Negotiating Environmental Subjectivities: Charcoal Production and Mennonite–Ayoreo Relations in the Paraguayan Chaco

Paola Canova, *University of Texas at Austin*

Introduction

In recent decades, western Paraguay, part of the larger Gran Chaco region, has been the focus of increased attention following a renewed wave of frontier-style development that is causing the highest rates of deforestation in this region, the second-largest forested area in lowland South America after the Amazon. It is estimated that about 192 hectares per day are being deforested (Guyra Paraguay, 2018) and converted into soybean fields and pasturelands for cattle ranching, the latter positioning Paraguay as the fifth-largest exporter of beef worldwide (Veit & Sarsfield, 2017). A related and more silent, but not less detrimental, activity among the Chaco forests has been the production of charcoal for export. According to UK-based NGO Earthsight, Germany and the UK are currently the largest buyers of Paraguayan charcoal. In 2017, they conducted an investigative report which revealed that BRICAPAR, a Paraguayan company whose major shareholder is ex-Minister of Public Works Ramón Giménez Gaona, is one of the main providers of charcoal to US and European markets.[1] In early 2017, some

22,000 bags of Paraguayan charcoal entered Germany every day, and 5,000 arrived in the UK (Earthsight, 2017). While the NGO's report awakened buyers to the ongoing rapid deforestation of the Chaco and successfully led some European businesses to stop buying charcoal from BRICAPAR, charcoal production has not stopped altogether.

While not advertised by journalistic reports, the Ayoreo indigenous people living in the Chaco, who until the mid-1960s still roamed the region's forests, have also been deeply involved in the process of charcoal production from their own forests, as illustrated by the lives of Jutoi and Tona. At dawn every day, this Ayoreo couple in their mid-60s followed the same routine before going to work in their "oven," an underground rectangular pit used for making what would be sold as barbecue charcoal. A tall man with small eyes and a thin but still muscular body, Jutoi began the day by washing his face with the water sitting in a twenty-gallon grease container left over from the previous night, and then proceed to light the fire in the courtyard of their one-room wooden house. Seated in his plastic-cable chair next to the fire, waiting for the water to boil, he would carefully strap on his old boots. After a few sips of *mate* tea, he was ready to leave, axe in hand. He would lead the way and Tona would follow, carrying the large Ayoreo fibre bag tied to her forehead with food and some water bottles. The thin path they walked began in the forest by the end of the road that crossed their house. After about twenty minutes they reached an open space where an improvised camp, marked by a makeshift tent and traces of a cooking fire, provided some shade and a resting place. Not far away a few thin metal sheds indicated the presence of the underground ovens belonging to some of the families living in the village. Jutoi and Tona, both of whom had lived in the forests during childhood, were unusually early risers, but others would soon join them to ensure a constant production of charcoal. On this particular day, tree trunks piled next to the ovens indicated preparations for an upcoming batch of charcoal. Important tree species included karanda (*Prosopis barbatigridis*), quebracho blanco (*Aspidosperma quebracho-blanco*) and palo santo (*Bursera graveolens*), the latter a species now declared to be in danger of extinction. Making charcoal involved individual as well as group decisions: which forest to cut, what kinds of trees to use, and how to transport the wood to the ovens and the charcoal from the ovens to the village. These topics would be discussed now and then around the fire when people gathered at night at the compound of the village chief. In a twist of irony, considering the rapid deforestation

associated with the production, I later learned that the charcoal was being marketed in Europe as "ecological" barbecue charcoal.

This economic activity, which lasted almost a decade (2004–2011) among Ayoreo and provided barbecue charcoal to European markets, was an initiative of members of Fernheim Colony, one of the three Mennonite colonies established in the Chaco in the 1920s–1940s. Drawing on this case study, this article explores the socio-economic and environmental dynamics that constitute and shape relations between Mennonites and indigenous peoples in today's Chaco. I place analysis of the charcoal production program into the broader historical context of intercultural encounters between Mennonites and Ayoreo, showing how, on the one hand, Mennonite social dynamics shaped the development agendas they envisioned for indigenous peoples, and on the other hand, how Ayoreo are negotiating their environmental subjectivities in a rapidly changing landscape. This case study challenges constructions of Mennonites in the diaspora as isolated communities (Goossen, 2016; Urry, 2006); rather, it reveals how Mennonites have been actively embedded in the broader socio-economic context of the places they have settled, influencing and impacting the lives of people surrounding them, and in turn reconfiguring their own socio-economic dynamics.

This article is based on ethnographic materials (interviews and fieldnotes based on participant observation) collected among members of Fernheim Colony and Ayoreo villages of the Departamento de Boquerón during three main periods: three months in 2006, sixteen months between 2009 and 2011,[2] and thereafter in several visits between 2012 and 2018. Secondary data collected from news sources further enhance the current analysis. The article is divided into three parts. First, it traces the historical relations between Mennonites and Ayoreo to show how these relations were constructed in ways that imagined Ayoreo as wild, while the only model of incorporation that Mennonites envisioned was one based on evangelization and labour relations. Second, the article describes the charcoal project established by Mennonites through an initiative called Desarrollo Integral Rural Sustentable S.A. (DIRSSA), which previously received international funding and the technical support of a local Mennonite faith-based NGO whose members are mostly Mennonites. I juxtapose this project with the environmental programs of a non-Mennonite NGO, Iniciativa Amotocodie (IA), an organization which currently receives international funding, in this case to work with Ayoreo, and is run mostly by Paraguayans with headquarters in Asunción, the capital. Through this juxtaposition I reveal how the agendas of

both NGOs collided and fostered tensions among Ayoreo. Third, the article shows how Ayoreo individuals construct their environmental subjectivities at the juncture of the conflicting socioeconomic and cultural realities that press them to adopt particular ways of interacting with nature that do not necessarily follow their own aspirations. I conclude with a reflection on the challenges and future directions of Mennonite–indigenous relations in today's Chaco.

A Brief History of Mennonite–Ayoreo Relations

The Ayoreo are a Zamuco-speaking group of about 6,000 currently living in Paraguay and Bolivia. In the Paraguayan Chaco they number about 2,400 (Dirección General de Encuestas, Estadísticas y Censo, 2014) and are one of the fourteen indigenous groups inhabiting the region. The Ayoreo have had a close history of relations with Dutch–North German descendant Mennonites who migrated to the Paraguayan Chaco. Menno Colony was first established in 1927; this group had left Canada fearing that the reproduction of their identity would be threatened as the Canadian state changed its schooling policies. Soon after, Mennonite refugees from Russia established the Fernheim colony (1930–1932). A final group migrated to the Chaco after World War II forming the Neuland colony in 1947 (Stoesz & Stackley, 2000). During their initial years of settlement, Fernheim residents were supported by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which played a central role in acquiring land and providing necessary equipment and food provisions until families could become self-sufficient. These first years of settlement, however, were marked by economic poverty, health epidemics which took the lives of many, and other hardships. Added to this, the Mennonites also found themselves in midst of the territory where the Chaco War (1932–1935) was being fought between Paraguay and Bolivia (Klassen, 1976). This scenario would shift by the late 1960s when the Mennonite economy took off and would later bring waves of agricultural and ranching investment to the region, turning Mennonites into economic elites in the country.

Since their arrival in the Chaco, Mennonites have related with indigenous peoples through evangelization and work (Klassen, 2003; Plett, 1979). The early history of Ayoreo–Mennonite relations was marked by violent encounters. The first fatal assault on the Mennonites by the Ayoreo was reported in Fernheim Colony in 1947, when four Mennonites were killed (Hein, 1990). In the years

that followed, the Ayoreo continued to make appearances in the area surrounding the colony. By 1961, in correspondence between the manager of the MCC experimental farm in Filadelfia and the director of Foreign Relief and Services from MCC headquartered in Pennsylvania, the former described the reaction of the Mennonites to these appearances:

> We, of course, cannot say for certain but to me it seems as if the Moros are not intending to make a hostile attack. The disturbing thing is that the Mennonites here are not doing anything to give them a chance to be friendly. Everyone, including the ministers, tells me to have plenty of guns and ammunition at the farm and to do some shooting every day. (Graber, 1964, p. 88)

These encounters, often perceived as hostile, triggered a view among Mennonites of the Ayoreo as fierce and wild, and therefore in need of being civilized. As a result, it became a priority for Fernheim Colony to establish contact and settle the Ayoreo in mission stations. After several unsuccessful attempts, which resulted in the death of Mennonite missionary Kornelius Isaac in 1958 (Hein, 1990), Mennonites began to work with New Tribes Mission (NTM), a US-based group of evangelical Christians, controversial for their conversion methodologies among indigenous peoples, who were already working in Bolivia among Ayoreo.[3] Along with Catholic missionaries, they contacted and settled the Ayoreo in missions by the mid-1960s (Bartolomé, 2000).

Today, most residents of Fernheim still vividly remember the arrival of Ayoreo in the colony in the early 1960s. Rudolf, a Mennonite elder, described his first experience with Ayoreo as a young man: "I was at school and all of a sudden they appeared in our windows. They would come and walk around town in groups of two or three, making unexpected appearances in people's homes or work sites." Already in those initial visits Ayoreo were introduced to labour activities in the colony. Mennonite relations with Ayoreo were constructed around the contradictory impulses of fear and exclusion on one hand and efforts toward incorporation and civilization on the other. The fact that the Ayoreo were the last indigenous group to make contact with the surrounding society in the region strengthened these reactions among Mennonites and Paraguayans alike. But there also was an honest preoccupation on the part of Mennonites about "what to do with them," as expressed by the above-mentioned MCC farm manager:

> We have the feeling that the time is not far away when the Moros will come out of the bush and when they do, the problem of knowing what to do with them and how to handle them may be greater than that of making contact with them. (Graber, 1964, p. 88)

Mennonite Christian ideology played a key role in what was considered a civilizing project among Ayoreo, following previous patterns of engagement with the Enlhet and the Nivaclé, who lived around them. An understated aspect of the evangelizing project is that it was crucial to help give meaning to the Mennonite project of settlement in the Chaco. This was specially so considering the trauma of forced migration to Paraguay (where they did not want to go, but had no option) and the initial hardships making a living there (Klassen, 2003).[4] A few decades after settlement had begun, as challenges continued, this same discourse persisted, as evidenced by a representative of the MCC who visited Paraguay:

> The colonists are realizing with each new experience that one reason God brought them to Paraguay is for the purpose of witnessing to the unevangelized Indians. The Mennonites may well be in the Chaco to help lead the Lenguas [Enlhet], the Chulupís [Nivaclé] and now the Moros [Ayoreo] from dark and hopeless fear to Christ the Light. (Graber, 1964, p. 6)

In this way, the Mennonite project to evangelize indigenous peoples was deeply enmeshed with a collective project of finding a sense of belonging in the new context of the Chaco. Incorporation through evangelization and work was conceived as the 'natural' order of things for Mennonites; that is, they were encouraging the reproduction of their work ethic and faith values. Over the years, this would generate tensions and frictions in their relations towards indigenous peoples, as evidenced in their relations with the Ayoreo.

From Foragers to Labourers: Shaping New Environmental Subjectivities

By the late 1960s, when Ayoreo were finally settled in Catholic and NTM mission stations, they were quickly introduced to the market economy, a process I have explored elsewhere (Canova, 2015). Along with Christianization, this process would radically shift Ayoreo sociality, as well as their relationship to nature. For them, nature was not limited to our western conceptualization of the environment, but also encompassed a complex set of human and non-human relations. The term *erami* illustrates this. In the singular, it is used to refer to the forest, but its plural, *eramone*, is all-encompassing and can be translated as "world" (Fischermann, 1988). According to Ayoreo cosmology, in the beginning of time there was no nature/culture divide. The first beings who inhabited this world were the *Jnani Bajade* (first men) and *Cheque Bajedie*

(first women), non-human entities such as animal and plants with humanoid traits who were considered responsible for conceiving and guiding the current world order, social and natural, which Ayoreo people inhabit. Through different experiences, catastrophes, and conflicts, the first beings gave rise to the present world order, which is known as the time of the *Disi Ejode*, or current generation. Through this process Ayoreo became distinct from nature but remained closely linked to nature in kinship relationships expressed through the *edopasade*, elements of the environment (human and non-human) related to the members of the seven patrilineal and exogamic Ayoreo clans (Fischermann, 1988).

As foragers, Ayoreo had a close relationship to their *uniri* (territories). Before being drawn into a sedentary lifestyle by missionaries, their subsistence economy was based on hunting, gathering, and seasonal agriculture. These activities took place according to an annual cycle, divided into two different periods according to religious and ecological criteria. During the *puyak eami*, or period of the prohibited world (May to August), which partially coincided with the dry season (approximately May to December), the Ayoreo lived as nomads, mostly hunting and gathering, and consuming produce from the previous planting season. After that, the time of the *uomi eami* or free world (September to April) would start and mark the beginning of the *putaningai* or planting season, during which they cultivated different varieties of squash and beans. During this period, they settled in semi-permanent villages and organized agricultural activities in a way that would not interfere with the continuation of their foraging activities. At the end of the *sekere* or harvesting season (approximately December to April), they would break up into smaller groups and resume roaming their territories (Bórmida & Califano, 1978).

The Ayoreo belief system was closely tied to their understanding of nature. Central religious figures included the *guede* (sun) and *asojna* (nighthawk), both powerful and respected. *Guede* was identified with the daylight regimes of life and *Asojna* with the nocturnal regimes. The latter was considered one of the most powerful beings, feared but also venerated by Ayoreo. Asojna caused death and some illnesses. Her role was to sanction the breaking of taboos left by her and other beings. The change of seasons was also associated to Asojna: her reappearance after hibernation announced the beginning of the rainy season and her absence indicated the beginning of the *sequeré*, or dry season. The latter was a time during which Ayoreo were particularly observant of taboos related to Asojna, as any activity that unwillingly led to her awakening could have fatal consequences for an individual or the group.

The beginning of her time, the rainy season, was celebrated with an important ritual in her honour to assure the renovation of nature and its benefits.

In this way, the Ayoreo economy and cosmological order were embedded in their conceptualizations of the realm of nature. But the process of missionization would radically rupture their ontology. The degree to which missionaries focused on eradicating Ayoreo customary symbols is evidenced in the emblematic book about the work of NTM missionary Bill Pencille in Bolivia. The book, called *The Defeat of the God Bird* (Wagner, 1967), recalls his innumerable attempts to convince Ayoreo that their God-bird Asojna was an "insignificant" and "vindictive" bird incapable of having power to kill any man. Along with suppressing the Ayoreo religious system, the economic programs implemented among Ayoreo would eventually also radically break their complex relationship to the wider natural and supra-natural spheres.

A new compartmentalized and commoditized relationship to nature was installed, first by NTM missionaries and later by Mennonites. Arun Agrawal's (2005a; 2005b) concept of environmentality has been an important framework for analyzing the formation of what he terms an "environmental subject position." Drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality, Agrawal defines environmentality as "a framework in which technologies of self and power are involved in the creation of new subjects concerned about the environment" (Agrawal, 2005a, p. 166). He considers three complementary processes integral to this approach: the generation of environmental subjectivities, the formation of regulatory communities, and the generation of governmentalized localities. By deploying different forms of knowledge and management, institutional regimes of environmental regulation set new parameters by which people come to develop individual perceptions, values, and desires towards the environment from a perspective of sustainable use and conservation (Agrawal, 2005b). This framework offers a valuable perspective to reflect on how programs, projects, and processes induce conservation or care towards the environment and as a result how individuals perceive themselves in relation to nature. I draw on this analysis to explore how the Ayoreo have experienced the inculcation of new regimes over nature established through environmental and economic activities fostered by NTM missionaries, Mennonites, and more recently, a non-Mennonite NGO.

By the 1970s, the Ayoreo were drawn to the labour pool of the Mennonite colonies with the decline of work activities at the NTM mission station. Mennonites had established agricultural settle-

ments among other indigenous groups (Stahl, 1974, 1978), but since NTM worked primarily with the Ayoreo, the Mennonites' missionizing relationship to the Ayoreo was initially more indirect. In Filadelfia, the precarious temporary work camps deepened the Mennonite perception of Ayoreo as dirty and uncivilized, resulting in their exclusion; they were not allowed to have an urban settlement as other groups had. But they were still desired for their labour, and rather than turning them into small farmers, Mennonites deployed them as a labour force, and for nearly three decades the Ayoreo became the *hacheros* (woodcutters) of the colonies.

The Ayoreo lived between the NTM mission station Campo Loro and the colonies, and worked clearing the forests of the Mennonite *aldeas* (villages), and later their own forests, to provide firewood as fuel for the steam power plant that provided energy to Fernheim Colony. They also worked making fences and providing firewood to local Mennonite brick factories. These activities implied a new relationship to the erami; the Ayoreo were no longer actively engaged with their forests for the reproduction of their livelihoods. The commodification of natural resources was now the exclusive means to access money under the new economy into which they had been integrated. In the process, several customary practices that followed the precepts of the Jnani Bajade were left behind, while others were silenced to avoid confrontation with missionaries. This commodified relationship to nature, while shifting certain practices, did not necessarily erase ontological values related to the erami. Glauser (2008) shows how elder Ayoreo still actively engage nature in their own ways. He describes, for example, practices such as giving thanks (*chatai*) to the human/non-human beings in the eramone when visiting a specific territory or making a ritual request to them (*chutai*) before planting gardens. There are more specialized activities such as *tareja*, a technique drawing on formulas not openly known to everyone, that is used to influence the surrounding environment and obtain a desired result. This latter realm belongs to the shamans and desired results include the prevention of illnesses and improving harvests. But the work of shamans is a topic not openly discussed today due to missionization.

While forests remain exploited as an important source of income, this does not mean that the Ayoreo do not continue to retain important knowledge about human/non-human relationships in their conception of nature, reproduced through an active relationship with the erami in the form of sporadic hunting trips, or visits to traditional territories where ancestors have roamed. Concomitantly, Ayoreo are aware that as a result of the dispossession of

their territories, they are dependent on their forests as an immediate source of income; this is particularly evident in the economic activities in Ebetogue, an Ayoreo village established by Mennonites in the mid-1990s.

The Mennonite Project in Ebetogue: Crafting Ayoreo Rural Subjectivities

Visiting Ebetogue, one notices a specific spatial arrangement: small plots of land neatly divided into rectangles on both sides of a main road. In the middle a large shed hosts the local church with rows of wooden pews. Not far from the church there is a brick house for the cooperative store, a school, and a health post. This layout, characteristic of Mennonite aldeas, was imported by Mennonites to indigenous settlements, some of which more recently have even included roundabouts, an iconic marker of the streets of Filadelfia. Up to that time the only other Ayoreo mission station in the Departamento de Boquerón was Campo Loro, run by the NTM. Mennonites became involved in establishing an Ayoreo village in the 1990s when the temporary work camp of hacheros on the outskirts of Filadelfia, which had stood for over a decade, was finally closed down by Fernheim due to overpopulation and deplorable living conditions. By 1995, approximately 100 families had moved to Ebetogue, located forty-eight kilometres north of Filadelfia.

The Mennonite-run non-governmental agency that supports the economic development of indigenous peoples in the region, the Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena Mennonita (ASCIM), bought the land and sought to provide economic support to the community by developing a five-year program, which included activities related to subsistence agriculture and a two-year training school. The school is iconic of the regulatory practices put in place to construct new economic and environmental subjectivities. There, community members were expected to be trained in various trades that included bricklaying, fence-making, and dairy production, activities that resonate more with the Mennonite farming and milking tradition rather than with Ayoreo economic activities. The goal was to have Ayoreo near the colonies to deploy their labour force, while at the same time to help them develop sustainable projects so that they would stay in their villages when not working on ranches or in the colonies.

It was in Ebetogue where Ayoreo were first introduced to charcoal production. Sani, an Ayoreo man in his mid-thirties who attended the trade school, remembered: “There was a Mennonite

whom we called Aregue Katade [the one with the short tongue]. He was the one who first taught us how to build ovens." Mennonites invested in infrastructure and soon most Ayoreo in Ebetogue were making charcoal that was bought by Fernheim Cooperative. This would later develop into a much larger program (as shown in the next section). After functioning for only two or three years, the trade school abruptly closed its doors. According to one of ASCIM's staff members (personal communication, 2006), the problem was the lack of Ayoreo interest, because "they expected to get paid for doing the training." A wage-labour logic had already deeply permeated Ayoreo subjectivities by this time. One Ayoreo from Ebetogue noted: "The school ended as Ayoreo lost interest in going." While there were honest efforts to engage Ayoreo through programs and activities in Ebetogue, the failure of these initiatives revealed how these programs, contrary to expectations, were not creating a new set of ethical and regulatory practices in relation to the economic and environmental subjectivities expected of Ayoreo. The situation worsened for Ayoreo as the sale of firewood for the colony's generator, one of the main economic activities in Ebetogue, stopped in 1998.[5] As a result of this change, about two-thirds of the Ayoreo found themselves suddenly unemployed (ASCIM, personal communication, 2006).

The programs of the ASCIM for Ebetogue reproduced Mennonite expectations and desires rather than focusing on Ayoreo interests. The model followed there had been previously employed in the establishment of other indigenous settlements in the region, a process that Mennonites began as early as 1935, first through the faith-based mission society named Licht den Indianern (Light for the Indians) and through the Indianer Siedlungs-Behorde (ISB) (Agency for Indian Settlements), which would later be renamed as ASCIM in 1961 (Klassen, 2003). By the 1960s, with financial support from the MCC and the Canadian International Development Agency, the goals of the programs in the indigenous settlements aimed at transforming inhabitants from foragers into a sedentary "agricultural-labor society" (Redekop, 1980). Like Ebetogue, these settlements were to become replicas of the Mennonite colonies, each with a sawmill, a cooperative store, a hospital, and a school. The goal was to turn indigenous peoples into productive craftsmen and farmers. At the request of the MCC, US sociologist Calvin Redekop evaluated these programs in the 1970s and noted, "It is patently clear that Mennonites and Indians are involved in a mutual process which has changed the Indian society and culture very drastically, and which cannot but create tensions, competition and even conflict" (1980, p. 155). He followed this by arguing that it

was remarkable how, despite the above-mentioned limitations, the program had worked so well, although other Mennonite researchers would highlight the tensions embedded in this civilizing process (Loewen, 1964; Regehr, 1979).

Similar tensions would resurface in the programs promoted in Ebetogue. The frustration on the part of Mennonites grew to the point that by 2001, ASCIM temporarily withdraw its support from Ebetogue. The Mennonite *asesores* (advisors) encouraged a local Mennonite brick factory to buy firewood from the community. According to the owner of the factory, the colony's administration had made this request to prevent Ayoreo from migrating to Filadelfia in search of work. And indeed, his factory soon became an important source of income for many families in Ebetogue. This situation reveals an internal tension experienced by Mennonites in their work with Ayoreo. On the one hand, they worried about the welfare of Ayoreo as labour opportunities shifted and programs implemented failed, and sought to resolve the problem by having them sell firewood.[6] However, over and over, Mennonites fostered regulatory practices that deepened Ayoreo economic dependence on their forests as the only viable source, which at the same time supported the economic growth of the colonies. This is a reality that continues to be overlooked as Mennonites reflect on their work among indigenous peoples in the Chaco.

The establishment of Ebetogue represented a shift in Mennonite relations with the Ayoreo. After decades of employing Ayoreo as wage labourers, the above-outlined programs show how Ayoreo environmental subjectivities were now constructed as pertaining to the realm of rurality; the goal was to turn them into small rural farmers. This was accompanied by an insistence on keeping Ayoreo out of Filadelfia, as they were not perceived as suitable for urban spaces. In 2006, still rejecting the idea of an Ayoreo urban neighbourhood in Filadelfia, Mennonite anthropologist Wilmar Stahl stressed that Ayoreo were "subsistence farmers" who belonged in their villages and not in the urban spaces (personal communication, 2006). This perspective, shared by the Mennonite community, obscures the long history of Ayoreo participation in the market economy and does not recognize that this labour force was crucial to developing Mennonite landholdings and propelling their economy.

The Ayoreo, however, used their "uncivilized" categorization by the Mennonites to their advantage, first in order to successfully negotiate the acquisition of Ebetogue, and later to decide their level of involvement in the programs established for them. Moreover, unlike other indigenous groups, the Ayoreo have refused to follow

the economic roles expected by the Mennonites, re-establishing their dynamics of spatial mobility, driving them to migrate to Filadelfia yet again.[7] This mobility continues to trigger anxieties among Mennonites, although they no longer share the preoccupation of early Mennonite missionaries, who in the 1930s equated the nomadic lifestyle of indigenous peoples with "sinfulness" (Klassen, 2003).

Commodifying Nature: Charcoal Production from Ayoreo Forests

By 2001 Ayoreo urban migrations had resumed, and the Mennonites intervened in an attempt to find an alternate solution to Ayoreo economic need. This time they introduced a new mixed-model approach to development, which combined ranching with the production of charcoal (ASCIM, personal communication, 2006). This model, conceived as sustainable, involved the clearing of forested lands and seeding of buffelgrass to turn these areas into pasture lands. In the process, the Ayoreo would use the logs to make firewood and charcoal, the sale of which would support Ayoreo households until they raised enough cattle to support themselves. By 2003, Ayoreo villages formally started producing barbecue charcoal for export with the support of Fernheim Colony. The program involved buying charcoal from both the indigenous and non-indigenous population. Since the existing national production to supply the international demand for charcoal was limited, MEDA-Paraguay[8] initiated a project that provided funds to create DIRSSA, an enterprise that that would buy, pack and export charcoal to European market through Fernheim Cooperative. Production in Ayoreo villages beyond Ebetogue was now well underway.

According to the director of DIRSAA at the time, their goal was to find new ways to incorporate Ayoreo into the larger regional market economy by fostering a plan for sustainable land and resource use within their territories. Since deforestation was perceived as imminent in the region, charcoal production was presented as a sustainable use of natural resources. Accordingly, Ayoreo were encouraged to clear part of their forests for charcoal production, which would then be turned into pasturelands for cattle. In theory, the plan also included reforestation with fast-growing species such as mesquite, and the production and marketing of honey. DIRSSA provided the training and the necessary infrastructure, and Ayoreo were instructed in all the steps of the process, from the preparation of ovens to the selection of forest

species and burning techniques. Ayoreo individuals were expected to repay the start-up costs with charcoal over time.

By 2006, Mennonite volunteers who worked for the Mennonite NGO Esperanza Chaqueña, a faith-based foundation, stepped forward to support this program through the provision of technical assistance.[9] By November of that year, DIRSSA bought a total of 3,500 tons of charcoal, 27 percent of which came from five Ayoreo villages (about 600 households) and the rest from Mennonite and non-Mennonite suppliers (Rempel, 2008b).[10] In this way, charcoal production became the pillar of Ayoreo household economies for the following six years. The average Ayoreo family was lighting their ovens twice a week to produce approximately 600 pounds of charcoal. When I inquired about production, Jutoi said assertively: "Cutting the trees is not the problem as we have plenty of experience doing that. What is hard is taking out the charcoal from the oven with this heat." I later learned that the process was done by hand with no protection whatsoever, and there were a few individuals who had started to show health problems as a result of the work conditions. But all the hardships involved in the production process were soon forgotten when families received their pay cheques from the Mennonite asesores every two weeks. Considering the limited access to work opportunities in the region, this activity is still remembered as "the time when we had plenty to eat." But the additional programs envisioned to make the activity sustainable were never implemented. Nevertheless, the Mennonite discourse around the sale of charcoal was framed as serving to "provide an alternate income to natives in the region, assuring their safety and personal and social progress" (Rempel, 2008b, p. 11). Many Ayoreo also saw benefits to having a steady income, and the program was successfully exported to European markets. But there was no mention of the environmental pressure that this activity was having on Ayoreo forests and the dependency it was creating for families.

By 2009, increased national attention to the environmental impact of this activity drove the Paraguayan Ministry of the Environment to pass Resolution 90/09, which regulated the terms for the granting of an environmental license for the production of charcoal by indigenous villages. Until then, the legal requirements for clearing forests had been more lax. In part as a result of these changes, by 2011, less than two years later, DIRSSA stopped buying charcoal, and the enterprise came abruptly to an end.

While charcoal production was presented using rhetoric about the sustainability of a mixed-model approach, which would have minimal impact on the environment and provide an alternate

source of income for indigenous families, Ayoreo forests were in fact used to generate export-oriented profits while drawing on the Ayoreo labour force. The Mennonite analytical framework for understanding and engaging the environment drew on a market-oriented development scheme, a model which also characterizes the broader economy of the region. Ironically, despite the environmental impact that the plan proved to have on Chaco soils, local experts defended its sustainability, arguing that the vegetative cover of the region has a fast regrowth rate, and that the diversification of activities avoids the over-exploitation of resources. This program was to mark yet another phase in the regulation of Ayoreo environmental subjectivities, this time through a discourse of sustainable development. Ayoreo ethical dispositions towards the ongoing clearing of their forests for charcoal production recognized the impact it was having on their environment; however, they were also aware that this was one of the few economic activities available to them. The next section highlights how Ayoreo negotiated some of the tensions that arose as a result of charcoal production, especially as a non-Mennonite NGO simultaneously worked among the Ayoreo to foster environmental programs that collided with the approach of the Mennonite-led initiative.

Emerging Tensions: Negotiating Environmental Subjectivities

Since the 1990s, NGOs working with indigenous peoples have taken a dominant role in the Paraguayan Chaco. In 2001, one of these organizations, Iniciativa Amotocodie (IA), began working towards the recuperation and protection of Ayoreo territories. With the emergence of a group of seventeen "isolated" Ayoreo in 2004, this organization emphasized the protection of the last so-called uncontacted Ayoreo still roaming the Chaco forests (Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2013). While Ayoreo engaged in charcoal production, IA worked closely with them through the Ayoreo organization Unión Nativa Ayoreo del Paraguay (UNAP), which they helped form in 2003. Their programs aimed to re-establish the link between Ayoreo ancestral territories and their culture, seeking also a new way for Ayoreo to relate to their lost environment (Iniciativa Amotocodie, 2019). To promote reconnection with ancestral territories, these programs encouraged Ayoreo to make trips to these sites and to narrate events that occurred in these places during their life in the forest. They also set up metal billboards as a tangible way to recognize and value these places and their meanings. Other activities included "moni-

toring trips," which involved travelling to sites where uncontacted Ayoreo might have been spotted or were believed to be moving through, in order to document traces of their presence and/or the advancement of the deforestation in those places. Finally, there was a radio program, hosted by members of UNAP, which encouraged Ayoreo to re-value their culture, emphasizing their life in the forest and their relationship with nature. Overall, these programs fostered discursive and regulatory practices aimed at the formation of an essentialized relation to nature, a relation by which Ayoreo were expected to redefine themselves as ecological selves. The fact that most Ayoreo could not make a living from these programs, and at the time were dependent largely on charcoal, was absent from this discourse. The environmental regulatory practices of IA sharply contrasted with the practices of charcoal production and the Ayoreo found themselves in the midst of colliding environmental positions.

In 2009, representatives of UNAP working with IA, who were also producing charcoal to sustain their families, were invited by a radio station in the capital to discuss the situation of the isolated Ayoreo. In the interview, one of them referred to the work of UNAP to support uncontacted Ayoreo as follows:

> We have to be conscious about respecting the environment, this nature that we love so much. Our organization seeks that the government also protect the life and culture of the *silvicolas* [forest dwellers]. It is the duty of the Ministry of the Environment to control and supervise legal and illegal deforestation going on in the Chaco at this time.

In the same interview, the vice-president of UNAP expressed his concerns about a second effort being furthered by UNAP: the renewal of legal permission, also by the Ministry of the Environment, for the production of vegetable charcoal. He said: "The *ministro* has to respect our dignity and rights as people, as it is established in our national constitution and in international laws, so that Ayoreo villages can work and have a steady income." Ayoreo were taking colliding positions with regard to the environment as a result of their involvement with the environmental programs of IA on the one hand and the charcoal program led by DIRSSA on the other hand. By November 2009, the divergent agendas fostered by both initiatives had led to major internal tension among Ayoreo. During that month, UNAP participated in a regional meeting on sustainable development in the Mennonite colonies, attended by then-President Fernando Lugo. Two representatives of UNAP caught the attention of the media as they approached the president and openly expressed their concern over the unhealthy work conditions of charcoal production (Duerksen, 2009b).

The Mennonite reaction was to argue that the leaders of UNAP were being manipulated by the environmental NGO into making such statements. Aware that Ayoreo were highly dependent on the income from the sale of charcoal, DIRSSA immediately ceased purchases in retaliation for these statements. As expected, this triggered a major revolt among Ayoreo. The sale of charcoal was so important to Ayoreo that they eventually made a pronouncement requesting the re-establishment of purchases, and a few weeks later, the Mennonites resumed the purchases of charcoal. Here again, Ayoreo were taking colliding positions as a way to navigate the colliding agendas furthered by the NGOs. While they were honestly concerned about health issues derived from charcoal, the pressure from Mennonites and their dependency on the income from charcoal drove them to request that the activity be resumed. This episode put in evidence the unequal power dynamics that enabled the Mennonites threaten the Ayoreo by withdrawing their economic support.

Both Mennonites and IA sought to engage with the Ayoreo according to their own perspectives, disregarding Ayoreo realities and sensibilities towards the environment as well as their economic priorities. While Ayoreo were critical of the impact that charcoal production was having on their forests, in a context where they have limited access to work opportunities, they did not have many other options available. In the same way, the Ayoreo were aware that IA was deploying external logics of relating to the environment, aimed at re-defining their relation with nature. Over the years, Ayoreo have successfully appropriated a discourse of economic development as fostered by Mennonites, while simultaneously furthering an essentialized discourse of the environment following the script introduced by the NGO. These performative roles, not uncommon in indigenous-nonindigenous relations, should be understood not as accommodation, but rather as strategies that open a space for autonomy and self-definition of indigenous peoples (Chernela, 2015).

One of the consistent critiques of Agrawal's environmentality analytical framework is that it does not take into account the social context and micro-political struggles that shape most interventions (Kipnis, 2008; Cepek, 2011). In a work entitled *Foucault in the Forest: Questioning Environmentality in Amazonia*, Michael Cepek (2011) questions the assumption that environmental positions are a unique expression of logics and techniques of regulation. Instead, he argues that a population's engagements with regulatory practices have to be understood in terms of the local historical and cultural practices that shape this process. In the Ayoreo case, this cri-

tique allows recognition of the ways in which Ayoreo have appropriated colliding environmental subject positions in their own way, attending to the history of relations with Mennonites and their own cultural sensibilities toward the environment.

The Ayoreo have not remained submissive while these shifts in environmental perspective are promoted. They have found their own ways to navigate changing scenarios, and have come to develop a critical self-awareness of their changing environmental realities, reproducing their own organic ways of engaging and relating to the erami; this differs from the script promoted by both the Mennonites and IA. Such a stance on the part of Ayoreo is almost always unrecognized by outsiders that seek to impose their own agendas. For example, Ayoreo have used their liaison with IA to further land claims which go unheard by the Paraguayan state—claims to territories which they now have begun to see as sites away from their villages in which they can immerse themselves to reconnect with the erami, a possibility most villages no longer offer as a result of intense deforestation. In the same vein, the trips with the NGO were seen as opportunities to receive salaries for their participation and to go on hunting expeditions, which is a more organic way to relate to their environment than setting up billboards, and which ironically is seen as a tangential aspect of their trips for the NGO personnel. They also used the radio programs to promote their own understandings of their relation to nature that differs from the script promoted by IA. They did this, for example, by trying to make sense of current environmental changes in their villages (a more tangible reality than lost territories) by linking them to historical events in the Bible, a context most Ayoreo feel familiar with, as most of them identify as Christians. Of course, because these programs were transmitted in the Ayoreo language, the personnel of IA were unaware of this.

Engagement with the Mennonites also has not caused the Ayoreo to fully embrace environmental ethics and practices that construct forests in terms of a commodified relationship with nature. Instead, Ayoreo continue to enact some customary values for understanding their territories through practices such as chutai and chatai, which continue to be reproduced by elder Ayoreo. Ayoreo have refused to become rural subjects as was initially expected of them, by developing their own urban mobility patterns that contest Mennonite spatial arrangements and colonial categorizations. Up to the present they continue to challenge expectations of engaging in subsistence agriculture in their villages; rather, they prefer wage labour activities. But they have also developed their own ways of engaging in wage labour, which more often than not chal-

lenge the expectations of both Paraguayans and Mennonites (Canova, in press).

Conclusion: Rethinking Contemporary Ayoreo–Mennonite Relations in the Chaco

Mennonite and non-Mennonite environmental and economic initiatives in the Chaco region are part of a broader movement of civil society taking the role of the state in spaces like the Chaco. The impact of NGOs is a topic that has been broadly explored by the anthropological scholarship on indigenous peoples in the Americas (Blaser, 2004; Escobar, 1994; Chernela, 2015; Chernela & Zannoti, 2014; Raddcliffe, 2015). While there are local expectations about their contribution to improving the livelihoods of groups of people, the question becomes, to quote the title Bebbington et al.'s 2008 book, "Can NGOs make a difference?" As this case study shows, their participation continues to be problematic. Janet Chernela (2015) rightly states that NGOs have shifted their roles from mediators to becoming dominators, and their engagements with local partners are turning into local production. As a result, the spaces of participation given to indigenous communities and organizations have become rather limited and guided by predetermined agendas. In the case presented here, such agendas essentialize the relationship between Ayoreo and nature in opposite and colliding ways, which limits their possibility of becoming agents in their own economic/environmental initiatives outside the sustainability framework promoted by outsiders.

Agrawal's (2005a; 2005b) environmentality framework is useful for revealing how institutionalized economic and environmental regimes are promoted through NGOs. Awareness of this could prove useful in helping indigenous organizations redefine their collaboration with non-governmental organizations, as they seek strategic alliances to advance their plights. At the same time, and building on Cepek's (2011) critique of the environmentality framework, the Ayoreo case offers evidence of how this approach assumes that individuals submissively take up new subject positions. This does not leave room to acknowledge the changing dynamics and colliding subject positions that different actors like members of UNAP must assume as they redefine their own values and understandings of nature. This in turn creates the risk of simplifying the multiple power-laden relationships they have to negotiate in order to advance their life projects in the changing context of the Chaco.

At a more specific level, examination of the charcoal production program established by Mennonites among Ayoreo opens a window to critically reflect on the socio-economic and cultural dynamics that have shaped relations between Mennonites and indigenous peoples in the Paraguayan Chaco. First, it demonstrates the complex history of their encounters and the relations these encounters have entailed. The Mennonite migrant community to the Paraguayan Chaco sought a place to reproduce their identity in isolation. However, they soon found themselves surrounded by indigenous peoples whom they incorporated according to their own cultural logics of evangelization and labour. As shown, this project became an important means to craft a sense of belonging to their new home in the Chaco. The Mennonite relationship with Ayoreo was unique in that the latter was the last group to be contacted in the region, and negative stereotypes of them persisted. As a result, Ayoreo were incorporated through their labour, but remained socially excluded until recently.

For the last forty-five years Ayoreo have participated in the regional economy as wage labourers. Their participation was promoted through an extractive and commodified logic. Mennonite interventions among Ayoreo reveal a contradictory environmental logic: first they were incentivized to become wage labourers at the expense of their forests, and later their programs were framed around subsistence agriculture and rurality. The programs sponsored by Fernheim Colony through their non-governmental organization ASCIM sought to remedy the absence of state programs for indigenous peoples in the region. Although favouring a discourse of interculturality, Fernheim's programs have followed a set of social and spatial regulatory practices aimed at shaping Ayoreo subjective relations to their territories and forests according to preestablished Mennonite values related to the economy and the environment. Over the years, a discourse of sustainable development has replaced the initial discourses of "missionization." The charcoal program was implemented under this new framework. Although this program aimed to respond to the needs of indigenous peoples to access work opportunities, its goals disregarded social and environmental concerns affecting not only the Ayoreo, but also the region as a whole.

Currently, Mennonites are furthering their engagements with indigenous peoples through the concept of conviventiality. For example, the ASCIM frames its goals in their work with indigenous peoples as "*convivencia intercultural armónica*" (peaceful intercultural conviventiality) (ASCIM, 2018). This approach seeks to rethink relations as involving "neighbours" mutually dependent on

each other. However, the long history of relations between Ayoreo and Mennonites, marked by unequal power dynamics, requires a critical rethinking of these relationships. Drawing on her work on Russian Mennonite settlers in Canada, Elaine L. Enns critically analyzes Mennonite relations to their native neighbours, in whose territories they settled (Enns, 2015, 2016). Enns advocates the need to engage in a process she has termed "restorative solidarity," that is, a process that consists of building empathy with indigenous communities, recognizing the historic and current injustices, listening to how they identify "harms, needs, and responsibilities" and finally, working with them to "make things as right as possible" through acts of accountability, restitution and reparations (2015, p. 8). Enns's approach provides a framework to critically reflect on a history marked by trauma, violence, and unequal power dynamics that have shaped not only the Mennonites but also indigenous peoples and Paraguayans in Paraguay. This perspective could also offer the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of our human interventions on the fragile ecological landscape of the region. Ultimately, acts of recognizing, listening, and restitution may prove to be significant steps towards a meaningful process of conviventiality as envisioned by Mennonites in today's Chaco.

Notes

[1] The investigation also unveiled that the Social Security Institute (IPS), a state entity in charge of social security in Paraguay which owns 200,000 hectares in the Chaco region rented part of its land to IRASA, which has a 20-year lease on three lots totaling 18,000 hectares. BRICAPAR signed a contract with IRASA to cut trees and produce charcoal on this land since 2012. It was estimated that an average of ten football fields/day were being deforested in these lands. By 2014, the charcoal facility at BRICAPAR had a production capacity of 1,260 tons per month (Earthsight, 2017).

[2] I acknowledge the support from the Wenner Gren Foundation for conducting fieldwork during this time period.

[3] The New Tribes Mission was founded in 1942 by US-born Paul Flemming. It is a US-based organization that supports members of different evangelical churches in the North America with which NTM has ideological affinity in spreading the word of God. The focus of its work is so-called isolated populations in the "third world." For more on the history of NTM see Johnston (1985). In recent years they changed their name to Ethnos360.

[4] The crisis was such in Fernheim during this time period, that it caused one third of the population to move to eastern Paraguay and form Friesland Colony (see Klassen, 2003).

[5] At this time, there was a shift from charcoal-based energy production to hydroelectric power from the *Itaipú* Dam.

[6] By 2006 factory used approximately 2000 cubic meters of firewood a month.

[7] Ten years later, by 2015, the pressure would become such that Fernheim Colony was forced to give them an urban lot—two hectares for 110 families.

[8] Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) is a non-profit Christian organization founded in 1953 by Mennonite entrepreneurs in the US to support the Mennonites in Paraguay through the borrowing of micro-credits for economic development projects. In 1996, the Mennonites in Paraguay founded MEDA Paraguay to support the same type of projects targeted to rural families in Paraguay (Ratzlaff, 2006, p. 268).

Charcoal production in Ayoreo villages had already begun in 2003. According to MEDA-Paraguay, however, only later (between 2005 and 2006) did they receive US$160,000 in non-reimbursable funds from the Interamerican Bank (IDB) to establish the project on charcoal production among four Ayoreo villages and Casanillo, a Toba-Maskoy village that would start producing in 2007. ASCIM and MEDA-Paraguay contributed US$66,000 to the project (Rempel, 2008a).

[9] Esperanza Chaqueña was formed in 2006. Their goals are oriented towards the support of marginalized communities. They provide technical assistance and support through development programs that seek the socio-economic autonomy of these populations. Their vision is "the conviventiality of the Chaco population in dignified human conditions and pacific relations."

[10] DIRSSA paid GS$250 (US$0.04) per kilogram for charcoal purchased in the communities, and GS$350 (US$0.05) per kilogram if purchased at the factory (DIRSAA staff member, personal communication, 2006). By 2009, after protests of Ayoreo the price was raised to US$0.09/kg. At the time, however, the local price paid by the consumer was about four times that amount (Duerksen, 2009a).

References

Agrawal, A. (2005a). Environmentality: Community, intimate government, and the making of environmental subjects in Kumaon, India. *Current Anthropology, 46*(2), 161–190.

Agrawal, A. (2005b). *Environmentality: Technologies of government and the making of subjects*. Duke University Press.

Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena Mennonita (2018). *Visión y misión.* https://www.ascim.org/index.php/es/quienes-somos/vision.

Bartolomé, M. A. (2000). *El encuentro de la gente y los insensatos: La sedentarización de los cazadores Ayoreo en el Paraguay*. Centro de Estudios Antropológicos de la Universidad Católica de Asunción.

Bebbington, A. J., Hickey, S., & Mitlin, D. C. (Eds.). (2008). *Can NGOs make a difference? The challenge of development alternatives*. Zed Books.

Blaser, M. (2004). 'Way of life' or 'who decides': Development, Paraguayan indigenism and the Yshiro people's life projects. In M. Blaser, H. A. Feit, & G. McRae (Eds.), *In the way of development: Indigenous peoples, life projects and globalization* (pp. 52–71). International Development Research Centre.

Bormida, M, & Califano, M. (1978). *Los indios ayoreo del Chaco boreal: Información básica acerca de su cultura*. Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura.

Canova, P. (2015). Los ayoreo en las colonias menonitas: Un análisis de un enclave agro-industrial en el Chaco Paraguayo. In L. Córdoba, F. Bossert, & N.

Richard (Eds.), *Capitalismo en las selvas: Enclaves industriales en el Chaco y Amazonía indígenas (1850–1950)* (pp. 271–286). Ediciones del Desierto.

Canova, P. (in press). *Frontier intimacies: Ayoreo women and the sexual economy of the Paraguayan Chaco*. University of Texas Press.

Cepek, M. (2011). Foucault in the forest: Questioning environmentality in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist, 38*(3), 501–515.

Chernela, J. M. (2015). Directions of existence: Indigenous women domestics in the Paris of the tropics. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology, 20*(1), 201–229.

Chernela, J., & Zanotti, L. (2014). Limits to knowledge: Indigenous peoples, NGOs, and the moral economy in the eastern Amazon of Brazil. *Conservation and Society, 12*(3), 306–317.

Dirección General de Encuestas, Estadísticas y Censo (2014). *III censo nacional de población y viviendas para pueblos indígenas del Paraguay: Pueblos indígenas en el Paraguay: Resultados finales*. https://www.dgeec.gov.py/Publicaciones/Biblioteca/indigena2012/Pueblos indigenas en el Paraguay Resultados Finales de Poblacion y Viviendas 2012.pdf

Duerksen, M. (2009a, September 28). *Continúa la producción ilegal de carbón en el Chaco Central*. ABC Color. https://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/interior/continua-la-produccion-ilegal-de-carbon-en-el-chaco-central-25220.html.

Duerksen, M. (2009b, November 28). *Las comunidades ayoreo del Chaco necesitan soluciones a largo plazo*. ABC Color. https://www.abc.com.py/articulos/las-comunidades-ayoreo-del-chaco-necesitan-soluciones-a-largo-plazo-45352.html.

Earthsight (2017, July 5). *Choice cuts: How US BBQs are fueled by a hidden deforestation crisis in South America*. https://medium.com/@Earthsight/choice-cuts-e7d736067915.

Enns, E. (2015, February 25). Facing history with courage: Towards 'restorative solidarity' with our indigenous neighbours. *Canadian Mennonite, 19*(5), 4–9.

Enns, E. (2016). Trauma and memory: Challenges to settler solidarity. *Consensus, 37*(1), Article 5. https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol37/iss1/5.

Escobar, A. (1994). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press.

Fischermann, B. (1988). *Zur Weltsicht der Ayoréode ostboliviens* [unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.

Glauser Ortíz, M. (2008). *"Que ore deji eramone" (Ellos todavía están en el mundo): El relacionamiento de los* ayoréodecon *su entorno: Una investigación en el Chaco central paraguayo* [Bachelor's thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Andres]. Repositorio Institucional UMSA. https://repositorio.umsa.bo/handle/123456789/8211.

Goossen, B. (2016). Mennonites in Latin America: A review of the literature. *Conrad Grebel Review, 34*(3), 236–265.

Graber, C. (1964). *The coming of the Moros: From spears to pruning hooks*. Herald Press.

Guyra Paraguay (2018). *Monitoring report on the land use change in the Great Chaco for the month of June 2018*. http://guyra.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/JUNIO-2018.zip.

Hein, D. (1990). *Los Ayoreos – nuestros vecinos: Comienzos de la Misión al Norte del Chaco.* Imprenta Modelo.

Iniciativa Amotocodie. (2019). *Actividades en curso*. https://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/iniciativa-amotocodie/actividades-en-curso/.

Johnston, K. (1985). *The story of New Tribes Mission*. New Tribes Mission.
Kipnis, A. (2008). Audit cultures: Neoliberal governmentality, socialist legacy, or technologies of governing? *American Ethnologist, 35*(2), 275–289.
Klassen, P. P. (Ed.). (1976). *Kaputi mennonita: arados y fusiles en la Guerra del Chaco* (K. Neufeld, Trans.; 2nd ed.) Imprenta Modelo. (Original work published 1975)
Klassen, P. P. (2003). *Mennonites in Paraguay: Vol. 1. Kingdom of God and kingdom of this world* (G. H. Schmitt, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Mennonitischer Buchversand. (Original work published 2001)
Loewen, J. A. (1964). *Research report on the question of settling Lengua and Chulupi Indians in the Paraguayan Chaco*. Mennonite Central Committee.
Plett, R. (1979). *Presencia menonita en el Paraguay: Origen, doctrina y funcionamiento*. Instituto Bíblico.
Radcliffe, S. A. (2015). *Dilemmas of difference: Indigenous women and the limits of postcolonial development policy*. Duke University Press.
Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (2013). *Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact in the Americas* (OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc.47/13). Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/indigenous/docs/pdf/Report-Indigenous-Peoples-Voluntary-Isolation.pdf.
Ratzlaff, G. (2006). *Historias, fe y practicas menonitas: Un enfoque paraguayo*. Facultad de Teología, Instituto Bíblico Asunción.
Redekop, C. (1980). *Strangers become neighbors: Mennonites and indigenous relations in the Paraguayan Chaco*. Herald Press.
Regehr, W. (1984). "Teorías del desarrollo y autogestión indígena." *Suplemento Antropológico, 19*(1), 89–95.
Rempel, E. (2008a, September). MEDA-BID projekt. *MEDA-Paraguay Journal*, (29), 11–12.
Rempel, E. (2008b, December). DIRSSA. *MEDA-Paraguay Journal*, (30), 11–12.
Stahl, W. (1974). Cinco establecimientos agrícolas en el Chaco Central. *Suplemento Antropológico, 9*(1–2), 111–152.
Stahl, W. (1988). *Escenario indígena chaqueño: Pasado y presente* (2nd ed.). Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena-Mennonita.
Urry, J. (2006). *Mennonites, politics, and peoplehood: Europe – Russia – Canada, 1525 to 1980*. University of Manitoba Press.
Veit, P., & Sarsfield, R. (2017). *Land rights, beef commodity chains, and deforestation dynamics in the Paraguayan Chaco*. USAID Tenure and Global Climate Change Program.
Wagner, C. P. (1967). *Defeat of the bird god*. Zondervan Publishing House.