"IF I HAVE A JOB IN THE CITY, I'LL GO TO THE BUSH ON WEEKENDS": PLACE PRODUCTION AMONG TOBA PEOPLE IN NORTHERN ARGENTINA

by

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous struggles over places are a response to the spatial reconfiguration that is part of an ongoing process of colonization. This thesis explores how urban indigenous people contest social exclusion through everyday place-making. I analyze how the residents of the Lote 68, an indigenous neighborhood in the city of Formosa (Northern Argentina), cope with their position of marginality within the city, by simultaneously embracing a project of "progress" and by re-appropriating the nearby bushes within rural private properties. The interviews and participant observation I conducted among this group show that their use of space disputes the hegemonic notions of aboriginality that articulate it as a poor, backward and a welfare-dependent identity. Conversely, the bush is a place that offers Lote residents a way of coping with unemployment, but more importantly, permits them to re-appropriate the notion of aborigen (indigenous person), recreate meaningful forms of socialization, and ultimately generate an alternative access to the city.
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If the ideas presented in a Thesis are collective, the moment of composing the narrative is still individual, that is why the statements and the flaws in this work remain my responsibility.
1. Introduction

1.1. An Unfortunate Hunting Trip

On August 14, 2002, eight men from the Lote 68, a Toba neighbourhood of the city of Formosa in the Argentinean Chaco, left the neighbourhood on a hunting trip to *el monte* (the bush). Once inside a private property and only a few meters from the beginning of the dense vegetation that covers the borders of the forest, they were surprised from behind by a group of armed policemen. The police officers did not stop to ask questions but started shooting at the group. According to the stories many people from the Lote told me after this event, the men hid behind some bushes and started to shoot back. Some people even claim that the policemen were riding on horseback, an image recalling the colonization of the Chaco region by the Argentinean army at the turn of the 20th century. The result of this confrontation was that two of the hunters were injured, a policeman was killed and another badly wounded. Yet the consequences of this clash were even broader.

Around noon, two hours after the shooting in the forest, approximately 100 policemen occupied the neighbourhood looking for those allegedly responsible for the killing of the officer. They proceeded with a tactic the Argentinean army had used during the military campaigns to conquer the Chaco region, and that military officers had also used in the 1970s during the dictatorship in their fight against the so-called “subversion” (a term referring, in theory, to leftist revolutionary groups but actually including all forms of opposition to the government). The *rastrillaje* (“the sweep”) of el Lote took several hours and involved almost every household. Policemen looked for all the men known to be hunters, by interrogating children in the street and getting in the houses of hunters’ relatives without any court order. With the presence of a judge who legitimated the procedure, that night 30 people were imprisoned, among them 10-year-old-

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1 The neighbourhood is called “Lote 68- Barrio Nam Qom” but is referred to as simply “el Lote” (literally, “the lot”) by its inhabitants.
children, old people and women. During the night, the police interrogated and tortured several people. All of them were insulted as 'indios' (Indians) and treated as responsible for the murder of the policeman. An old man was put naked in a tank of water, young kids were locked and forced to sleep on dirt floors for the whole night and a woman testified that she was raped. The police released most of the people in the following days after the demands of human rights agencies and the intervention of leaders of the community, NGO's (non-governmental organizations) and the Catholic Church. The eight men that formed the hunting group were put in prison. After the attack, people from the Lote formed a permanent committee in order to denounce the police attack and support the people imprisoned. In a way that followed the “typical” dynamics of the politics in the Lote, two weeks after the attack, a few political leaders from the Lote aligned with the government left the commission, generating a division in the movement against the government.

I have reconstructed these events from the narration of two political leaders, both of whom are in strong opposition to the government policies and who used to work together in an NGO. The wife of one of them, who shares their critical standpoint, provided me with some of the details of her personal experience. In this event there are many salient aspects that arise not as singular incidents but rather as part of deeply rooted social relations and conflicts. On the one hand, the relation between an occurrence in the bush and its repercussions in the Lote make clear that both places are part of a broader dynamic of the production of difference and its intersection with a system of hierarchies. On the other hand, the conflict is a manifestation of the constant tensions between Toba people, government officials and formoseños (people from Formosa) that establish systems of jurisdiction in which relatively defined groups have differential possibilities to access and circulate through places (Grossberg 1992).
The main research question in this thesis is: Why do people from the Lote neighbourhood go to the bush even if this practice does not guarantee subsistence (as it does in the interior), and even if this implies important conflicts with private owners of the land (in contrast to the interior where the bush is generally in public lands)? In this way, my research echoes a similar analysis made by Gordillo (2004) in the western area of the region. His work shows the importance of the bush for the Toba groups living in rural areas, where the bush can guarantee subsistence for poorer people. The reproduction of this very material relation entails and results from the reproduction of particular meanings attached to the place and the practices conducted in it. There are many elements that echo this in the Lote, however in the case I am analysing the conditions are different. Principally, if the bush can contribute to household subsistence, it is mostly through income generated by selling forest products rather than through food provision. The fact that a conflict in the bush among eight men generated a massive attack on a neighbourhood of 3000 people also poses further questions: What is the nature of the strong connection between the aborígenes and the bush? How do people produce the bush as a place in tension with other places, in particular the neighbourhood?

In this thesis, I analyse the production of the neighbourhood as a place of aborígenes (indigenous people) and the experiences and practices performed in the bush, as interrelated processes in the production of aboriginality (Bekett 1988, Briones 1998). I will draw on my previous work (Vivaldi 2005a) in order to understand how in this conflict, a salient process of making of subaltern identities is built and contested. This production is not undertaken in abstract contradictory relations but is materialized in the creation of specific places: el Lote (the neighbourhood), el monte (the bush), el centro (downtown) and the rural communities where people of the Lote come from.
In order to do this, I will focus on the first two places, the Lote and the bush, in two main regards: how the attack on the neighbourhood affirmed a specific identification of the Lote as a site of aboriginality, and how the tensions between an indigenous and a generalized non-indigenous population is manifested in struggles over the bush. I will analyse how these tensions are situated in places (Gordillo 2004, Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 1996).

From a theoretical perspective, I am interested in the intersection of space, bodies (as sites for subject production), and indigenous politics, in that they are central to understandings of localized struggles for collective rights. I will start with a theoretical review of the production of space and bodies in relation to the shaping of indigenous identities. This thesis is situated within studies of the politics of difference, focusing on the particular problematic of indigenous identity politics. I address, in particular, that literature regarding indigenous identity politics that builds on a Gramscian notion of culture as generative of social structuration and consider how these struggles are situated in and produce places. The relationship between indigenous politics and place production has not been so widely developed in Argentina but has been a prominent problematic in the last ten years within North American anthropology (for example Nelson 1999, Li 2003). I approach the body as mediating between the production of identities and places, as subjects, through their bodies, shape places and are in turn shaped by them.

This approach contrasts with two prominent ways indigenous struggles over the environment have been situated in recent years. On the one hand, some scholars have understood indigenous connection to the environment as an example of a strategic essentialization of identity

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2 I developed this approach primarily in discussions at the Geaprona, the Aboriginality Provinces and State Research Team, where we discussed the multiple provincial styles of hegemony and how these shaped the particular fields of indigenous politics, simultaneously at the provincial level and the national and international spheres. My interests have diverged towards addressing the everyday forms of resistance that arise in that context. Having been connected to the environmental movement since 1993, my own landscape of affect connected with the Toba use of the bush on in my arrival to the Chaco. This motivation led me to address the topic as a form of the production of space, a literature that was introduced to me by Gastón Gordillo in 2001. I further build my work on a long tradition of ethnographies of the Chaco: Cordeu y Siffredi (1971), Carrasco (2000), Wright (1997). Finally, recent ethnographies of the Chaco by young anthropologists have been as influential: Iñigo Carrera (2001), Tola (2004), Citro (2004).
(see, for example, Li 2003). On the other hand, many political ecology analyses based on economic approaches have focused on struggles over the environment as conflicts to control natural resources (Peet and Watts 1996). Some elements of strategic essentialism are present in the fact that the Toba use of the bush takes advantage of the space opened by the representation of indigenous attachment to nature (for the Chaco see Miranda 1955). This representation even contributes to an implicit consent on the part of some landowners in allowing Toba people access to the bush. The bush also offers a partial economic alternative and thus there is some economic interest in accessing it—and in this way could potentially be seen as part of natural resources struggles. However, in this case, these approaches do not offer a complete explanation of the Toba use of the bush. In the Lote there is no open political claim over the lands of the bush, thus there is no prominent strategic essentialization. The economic use of the bush does not offer a complete subsistence alternative and at the same time it does not explain why people are more worried about getting a job, about “progressing,” than about claiming the lands of the bush. In contrast to these approaches, then, I want to determine the meanings, practices and experiences that make it a place worth fighting for not in an open political confrontation but in everyday practices of women and men.

Following the discussion of theory, this thesis is divided into two main sections: 1) the Lote and 2) the bush. In these two sections, I try to answer the following questions: a) Why is the Lote and its population consistently categorized as aborigen? And, b) why is the bush a site of identification and a landscape of affect³?

³ By landscape of affect I mean the “emotional dispositions of individual and communities in wider topographies of fear and love, suffering and belonging” (Moore, Pandian and Kosek 2003: 31).
1.2. The Politics of Places

In this thesis, I make use of theoretical approaches that consider places not as closed entities but as relational, historical and socially produced spatial delimitations (Lefebvre 2000, Grossberg 1992, Harvey 1996). Therefore, I look at place production as an indissoluble part of historical social tensions, power relations, and disputes over meaning. In this regard, my analysis is situated in the field of the anthropology of place and space, considering place as the focus of analysis and as the concrete dimension of social interaction. As Casey (1996) has argued, space can only be considered as a specific human creation, therefore to see abstract space, as a universal category outside social relations is problematic. Along these lines, I follow Henri Lefebvre (1991) who considers that place is not only social but is also produced. To consider places as social products also means to consider their relevance in the reproduction of society. Hence, Lefebvre proposes a three-dimensional process in the production of places: 1) the planning of places from positions of power, 2) the representations of places by their users that may challenge those ideological dimensions, and 3) the practices that effectively produce and reproduce certain places, following both the lines set by power positions and alternative constructions.

Finally, I also rely on Grossberg’s (1992: 103-111) notion of “territorializing machines,” through which he connects the production of identities and the sedimentation of places, with this he reflects on differential levels of affective attachment and how much people become empowered in places. Grossberg further introduces the concept of “structured mobilities” to account for the processes that delimit possibilities of action, movement, and access to specific places in everyday life. I use this concept to analyse the Toba’s everyday practices and movements in and between places. I argue that these differential experiences define places not just as an area of inscription (or disarticulation) of social relations, but also as the concrete sphere
of their contradictions. Following Gordillo (2004), places are built in multi-dimensional and shifting fields of social tensions.

Place production cannot be understood except as the result of bodily practice and experience. In this regard, bodies are not only biological entities but are also individually and socially shaped (Locke and Scheper-Hughes 1987). I am particularly interested in linking the previous ideas with recent analyses of the body: that is, I aim to examine the ways in which people’s bodies shape places and how places organize people’s activities, embodied experience and affective energy (Bourdieu 2000, Csordas 1990, Grossberg 1992). The dialectic of bodies and places provides a focus of analysis, aiming to overcome the dichotomy between bodies and places. Following Csorda’s (1990) interpretation of Merleau Ponty, the body is the fundamental instance of experience and a source of knowledge. Perception is the first instance of knowledge, from which objectivation is a consequence. Moreover, perception is not just a sensorial function but rather an activity informed by culture. Drawing on these ideas, Pierre Bourdieu’s (2000) notion of *habitus* underlines the relevance of social practice in the construction of the structure of the objective world. He defines a circular relation between subjects and the objective structure of the world: from their particular position in social structure, subjects shape and reproduce the world by following of unconscious dispositions, the *habitus*, and by doing so they are shaped as subjects in changing social settings. How people circulate in and between places (De Certeau 1984, Grossberg 1992) and the amount of energy invested in places is another way in which the production of places needs to be analysed as an *embodied* experience (Csordas 1996).

Foucault (1979) also considers the body as the main area in the production of disciplined subjects that is characteristic of modernity. He traces a positive aspect of power, one that not only constrains but also produces people willing to “get better” and thus shape themselves in certain ways. The internalisation of certain forms of control is conducted through particular techniques
which produce disciplined subjects. One of these techniques is fixing people to a bounded place. This disciplinary place isolates people, limits interactions and creates places "transparent" to the vision of the invigilator, which sees but cannot be seen\(^4\). In other words, individuals are subiectified through particular body techniques that are then internalised.

My interest in the body and space is linked to an understanding of how particular subjectivities are created. The way indigenous subjects are constituted in configurations of otherness and differentiated from the normal "citizen" (Alonso 1994) is a deeply embodied and spatialized process\(^5\). I understand aboriginality as a particular type of ethnicity based on the experience of Europe’s colonial conquest of distant territories that differentiates an indigenous identity from an ethnic minority constituted in the process of nation-state formation or as a result of migration (Bekett 1988, Briones 1998). Aboriginality is not only shaped against the state but rather as a particular type of citizenship different from that of the "normal" citizen whose identity is equated with the national one. Thus aboriginality is only understandable in its production inside state relations. At the same time, the definition of belonging and the limits of the group’s distinction is not a given fact but are constantly renegotiated according to the context and the different dimensions of people’s subjectivity.

I take Hall’s (1985, 1995) notion of articulation, in particular the articulation of political identities, in order to understand the production of a unified Lote, not as a mechanic reconstruction of ethnicity but as a result of historical experience. The notion of articulation permits me to explore what type of distinction is creating the group’s boundaries and thus bringing people together and what elements are selected as relevant meanings (as a signifying

\(^4\) The model of this type of interaction is the Panopticon, intended to increase the effectiveness of organizing people in different productive endeavours, for example, to enhance the product of workers' labour in a factory, to normalize insane people and criminals, or to educate children.

\(^5\) In this respect, Alonso claims "I think anthropologists must examine how the organization of space is implicated in ethnic formation and inequality, in state strategies of asymmetric incorporation and appropriation, and in the complex dialectic between hierarchy and egalitarianism, heterogeneity and homogeneity, in the imagining of nations" (1994: 393-394).
chain) that represent the group. This concept allows us to understand which types of unity and difference are created, and which elements and connections between them become meaningful in a particular conjuncture. In this sense *conjuncture* becomes important in order to emphasize the contingent situations that make possible certain fields of power negotiation. Grossberg (1992) proposes that differentiating machines are the mainly discursive instances through which forms of social classification generate a system of social difference linked to social hierarchies. I recognize that the delimitation of aboriginality is one of multiple differences. I am not only interested in how inequalities are shaped in relation to being indigenous but rather how “people’s identities are defined by the complex articulations between their different positions in a variety of systems of social difference” (Grossberg 1992:99).

1.3. The Making of the Field

I travelled to the Lote for the first time in July 1997, as a research assistant to a physical anthropologist investigating women’s reproductive health. From 1999 to the present, and after remaking the field under my own research, I have travelled to the Lote at least once a year in small trips of around 10 days, totalling 6 month in the field. From 1999 to 2002 I made these trips as part of formal fieldwork for my Honours Thesis, analysing political and economic dimensions of identity formation of the Lote. The main part of the material discussed in the present thesis is drawn from subsequent trips, in which I got interested in the spatial inscription of identities in relation to the conflict I describe at the beginning of this section.

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6 For one year I travelled regularly (every two months) from Buenos Aires to the Lote as part of this project. This work gave me the chance to get to know many families in the Lote, some of which I continued visiting even after the project ended.

7 The research explored the correlation between high patterns of breast-feeding, post partum amenorrhea and nutrition. My tasks were to conduct interviews, 4 hour “visits” to the women participating in the research in which I made observations of the women’s activities and breast-feeding. I also helped to collect saliva samples from 100 women every two days. For a more in-depth analysis on my repositioning in the field see Vivaldi 2005.
It is difficult to define the limits of my fieldwork, as while living in Buenos Aires I received multiple visits of friends from the Lote. They came with me to work, to university and to social parties, and I accompanied them to meet journalists, government functionaries and friends. In this calculation it is not included the fieldwork I conducted at home in Buenos Aires (where I took notes and conducted some interviews). This is only another dimension showing the arbitrariness of defining a place and time of fieldwork detached from “normal life,” particularly as a Latin American Anthropologist working inevitably (and interestingly) near home.

The first part of my work had a major emphasis in the recording of interviews to reconstruct the history of the Lote and residents’ experiences of migration, but I gradually came to rely more on informal interviews and participant observation. This is also related to the demands of the problem under analysis, which led me to focus on what type of activities, affects, and interactions were unfolding in each place. In the latter fieldwork, I worked with a group of *artesanas* (women who make handicrafts) and one of *mariscadores* (male hunters). I went to the bush with the women but was unable to go with men because of the strong sexual division of the activities in the bush.

### 2. El Lote as an Indigenous Neighbourhood

From a historical perspective, the Lote is part of the ongoing process of the Argentinean state’s colonization of indigenous groups. The Chaco was the last region in the country to remain under indigenous control. The efforts of the Argentinean government to take control of these lands were

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8 I reconstructed the men’s activities from their preparations to go to the bush, and through interviews. Work with adults, interviews with elders and interaction with children contributed to accessing some dimensions of intergenerational experiences in the bush.

9 The Toba are the third largest indigenous group in Argentina out of a total 398,720 indigenous people in the country (INDEC 2005). According to the government of the province of Formosa, it is estimated that there are 10,000 Tobas, 12,450 Wichi 13,938 Pilagá, and 106 Churupá living in the province (INDEC 2005). The number of Tobas living in the city of Formosa remains unknown, but there are definitely a small number of better off families living in the centre of the city and there is a precarious growing Toba occupation in fiscal Lands of less than a thousand people—the end of this sentence is confusing to me. The Lote is considered a Toba neighbourhood because the all the residents are Toba, with the exception of 10 Pilagá families and one Wichi family. The possibility of fixing these numbers with certainty is low due to the high mobility of families and individuals in and out of the Lote.
only emphasized at the end of the 19th century after the end of the military campaign to control Patagonia, which massacred Mapuche populations to “free” the lands for cattle breeding. In the Chaco, the object of conquest was two-fold: the land and the indigenous population as a labour force. After the 1884 Campaign of General Victorica (which occupied the rivers and the main hunting fields), the Chaco groups were confined to reducciones (State reservations) and catholic misiones (missions) formed to discipline indigenous as good workers and Christians. However, indigenous armed uprisings and army massacres continued until the 1940s. In the eastern region the Tobas were first incorporated into the labor force for logging activities and since 1920 in the flourishing cotton industry (Iñigo Carrera 1983).

During the 1950, migration of indigenous people to the cities resulted from processes affecting the rural communities such as the mechanization of production and the consequent lack of seasonal employment, and a decreased access to natural resources, among other things. In the case of the Lote, most of the people gradually arrived from different parts of el interior\textsuperscript{10} of the provinces of Formosa and Chaco, since the 1950’s, and settled down at the shore of the river Blanco, inside the domains of a large rural property, with the informal consent of the owner\textsuperscript{11}. It was only twenty years later that they articulated a land claim as aborígenes and acquired the Lote as an alternative territory to settle down.

The Lote is not just another marginal neighbourhood of the city of Formosa. Presently, according to NGO’s estimations its population is around 2500 (of a total of 198,074 inhabitants of the city according to the INDEC 2005) people\textsuperscript{12}. The Lote is situated 11 kilometres form the centre, and currently is being surrounded by new neighbourhoods resulting from housing programs. The Barrio Norte, another marginal neighbourhood with a high proportion of

\textsuperscript{10} “The interior,” used as a relative category to refer to rural areas from an urban point of reference.

\textsuperscript{11} The migration of indigenous people to the big cities is not unique to Formosa; there are important Toba neighbourhoods in the city of Resistencia, La Plata, Rosario and also in small cities as Ingeniero Juarez.

\textsuperscript{12} A political leader in the Lote who frequently conducts informal censuses to register people as beneficiaries of assistance plans, recently calculated that the population is currently approaching 2800.
Paraguayan immigrants, is now only one kilometre from the Lote following the national road. According to a demographic study done in 1998, the population of the Lote is mostly unemployed. Only 25% of the economically active population of the Lote employed (and of this 25%, 12% are state employees). The Toba households, composed of extended families generally live on a small income from state welfare received by one member, and the informal activities of the rest of the members, mainly women’s handicrafts and informal jobs men periodically hold.

The categorization as *barrio aborigen*, “indigenous neighbourhood,” shapes the place, its “population” and the types of interactions its residents have with the different government agencies and other non-indigenous people. *Aborigen* is the term the state has used to designate this population and is also the main identity marker of the people of the Lote as an internal “other” in the province and the city. This term is not uniquely adopted by the people in the lote but also by the other indigenous groups in the Chaco; it is representative of a shared condition. The process by which certain people come to be identified as *aborigen*, or indigenous, can be explained through the notion of aboriginality that recreates a common historical experience, a common relation to the state, and a common subject position in the present. This identity as *aborigenes* brings people of the Lote together (and distinguishes them from other people in the city), and articulates people around a set of elements that represent the distinctiveness of the group to others (Hall 1985, 1995). In this dynamic there are simultaneous forces that emphasize difference and that at the same time challenge this notion and expand it.

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13 The city of Formosa is closely connected to the Capital city of Paraguay, Asuncion, which is only around 120 km away. The legal and illegal commercial traffic between the cities is very intense and accomplished primarily along the national road that actually runs through the Lote.

14 This research is not recent, yet is the most detailed study on the demography of the Lote done in recent years (Unicef 1998).

15 The family units are generally composed of a married couple, their sons and daughters, and frequently their elder parents, aunts and uncles or unmarried brothers and sisters. Sometimes the older sons and daughters keep on living on the family lot after marriage. In these cases they build a different house but may share food and other activities. Thus each family lot is frequently composed of a series of small interacting houses.

16 I am referring to the making of a population as an object of government and care (Foucault 1991).
As in the western region of the Chaco, the first level of identification for Lote residents is the category, aborígenes. Gordillo (2004) argues that the aborígenes category was formed in labour experiences in the case of the groups of the western Chaco. This argument could also be made for the eastern region and thus for the Lote, particularly in light of residents' experience of work at cotton farms and plantations. However, I argue that even though this may be one dimension of the production of aboriginality, it is not the only one. In particular, the making of a field of “indigenous politics” that had a moment of intensity with the Peronist government and the distribution of ID cards, but has settled down since the 1980s with the return to democracy, has an important weight in the shaping of the category aborígenes (see Carrasco 2000).

This is the first category that arises when people present themselves and the neighbourhood. Aborigen is an identification that opens a negotiated field of possibilities and limitations. It creates access to particular government policies and services, which are claimed on the basis of being a population that preceded the state. The claims over lands— in particular education, health and justice—are and were negotiated through this identity that permits access to the sphere of indigenous rights at the level of the nation and the provincial state. Being aborígenes is the first instance, an identification and a marker of place that distinguishes the neighbourhood from the rest of the city. In addition, the identity marker of aborígenes reflects the successful land claim of the Lote, a time when the identity became “fixed.”

In this section, I will analyse how that was possible in the face of: 1) a state recognition of indigenous land claims; 2) the importance of the colonial experience in the shaping of these identities; 3) the cultural re-production implied in the localized practices in place; and 4) the unification of the people of the Lote around their desire for progreso.

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17 Used rather than “Tobas” or Tobas of a particular village, which are other important identity markers.
18 The province of Formosa was the first to give constitutional recognition to indigenous people, in 1984. This was done before nation wide recognition following the national constitution reform of 1994 (see Carrasco 2000).
In order to address the specific way this unifying aboriginality is produced in the Lote we should consider the tensions of this aboriginality with other forms of identification, which problematize this commonality. In other works (Vivaldi 2005a, 2005b), I have analysed all the categorizations in tension with each other that shape differences in the Lote. One of them is the struggle over the recent past manifest in a distinction between “first settlers” and “newcomers” that divide the families that participated in the Lote land claim. This distinction is related to the distinction in residents’ place of origin before migration, a distinction that continues to define important divisions and alliances as people keep fluid relations with relatives in rural communities and also keep closer relations in the Lote with people from their community of origin.

Considering that political patronage is crucial for family subsistence (see Iñigo Carrera V. 2001), the other major demarcation is the shifting political affiliations connected to the dynamic of patronage relations in the field of la política, “politics.” Relations of patronage are active throughout the year and not only in electoral moments (in which they acquire a particular intensity), as they permit access to diverse types of state assistance.

These dimensions are deeply interconnected, as the division, for example, between new and first settlers is used as a political distinction. In this way the category does not have the same implications in every context and for everybody in the Lote. Rather, the notion of being aborígenes is itself a sphere of struggle (Hall 1985) among men and women, better-off and unemployed people, newcomers and first settlers, political affiliations, and ethnic groups. At the same time, the articulation of people as aborígenes is also shaped by and recreates their experience in places. The process of identification conditions the way people have access to economies of value (symbolic and material), situated in particular places. Following Grossberg (1992), the way people move between places, access, use and become empowered in these
places, is regulated through regimes of jurisdiction. Regimes of jurisdiction, thus, define how people can circulate through different social spaces, who has access to them and which types of practices different subjects can perform in them. They condition not only access to places but also the whole directionality and intensity of circulation through social spaces and places. In the interaction with this system of jurisdiction differential structured mobilities are generated; these mobilities are a sphere of struggle. In my previous work, then, I deconstructed difference within the category of aborigines (Vivaldi 2005 a). I will now focus on what brings people together.

2.1. Migration and Land Claim

It was only after twenty years of informal settlement in the peripheries of the city that the Toba families mobilized an alliance with political officials to get lands near the city. The claim was articulated on the basis of their indigenous identity. Interestingly, the arguments that they made did not claim a historical connection to the land or a spiritual connection to natural resources but their willingness to progresar (progress) by being close to the city. During this process, a group of Toba men repositioned themselves as indigenous leaders, learning hegemonic institutional practices to situate their struggles within the legal domain. After many negotiations (and offers of lands good for agriculture but far from the city, which they rejected), they got the fiscal plot number 68, now “the Lote.” This land was bought by the provincial government in 1970 and given to the 12 families that organized the claim. The context of the claim is a moment in which the national politics towards indigenous people had shifted from the discourse of “incorporation” (during the Peronist government of 1946-1955) and “development” (advocated by the short presidency of Arturo Frondizi 1958-1962) towards the discourse of “historical reparation” (Carrasco 2000: 32), an idea implemented through the granting of land titles to recognized communities. We can understand the success of this claim in relation to these governmental logics: incorporating indigenous people into the allegedly “civilized” life of a city, developing
this particular population through their sedentarization, and realizing the promised “historical reparation” through the titling of lands.

For the families involved in the claim, the articulation of their demand as indigenous rather than as farmers, poor migrants, or other available forms of identification was the most significant way of framing the struggle, not just as a strategic use of their identity but also in relation to their historical experience and the possibilities that this identification permitted. This claim was then particularly effective even before any legislation on indigenous rights was produced in the province or in Argentina. If we consider that in Formosa the demographic weight of the indigenous population is important (see above), the effectiveness of an indigenous articulation as political subjects can be related to their emergence as an effective political body that could make elections change direction. In this respect, the bases of this land claim do not differ from the way other indigenous communities in Formosa framed their struggles for land, referring to a general pre-existence in the province and a right for land to ensure their life in the present.\(^{19}\)

2.2. Echoes of Colonization

The particularity of the land claim of the Lote is that it does not include a specific reference to a bounded “tribe” inhabiting the specific lands of the Lote “from time immemorial” and thus claiming their property in relation to historical and symbolic attachment to the particular piece of land. Rather, the production of aboriginality is made at a general level of having rights over all of the provincial territory regardless of whether or not their group has inhabited that specific place. The claim is made both from the authority of a pre-existence in the territory and on the basis of these people’s social exclusion following the state’s military conquest and colonization in the 1880s. Consequently, we can also consider that this condition as indigenous was created through

\(^{19}\) For the particular histories of land claims in the province see Citro (2004), Gordillo (2004), Salamanca (2006), and Wright (2002).
the experience of being populations already settled in the region that until the beginning of the 20th century still kept a relative control over their territories.

Beckett (1988) argues that the ethnicity emerging from the conquest of native populations during European expansion should be differentiated from ethnicity which results from migrations. It can also be distinguished from that type of ethnicity that arose through the creation of nation-states and implied the subordination of populations to the sovereignty of one state, one territory, and one-nation ideologies\textsuperscript{20}. These are "the other" subordinated by a dominant national identity, such as the Irish or the Vasque. In the Chaco we are confronted with a history of failed attempts to conquer land and people during the Spanish colonial regime, and an effective subordination that took place only during the creation of the Argentinean nation-state. According to Briones (1998), aboriginality constitutes a particular type of citizenship that is "refracted" by the state and is shaped in dialogue with the national identity. Like all identities, aboriginality is relational and built in a dialectics with the identity of the "normal" citizen of that state which in this process is made invisible as a self-evident truth (the uncontested \textit{doxa}, in Bourdieu's terms). Then, the criteria that creates the limits of belonging to this group, or in Hall's terms, articulates a set of elements as distinctive characteristics unifying the group, varies in relation to particular contexts, is the result of historical dynamics, and thus is conjunctural.

Consequently, we can argue that the identity of Toba people as \textit{aborigenes} is constructed by their positioning resulting from the recent subordination to the Argentinean state. In this sense, we can understand that the experience of being subjected to the state; confined to unproductive lands; being incorporated into the regional economy as a marginal labour force; having been distinguished as an "internal other" within the national and provincial state; having been

\textsuperscript{20} The production of aboriginality then is also different from the type of ethnicity produced in the constitution of diasporic identities as a result of any type of trans-national migration. These ethnicities do not have a particular attachment to the territory they actually occupy, but rather claim a belonging to a faraway motherland.
submitted to specific policies of the state and the church to become “civilized” citizens (“good workers and Christians”). These are all components of the production of an indigenous identity but also the making of indigenous subjects.

Being aborigines and holding onto this identity in order to claim the lands of el Lote then makes sense through a historical perspective. When people claim that they are aborígenes, they often add the adjective pobres, “poor.” This makes explicit the historical correlation between the asymmetrical incorporation of Toba people to the state as an other (characterized as uncivilized, ignorant, close to nature, violent, irrational, among others) and the process of socio-economic marginalization resulting from their incorporation into capitalist relations as a cheap labour force and as a malleable population which could be employed when needed and left to its own subsistence when not needed.

In this respect, Alonso (1994) has shown how the process of state creation implies the creation of a hegemonic grid that produces a particular time, space, and identity. In this grid, ethnic and indigenous identities are produced by a transformative incorporation (in Gramsci’s terms) and localized in the time-space grid as something from the past and in the spaces of the margins. The hegemonic time-space and identity are erased, made invisible yet produced as the negation of these “other” identities.

To her argument we can incorporate the idea of development as analysed by Cowen and Shenton (1996), in which they argue that the logic and practice of development appears in the 19th century as a response to the problems of progress. In this way, the Toba are shaped as a group that not having progressed had to be guided to higher stages of development. This was a need as their non-modern existence appeared as an obstacle to the project of modernity in the area. During colonization, this population was not only subordinated and marginalized, it was characterized as “underdeveloped.” Special policies to improve the people through their
education as productive workers, but also through their conversion to Christianity, were projects undertaken by the government and the church immediately after colonization. Both projects had the moralizing implications of turning them into “useful citizens.”

There was also a need of fixing to these people not only a stable identity as an “indigenous population,” but also fixing them to a stable place (cf. Li 2003). This was particularly relevant in relation to the nomadic practices of the Chaco groups, which had been shaped by the incorporation of the horse and the establishment of complex commercial relations during the 18th and 19th centuries. Fixing this population in space and thus generating circumscribed indigenous places (reducciones and missions) is then one of the civilizing and assimilatory technologies deployed in the Argentinean Chaco.

People in the Lote reframe the experiences of violence perpetrated by the Argentinean government, of the reduction of their lands and resettlement on reserves and of the ongoing hostilities with armed forces as a legitimating narrative of their right to have a place near the city as a way to cope with economic and social exclusion. This point takes us to the particular elements of articulation as aborigines: the reproduction of particular practices and meanings.

2.3. Aboriginality as “Cultural” Practice

Identity as aborígenes is also constituted in everyday practices and experiences of “ordinary” people. Connerton (1989) proposes “societies remember” by the embodying of memory in practice. One way of doing this is through everyday “ways of doing things” that are socially informed and at the same time produce and reproduce a particular organization of the social world (Bourdieu 2000)\textsuperscript{21}. In the Lote people create and recreate an indigenous identity by “doing things” (as in the explicit affirmation “all aborígenes know how to make handicrafts”) which link

\textsuperscript{21} The other form of memory is commemoration, which Connerton considers not only a way of connecting to the past but of bringing the past to the present and recreating not only the values, events, and meanings, but also the practices that are considered foundational to a particular social formation.
them to rural communities and to a past previous and subsequent to colonization. Even though this social organization was transformed with their incorporation into the state and capitalism, and is constantly recreated and negotiated, some of these practices are linked to the past, recreated as a distinctive cultural characteristic of the group and thus articulated as part of an indigenous identity. This aspect of their identity as aborígenes becomes specific and is related to being Toba people.

Some of the practices that give meaning to being Toba are: speaking their own language as a primary language (one of the languages of the Guaycurú linguistic family [Miller 1979]), and reproducing a particular type of knowledge defined as culturally specific in dialogue with hegemonic types of authorized knowledge the state services imply. Other practices include symbolic and material practices that produce dreams as an aspect of reality (Wright 1997), understand the body as an open system that connects a person with multiple others (Tola 2004), associate political leadership with shamanic powers (Cordeu and Siffredi 1971), and emphasize maintaining harmonic relations with the owners of the animals of the bush (Miller 1979). In sum, these practices that anthropologists have characterized as the study of cosmologies have a fundamental role in recreating a “Tobaness” as a cultural specificity. I consider this “specificity” as the product of relations in which these people situate themselves as aborígenes and Tobas within these specific interactions. In the Lote, nutritional plans, the school where a bilingual and bicultural curriculum is implemented, the health centre, and the community centre run by a Catholic Church NGO are some of the spheres where this specificity is produced, in addition to the particular experiences prior and during colonization.

In this regard the practices in the bush are a particular arena of reproduction of meaningful ways of doing and knowing that inform this Tobaness.

2.4. Progress in the City
I have shown how Toba aboriginality is built in relation to: 1) their social position in the city; 2) the experience of colonization and 3) the recreation of cultural practices which give content to their identification. I will now turn to the way the notion of "progress" attached to the city shapes their definition as urban aborígenes.

Most people claim that they were initially attracted to the city of Formosa by the possibility to progresar by having a trabajito “small job,” selling their handicrafts in the city, and having access to informal and occasional types of wage labor. However there is a generalized connection between the idea of progresar and the expectation of having formal employment, which offers the possibility of a significant participation in the formal economy. People emphasize the benefits of “having a wage” (which is another way of naming state employment): the work required is not physically exploitative as is the work in the rural areas (cf. Gordillo 2002). A job permits people to buy their favourite foods instead of depending on the political leaders’ distributing food and organizing soup kitchens. It allows them to build their own houses following their own designs instead of depending on government housing programs and/or materials gathered in the bush. It also permits them to send their children to private schools in the centre of the city (generally Christian, Protestant institutions) where they will achieve a better education or at least a diploma without the negative connotations of having graduated from the state school in the Lote, which is set up to be bilingual. In short, having a salary involves the expectation of overcoming the economic and social exclusion of being aborígenes and pobres.

The discourse and practices that give meaning to progreso become deeply spatialized when people claim that in the rural areas there is no possibility of progress. Interestingly, another way of referring to the rural communities is el monte, “the bush.” As Mariana a woman in her

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22 This can be considered one of the paradoxes of multicultural politics which advance special rights to indigenous people, but end up generating further marginalization. In this case having a certificate from and indigenous school (both primary and secondary) generates discrimination when people look for a job and even prevents them to access to any University outside the province.

23 Literally, “indigenous and poor.”
late twenties, told me one afternoon: "In the interior everything is all bush, people live in the middle of the bush, all the children are barefoot, they have nothing." Thus the city as a place of progreso is in direct opposition to the rural communities of the interior: places of poverty, also called monte, or bush.

This progreso associated with the city is then the main signifier around which meanings of the experience of migration to the city and settlement in the Lote are organized. People with different personal trajectories, coming from different rural communities of the Formosa and Chaco provinces, agree that the rural communities are poor and offer no possibilities for change, while the city is a place of progreso in itself, offering opportunities for a better life. The interpretation of the outcome of this expectation among people living in the Lote is evidently different in the case of the few government employees, some of whom claim to be in the process of "progressing," than in the case of unemployed people. The latter reframe the notion of progreso, postpone it to the future or question the possibilities for progreso as a result of their status as indigenous.

As a category, "poverty" is very much located in the rural communities, which are at the same time spatially distant and distinguished from the city. Thus the idea of being indigenous implies, on the one hand, a lack of progress, in that people refer to moving to the centre of the city as "becoming white." Coming from rural communities is at the same time an assertion of being aborígenes and Tobas from particular places. When adult people are asked where they come from, they refer to specific communities and in doing so they trace differences among them. Their reference to being aborígenes, as having been born in rural villages, situates their identity far away from the city and the Lote, and generates their condition of newcomers to the city, in contradiction to the notion of aboriginality as pre-existing in the territory.
Even though there is a general agreement in this general aspect of what progreso means, there is not a homogeneous characterization of it. Some people understand progreso as the possibility of participating in the Iglesia Evangelica Unida, a Christian evangelical church conducted by Toba preachers. Others see it as sending children to primary and secondary school or as being closer to state services, such as the hospital and soup kitchens. Finally, political leaders also associate progreso with being visible in the city. In this aspect of progress, the spatial proximity to government institutions is stressed, which makes it possible for leaders to maintain daily negotiations and claims in the provincial agencies by persisting in their negotiations. In this respect, they emphasize the importance of persistence and visibility in order to make negotiations effective and avoid governmental cajoneo (which means to be archived and stop a bureaucratic procedure) of their claims and projects. This final point is a key aspect when considering that people from the Lote rely on patronage relations with the government for their subsistence (Iñigo Carrera V. 2001). In these multiple uses, the signifier progreso presented by different people (men, women, employed, unemployed, etc.), changes and amplifies its meaning in the different contexts of enunciation. This ambiguity generates a field of uncontested unity as all people from the Lote agree on the positive value of progress (Li 2004, Mosse 2005).

A final way in which people in the Lote construct aboriginality is in relation to the bush as a meaningful place. In the narrative of migration to the Lote, which locates the city as a site of progress versus the poverty of the rural villages, people emphasize the practices in the bush as something from distant locations in time and space. Thus a general discourse on being aborígenes is linked to having a common past and getting everything one needed from the bush,

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24 For an analysis of the formation and role of the Iglesia Evangelica Unida, see Miller (1979).
25 Patron-client relations are important way of guaranteeing subsistence not only during election times. Political party leaders guarantee access to welfare programs, organize soup kitchens, and mediate access to many state services such as the hospital in the city. Following a reciprocity principle, people offer their votes to the candidate the leader is supporting in each election to pay back the "help" received. For a whole analysis of this process see the work of Valeria Iñigo Carrera (2001).
26 A kilómetros de hoy, meaning “Kilometres from now,” is a line in the lyrics of a popular rock band in Argentina that brilliantly synthesizes the idea of the bush as a past and distant location.
a bush that was rich in animals and non-human beings, and over which “our forefathers” had control. This control over and dependence on the bush in the past and in rural villages in the present is manifested in the long descriptions women and men provided me on the “uses” of the forest. From the way shoes were made out of animal’s skins to the fruits gathered, all these descriptions tend to emphasize the autonomy from commodities and indirectly question the dependence on them in the present. The conclusion to this type of narrative is that today “people do not go to the bush anymore” and that “the new people (versus the ones before us) do not know what to hunt, do not know the plants, dislike the bush food and are not interested in it anymore,” as a hunter in his fifties told me. Many other people confirmed they agreed with this point. This is a general discourse that is reproduced with small variation in details and emphasis by most of the people in the Lote I talked to. At the beginning of my work I found that this was a contradictory discourse in relation to the narrative of progreso (which identifies the bush as a place of poverty), and also the “fact” that people continue to go to the bush.

The paradox between the discourse of the bush as a place of the past where they do not go anymore and the actual practices of the people going to the bush is the object of the next section, in which I will discuss the clashes over the bush as an everyday tension that had a visible manifestation in the 2001 conflict. I will argue that this particular conflict is part of a deeper process of positioning (social and spatial) of people of the Lote in relation to the bush.

3. The Near and Distant Bush

One morning at the beginning of the winter I accompanied a group of women to the forest to search for totorás, aquatic plants that grow in the marshes. Three women, Clara and Inés who are in their mid twenties, Julia who is around sixty years old, their younger children and I left the

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27 One of the descriptions of this control is the fight with the yaguareté (Leo onca palustris), which only brave men faced, implied a display of masculinity and conferred prestige as well as particular power to the successful hunter. Ancient women are described as having a special strength and being able to carry enormous amount of firewood and fruits through very long distances.
neighbourhood carrying water and some pieces of bread. Before we left, Clara made all the arrangements to leave the house for a day. She told her older daughters to cook, she also went to Inés’ place to check if she needed any help. Inés was hesitant to leave her home, as she had nobody to take care of her children. She finally sent a younger child to the school with an authorization letter for her older daughter to leave class early so that she could take care of her younger siblings. Clara had also asked me whether I was menstruating, as the smell of blood could make the snakes follow us and eventually bite us. We walked for almost an hour, during which I was shown places where they had shared common experiences. In one lagoon they had to run away from a *yacaré*, a small crocodile-like reptile. They also had to get out of the water because the weather had suddenly changed and the water had begun to rise (a sign of danger). On another occasion, they had to run away from landowners who did not want them inside their property.

After a half an hour walk we got to the place, the three women changed their clothes and entered the marshlands. They were worried about the weather because, as they made me realize, there was some wind blowing. This could announce rain and, as they explained, being at the marshes could then become dangerous, because with rain “all animals come out.” They cut *totoras* for almost an hour, and then they started to separate the different leaves from each other. As they did this, Clara showed me how they could distinguish the bad *totoras* from the ones that could be used for making the handicrafts. She made me and her children touch some to feel how soft and flexible the good *totoras* leaves are. During this time, we talked about our relation to our husbands, boyfriends and in-laws. Clara was particularly worried about Inés’ husband’s attitude toward her, as he got very angry every time Inés did not have time to prepare food for him. As we walked back home, Clara advised Inés on how to talk to her husband to make him understand that she was very busy making handicrafts, taking care of the children and house-keeping. He had to
consider that she does not have any relatives to help her as she had just moved to the city. We arrived late in the afternoon, joking about how much we would eat and setting an appointment to meet in two days to go to the centre of the city to sell their handicrafts in a market.

Clara mentioned that when she has bad relations with her neighbours who are “jealous” of her, she goes to the bush frequently to be calm and avoid listening to people criticize her. In the same way, Juan explained that every time he feels tired of struggling in la política, politics, he goes to the bush to recover tranquillity. Getting away from the Lote is more difficult for women who generally need to get help in their house duties. On the trips with the women I was impressed to see the cheerfulness and openness in the way they talked about several topics, something that does not happen in the Lote, where criticism is spoken in a soft voice. As soon as we left the Lote women started talking about their relationships and giving advice to one another. They also talked about their relationships with political leaders and designed strategies to get them to help them. Men also told me about the importance of going to the bush with people you get along with. It was in the bush that one of the political leaders convinced another one to form a civil association²⁸.

As described by the people that go generally to the bush, this is a place of intimacy where one can get away from the tense relations with neighbours and relatives. Men and women only go with close friends and relatives. It is also a place of health and strength as the food of the bush has medical virtues (for instance, people argue that the fat of the capybara can cure respiratory affections and help recovery after severe illness). Medicinal plants however, are not commercialised.

²⁸ Tobas are not the only ones to use the bush, poor criollos also gather firewood, and rural men go hunting in the bush. However, Tobas emphasize that criollos have other way of using the bush; they for instance do not know to read the signs of danger, as bird’s singing or the change of the rise of the water.
The motivations to go to the bush can be absolutely "material," that is, generated by need, mostly of unemployed people, for products can be sold and turned into cash\textsuperscript{29}. For instance, as Juan mentioned once, "I will go to the bush to get money for my ticket to go to Buenos Aires." But people also go to the bush because of the type of experience produced in that place and the meanings of the practices conducted there. These two aspects are what Moore (1996) recognizes as the "material" and "symbolic" dimensions of struggles over the environment, in his proposition to combine environmental politics and cultural studies into an environmental cultural politics. In this case, through struggles over the bush people simultaneously claim the use of resources and articulate particular meanings over those places. Where Moore is focusing on the situated practices of people in Kaerezi, Zimbabwe, I am also focusing on experiences in particular places. In this, I am following Sider (1997) who claims that experience is not just a consequence of a culturally informed perception (as Csordas 1990 argues) but is itself a field of political struggle and is produced by people, of course not absolutely free, but within the conditions given to them\textsuperscript{30}.

In the remainder of this section I will analyse the way the bush is made as a place of aboriginality in relation to: 1) the risk people take to go to the bush, 2) the economic significance of the practices in the bush, 3) the bush as a gendered place, 4) the production of a particular valorised experience in the bush, and 5) the type of memory attached to and recreated in the bush.

3.1. "We Had to Run Away"

\textsuperscript{29} Even though the importance of these strategies gains major relevance among the unemployed, it is still of economic importance for employed people who find it convenient to have extra income from selling bush products.

\textsuperscript{30} The notion of agency implied in the main concepts of this thesis: the making of places, the production of identities, and the construction of memory entail the idea of Marx that positions action within a historical field of given conditions: "People make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already given and transmitted from the past" Marx (1963).
As analysed in the opening pages, organized hunting trips of Lote residents to the bush can lead to violent clashes with different agents of the state\textsuperscript{31}. The fact that a group of hunters had an open confrontation inside the bush is not a new event. According to what many men and women told me, since they settled down in the Lote they have been going to the forests very frequently. Men, women and children have always gathered firewood, which is the main source of fuel for cooking and warming the houses in winter, even among the families that can afford to get gas canisters. This activity is generalized and demands trips to the nearby bush at least once a week. But women also gather materials to manufacture handicrafts almost once a month depending on the availability of the materials (when cold weather arrives the leaves are no longer good) and market variations (there is an explosive demand of handicrafts in November before Christmas in the neighbouring big city of Asunción, the capital city of Paraguay). Men hunt in forests several kilometres away from the Lote where medium size animals (like ñandú, pavas de bush, alligators, tatú, charata, and ducks) can be found. Men also fish in the river during fishing season in the summer. Finally, people go for “recreation,” as some families go to the river to swim in hot summer days, kids play in the bush when they go to collect firewood with their parents. When I started asking about these activities I learned that all of them imply a certain amount of risk.

I was surprised to hear from Amalia, a 45 year-old woman, that to gather palm leaves she has to enter open grasslands, where cattle generally are, and in those moments she is really exposed to the armed employees in charge of taking care of the cows\textsuperscript{32}. Many times she had to run away avoiding the bullets, leaving her palm leaves behind. “Sometimes they don’t even care I am with the kids and we all have to run away,” she told me one afternoon. This was confirmed by Martin, Inés’ husband, who prefers to gather the palm leaves for her as a way of protecting her.

\textsuperscript{31} While women’s bushes are in general around 10 km from the Lote and women go there walking, the hunting bushes are around 25 kilometers and men generally bike there.\textsuperscript{32} Palm leaves are used to produce more delicate weaving, that is sold at a higher prize at the city, in contrast to the more rough handicrafts made of totora leaves grown in the marshlands.
Martín, a state employee, who claims to have no knowledge of the bush and who was never taught to hunt, laughed when he told me about the way he knows how to get the palm leaves and avoid the employees’ surveillance. He knows he can creep from the fence to the palms without taking many risks, quickly knock them down, collect the leaves and run away.

The men on their hunting expeditions are particularly exposed to clashes. Before and after entering the fields they are exposed to police control, and many times have their firearms taken away because they do not have the legal permission to carry them. As they get into the private properties they confront employees who consider them cattle thieves. Hunters defend themselves claiming that they never steal cattle and are only interested in wild animals, which they legally have the right to hunt. These tensions led some hunters to organize themselves in 2002 and to collectively request special hunting permits, which where made on behalf of one of the civil associations formed by some political leaders of the neighbourhood.

Women, on their part, are more capable of managing the conflicts in the bush, as they are not perceived as such an important threat. They enter the bush for a short time, un-armed and they are perceived in relation to female stereotypes as vulnerable and non-aggressive rather than a real threat. Thus they can be seen inside a private property and not be attacked, whereas the men’s presence is very much interpreted as a threat by the landowners and is followed by aggressive attempts to take them off the land. At the same time women can even avoid entering private properties by collecting totoras in the marshlands in public spaces, something they do as much as they can.

An important element when people told me about this dangers is the contrast between the present and the past as accounts generally associate the conflicts in the present with memories of the times when there were no fences and these particular “montes were free” (as one hunter
remembered). Of course, the lack of fences did not preclude conflicts. However, the change introduced by the fences was the demarcation of those places as private properties, something that was not a sudden act but rather a process of delimitation and marking of boundaries. The sedimentation of relations of private property in those places were and are based in the violence over the Toba practices in the bush that claim that place for an alternative project. Thus this “risk” is not just a manifestation of conflict over resources but the clash over alternative projects of place and their control.

3.2. “With my Handicrafts I Have a Little Money”

In the face of this conflictive situation, and from a “material” perspective it was important to discern in which way the bush constitutes an economic activity that justifies taking such risks. As I have just described, one of the reasons people go to the bush is to obtain products for consumption. These products contribute to subsistence as they replace commodities. Families that cannot afford natural gas use firewood. Game meat and honey contribute to their diet of carbohydrates (a diet linked with poverty) and are two highly valued types of food. At the same time, the bush is a source of marketable products and raw materials for commercial production such as animals’ feathers and skins, or the palm and totora leaves used to make handicrafts.

Consequently, going to the bush is a partial economic alternative particularly for people who are unemployed (who are the majority of the population of the neighbourhood) as it is an activity that can be conducted almost at any moment. Indeed, the bush “is there” when there are no other economic alternatives available. This echoes Marx’s notion of forests as a “primitive source of

33 This memory is of a time when the neighbouring plots in the Lote where still being divided and sold, but also refers to past experiences in the rural villages where access to the bush was also more open. Ultimately, these memories are pointing to the fact that the bushes were “free” of criollos, fences, cities and towns and only inhabited by the aborigenes, in the times of the grandfathers of the currently adult people.

34 These handicrafts are probably a combination of Toba weaving techniques and others taught by the missionaries to make hard bags for picnics and to carry a mate and thermos. They also produce small animal figures with vegetable fibers. There is not an open claim of considering this an art, as they are mostly utilitarian objects, however there are women recognized as particularly skilful and inventive. The handicrafts are sold at markets, at the ICA (provincial institute of indigenous affairs) or by going from house to house in the middle class neighbourhoods.
food” used by “the poor” as a way of totally or partially reproducing life outside wage-labor relations, a notion Marx elaborated in relation to the conflicts over forest in 19th century England (Moore 1996). This notion is taken by political ecology as a particular type of struggle over resources as “the right of the poor” (Moore 1996:136). It is also a notion that Argentinean economic anthropology has used to analyse the reproduction of life outside capitalist labour relations in the western Chaco (see for example Trinchero 1995). This analysis, made in the context of the rural communities focused on the possibilities of indigenous people of relying on the bush for their subsistence in cyclical periods of unemployment.

In this case, the claim over the economic use of the bush is not only made in relation to class, but is made by the Tobas as aborígenes. As Wright (2003) has shown in rural areas not far from the Lote, the category marisca, hunting and gathering, is contrasted with trabajo, labour, which includes both wage labour on farms or in factories and agricultural work on the farms. The contrasts between these two categories have their origin in the nineteen-century missionary attempts to transform the Tobas into agriculturalists. As I analyse elsewhere (Vivaldi 2005a), in the Lote, the marisca and the “work of the women” are explicitly re-signified as trabajo: “If we do not have a job in the city, the marisca is the only thing we have. The marisca is the job of the aborigines. But the government doesn’t want to understand.”

The bush therefore constitutes a primary economic activity and a source of income outside state relations for women as well as men. Handicrafts constitute a feminine economic dimension “el trabajo de las mujeres” (women’s work), independent from men (cf. Gordillo 2004). For unemployed men going to the bush is an economic alternative for coping with the lack
of *changas*, temporary work, in the city. Using the bush is a way of contesting the exclusion from the city, as they are not only indigenous, but also unemployed and poor.\(^{35}\)

The bush is a place of partial independence from labour relations of exploitation, as Tobas keep a relative control over their labour relations while in the bush.\(^{36}\) In this regard, employed Tobas (both women and men) claim that they do not to go to the bush as often as they used to. Most of them articulate the discourse, described in the previous section, of the bush as something of the past and situated in distant locations. Elizabeth, who was born in a village was explicit about this:

> I used to go to the bush with my grandmother. She taught me how to collect fruits. I loved climbing the trees. But since I have a job I no longer have time to go. I do not want to go because all your clothes get ruined in the bush.

In this way, she not only locates the bush distant in time and space, but also delimits the bodily practices in the bush as negative in relation to one of her main distinctions as a health employee, which is to wear clean and nice clothes. In the same way, some employed men claimed not to go to the bush anymore as the bush has new owners and it is hard to find any animals at all.

Nevertheless, this is not a general trend as I met many employees who continue to go to the bush. One of them is a schoolteacher who told me she enjoys going to the bush with her mother. A man in his sixties who works in the health centre told me he really missed “bush food” if he did not have it for some time. Juan, a man in his forties and unemployed further explained “If I have a job in the city, I will keep going to the bush on weekends.” In this same direction, people who claimed to not go to the bush, still receive bush-food from their relatives and neighbours. My next step will be, to try to understand what this enjoyment about.

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\(^{35}\) We could consider that this is both a political action and a satisfaction of economic needs. However, the fact that this economic alternative is chosen over other forms of informal employment is indicative of its significance beyond mere “subsistence.” As Moore, Pandian and Kosek state, struggles over nature are *simultaneously* symbolic and material (2003:40).

\(^{36}\) All of these points keep a close relation to the analysis of Gordillo (especially see 2004). These connections were made in multiple personal communications with the author.
3.3. Gendered Bush

In this section I attempt to make explicit a dimension that is present in all the analysis thus far. The bush is a place where gender is made and reinforced at multiple levels.

In the first place, the bush allows some economic autonomy for women. In particular, this activity allows women to contribute, and sometimes even support their families. For instance, Cecilia told me once, “When my husband does not have a job, the handicrafts are the only thing that is left.” Similarly, the handicrafts permit another Toba woman who is a single mother to have her own family and an independent life without a husband: “With the handicrafts I can live on my own, the children are with me. I can tell them what to do. If I was with my mother I should accept her to tell the kids what to do. With my handicrafts I am fine, sometimes it’s not enough but still.” This manifests what others have pointed out as the generation of gendered spaces of autonomy through an economic activity they control (Moore 1996, 2005). In this case women have control over the production and the commercialisation of the product.

As the trip to the bush described at the beginning of the section shows, the autonomy is not just manifested in the possibility of cash generation, but the trip to the bush itself offers a space of female socialization independent from men. This independence is concretely spatial: in the bush none can overhear their conversations and none can reach them; they are on their own with other good friends and close relatives. At the same time, the activities in the bush recreate a gendered practice, “women’s work,” and a gendered knowledge, an activity that has continuity with the production of handicrafts in the Lote. Men can help in the productive process but the ones who know how and where to collect the totora and palma leaves to make the crafts and indeed do generally collect them on their own are women. The performance of these practices and the creation of this feminine space are part of the making of gendered subjects (Astuti 1998).
The production of handicrafts allows women to open a space for women in la política, a space broadly dominated by men. One example is Susana, one of the only women who is a strong political leader and has produced herself as such through the organization of a civil association dedicated to handicap commercialisation.\footnote{For a broader discussion see Vivaldi (2005a).}

In addition, gathering is related to ethnic identity production as it is seen as the job that Toba people do as an alternative to unemployment. Also, Astuti (1998) observes that ethnicity is not an attribute given by birth, but one that is constituted in particular actions. We can consider then that to be a Toba woman has a lot to do with this bodily-grounded practice, which is constituted in specific actions and the multiple ways of performing them.

3.4. **"In the Bush I Feel Fine"**

This notion of "enjoyment" has multiple meanings in relation to different contexts of conversation. Inés, a woman in her twenties, told me when we were chatting in the bush while she collected totora leaves and after her first visit to Buenos Aires: “I could not live in a city like Buenos Aires. There is no place, not anywhere to go to be calm. You don’t have any bush nearby, somewhere open you can see. Everything is piled up. There’s no place for your plants.” Here, she is contrasting the city with the bush as a place where she feels relaxed.

Something implicit in this idea of quiet, in spite of the many conflicts examined earlier, is the relative communal access to resources in the bush and the relative control over labor relations in contrast to other paid jobs (both rural and urban changas and state employment). Thus the bush is presented as a place where people have a particular type of knowledge. This knowledge is not just a recreation of a cultural perspective, nor is it just the attachment of specific meanings to a place, but both aspects are related to the possibility of this relative control over the labor
relations and access to resources. This dimension is defined in contrast to other types of access to places and social interactions: mainly the control, competition and envy that dominate the Lote, and political relations.

As I previously showed, the bush is not just a place of economic satisfaction. It is also a place of intimacy with close friends and family members that go there, a place to obtain healthy and healing food, and a place to escape from the social tensions in the neighbourhood. In this way, the bush is a place that is constituted by more than simply the economic possibilities it provides.

We can understand the practices presented at the beginning of the section as well as the more specific activities and gestures in the bush as a particular habitus. In the case of women some of the practices were described in the initial vignette: finding the place where good raw materials can be found, cutting the leaves, selecting them and grouping them, just to mention a few of the activities. These practices constitute both the bush as a place and people's experience in it, and are themselves shaped in connection to practices performed in the communities of el interior. As a result, we can consider these practices as producing not only an economic alternative but also the social world in a particular way: they define areas of feminine work, and in doing so shape femininity, define spheres of masculine activities, and thus contribute to the making of masculinity. The activities recreate group relations between women and men because the bush is a sphere of intimacy, of horizontal work relations and collective access to resources.

For both, men and women, these practices and the place of the bush constitute spheres of autonomy from la politica, from the tense relations of competition and envy in the neighbourhood and from the marginality they experience in the center of the city. However, for

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38 I was able to reconstruct this only through the direct participation in women's activities in the forest. With men I have been able to observe only the preparations of their trips and talk about what they do in the bush before and after. Interestingly, what women do in the bush is part of silent practices, in contrast to men's accounts of hunting expeditions, for women never fully describe or tell about their rich experience in the bush.
women this autonomy is particularly important as it frees them from the constant housework in their homes and the surveillance of their husbands that demand this work. Among unemployed women who do not have many chances to go out of the Lote, in contrast to unemployed men who frequently go downtown to look for daily jobs, going to the bush temporarily liberates them from tensions with their relatives who may control their actions or request their work.

In these practices the bush is never stabilized. The bush changes through time, according to the type of practices conducted in it, to the shifting relations with the owners of the land, and to other interrelated experiences in that place. There are also multiple types of bush, which are not metaphorical places of the past, but the concrete places where people usually go or used to go. However, there is also a generic bush that is re-articulated in the trips to the bush, which is a metaphor of the past and the rural areas. This distant bush comprehends multiple localities in the interior: the villages and the cultivated land, the forest and the marshlands. It collapses the different montes that people from the Lote come from: montes in La Primavera, in Las Palmas, Colorado, and so on.

3.5. Memories of the Bush

Practices producing the bush can be recognized as embodying a particular memory that links the actions they carry out in it, with the communities of the interior, and that also connects them to different pasts. Memories of previous experiences in the bush arise on each new trip: a woman who went gathering while she was menstruating attracted (with the odour of her blood) arganak lateé, the mother of the snakes that generated a big storm; a grandfather teaching a boy to hunt in

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39 People distinguish very precisely in their accounts: marshlands, floating islands, lagoons, embalsado (a combination of a lagoon with multiple plants on it) grasslands, deep forest, open forest, group of bushes, clear space in the bush, places where women go and places where men go, among others.
the interior; the ancient ones escaping the attacks of the army\(^{40}\). These are some of the simultaneous events remembered while being in the bush conducting certain activities.

In these memories the bush is simultaneously a place of poverty, in contrast to the city’s progress and wealth. Yet in another sense the bush is the site of richness, as in the past people did not lack food and this place is remembered as full of animals and fruits. It is recognized as well that in the present the aborigines are not as poor as other poor people, as they have the bush that allows them to cope with urban unemployment.

The bush as a place of memory becomes abstracted from the fact that the memories that are triggered are not specifically associated with those exact places. In this case, and in relation to what was analysed for the land claims for the Lote, then memory does not “sit” in particular places, paraphrasing Basso (1996). Most of the people from el Lote do not have memories of these particular forests located near the Lote; rather, they remember other montes\(^{41}\). So what is significant in this case is not so much what memories are contained in it, in which specific places, but rather what type of interactions produce the bush as a multi-local place. Among the people in the Lote, to remember the bush as part of, on one level, a general memory of the rural communities, and on another level, of their autonomy over their territories before colonization, connects them in a critical way to the past. In the bush people remember the clashes with the army and the police for the control over the territory; they remember the multiple displacements created by that violence. Yet as Casey (1987) has argued, memory about places does not only refer to the past but actualises this past and a series of relations with/in those places.

Even though Casey does not explore the political implications of these processes, keeping a constant connection to the forest, in a broad sense, is a way of remembering and challenging the

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\(^{40}\) The Toba women have series of restrictions during menstruation. Even though they say that they do not stay all day at home as their ancestors used to, they do not go to the bush. This is because the smell attracts animals that can bite the women. Particularly it can awaken the mother of the snakes that lives in the underworld of water. \textit{Araganak Latiee}'s anger can generate very big storms that have destroyed entire bands in the past.

\(^{41}\) Men I talked to could make very detailed cartographical sketches of the bush in the areas where they grew up.
state control over those lands. It challenges the hegemonic discourses that erase the Toba’s historical control over these territories. In this way, particular memories are not just the account of personal experiences but relate to generic “we” events in which they were clearly not present. For example twenty-five year-old Esteban said: “We were living here before the ships started arriving, we used to fish where the building of the navy now is.” The bodily experience of going to the bush and doing certain practices is, then, a direct connection with these pasts that is not only intellectually recalled, but bodily recreated and renovated. Memories such as the ones of autonomy before conquest, clashes with the army, sedentarization, etc. are emplaced in a generic bush that sediments these memories and brings them to the present.

These memories, even when they are about different moments, places and about different Toba groups (from La Primavera, Clorinda, Misión Tacaglé, San Carlos, Las Palmas, Colorado, among others) are connected as a general experience that informs their position as indigenous people in the Lote. These memories challenge the official production of the history of Formosa as a particular selection of events that tends to the creation of a civilized place, a place dominated by reason, over a “desert” ruled by natural forces. This memory of the bush gives a common past and a base point for the current political struggles in the city.

Gordillo (2004 253-257) observes that places are not built in isolation but in tense relation with other places. In our case, the practices in the bush are constructed in tension with the changas, the informal and temporary work people conduct in the centre of the city, and the changas they conduct in rural areas, which are also very physically demanding. If the position in the Lote is related to the expectation of getting state jobs, which would allow a better type of job as well as an income, then the Lote stands as a place closer to a site of wealth in contrast to

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42 For the production of the desert in the Chaco see Gordillo and Leguizamón 2002, Wright 1997, among others.
43 Some of this work is maintenance duties, digging, and weed cutting. There used to be a big demand for indigenous work for cotton harvest, a demand interrupted at the beginning of the 1990s, but it is now re-emerging.
the rural villages. The bush is, then, the metaphor of the poverty in the rural areas but also links, in the Lote and in the present, people who are unemployed. Thus men and women from the Lote see the activities in the bush as a way of coping with poverty. The poverty linked to the bush is reconstructed in this double contrast to employment in the city.

In this way, going to the bush is another dimension of the production of aboriginality in the Lote. Even though going to the bush is not an open political stance (especially, because it is not accompanied by a public discourse for recognition and does not formally challenge property relations over the bush), it is a deeply political practice, because people appropriate a place that is private property. And in a way this action is very thickly “charged with an identity” as the practices in the bush are framed in being aborígenes and having used that place since pre-colonial times. Thus, the bush contributes to the articulation of people’s identity in the double sense pointed by Hall (1985, 1995): the bush unifies people under a common experience and it gives a meaning to their distinction as aborígenes and in contrast to the formoseños. This place also provides a set of elements that give meaning and establish connection between them (in a conjunctural semantic chain) and permits them to present themselves. This way of making their identity is in contradiction with hegemonic constructions of aboriginality in the city.

In Grossberg’s terms (1992 104-105), the bush is constituted as a significant place in relation to the amount of affect (how something is made to matter) invested in this point as a site of identification where their everyday movements are stopped and contained. In all these dimensions the bush is not only produced as a meaningful place, but also a place that is worth fighting for. Hence, going back to our opening questions: What connection does the production of the bush have to the attack on the whole neighbourhood?

4. Fluid Places
As I have analysed, the type of struggles over the bush in the Lote are different from those in rural areas. Whereas in the interior there are some communities that even have legal ownership over the bush or use public lands, in the Lote the use of the bush challenges private property. In the interior indigenous people and criollo settlers base the conflicts on the different uses of the bush. The former hunt and gather for consumption and the latter breed cattle in the bush. In the interior, these conflicts also lead to armed confrontations and racist symbolic violence between people who share a similar experience of poverty. Another difference is that these struggles have led to legal disputes over territory. In the relationship of the people of the Lote to the bush, none of this happens; their conflict is with the most powerful group of the province: the owners of the rich lands near the city. As I have emphasized thus far, to the present-day, the people of the Lote have never articulated any type of claim over the lands they use. There is then a final connection to be made: What do the bush and the Lote articulate in a certain chain of meanings and also in their contradictions?

4.1. Fixing Indigenous Subjects into Place

When the police raided the neighbourhood looking for the eight men who had clashed with those policemen in the forest, some officers told people that “nuestro compañero murió así que un indio tiene que pagar por esto”: “Our partner died so an Indian has to pay for this.” They imprisoned 30 people among them children, women and old people. All of them were subjected to different types of torture, and isolated. A woman had a gun pointed at her head to make her say where her husband was, kids were thrown to the floor and locked in jails for a night, and a young man had his hair cut. All of them were insulted as “indios de mierda” (shit Indians), “ladrones” (thieves) and “asesinos” (assassins). In one of the stations a woman was raped.44

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44 This conflict cannot be understood in isolation from the many clashes with the police and the army that did not end after the military conquest of the Chaco. The slaughters of Napalpí (Cordeu and Siffredi 1971), the killing in Rincon Bomba, in Las Lomitas, among others, are still events unrecognized in the official history and have not been fully analyzed.
The collective attack on the neighbourhood is meaningful as it implies the production of a collective body of indigenous people. The action of the provincial police attacking a community, identifying the collective with the actions of eight men, shows how people in the Lote are homogenized as indigenous. This is made explicit in the phrase of the policemen who claimed that as “our mate was killed, an Indian has to pay.” This is not new, as we have shown; these processes have deep historical roots. What we find in this action is a reinforcement of this pattern that brings to the surface the tensions generated in the construction of subaltern identities. The violent attack on the Lote expresses the official categorization of the neighbourhood as indigenous, but also reproduces this identification and more profoundly shapes the bodies of the people as objects of the exercise of power. In this action, the provincial police and the policemen are recreating their own position as an agency of power and as subjects with power. It is not in an abstract class or ethnic struggle that this system of hierarchies and this form of power are created, but rather, they are created in the place of the Lote and in the violence by the policemen’s bodies over Toba men and women’s bodies. In this event, both bodies are produced as collective. Toba people receive the violence of policemen who understand the event as an attack on their collective body and who feel that their jurisdiction as monitoring private property was threatened. The attack, from the policemen’s point of view, is a counter defensive action and a movement in order to re-establish equilibrium where no indigenous person can threaten the police body.

The action of attack reinsures the delimitation of Toba’s bodies to the place of the Lote and in doing so reaffirms the Lote as aborígen and the aborígenes’ place as the Lote. This action, thus, reinforces the fixation of these people to that particular place, a fixation that is part of a historical production of systems of hierarchical difference in places. As Lefebvre (1991) has pointed out, violence is a productive force in the inauguration of the abstract space of capitalism. And as it is manifested, in this case and in many others (see for example Taussig [1987] in
reference to the space of death created during the colonization of the Putumayo area), violence is still recreating this space. This violence is a productive force similar to the policies of the provincial state, which by fixing the families to the site of the Lote (even though people wanted to have this place), recreates the contradictory and tense relations between indigenous and non-indigenous actors, between downtown and el Lote.

As a consequence, violence is not only a way of controlling indigenous bodies, but of producing them as a different and subaltern “other” and turning their movements out of the Lote into criminal actions. As Foucault (1979) has shown, the control of these bodies is done through action over individual bodies, but these bodies are understood as being part of a collective body, which constitutes the arena of body politics. Toba trips outside the Lote and their use of the bush can be thus understood as embodied strategies of resistance against their marginalization and the disciplining of their bodies and movements. The movements toward the bush threaten the technologies of subject production that delimit, divide and organize space creating compartments to fix people into and make them transparent as the object of control, using Foucault’s terms. The control over Toba practices in the bush demonstrates that these practices threaten the regimes of jurisdiction that assign specific places to particular people. They thus challenge the production of difference and the disciplinary attempts to normalize and control this group 45.

In other words if the Lote is the result of an attempt to control these groups’ bodies, places and movements, the circulation out of the Lote, into and around the bush, represents a movement of resistance for the people of the Lote and a threat to be controlled from positions of power. Similarly, all places are unstable and defined in the tensions they have between one

45 Cattaneo (2006) analyzes that reproduction is one critical point in disciplining the bodies the production of indigenous subjectivities.
another, yet we can see the fixation and delimitation of places, in order to submit them to institutional control and care, as a productive mechanism of power.

Even though the dominant classifications mark a spatial and racial division between white hegemonic *formoseños* occupying the centre of the city versus indigenous people in the Lote, this dichotomy is not a "neat" division in practice. Neither can we oppose indigenous people to the state in a simple opposition as we have seen the state has been part of the Lote since its creation. People in the Lote are themselves part of the state through their participation in different programs, by participating in party politics and by being government employees. The state is part of the Lote through its agencies and programs. The conflict with the police indicates that the subversion of the correlation between ethnicity and place is perceived as a threaten to the division between an "us" *formoseños*, normal people representing the state and the landowners, and a "them" *Aborígenes*, assassins, illegal occupants of private lands, living in government lands. This threat destabilizes the division and the authority of the "us" *formoseños*.

### 4.2. Struggles Over Places

In this work I have analysed two interconnected struggles over places: on the one hand, the process of production of the Lote as an indigenous neighbourhood, and on the other, the fights over the bush as a multiplicity of spatial practices that effectively constitute and challenge the hegemonic production of that place as a private property. Both processes have shown to be interconnected in a narrative of migration to the city that situate the bush as a place of the past, of poverty and backwardness in contrast to the city as a place of the present (and a hope for a future "integration"), of wealth and development. In another sense, the bush is a site of richness of resources that permit Lote residents to cope with urban unemployment. The bush is also a place

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46 Even though the centre cannot be considered a stable place either, the state projection of the provincial state towards the past, and the presence of buildings that materialize the spectre of institutions, projects them as natural-always-there, and foundational of state territory. In this regard, the city center stands in contrast to the unstable placement of the bush as a mobile and shifting spatiality.
of autonomy from the relations with \textit{la politica}, politics in the Lote, and, for women, autonomy from some aspects of masculine domination over their households.

In this way, the historical struggle over the Lote to acquire a place in the city, and obtaining more possibilities of access to the progress of the city, is part of the daily struggles of the people. However, people still struggle to have access to the bush, as it is a place articulating an indigenous identity and understood as a site of autonomy. In many ways the bush from their position opens possibilities of approaching the city not just as poor indigenous and political clients, but also as \textit{artesanas} and \textit{mariscadores}. In addition, the interconnection between the Lote and the bush is not just a Toba construction, but in the conflict analysed an event in the bush had immediate and direct consequences over the whole neighbourhood.

As Harvey (1996) argues, social struggles are not just abstract clashes to gain power but are localized struggles and often struggles over places. In this case, we have seen that the clash between Tobas and police in the bush is just a point of intensified tension in the constant struggles over place where the indigenous identity is defined. People from el Lote make an effective appropriation of the bush as a place for economic production, but also as a site of partial autonomy\textsuperscript{47}. This discussion leads us to a more abstract question of whether the Lote can be considered a site of resistance. On the one hand, the Lote was historically produced through struggles with state agencies to obtain a place (both physical and a social) in the city, and could thus be defined as a site of contestation. The claim to have a neighbourhood in the city can then be considered a foundational struggle that constitutes the Lote as a place of contestation in

\textsuperscript{47} If we follow Harvey's logic, this struggle over places can be an effective way of resistance, yet it will never challenge the structure of economic power. Paraphrasing Harvey, capitalism is still effective in controlling the relations in a general space, while resistance can eventually succeed in controlling specific places. This distinction is based in Harvey's critique of the political movements that aim at producing alternative places. He claims that producing spaces of communal autonomy mask an identity division between the members of the formation and the ones that are not that create new contradictions instead of overcoming them. He is then criticizing the tendencies for enclosure of some communities and the reactionary implications of them as creating mechanisms of exclusion to the outside. He sees conservative forces in the creation of rigid boundaries as a way of reproducing power relations.
relation to the dominant territorializing machines that articulate *aborígenes* with backwardness and a crystallized past and fix them to marginal rural areas. The Lote challenges the matrix that classifies indigenous as people belonging to rural areas by asserting an indigenous presence in the city. It thus articulates an urban aboriginality, which at the same time refers to a distinctive identity and the willingness to progress, to overcome social and economic marginalization.

Yet the Lote cannot be considered only a place of resistance, as it is also one of disciplining of *aborígenes* through the multiple state programs that seek, for example, to regulate reproductive health and sanitary habits (see Cattaneo 2006). Considering the layout of a geometrical grid organizing space, the Lote is also a place where people learn to regulate themselves to be able to *progresar*, and is a place of assertion of the provincial state’s sovereignty as the lands were “kindly” bought by the government and handed over to the people. In this process, the place of the Lote is one of discipline and where people have learned to want to progress. It is a place of superposition of sovereignties where Toba political leaders’ powers compete with the attributes of the different government agencies, being the police attack a claim to regain control after the subversion of order generated in the Toba getting out of the Lote.

We can see the moment of struggle for the Lote as an action that was effective in assuring a place of settlement in the city. This presence in the city contests the way an *aborigen* identity is articulated from power positions as a rural identity, and in opposition to the ideal city inhabitants who are the European migrants dedicated to agriculture (see Vivaldi 2005). However, as we have seen both the claim itself and the result of the creation of the Lote were shaped in hegemonic terms. We can think that for the state it was crucial to fix indigenous people in a place and subject them to *progreso* and not have a group occupying private properties and circulating around the city. The neighbourhood was labelled as a place of poor indigenous people, located on the peripheries of the city, marginalized from state services. Thus, the population of the Lote is
characterized as aborígenes who are badly educated, badly fed, and responsible for their poverty and marginality. The people from el Lote contest this identification through the discourse of progress as obtaining jobs and better education. The neighbourhood as a site of aboriginality is built in tensions and articulations between indigenous people and the state, in which the distinction between the state and the aborígenes is not clear.

In this thesis, I have analysed a particular type of process leading to the making of the bush. This production shares with the situation of indigenous people living in the rural areas in the Chaco (Gordillo 2004) the making of the bush as a place of partial autonomy shaped in tension with places of production and the hegemony of state agencies, and places of capitalist production, and a place of relative female autonomy. However this autonomy is also informed in a different way. In the first place, the dependence on patronage relations is more profound in the Lote than in the rural areas as in the city subsistence is accomplished mostly through these relations (see Inigo Carrera V. 2001), something that does not happen in the interior where there are other types of productive alternatives.

Most importantly in the face of the unfulfilled project of progress, the bush permits the people of the Lote, who have no particular common trajectory as a group; to articulate their identity in an alternative way to the devalued identity (of being “poor and backward”) assigned them in the city. If the hegemonic production of the provincial place divides and disconnects places through the making of an abstract space (Lefebvre 1991), the practices in the bush make an implicit political claim by connecting the montes nearby with the ones in the interior. In this way the use of the bush is a practice that disputes the effects of colonization, because it is a reminder of their past control over the lands. In this way going to the bush is not a cultural production “invented in a vacuum,” but is a re-appropriation of the past in order to position themselves in the present and challenge their subalternity (Hall 1995).
In the conflict over the bush a specific and constant tension was suddenly made visible. This is the contradiction between the delimitation of lands as private properties classified as places of agrarian production and the Toba’s implicit claim of rights to the natural resources of the forests in those lands. This tension is somehow lessened by the fact that agrarian production is not dependent on the resources of the bush. However, a constant tension is present in the spatial superposition of two distinct productions of place. Without being an overt political form of contestation of their position of marginality in the city, going to the bush challenges the technologies of discipline that fix them to the place of the Lote and subject them to the care and surveillance of different state, religious and private agencies.

The attack on the Lote reinforces the connection between this place as a settlement of a collective subject seen as a threat in disputes over the bush and in the city. The attack on the Lote, as an indigenous place, seems to be a movement towards limiting Toba struggles over places and their mobility between them. In this way, it reminds us of the Foucaultian punishment of docile and rebellious bodies that do not obey their fixation to delimited places. For the Toba of the Lote, paradoxically, the bush is a place that is worth fighting for because it creates a space of partial autonomy and creates possibilities for their positioning as aborígenes in the city.
References


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