Mapuche adolescents are contextualized in the frameworks of decolonial thought and performance studies, we are able to understand how the Mapuche are actively thwarting neo-extractive, nation-building projects that are based on the construction of a homogenous national identity. Identifying the structures that seek to subordinate the Mapuche has resulted in the need to contest these ideas as demonstrated by the self-affirmation. This work is particularly critical in the 21st century as it challenges an invisibilized subaltern experience that was narrated by the state, allowing it to be reclaimed by those who were subjected to its violence. As claims for rights and dignity continue, the actions of Mapuche involved in the Wefkletuyiñ movement demonstrate how subaltern histories and trajectories can be reclaimed while offering an example of what decolonial practice and embodiment looks like in the 21st century.

El Agua Vale Más Que El Oro (Water is Worth More Than Gold)

Despite the efforts of the Mapuche community, the AVAs of Río Negro and their provincial allies, their success was undermined in 2011 when the the provincial government of

Río Negro reappealed provincial law N° 3981, once again permitting the use of cyanide and mercury in open-pit operations. With these changes to provincial regulations, the Calcatrean project was reactivated in 2017 as Patagonia Gold bought the mining rights from Pan American Silver. With the Calcatrean project along the 42nd southern parallel, there is a high-grade low-sulfur gold system with an estimated 2.325 grams of gold per ton mineral outcrop. According to the preliminary studies put forth by Patagonia Gold, it estimated 1,000,000 ounces of gold that could be sourced from the 8 million tons of outcrop. In their study, they expected to sell their gold at the price of 650 USD per ounce (Chávez and Wagner 2019). As a result of this threat, residents of Ingeniero Jacobacci, the Lof Mapuche community, human rights leaders and socio-environmental activists have mobilized again and issued a statement² contesting the resumption of exploration and extraction in the area. Their concerns can be broken down into 3 general categories in which they question methods of environmental protection in order to ensure there is no environmental damage or contamination; the generation of employment; the generation of foreign exchange.

Their statement questions the nature of open-pit mining in which politicians and multinationals brand these open-pit operations as socially responsible and environmentally conscious operations. The resisting communities sustain that once these operations begin, the landscape will be inexorably damaged, altering the ecologies of the Patagonian flora and Fauna. With these projects, they also question the billions of liters of water that would be required to sustain this extractive project, especially in a region of the world in which this resource is scarce. They go on to interrogate the environmental impact assessments by the Provincial Water

² <https://www.endepa.org.ar/contenido/Abrire-el-Debate.pdf>

Department that gauged the quality and quantity of water in the region; the results have proven to be alarming however the communities question the lack of transparency and dissemination to all of society in the region. They have gone on to question the role of the Department of Environment and Sustainable Development and its methodology in addition to the degree of autonomy in which studies are performed, questioning the influence of the multinational Patagonia Gold. Under National Law N° 25,831, as Argentine citizens they are guaranteed the free access of public environmental information. They have requested this information and have not yet received this information, thus violating their right to informed consent. The resisting communities also respond to the arguments frequently cited by those who are in favor of mega-mining. These rural communities require jobs to meet the basic needs of their families, however they seek work that respects their dignity as valid social actors. Questions are raised about the number of jobs created, the duration of employment, and the level specialization needed for these jobs. They go on to question the misleading number of jobs provided by these industries. Oftentimes these jobs are not permanent and last only a few months. As this information is not made available to communities, they are not allowed to consider alternative forms of permanent employment that do not compromise the health of future generations. These concerns are articulated by members of the Mapuche community, such as *Abuela Maria*³ (Grandmother Maria) in which she adamantly rejects open-pit mining due to the irreparable harm it has on existing life making projects such as cattle raising that she participates in. She goes on to echo what the members of resistance seek: economic safety and dignity. Lastly their concern regarding the generation of foreign exchange for the state is questioned. After mining is

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBbBjJJqoU>

extracted, multi-nationals **self-report** what the value of their production is and pay a negligible percentage in return, capped at 3%. According to the resisting communities, they scrutinize foreign direct investment as little is done to address the impoverishment of the communities affected, but rather these projects are promoted by the state as the most expedient way to generate foreign currency quickly in order to pay off foreign debt.

The concerns of the resisting communities of Río Negro call attention to the contradictions of the Argentine state. In July of 2019, the Argentine senate declared a state of climate and ecological emergency⁴ in response to the global mobilizations that demanded a change of the status quo that has resulted in the climate crisis experienced today. Although this declaration is non-binding and does not threaten existing modes of production, it called for a thorough interrogation of the methods of wealth production and consumption in the country in addition to the distribution and extraction of natural resources. With the state's recognition of the climate crisis, resisting communities question why during this critical moment in human history attention is not given to other goals that seek to address change. These communities question the need for mineral extraction, which is contradictory to the goals outlined by The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030⁵ in which they seek to eliminate poverty, hunger, achieve food security, and guarantee access to water, etc. They highlight how the goals of the United Nations seek to address the inequalities within Argentina, questioning why the state continues to advance with neo-imperial projects that in turn create sacrifice zones that have tremendous environmental costs while simultaneously disrupting the social fabric of rural and Indigenous communities.

⁴ <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/argentina-declaro-emergencia-climatica-nid2268872>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

With these concerns put forth by the Mapuche communities of La Línea Sur and the rural inhabitants of the Patagonian Plateau, environmental organizations from various parts of the country have lended their support and accompanied them in this struggle. The advance of the Calcatreu project not only threatens the inhabitants of the Patagonian plateau, but also those found in urban areas such as the neighboring city of San Carlos de Bariloche. Bariloche is revered internationally as a tourist destination due to its location within the Andes mountains that offers a wide variety of ecotourism (skiing, hiking, birdwatching, fishing, snowshoeing, etc) throughout the entire year. The economy of the city primarily based on this tourism draws visitors from neighboring countries such as Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. Further adding to Bariloche's appeal is that it sits on a thousand-year old alpine forest. Bariloche is also known for its location in the Argentine lake district, with many of these alpine lakes being glacier fed. In a classically Patagonian fashion, the city rests upon the shores of the picturesque lake of *Nahuel Huapi*. With the threat of contamination to national parks and lakes, the residents of the Bariloche, both Mapuche and non-Mapuche, have mobilized through organizations such as *La Asociación Ecologista Piuke* (Ecological Association Piuke). Piuke, meaning Heart in Mapudungun⁶, is based in one of the humbler parts of the city known as *El Fruitillar* which is home to many of Bariloche's urban Mapuches. Piuke participates in ecological political action in the pursuit of autonomous and diverse self-managed communities. They were one of the many organizations across the province to support rural communities of La Línea Sur. Piuke subscribes to the belief of social ecology, a vision for the future that rejects notions of hierarchy, domination, power (Nursey-Bray 2012). In their goals they seek to implement principles of

⁶ The Indigenous language of the Mapuche

equity, social participation, non-violence, diversity, and solidarity. As an organization led by non-Mapuche individuals, they recognize that they inhabit a plurinational territory, that of the Mapuches, thus their actions draw from ecofeminist thought as a way to disrupt the link between state paternalism and extractivism. It is under these ideological frameworks that Piuke engages in ecological militancy demanding that interlocking dimensions of social-wellbeing, economic productivity, political participation, and cultural recognition be met in order to ensure the dignity of the communities of southern Patagonia.

Since the repeal of provincial law N° 3981, once again permitting the use of cyanide and mercury, Piuke has actively been organizing for its reinstatement. On January 3rd of 2020, I traveled back to Bariloche in order to meet with some of the community leaders of this resistance. It was during this time that I had the opportunity to observe how the theoretical approach of Piuke translated into the holistic daily practices of the organization. During this field experience I learned of how they, like organizations of MoCaFor in Formosa, intended to meet the needs of their constituents. Located in the peripheral neighborhood of El Frutillar in Bariloche, their operations were based out of *El Centro Comunitario Chico Mendes* (The Chico Mendes Community Center). It was from this center that the leaders of Piuke held the space for the constituents to plan programming and direct actions against the advance of the Calcatreu project. During these meetings members discussed the benefits of various small direct actions or that of one large one. During this process the members had to consider the feasibility of sustaining these direct actions as the unpredictable weather in Patagonia results in fluctuations in daily temperature which can prevent participants from sustaining long term direct actions. It was during these meetings in which I learned of how Piuke sustains itself by engaging in the

production of local jams, selling of books and other media, and selling of plants native to the alpine region that are grown in Piuke's Nursery *La Reforestal*. The funds generated from these sales would be used to pay for the community center's utilities and rent. The Piuke headquarters provided a location for other community building activities which ranged from access to dance lessons that provided guided exercise to the community, to bread baking in order to provide the training necessary for their constituents to seek employment at local *panederías* (bakeries). Other efforts at building community and organizing took the shape of Radio On the second level of the community center, Piuke sponsored an autonomous radio station⁷ that provided their constituents and locals with the ability to broadcast their messages. These broadcasts were informational, providing a method of diffusing information about disputed territories and the advances of mining projects. This radio station also provided the space for the Mapuches of the urban periphery to voice their concerns related to their ancestral struggles.

On January 8th I had the opportunity to witness and briefly participate in the manifestation of Piuke's community building projects, it took the form of a direct action which took place in front of the civic center of the city.. During this action, I had the opportunity to meet some of the members of Piuke's solidarity network. This network included chemists and biologists who lived in Bariloche, *Mendocinas*⁸ who were members of popular assemblies for the defense of water, local teachers, and representatives of neighboring Mapuche communities. This action took place at the center of the city, a site heavily trafficked by tourists, during the demonstration organizers decided to have monthly demonstrations in rejection of the Calcatreu project and the repeal of the anti-cyanide law. During this meeting, members of the Mapuche

⁷ <https://radioteca.net/radioautonomapiuke/>

⁸ Women from the province of Mendoza

community denounced the encroachment of the Patagonia Gold and the usurpation of ancestral territories, calling attention to the state policy of repression. In their denouncement, they cited the murder of a local Mapuche, Rafael Nahuel. Rafael's death was the result of a confrontation between members of the National Prefecture who claimed that there was an armed confrontation, this claim is still supported by the state. In November of 2017, a group of young Mapuches including Rafael were successful in reclaiming territories in the municipality of Villa Mascardi, a few kilometers from Bariloche. The territory which had been usurped by the states National Parks system was patrolled by National Prefecture who attempted to expel them from the site. As the Mapuches resisted with the use of stones, the National Prefecture responded with 200 bullets (Pagina 12 2019). One of these bullets had struck Rafael, and as companions attempted to evacuate him, they were arrested and as a result Rafael succumbed to his wounds.

It is in this context in which Piuke works in solidarity with Indigenous groups throughout the province of Río Negro. During the direct action of January 8th 2020, I was able to witness how Piuke comes together with various organizations to reject the lethal policy of state repression that often goes hand-in-hand with the expulsion of Indigenous communities from their territories for the purpose of installing neo-imperial projects like Calcatreu. In order to achieve the recognition of dignity to the life making projects of Indigenous Peoples throughout the province of Río Negro, they cited legal precedents from other provinces within Argentina. Provinces such as Cordoba have constitutionalized the prohibition of the operation of open-pit mining activities. This goes on to include the ban on extraction of nuclear minerals such as uranium and thorium and the use of polluting toxic chemicals such as cyanide, mercury and sulfuric acid (Law N° 9,526 of Cordoba). This amendment to the Cordoban constitution was

done in order to compliment the national environmental norms that aim to protect the environment. Prompting this change in the provincial constitution were the irreversible effects of open-pit mining on the environment and the health of the population and their access to water. The adoption of this modification intended to be consistent with the principles of damage prevention, precaution and sustainability which at the national level are intended to guide environmental law. With Cordoba's constitution as a model, the *Piukeros*⁹ and those who attended committed to demonstrating in front of the civic center, every month in addition to participating in other direct actions. However these commitments have been compromised as the global pandemics threaten the ability of popular organizations to engage in direct action that challenge the advancement of the mining industry throughout the province.

Mobilizations in the province of Río Negro have become disrupted as the Argentine president Alberto Fernández declared a nationwide quarantine beginning March 19th of 2020 (El Pais 2020) in response to pandemic caused by COVID-19. The mandatory quarantine was expected to last up until the end of the month, however due to the highly contagious nature of COVID-19 the residents of the province of Río Negro are still under mandatory quarantine. The movement of residents is restricted to essential business in which they are only allowed to leave their houses during certain days of the week in order to go grocery shopping and acquire medicines. Only services deemed essential are allowed to operate as these public safety measures aim to reduce the rate of transmission between community members. The pandemic has halted economies worldwide, this is also the case in Bariloche in which tourism has ceased with no clear end to the pandemic in sight. As a result of this, the provincial governor of Río Negro has

⁹ The Constituents of Piuke

called for the incorporation of mining into essential business in order to mitigate the economic losses experienced by the state, she cited that 30% of the Río Negro's GDP is based on tourism (Agencia Digital de Noticias 2020). By doing so, governor Arabela Carrera's claims that the province would be able to avoid the adoption of quasi-currency, which was a practice adopted by the Argentine state prior to the economic crisis it experienced in 2001 and 2002. The logic of the provincial governor proves to be problematic as it would reinforce the historical inequities that are experienced in both rural and urban areas of Río Negro. With open-pit mining's tremendous use of water, it would make gaining access to potable water much more difficult. The global issue of scarcity is captured in a study¹⁰ put forth by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund in 2019. In it they note that 2.2 billion people globally do not have access to safely managed drinking water, equally concerning is the figure of 4.2 billion people who currently lack basic hand washing facilities. This is particularly concerning as the WHO has indicated that a preventive measure that should be taken to avoid exposure to COVID-19 is frequent handwashing. This would prove to be extremely difficult for the residents of the arid Patagonian Plateau as their water becomes appropriated by multinationals like Patagonia Gold in addition to being contaminated. The COVID-19 pandemic has also made it impossible for these communities to mobilize to challenge the advance of the Calcatreu project as one of the methods used to combat the spread of the pandemic includes social distancing. With people unable to gather, let alone leave their houses, multinationals like Patagonia Gold are given a clear path cleared of resistance. It is under these global conditions that the Argentine state and multinational actors are able to conduct their neo-extractive operations with little to no

10

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who>

resistance. The consequences of the neo-extractive model in Río Negro have yet to be documented as they are still being played out in the contemporary. However it is without a doubt that the Mapuche communities of the Patagonian plateau along with collaborative organizations like Piuke will continue their struggle of rejecting open-pit operations of Calcatrean that threaten Indigenous life making projects and the livelihoods of those in urban centers. These communities have long and difficult battles ahead of them, they also have a history of resistance, following this history they will continue to struggle for their recognition as full partners in society and the dignity that it demands.

Conclusions

The vignettes of resistance in the chapters above demonstrate how communities throughout Argentina mobilize and articulate their identities and how these identities are inextricably linked to their grievances. In doing so, these communities demand that they be recognized as full partners within their social, political, and economic interactions with the state. The mobilizations in Monte Azul, Esquel, and Bariloche exemplify how communities reject the subordinate positions that multinationals like Monsanto and Patagonia Gold intend to place them in. The creation of a sacrifice zone in Monte Azul is the result of the realities defined by powerful forces. The license to pollute, granted by the provincial government of Formosa, demonstrates the problematic and fundamental issues of patronage politics that poor, rural, and Indigenous communities are susceptible to. Challenging these neo-imperial projects requires the disruption of the framing of multinational enterprises as the engines of development. The thread that ties these socio-environmental conflicts together is the reconfiguration of patterns that weave new asymmetries of power into the social fabric of Argentina. These actions are economically incentivized and decidedly geopolitical as territories become specialized in the production of commodities such as gold and genetically modified soybeans. These commodities which are operated and controlled by transnational corporations serve the geopolitical function of ensuring

the global provision of these minerals and foodstuffs. This serves the global monopolies as they control the dynamics of consumption through the advances of technology and flow of global capital (Svampa 2011).

As communities like those Río Negro continue their defense for life making projects and the water that supports them, the myths of extractivism, particularly that of neo-extractive projects being the engines of development require interrogation. Companies such as Patagonia Gold assert that their projects will have macroeconomic impacts on national economies of countries that are willing offer their lands. They falsely assert that projects such as Calcatreu promote the development of local economies such as that of Ingeniero Jacobacci. These assertions by multinationals are anchored in the large amount of investments that go into exploration, in Río Negro, Patagonia Gold has invested 15 million USD (Chávez and Wagner 2019). However, the income generated from foreign exchange and royalties do little to recognize the socio-political conditions that allow for the displacement of rural and Indigenous communities and the deadly repression that those who struggle against these institutions face. By neglecting these dimensions, the denial of dignity and self determination is made possible. This economic growth becomes synonymous with the reproduction of structures of power that disadvantage communities like those of La Línea Sur. The neo-extractive model of development seeks to reify the new international division of labor, deepening power differentials between countries of the post-industrial west and those submitted to its will. In this new model, countries of the post-industrial west remap their borders of production, privileging the care of the environments within their territories at the detriment of environments of countries in which they do operate, which serve as sources of wealth and waste sites(Savampa 2011). This is witnessed

in Argentina as cattle from the Patagonian Plateau contained high levels of cadmium, threatening food security in addition to the traditional life making projects of the region. These new economic and geopolitical arrangements have served to create new methods for the subordination of national economies for the extraction of natural resources and the appropriation of fictional financial surpluses.

These fictional surpluses are constructed in locations like Río Negro, Chubut, and Formosa in which sub and supra-level resources are once again reinvigorated with the seeds 21st century of neo-imperial extractivism. Another myth championed by extractive industries like megamining is the supposed wealth of jobs that these ventures create. Despite these promises from these multinationals only 0.7% of the jobs in Argentina were in the mining industry, with less 0.5% of them being registered to private companies. These nearly negligible numbers are due to the fact that megamining is not labor intensive, but rather it is capital intensive (Svampa 2011). This skepticism was rightfully articulated by the communities of La Línea Sur who questioned the longevity of the jobs produced from the proposed ventures. Oftentimes megamining multinationals will deliberately overestimate the number of jobs made available from these ventures, this was illustrated in 1997 in which the mine *Bajo de la Alumbraera* in the province of Catamarca promised the creation of 10,000 jobs for laborers, however during a follow up by the Argentine Chamber of Mining they found that only 4,000 jobs were created. This mine goes to further misrepresent the number of jobs created by citing on their website that 1,800 jobs are created when in fact only 800 of those are permanent and the remaining are held by contractors (Svampa 2011). Other myths championed by the state and proponents of these ventures are the economic contributions to the state. Multinationals that operate open-pit

operations in Argentina are allowed to deduct 100% of the money invested in their exploration. Making this worse is that these operations do not contribute municipal taxes to the marginalized communities in which they primarily operate. Further encouraging these ventures are the subsidized rates for electricity, gas, fuels and many other exemptions. With each of the creation and operation of new open-pit operations, they have the same levels of electricity consumption of a city of 300,000 inhabitants. This massive amount of energy consumption then results in the rechanneling of electricity from Argentine populations, which already operate on an energy deficit to multinationals (Svampa 2011). The effects of these deficits are experienced by those nationwide as energy subsidies are reduced in order to address these deficits.

As the promises of economic stimulation by these neo-imperial projects are interrogated, the exploitative nature of multinationals are revealed. The adoption of extractivism and the ensuing reprimarization of the Argentine economy reveals how sacrifice zones are established and perpetuated. The intersecting dimensions of marginalization that are illuminated by these projects demand an integrated approach in order to successfully contest the creation of sacrifice zones. As illustrated in the earlier chapters, those who are affected by extractivism are in positions in which they are enveloped in a complex web of political, social, and economic realities. Due to the precarious positions in which they live in, these marginalized communities do not have the ability to address one concern at a time. In order to combat this, holistic approaches must be undertaken in order to ensure healthy, livable and sustainable communities emerge. This kind of collaborative resistance is illustrated by the alliances that are built across Indigenous communities, Asambleas de Vecinos Autoconvocados, and their allies. Doing so allows them to pool the resources necessary to denounce these harmful industries. This may take

various forms, in Patagonia a popular method of doing so is through the use of media. By employing the use of media, multinationals can be held accountable for their lack of social and environmental responsibility. In Formosa we see the great lengths that the state will go to protect provincial and multinational interests. Once the consequences of the chemical drift garnered media attention, the state blamed the health effects of the agrochemical drift on the peasant's hygiene, effectively manipulating the narrative regarding chemical exposure. The case of Monte Azul illustrates the vulnerabilities of these multinationals. Other forms of resisting these industries include shaming industries and provincial enablers into reforms; lawsuits; training and equipping sacrifice zone residents to autonomously conduct the quality of air, water, and toxins within their own bodies (Lerner 2011). Although these strategies are effective for those who inhabit or are threatened by sacrifice zones, we must interrogate these problematizations further. In doing so we are able to identify and challenge these differences in power that deem marginalized communities throughout the world as sacrificial for the purpose of national prosperity.

Bibliography

Aliaga, Cristian. "The Land 'Wars' in Twenty-First Century Patagonia." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 28, 2019. doi:10.1080/13569325.2018.1493440.

"Amerindian Rights: State Law of Indigenous Rights." *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Graciela Montaldo., Duke University Press, 2002. doi:10.1215/9780822384182-083.

Andía, Juan, and Cecilie Ødegaard. "Indigenous Peoples, Extractivism, and Turbulences in South America." *Indigenous Life Projects and Extractivism: Ethnographies from South America*. Edited by Cecilie Ødegaard, and Juan Andía., Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018.

Aranda, Darío. *Tierra Arrasada: Petróleo, Soja, Pasteras y Megaminería Radiografía de la Argentina del siglo XXI*, Random House Mondadori S.A, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015.

Azócar, Gerardo, et al. "Conflicts for control of Mapuche-Pehuenche land and natural resources in the Biobío highlands, Chile." *Journal of Latin American Geography*, JSTOR, 2005.

Briones, Claudia, and Walter Delrio. "La "Conquista del Desierto" desde perspectivas

- hegemónicas y subalternas." *Runa*, vol. 27, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2007.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*. Edited by Paul Erickson, and Liam Murphy., The University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- Cabezas, Heriberto. "Introduction." *Sustainability : Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Urmila Diwekar., Bentham Science Publishers, 2012.
- Erickson, Paul, and Liam Murphy. *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*
Edited by Paul Erickson, and Liam Murphy., The University of Toronto Press, 2017.
- Estomba, Diego, Ana Ladio, and Mariana Lozada. "Medicinal wild plant knowledge and gathering patterns in a Mapuche community from North-western Patagonia." *Journal of ethnopharmacology*, vol. 103, 2006.doi:10.1016/j.jep.2005.07.015.
- Friedman, May, and Silvia Schultermandl. *Growing up transnational : identity and kinship in a global era*, Toronto : University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2011.
- Gordillo, Gastón, and Silvia Hirsch. "Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence." *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 11, 2003.
- Hardt, Michael. *Empire*. Edited by Antonio Negri., Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2000.
- Harvey, David. "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession." *Socialist Register*, vol. 40, 2004., socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5811#.U17RffldU2s.
- James, Daniel. "Perón and the People." *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Edited

- by Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Graciela Montaldo., Duke University Press,
2002.doi:10.1215/9780822384182-047.
- Kropff, Laura, Katango (Theater group). *Teatro mapuche : sueños, memoria y política*, Ediciones Artes Escénicas, Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2010. /z-wcorg/.
- Kropff, Laura. "Activismo mapuche en Argentina: trayectoria histórica y nuevas propuestas." *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales*, 2005.,
<http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/gt/20101026125925/6Kropff.pdf>.
- Kropff, Laura "‘Mapurbe’: jóvenes mapuche urbanos." *KAIROS-Revista de Temas Sociales*, 2004., <http://www.revistakairos.org/wp-content/uploads/laura-kropff.pdf>.
- Lapegna, Pablo. "Social Movements and Patronage Politics: Processes of Demobilization and Dual Pressure." *Sociological Forum*, vol. 28, Wiley, Springer], 2013. *JSTOR*,
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43653920>.
- Lapegna, Pablo.. *Soybeans and power : genetically modified crops, environmental politics, and social movements in Argentina*, New York : Oxford University Press, New York, 2016.
- Lerner, Steve. *Sacrifice Zones : the Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States*.
Edited by Phil Brown., Cambridge, Mass. : The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2012.
- Li, Fabiana, and P. A. Peñafiel. "Stories of Resistance: Translating Nature, Indigeneity, and Place in Mining Activism." *Indigenous Life Projects and Extractivism Ethnographies from South America*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018.

- Mandrini, Raúl., Ortelli, Sara.,Rojas, Oscar., *Volver al país de los araucanos*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 1992.
- MapUrbe Communication Workgroup "Mapuche, Mapunky, Mapuheavy." NACLA Report on the Americas, 2007.
- Maybury-Lewis, David, and Kenneth Roth. "Genocide against Indigenous Peoples." *Annihilating Difference*. Edited by Alexander L. Hinton., University of California Press, 2002. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pncxp.7>.
- Moreno, Mariano. "The Landowners' Petition." *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Graciela Montaldo., Duke University Press, 2002a.doi:10.1215/9780822384182-012.
- Nagy, Mariano. "La Conquista del Desierto." *Congreso Judío Latinoamericano*, 2013.
- Palermo, Vicente, and Marcos Novaro. "Menem: A New Style in Politics ." *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Graciela Montaldo., Duke University Press, 2002.
- Penfield, Amy. "Extractive Pluralities: The Intersection of Oil Wealth and Informal Gold Mining in Venezuelan Amazonia." *Indigenous Life Projects and Extractivism Ethnographies from South America*. Edited by Cecilie Ødegaard, and Juan Andía., Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018.
- Price, Richard. *Rainforest Warriors - Human Rights on Trial*, PHILADELPHIA; OXFORD: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2011.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Edited by EBSCOhost., New York : Vintage Books, New York,

1979.

Sarmiento, Domingo F. "Civilization or Barbarism." *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles, and Graciela Montaldo., Duke University Press, 2002. doi:10.1215/9780822384182-016.

Savino, Lucas. "Landscapes of contrast: The neo-extractivist state and indigenous peoples in “post-neoliberal” Argentina." *The Extractive Industries and Society*, vol. 3, Elsevier, 2016.

Shohat, Ella. "Gender and culture of empire: Toward a feminist ethnography of the cinema." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 13, Routledge, 1991. doi:10.1080/10509209109361370.

Stensrud, Astrid. "Water as Resource and Being: Water Extractivism and Life Projects in Peru." *Indigenous Life Projects and Extractivism Ethnographies from South America*. Edited by Cecilie Ødegaard, and Juan Andía., Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018.

Svampa, Maristella. "Commodities Consensus: Neoextractivism and Enclosure of the Commons in Latin America." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 114, Duke University Press, 2015.

Svampa, Maristella, and Enrique Viale. *Maldesarrollo La Argentina del extractivismo y el despojo*, Katz Editores, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2014.

Szulc, P. A. "Mapuche se es también en la waria (ciudad). Disputas en torno a lo rural, lo urbano y lo indígena en la Argentina." *Politica y Sociedad*, 2004.

Veltmeyer, Henry. *The new extractivism : a post-neoliberal development model or imperialism of*

the twenty-first century?. Edited by James F. Petras, Verónica Albuja, and Liam Chapple.,

London; New York : Zed Books, London; New York, 2014.

Warren, Sarah. "A Nation Divided: Building the Cross-Border Mapuche Nation in Chile and Argentina." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 45, Cambridge, 2013. doi:10.1017/S0022216X13000023.