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**PROTECTIONISTS AND
THE GUARANÍ: THE
VILLAGE THAT DID NOT
EXIST**

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**SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL
CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN
BRAZIL**

Protectionists and the Guaraní: the village that did not exist
Socio-environmental conflict in Southern Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of the 'Yellowstone model' throughout the world during the 20th century provoked the expulsion of traditional populations from their territories. Displaced people often became impoverished and had their social fabric destroyed. Despite criticisms of that model, it continues to be adopted as a solution for wildlife conservation in many parts of the world.

The 1988 Brazilian Constitution granted indigenous peoples original rights to their territories. Nonetheless, the Guaraní inhabiting the Atlantic Rainforest are in dispute over their ancestral lands with parks under strict protection. The debate unfolds between institutions and organizations arguing that the Guaraní are a threat to the environment and those who think they can be allies in the preservation of nature.

This study looks at the Itapuã people-park conflict in Southern Brazil. The Guaraní claim Itapuã Park area as their traditional territory, but their right has been denied. I asked what are the obstacles preventing that dispute from reaching a solution benefiting both cultural and natural diversity. The obstacles identified were the adoption of a protectionist approach to conservation by environmental policy-makers, followed by a critical lack of knowledge about the Guaraní, and the ambiguities from the legal framework regulating indigenous rights and environmental protection.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	V
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	VI
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Conservation and indigenous peoples in Brazil.....	2
1.2. ‘Itapuã case’ – Research question in context.....	4
2. METHODS.....	8
2.2. Main limitations	8
3. ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATORS’ STANDPOINT, GOVERNMENT AND LAW	9
3.1. Population growth, resource use and consumption patterns.....	9
3.2. Environmental education	10
3.3. The legal framework	10
3.4. Legalism	12
4. THE GUARANÍ: PINDÓ MIRIM VILLAGE AND THE ELDER’S SPEECH.....	13
4.1. Pindó Mirim village.....	13
4.2. Listening to the elders	18
5. ITAPUÃ: A PARK OR A GUARANÍ VILLAGE?	21
5.1. Parks – “the last bastions of nature”	21
5.2. The village that did not exist.....	22
5.3. Invisibility.....	24
6. THE GUARANÍ: PART OF THE PROBLEM OR PART OF THE SOLUTION?	25
6.1. Indigenous contributions to the environment	25
6.2. Limitations in the exclusionary model	25
6.3. Conciliators – searching for common ground	26
7. CONCLUSION.....	28
7.1. Obstacles.....	28
7.2. The village that did exist	29
LITERATURE CITED	30

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: GUARANÍ TERRITORY AND SUBGROUPS (LADEIRA AND MATTA 2004: 7).....	2
FIGURE 2: GARLET'S CLASSIFICATION OF THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE GUARANÍ MOBILITY (1997: 140-185).....	3
FIGURE 3: ITAPUÃ PARK IN BRAZIL.....	5
FIGURE 4: ITAPUÃ STATE PARK.....	5
FIGURE 5: GUARANÍ CHOIR IN PINDÓ MIRIM - LAGOA NEGRA AT THE BACK	13
FIGURE 6: PINDÓ MIRIM VILLAGE AND ITAPUÃ PARK	14
FIGURE 7: MBYA GUARANÍ POPULATION NUMBERS IN VILLAGES ACROSS BRAZIL	15
FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS PRACTICING DIFFERENT PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES (QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT)	15
FIGURE 9: GUARANÍ TRAP TO CATCH ARMADILLOS.....	16
FIGURE 10: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH DIFFERENCE APPLIANCES (QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT).....	17
FIGURE 11: ADOLFO'S FAMILY AND DWELLING PLACE.....	19
FIGURE 12: BLACK BEANS	19
FIGURE 13: MAIZE GRINDER	19
FIGURE 14: SWEET-POTATOES.....	19
FIGURE 15: SITES INDICATED BY BENITO AND ANOTHER FORMER RESIDENT	23
FIGURE 16: 1978 AIR PHOTOGRAPHY, VILLAGE SITES IN RED (METROPLAN)	23
FIGURE 17: OLD VILLAGE SITES (RED CIRCLE), PARK AND CURRENT VILLAGE	24
FIGURE 18: GUARANÍ FROM ITAPUÃ, 1973 (ZERO HORA)	29

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEPI - State Counsel for Indigenous Peoples

CIMI - Indigenous Missionary Counsel (NGO)

CURICACA - sustainable development NGO

DEFAP - Rio Grande do Sul Department of Forests and Protected Areas

DRNR – Department of Renewable Natural Resources

EMATER - Association for Agricultural Expansion and Technical Assistance

FEPAM - State Foundation for Environmental Protection

FUNAI - National Indian's Foundation

FUNASA - National Health Foundation

GERM - Executive Group of Porto Alegre Metropolitan Region

IBAMA - Brazilian Institute for Environment and Natural Renewable Resources

IECAM - Institute of Environmental and Cultural Studies (NGO)

MPF - Brazilian Federal Prosecutor's Office

SNUC - National System of Conservation Units

UFRGS - Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul

1. INTRODUCTION

The dominant solution for wildlife conservation throughout most of the 20th century was the 'Yellowstone model' (Chatty and Colchester 2002),¹ based on one of the first nature conservation experiences in the US through the expulsion of local inhabitants, in 1872. In recent decades, the debate about conservation of natural resources grounded on exclusionary policies (Brechin et al. 1991, 2003; Brockington 2002; West et al. 2006) has motivated the establishment of several international treaties and conventions,² recognizing local populations' rights to their lands, but in practice there are still many recent cases of exclusionary conservation initiatives (e.g Ahrens 2001; McCabe 2002; Turton 2002). So far, people-park conflicts lack solution (Ricardo 2004; Agrawal and Redford 2007: 5).

The 'Yellowstone model' preaches the idea of wilderness, referring to areas of pristine nature that should be preserved for their natural and aesthetic value (Brockington 2002). Its defenders – who I call 'protectionists' or 'fortress conservationists' – believe that species extinctions can only be prevented if people are set aside.

This model has been questioned by a number of studies, looking at its limitations both in terms of conservation and regarding its effects on traditional populations (e.g West et al. 1991; Brechin et al. 2003; Colchester 2003). Such debates were propelled by the unsuccessful management experiences of human-free parks, the human rights debate on the negative results of evictions on local populations, and a general concern about increasing poverty in the world.

On the management side, understaffing and underpayment of rangers make parks vulnerable to illegal miners, loggers and farmers (Terborgh 1999: 20; Sheil 2001: 1180). Furthermore, as wildlife tends to disperse outside protected areas, park-focussed conservation efforts are not effective enough to preserve certain species (Barrow 1993). On the displacement side, evicted people often increase pressure on local resources, be it due to resentment as they become destitute, or due to restrictions on their mobility (Barrow 1993; Brockington 2002; Chatty and Colchester 2002).

Fortress conservationists maintain that only IUCN categories I-IV (strict protection) should count as protected areas (Locke and Dearden 2005). They recommend that places of high levels of endemism and in an advanced stage of destruction – such as the Atlantic Rainforest – should be central targets for human-free conservation (Rodrigues et al 2004). In the Brazilian Atlantic Forest, both biological and cultural diversity require protection. Fortress conservationists claim these two values are irreconcilable.

¹ Or the 'fortress' conservation model (Brockington 2002).

² Such as the 1989 ILO Convention 169 (arts. 13-16), 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (art. 8, j), and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Brazil is a signatory country of all of them.

1.1. Conservation and indigenous peoples in Brazil

Brazil's concern for the environment started to rise during the 1970s, when the consequences of large development projects began to be felt (Diegues 1992: 4). Several strictly protected areas were created during that period, mainly based on the Yellowstone model. Nearly at the same time, indigenous peoples in Brazil secured the right to their traditional lands with the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, but the fortress conservation model continues to be widely applied as a solution to preserve wildlife, clashing with indigenous peoples, institutions and activists defending their interests (Whitesell 1996: 416; Ladeira 2004: 241).

1.1.1. *Guarani in the Atlantic Forest*

The Atlantic Forest stretches from north-eastern Brazil to northern Argentina and southern Paraguay. With high levels of endemism, it is home to more than eight per cent of Earth's known plants and five per cent of Earth's known vertebrates (Conservation International 2008). Only seven per cent of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest remains. This huge devastation was caused by colonization projects, large scale farming, and development programmes in Brazil's most densely populated states (Dean, 1995; Schwartzman et al. 2000: 1352).

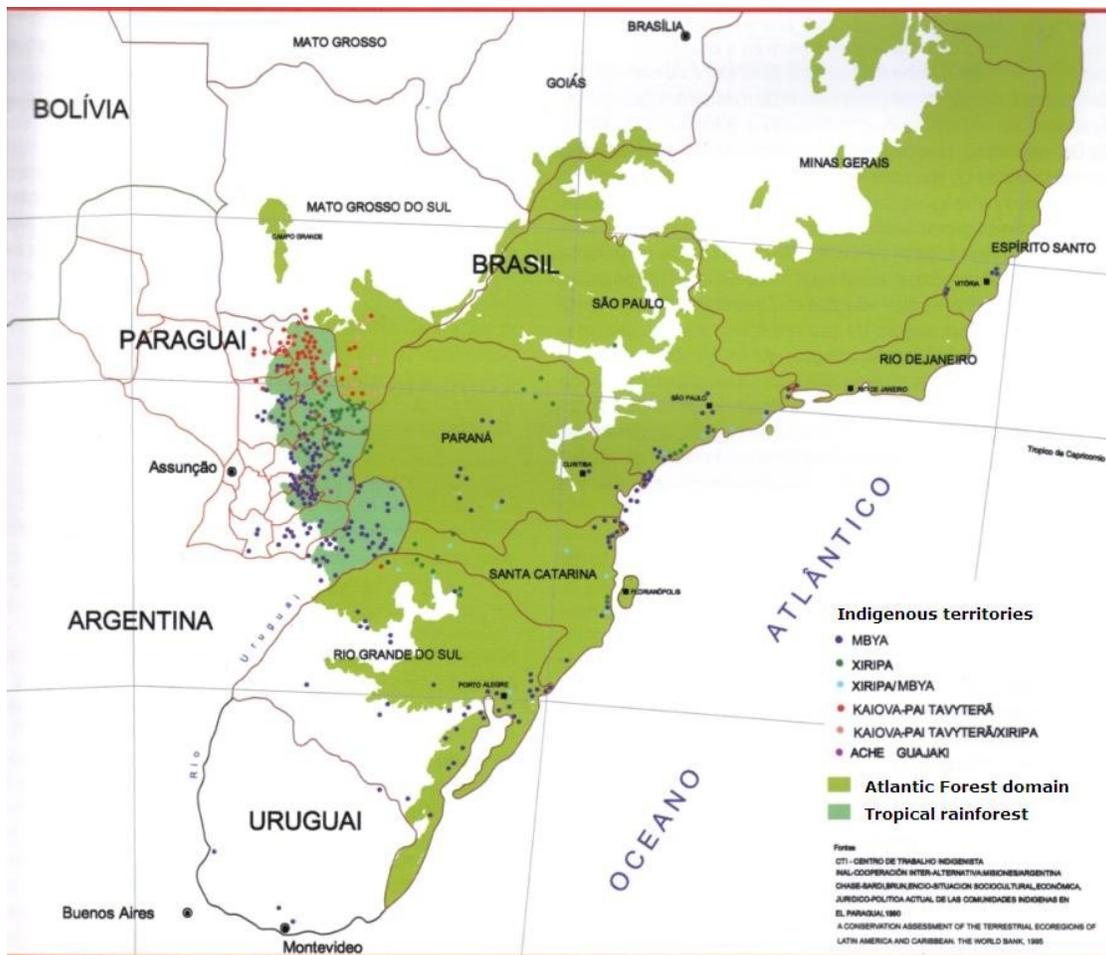


Figure 1: Guaraní territory and subgroups (Ladeira and Matta 2004: 7)

The Atlantic Forest is also the habitat of the Guaraní people, an indigenous ethnic group belonging to the Tupi-Guaraní family. There are three Guaraní subgroups: Kaiova, Chiripa, and Mbya (Schaden 1974: 1-3). They have inhabited its forests for centuries, moving over a large territory comprising areas in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. In Brazil, they live mainly in seven states (Figure 1).

One of the remarkable characteristics of the Guaraní is their high mobility around the aforementioned territory. Garlet (1997) carried out a dedicated study into the reasons for the Mbya-Guaraní mobility (Figure 2); these ranged from religious motivation, searching for the ‘Land Without Evil’ (Yvy Marã’y³ – virgin, intact ground), to dispersal due to kinship or leadership conflicts inside their villages (tekoa).

In the last five centuries, at least, the Guaraní have had to find strategies to escape from a series of challenges to their lifestyle and territory, such as slavery, Jesuit Reductions, epidemics, war between colonial powers, and land expropriation. Their most common remedy had been to escape and search for refuge in unexploited areas (Neumann 1996; Langer 1997; Chamorro 1999). Nonetheless, their population was reduced from approximately 2 million in the 16th century (Meliá 1989 in Brighenti 2005: 39) to 70,000 people – half of them living in Brazil (Ladeira and Matta 2004: 6).

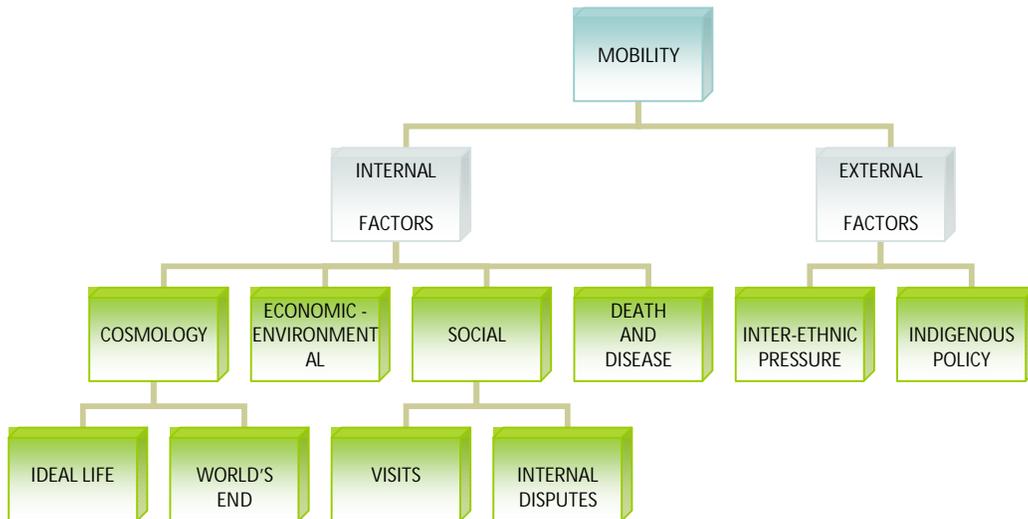


Figure 2: Garlet's classification of the motivations for the Guaraní mobility (1997: 140-185)

1.1.2. Guaraní in parks

It often happens that the Guaraní find parts of their territory suddenly transformed into a conservation unit under strict protection. In Brazil, a situation in which a conservation unit overlaps a traditional indigenous territory is called ‘superposition’ (*sobreposição*). Such situation is usually very contentious, and one of the reasons for that is because both Brazilian environmental

³ When using Guaraní words I attempted to be consistent with Scott Britton's spelling. Otherwise, I adopted referred author's spelling.

and indigenous legislation have arguments to defend human-free areas for the protection of nature and indigenous' rights to their traditional territory, respectively. There is no consensus as to which of those rights should prevail over the other. In the case of the Guaraní people, there are 16 superposition cases spread over the Brazilian Atlantic Forest (Plínio dos Santos 2004: 228). Solutions to these socio-environmental disputes have not yet been found.

The Guaraní have predominantly been considered a threat to the preservation of nature by environmental policy makers. Their presence is not admitted in areas designated for nature conservation, and they are often classified as invaders by the media and some natural scientists (Ávila Vio 2004: 293; Ladeira 2004: 239). Brazilian protectionists are concerned by their population growth and their productive activities (Olmos et al. 2004: 258). As a group of natural scientists puts it:

The modern Guaraní are one of the major but least recognised causes for the impoverishment of São Paulo's Atlantic Forest biodiversity theoretically protected in conservation units. After all, it is basically only in conservation units that one can still find the products indigenous peoples exploit...This is an important factor to understand the wave of invasions in protected areas. (Olmos et al. 2004: 258)

Indigenous peoples and activists, on the other hand, claim they not only can be partners in environmental preservation, but also depend on it for their cultural survival.

1.2. 'Itapuã case' – Research question in context

I discuss here the case of Itapuã State Park, in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul: a strictly protected area created in 1973, claimed by the Guaraní as a traditional territory. They have been legally disputing that territory since 1998, but their right to the area has been denied and they currently live on Pindó Mirim village: a small plot of land adjacent to Itapuã's boundaries.

1.2.1. *The Park*

The creation, in 1973, of Itapuã State Park (Figure 3 and Figure 4) by the State of Rio Grande do Sul added to efforts to preserve the Atlantic Rainforest, as many of its faunal and floral species occur there. It is a conservation unit of strict protection comprising 5,566.50 ha located in Itapuã District, Viamão city (DRNR 1997). Due to particular environmental determinants, the variety of habitats in the Park results in a rich biodiversity, with more than 300 floral and 400 faunal species identified (ibid: 37-38).



Figure 3: Itapuã Park in Brazil



Figure 4: Itapuã State Park

1.2.2. *The conflict*

In March 1998, the Brazilian Federal Prosecutor's Office (MPF) in Porto Alegre,⁴ instituted an administrative procedure to investigate whether the area of Itapuã State Park was a traditional Mbya-Guaraní territory, hearing claims from Mbya-Guaraní people that there were still traces of their recent presence (MPF 1998-2006: 109). The department in charge of the Park declared that there had been no Mbya-Guaraní villages there in the recent past (ibid: 8-9). In April 1999, MPF recommended that the Park management interrupt the infrastructure works until there were satisfactory technical assessments to say whether it was an indigenous territory, but the recommendation was not followed by the administration (ibid: 125-146).

The next reference to the case in MPF's files comes only in 2003, when the State Council for Indigenous Peoples (CEPI) reports the presence of three Guaraní families living adjacent to the Park (ibid: 151). This village – named Pindó Mirim - was established in 2001 by the families of Turibio and Adolfo: important political and religious elderly Guaraní leaders. They insisted that the Park was overlapping their traditional territory.

Between 2003 and 2005 MPF held more than 20 meetings and public audiences about the subject (ibid: 189-766). The intention was to gather stakeholders to discuss an agreement. Local and national environmental departments, Park Counsel and management, the State Prosecutor's Office,⁵ and some biologists from the local university (UFRGS) stated that there was no recent Guaraní occupation in Itapuã and, if they let them enter the Park, preservation would be threatened. They also argued they would be breaking the law by doing that. The National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), MPF, CEPI, anthropologists from UFRGS, and policy makers engaged in participatory work with these communities supported the Guaraní in their claims, arguing that they were able to care for the environment (e.g. ibid: 313-401).

The negotiations were unsuccessful, and at the end of 2004 members of the Park Council declared they were 'expressly against the entrance of indigenous peoples in the Park' (ibid: 600). Up to this day, the Guaraní continue to live a few steps from the Park's fence.

This paper investigates and identifies the main obstacles that are preventing the Itapuã people-park conflict from reaching a resolution that promotes both cultural and natural diversity. I asked why the Guaraní are being excluded, whether they should be excluded, and looked at the consequences they are suffering due to this exclusion.

When analyzing my results, I identified as obstacles the adoption of a protectionist approach to conservation by influential environmentalists involved in local conservation policy, followed by a critical lack of knowledge about the Guaraní. Another obstacle, arguably a consequence of the former, is the bewildering legal framework regulating the establishment of indigenous territories

⁴ MPF, as the 'guardian' of the Constitution, is responsible for making sure that the major Law of the country is respected. As such, it must judicially defend indigenous peoples and also ensure that present and future generations have access to an ecologically balanced environment. It has the prerogative to oblige the responsible parties to amend their actions in case of disrespecting constitutional rights.

⁵ The State Prosecutor's Office entered the conflict to defend the environmental interest, as the Park is under Rio Grande do Sul state supervision. Indigenous issues are a federal issue.

and conservation units, which is reflected in institutions such as FUNAI and national and local environmental departments. Because legislation maintains a potential opposition between those two realms, it puts policy makers from both sides in the delicate position of negotiating a solution that integrates biological and cultural diversity.

In order to present the results of this research I outline, in Chapter 2, the methodology I used, and present in the two following chapters the environmentalists' standpoint and the legal framework as well as the Guaraní's statements and lifestyle. Chapter 5 tells the history of the village that was denied. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses perspectives towards a solution, and is followed by my conclusions.

2. METHODS

2.1. Mixed methods approach

I chose to analyse the conflict from a political ecology perspective (Little 2006) by examining its history, then by mapping stakeholders - listening to their views on indigenous presence in parks - and looking at their influence in policy. Besides, I intended to verify whether people's opinions about the Guaraní relation to nature were based on assumptions or facts, for which I resorted to different methodologies.

My primary data collection was based mainly on qualitative methods, as I was interested in understanding people's views, motivations and opinions. When approaching different stakeholders, I preferred to use semi-structured interviews, as they allow for systematic questioning but also personal digression. To understand Guaraní perspectives and lifestyle, the chosen method was participant observation combined with a structured questionnaire for enhanced quantitative data. I used a variety of techniques to check for consistency of the data, such as attendance at multi-stakeholder meetings to listen to people I interviewed, and information cross-checking with governmental files, reports and other secondary sources.

In order to accomplish my research I had first to investigate if the Guaraní village in the area of Itapuã Park actually existed. Searching for evidence in that direction could provide indications as to whether any kind of rights denial has taken place, and if discourses have been based on facts rather than assumptions. In order to answer that question I collected a number of oral histories with former residents of the area, went on guided walks using GPS and compared results with aerial photographs.

2.2. Main limitations

The short time I had to carry out fieldwork (March-May 2008) certainly affected the depth and amount of data I could access. It takes time to build up trust with an indigenous group such as the Guaraní, who are known for being very reserved and often suspicious. Even though they knew I was coming, they only really accept someone after they had seen the person a few times and approved his/her behaviour. It was a challenge just to talk to many of them - especially women and children - as most of them do not speak Portuguese. A way to overcome this problem would be to undertake a prolonged stay and learn Guaraní, which were impossible in my time frame. Given those constraints, I could not detect conflicting views within their community. Last, but not least, an ethnography of socio-environmental conflict challenges the researcher to deal with very controversial issues, which may easily raise ethical questions. It is a hard task to preserve people's identities while making an effort to present the case as clearly as possible.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATORS' STANDPOINT, GOVERNMENT AND LAW

In this chapter I present the environmental administrators' standpoint about the Guaraní lifestyle and their relation to nature, as well as the legal framework regulating the creation of conservation units and indigenous' rights to their traditional territory. The data used in this chapter comes from the results of the semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, literature and legislation review, and the analysis of governmental files.

To fortress conservationists, the ecological effects of human impacts on nature are 'unnatural' (West et al. 2006: 225-226). Terborgh, for instance, defines nature as 'a web of interactions involving plants and animals in different combinations and in various relationships' (1999: 15). During interviews, all environmental administrators supported this view, demonstrating a strong protectionist approach to conservation and a total misunderstanding of the role of mobility in human-environment relationships. The director of the State's Department of Forests and Protected Areas (DEFAP), referred to the Guaraní as nomads, and explained his point:

'Nomadic people came to be due to the fact that they don't produce anything, they only absorb. So, when you don't produce, you deplete the whole environment in that place... Then what happens? You cut down all the forest, your fire finishes; you eat all the fruits, there are no fruits left. And so? You leave that behind and go somewhere else. In that sense, all of us came from nomads... Then what happened? ...We started to settle and to do something to maintain the place. I believe this is the basis of our history.'

Environmental decision-makers demonstrated a very poor knowledge of the Guaraní. DEFAP director did not know that the Guaraní were farmers, and therefore not nomads. In contrast, the superintendent of the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA) knew that they farmed, but attributed that to acculturation.

3.1. Population growth, resource use and consumption patterns

Population growth and people's drive to advance their material wellbeing are central preoccupations of environmentalists in defending people-free parks. They claim there are not enough natural resources on Earth to provide for a population increasing at such a fast pace (e.g. Gartlan 1997: 216; Redford et al. 2007: 5). All environmental administrators demonstrated the same concern about indigenous population growth. 'I think there are too many people in the world...', said a municipal park manager in Porto Alegre who is facing a people-park conflict with a Kaingangue group.⁶ She also stated that 'only someone who doesn't exist doesn't cause impact'. When asked about the biggest impact the Kaingangue were causing in the park, she replied it was the fact that they walked in the area (pisoteio), damaging the forest grounds and scaring the birds.

⁶ An ethnic group belonging to the Gê family.

3.2. Environmental education

A protectionist view holds that the 'well-organized societies of the industrialized world are the ones most concerned about biological diversity and [through their scientific knowledge] are the most capable of providing the stable, long-term institutional support needed to preserve it' (Terborgh 1999: 12). Gartlan (1997: 223) states that 'it is unrealistic and irresponsible to hand over the duty for protection of these unique ecosystems to the local communities who have neither the resources nor the biological education to manage them.'

Such attitudes towards indigenous communities emphasizing their inability to understand and manage the environment sustainably emerged frequently in my interviews with officials, administrators and policy makers. For example, the IBAMA superintendent said that, although at present they do not have any work with local ethnic groups, they would 'have a lot to contribute to indigenous peoples in terms of environmental education, because wherever they enter they cause degradation'. The DEFAP director was proud of Itapuã Park administration and believes it has a social function, which is to educate people about the environment – basically, an education emphasizing that conservation is only possible if nature and culture are set apart.

Despite administrators' opinions about indigenous peoples and why they represent a threat to nature, they all said that during their studies they did not have any contact with the human sciences or with indigenous groups and admitted to being unclear about cultural differences between the State's ethnic groups: Kaingangue, Charrua and Guarani.

3.3. The legal framework

Current legislation regulating the creation of conservation units strongly reflects this protectionist approach and also reveals the lack of knowledge about indigenous peoples on the part of Brazilian environmentalists who influenced the legal process.

Article 225 from 1988 Constitution states that '[e]veryone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, which is an asset of common use and essential to a healthy quality of life, and both the Government and the community shall have the duty to defend and preserve it for present and future generations' (Brasil 1988, my translation). This article was partly regulated in 2000 by Law 9985, instituting the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), which established two major categories of conservation units: strict protection (e.g. parks) and sustainable use (e.g. extractive reserves). Responsibility for the creation of conservation units lies on the federal, state and municipal levels, which are accountable to the Ministry of Environment.

In contrast, Articles 231 and 232 of the Constitution granted indigenous peoples original rights to their lands. Consequently, any legal act carried out since colonization on a traditional territory – such as the creation of a park – might be deemed null. Besides, they now have the right to self-determination and are no longer under state tutelage. The establishment and recognition of indigenous territories, as well as assistance to indigenous peoples, is a federal duty carried out by FUNAI, part of the Ministry of Justice.

The above framework directly impacts on initiatives from the executive, judiciary and legislative levels, as we will see below.

3.3.1. Executive

To begin with, FUNAI lacks structure to accomplish its duties - a fact acknowledged by all interviewees. FUNAI has not hired anybody since 1986, so it is operating under a much reduced number of staff, all of whom were first employed at a time when indigenous peoples were seen as incapable of taking care of themselves.

The relegation of environmental and indigenous issues by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Justice respectively results in very poor communication between environmental departments and FUNAI (Macedo 2004: 222; Vianna and Wey de Britto 2004: 280). This matter was also identified by all interviewees as problematic.

When I asked the IBAMA superintendent how they relate to indigenous peoples, he persistently referred to their environmental education work with the Landless Workers Movement (MST) campsites. I insisted that the Guaraní did not belong to that same movement as they are not subject to agrarian reform nor do they share the same political objectives. He then agreed that they do not have any work in cooperation with FUNAI.

3.3.2. Judiciary

Cases in which indigenous territories overlap with conservation units tend to end up in the Judiciary. The current legislation (post 1988) allows for different interpretations with regards to legal precedence between people's rights to a healthy environment and indigenous' rights to their ancestral lands. Because of the 'divide' produced by the Constitution between environment and indigenous peoples, prosecutors often have to take a stance and defend one side at the expense of the other, but that does not guarantee the prevalence of either side as the MPF does not have executive power.

The Federal Prosecutor's Office

The Federal Prosecutor's Office, as part of the Judiciary, has taken the lead in several conflicts involving superposition of Guaraní territories and conservation units and it usually stands on the side of indigenous peoples (Plínio dos Santos 2004; Sanches 2004). One case which had a successful outcome was in Ilha do Cardoso, São Paulo, when MPF provoked an inter-institutional debate that culminated in the creation of a multidisciplinary group including the Guaraní in the management plan of the park (Macedo 2004: 222). Successful negotiations such as this are rare; nonetheless MPF has been playing a central role in fomenting this debate among stakeholders.

3.3.3. Legislative

SNUC Law had never predicted a category of conservation unit integrating indigenous peoples with the preservation of nature, even though such a bill was proposed. The coordinator of the NGO CURICACA commented that this bill was rejected because 'people that were involved at that time had a very preservationist view'. Article 57 from SNUC Law established that, within 180

days from its validity (i.e. from July 2000), the federal institutions responsible for the execution of indigenous and environmental policies had to constitute a commission to decide on how to solve superposition cases, but no solution has yet been found.

3.4. Legalism

When asked where indigenous peoples should live, environmental administrators' answers were unanimous: where they can legally prove it is a traditional territory. As state bureaucrats, their duty is closely linked to compliance with the law and, as environmental representatives, they cannot allow human presence in strict protection parks because, according to the set of rules they have to follow, it is illegal. Itapuã Park manager was very precise in that respect, saying their procedure is clear: if the indigenous population invade the Park, staff has 24 hours to remove them. The municipal park administrator summed up that position:

'Independently from people's individual positions, we occupy places on a stage. On the municipal stage, I am a character many people see as against indigenous peoples, and people are ready to fight against me. I am a character who defends the environment... But I admire the Indians.'

4. THE GUARANÍ: PINDÓ MIRIM VILLAGE AND THE ELDER'S SPEECH

In this chapter I outline the lifestyle of the Guaraní using as a case study Pindó Mirim village. In order to achieve that, I use general information from the literature and governmental files, the data collected during fieldwork and the results from the structured questionnaire applied in Pindó Mirim village. I also present the speeches from two important Guaraní leaderships collected during fieldwork, analyzing them through the lenses of key concepts from the anthropological literature, and contrasting the indigenous views with other stakeholders' views manifested in the interviews.

4.1. Pindó Mirim village

Pindó Mirim village lies on the top of a hill overlooking Itapuã Park (Figure 5 and Figure 6). It is composed mainly of Mbya-Guaraní.⁷



Figure 5: Guaraní choir in Pindó Mirim - Lagoa Negra at the back

⁷ Most of the villages in the Atlantic Forest where superposition happens are also of that subgroup.



Figure 6: Pindó Mirim village and Itapuã Park

During their first years in Pindó Mirim the Guaraní faced discrimination from neighbours and repression by the Park administration and the media. An illustration of this was the occasion when Park guards caught Adolfo fishing on Lagoa Negra. They pointed a gun at him, broke his fishing rod, and forced him to throw the caught fish back into the water (MPF 1998-2006: 185-188). Also, in a community radio programme in May 2001, some neighbours declared the Guaraní were a threat to the area. They said they would cut down the trees and sell them, and would hunt and devastate the Park, eating all the animals. Neighbours urged the State to settle them somewhere else - one suggested that they should be confined in a hospital, and another threatened to set fire to their huts if they settled in the area (MPF 2006).

According to Turíbio – the village chief – shortly after they settled, a committee with municipal and state representatives went to Pindó Mirim and made a lot of promises, saying they would improve the village's infrastructure and in exchange the group should not attempt to enter the Park. This fact was later confirmed by a Park Counsel representative who admitted the local government is indebted to the Guaraní as it did not fulfil its promises.

4.1.1. *Village population*

At the time of my research, the village had a population of 46 people split into ten households, following the low population density pattern characteristic of Mbya-Guaraní villages. A 2003 assessment done by FUNAI about Guaraní villages from the state of Espírito Santo southwards shows that out of the 38 villages classified as solely Mbya, 76 per cent had less than 100 people (Figure 7) (Ricardo 2004: 229-232).

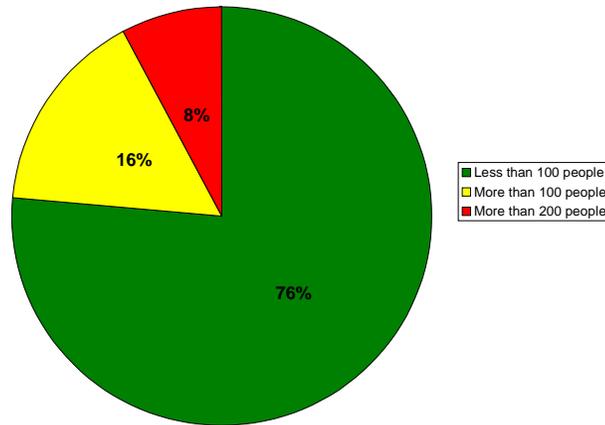


Figure 7: Mbya Guaraní population numbers in villages across Brazil

Pierre Clastres (2003[1974]) developed a theory about how the Guaraní managed to maintain their society 'against the state', directly relating that fact to a purposeful avoidance of high population density. He argues that a society without a state is only possible with low population densities, and that the Guaraní karais (shamans), in the period of the Europeans arrival, realized that fact due to the empowerment of their chiefs and enacted their prophetism of the 'Land Without Evil'. They professed their society was about to collapse, gathering hundreds of people in the search of a land of abundance and no submission, provoking a great dispersal of the Guaraní population (ibid: 227-230).

4.1.2. Productive activities

As one can see in Figure 8, agriculture is practiced by all households, being extremely relevant to their religious performances (Felipim 2001: 101).



Figure 8: Percentage of households practicing different productive activities (questionnaire result)

Due to their village's reduced size (24 ha), the Guaraní cannot practice their traditional slash-and-burn technique (*coivara*) (Bertho 2005: 113). In spite of the poor soils and the difficulties in rotating their plots, they resist using fertilizers and pesticides in their fields. Two FUNAI officers I spoke with commented that they had given them chemical compost, but it was not used.

The Guaraní were farmers before the Europeans' arrival. Accounts about them, given by travellers in the 16th and 17th centuries, bear a striking resemblance to their contemporary customs. In 1541, on his trip from Santa Catarina state to Asunción in Paraguay, the Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca was astonished by the Guaraní villages he found on his way through the Atlantic Forest, with their people speaking a language understood in all corners of that region. He describes them as farmers planting manioc and maize and raising chicken (1999 in Ladeira 2004: 234). The missionary Villasboas, in 1678, also refers to their fields of manioc, maize, beans and sweet potatoes (in Necker 1990: 238). The Guaraní continue to cultivate the same crops and to speak the same language across Brazilian states and neighbouring countries to the present day.

As in most of the Guaraní villages these days, in Pindó Mirim they have to diversify their livelihoods. Garlet and de Assis pointed out that the level of diversification depends inversely on the abundance of local natural resources (1998: 17). The two most common sources of income – both in this specific village and as a general Guaraní strategy (ibid: 18) - are craft production and daily wage labour on neighbours' farms.

According to the questionnaire results, all the households raise chickens, being their only livestock. They say the area is very poor for hunting, but 90 per cent of them practice some form of hunting in the surroundings,⁸ though not often (70 per cent go hunting only once a month). They only hunt with traps (Figure 9) and nobody sells their agricultural produce, as food is considered to be a gift from *Ñanderu* ('our father'). Also, nobody works for the Park and 40 per cent of households receive some help from the Federal government in the form of pension or 'Family Grant' (*Bolsa Família*).⁹



Figure 9: Guaraní trap to catch armadillos

⁸ Hunting is a sensitive issue and therefore information gathered might not be totally precise.

⁹ Cash transfer programme by the Brazilian government in place since 2003.

4.1.3. Consumption patterns

Despite living close to an urban centre and the poor condition of the area, the Guaraní still make efforts to live on a subsistence economy, with low levels of consumer goods. When they have money it is normally spent on immediate needs. Their houses generally have two rooms, very few appliances (Figure 10), no bathroom and almost no furniture (maybe a bed and some baskets). They light their fires on the ground and cook exclusively on it. Only three houses have electricity.

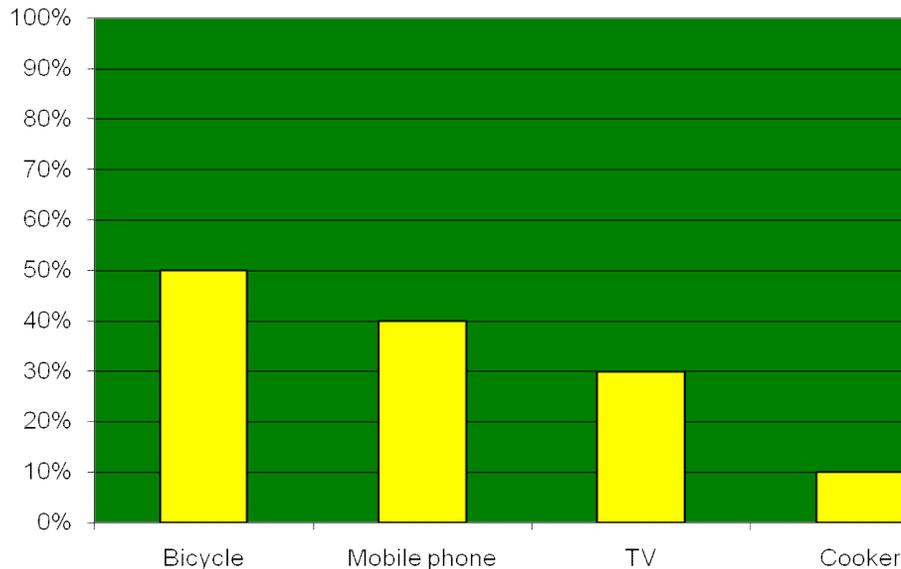


Figure 10: Percentage of households with difference appliances¹⁰ (questionnaire result)

In the past, the Jesuits' efforts in the Reductions to teach the Guaraní the rational principles of the market economy failed (Langer 1997: 50). Schaden (1974) tried to explain how this attitude persists:

Only in a few tribes like the Guaraní is there such a pronounced inability to develop an economic spirit with the idea of profit and a corresponding decisive thinking, simply because a profound religious mysticism has shaped their mind and tended to assign an emotional and sentimental imprint to all their attitudes, instead of giving them rational criteria to apply practical norms in their relationships with other human beings. (ibid: 55, my translation)

4.1.4. Language, education, and the future

The questionnaire showed that everyone in the village speaks Guaraní and that of the 24 children living there, only three go to school. The Mbya-Guaraní have been very reluctant to sending their children to school as they say 'it is not their system' (Garlet and Assis 1998: 19; Chamorro 1999: 23-24). When asked about their children's future, 90 per cent of the respondents said they believe they will continue to live in Guaraní villages (and not in the city).

¹⁰ The cooker is not used.

4.1.5. *Health*

These days in Guaraní villages it is common to find children malnourished, and in Pindó Mirim the situation is no different. FUNASA nutritional reports from July, September and October 2007, and January 2008, undertaken on children under 60 months demonstrate that, on average, 30 per cent of children are underweight and 15 per cent are at nutritional risk. Alcoholism is also a major problem affecting adults.

For the Guaraní, health problems are connected to natural disturbances. If nature is sick, the individual is also vulnerable (Garlet 1997; Chamorro 1999). They have faced difficulties due to the restricted access to areas where they can find their traditional medicine. Turíbio tells: 'a few years ago, I tried to enter the Park to find some herbs to heal my cold, but the guards prohibited me. I argued that the place is Guaraní, but they did not let me in'.

4.1.6. *The Park*

When asked in the questionnaire why they were interested in the Park, the Guaraní mentioned the following resources that are important for their lives: fish, good water, forest, palm trees (*pindó*) and the worms that feed on it, medicinal plants, and wood for crafts. One informant expressed his wish pointing to Lagoa Negra and saying: 'I will have to buy this lagoon so that I can fish'.

4.2. *Listening to the elders*

I took one day to visit Adolfo, a religious leadership (*karai*), who is now 96 years-old. He moved away from Pindó Mirim a couple of years ago to another village some 300 kilometres from Itapuã. He lives in a traditional mud house with his family (Figure 11 to Figure 14). His wife cooked us a meal on ground fire, and we ate from their crops and savoured armadillo meat. He said he is still interested in the area, but now he has shifted his attention to a conservation unit in front of Itapuã that is theoretically protected by Aracruz¹¹ – a cellulose company that has the duty to preserve certain areas of forest in exchange for planting eucalyptus in others. He does not understand why the Park is closed to the Guaraní if they are the old inhabitants of that land, and wondered: 'how are we not allowed to enter the Park and rich people can plant such a large area with eucalyptus to produce paper and make money?'. He says he wants to be in a place that allows him to live as close to the 'traditional way' as possible. He wants, still in his lifetime, to be able to pass on his customs to younger generations: 'I want to show the white man how the Guaraní live!'

Turíbio showed similar concerns to me, explaining that it is getting harder and harder to find or to access areas where they can teach younger generations how their 'ancestors lived'. He said he still holds a wealth of knowledge he would like to pass on, but he worries he might not be able to.

¹¹ In 2007, the State Secretary of Environment issued a license for Aracruz, Votorantim and Stora Enso to plant more than 120,000 ha of eucalyptus in Rio Grande do Sul – an investment of 1.5 billion dollars looking at the production of 1.8 million tons of cellulose a year, of which 99 per cent are for export. State environmental legislation was modified to issue the license, exceeding the national allowed limits of SO₂ emissions and heavy metal waste. Several areas allocated for eucalyptus plantations are also territories claimed by the Guaraní as traditional lands. Besides the environmental damages the processing of cellulose causes, such as loss of native plant species, acid rain and fish malformation, a single adult eucalyptus tree may consume up to 250 litres of water a day. Aracruz is responsible for clearing 50,000 ha of the Atlantic Forest cover in Espírito Santo State (Ingá 2008).



Figure 11: Adolfo's family and dwelling place



Figure 12: Black beans



Figure 13: Maize grinder



Figure 14: Sweet-potatoes

4.2.1. *Amerindian perspectivism*

Calamitous natural events, pollution and deforestation are considered by the Guaraní as signs of the world's end, as are disputes and violence. They believe that since the jurua (white man) came into their territory a series of catastrophes have happened, such as war, disease, and slavery (Garlet 1997: 157-159). The Guaraní are finding it difficult to follow their religious precepts, and white man is also disrespecting an important rule given by the gods, namely that the fields were for them and the forests for the Guaraní (Ladeira 2004: 239). Nowadays, the jurua is invading and privatizing the forest, breaking the pact.

Viveiros de Castro's 'Amerindian perspectivism' (2002) is a guide to a deeper understanding of indigenous relations to nature. For Amerindians, the world is inhabited by several species of subjects – be those plants, animals or humans - who perceive the world from different viewpoints. In opposition to the Western idea of multiculturalism, where there is one nature and multiple cultures, the indigenous perspective is one of multinaturalism, in which the spirit is common among all beings and only bodies are different. Predator animals, for instance, perceive humans as preys and themselves as humans. 'Blood is the beer of the jaguar' (ibid: 361, my translation). Therefore, what some call nature can be culture for others. In that sense there is continuity, not duality, between nature and culture (ibid: 347-362).

According to the Amerindian perspectivism, 'culture is the nature of the subject' (ibid: 378), what

establishes who the subjects are, is their practice: what they eat, how they walk, who they marry, how they communicate (ibid: 382-389). From that perspective, one can understand why the Guaraní say they can no longer be perfect, and that the world is ending. By making it impossible for them to continue performing their cultural practices, their system becomes vulnerable (Fortwangler 2003). Setting them apart from the environment breaks their ties to the land and destroys their social fabric (Colchester 2003: 50). Guaraní concerns about the possible loss of their traditional knowledge should be understood in that light.

4.2.2. *Virtualism*

It often happens that indigenous peoples are first forcibly deprived of their lands, and the resulting changes they suffer are used against them to argue that they are no longer legitimate. After few years, they are seen as strangers when wandering in the same territory, a phenomenon West et al. (2006: 261) call 'virtualism'.

In southern Brazil there is a widespread perception that indigenous peoples are not 'traditional' anymore. IBAMA head of staff stated that '[t]he indigenous living up north, where there is less concentration of civilization, still walk barefoot... When you go southwards, the Indians wear slippers, trainers, shirts. The expansion of the city ends up acculturating their lifestyle'. The Park Counsel representative criticized the Guaraní for increasingly demanding facilities, such as pumped water and electricity. He stated: 'there is no difference between a popular village in Porto Alegre suburbs [slums] and an indigenous village...I can't identify any'.

Turibio said nowadays people criticize them, saying they eat things from the supermarket and don't use bows and arrows. But how could they, if they have no space? How could they, if they are not allowed to carry out their traditional practices?

A similar phenomenon to 'virtualism' happens when indigenous peoples are blamed for destroying their traditional lands when in fact they were not responsible for it. A professional from the Indigenist Missionary Counsel (CIMI) mentioned that the prejudicial views many environmentalists have of indigenous groups partly come from the time when their lands were leased by the indigenous foundation for timber extraction and agriculture. FUNAI regional executive confirmed this, explaining that it was carried out under state tutelage, as a way of generating funds for their administration. Having worked for FUNAI for the last 27 years, he declared that he did not know of any place where the Guaraní have destroyed the environment, stressing the remoteness of the areas they choose and their resistance to accepting agricultural technology to develop their gardens.

The EMATER representative,¹² working with the Guaraní for more than 30 years, emphasized his confidence in their ability to manage natural resources. He was critical of the local environmental movement, stating that the Park was established in the same context of colonial exploitation that, as the Guaraní say: 'is a plague of grasshoppers that spread over their territory and ate all the natural resources'. When society finally realizes that most of the state has been turned into fields, it wants to save what was left at any cost. He called it a 'short-sighted environmentalism' that 'simply levels all human beings as predators... everybody is excluded independently from culture, system, relationship, or responsibility'.

¹² Association for Agricultural Expansion and Technical Assistance

5. ITAPUÃ: A PARK OR A GUARANÍ VILLAGE?

This chapter contains the results of the historical investigation carried out in this research to find out whether the area of Itapuã State Park actually lies on a Guaraní traditional territory – a fact that has always been denied by the Park administration and by the State Environmental Department. To search for evidence of the Guaraní presence in the area, I interviewed a number of Guaraní, looked into governmental files and local newspapers, and used aerial images and mapping strategies. Alongside the history of the Guaraní villages in the area, I also use information from the interviews with environmental administrators on the subject and relate them to the literature.

5.1. Parks – “the last bastions of nature”¹³

Initially, parks were created mainly for recreational and scientific purposes (Robinson 2007a: 3). With growing concerns about species extinction in the 1980s and ‘90s, the central focus shifted to wildlife conservation, which came along with the development of systematic approaches to conservation planning (Terborgh 1999: 17; Rodrigues et al. 2004: 640). Itapuã’s history is similar: the prime goal of the Park upon its creation was tourism, given that ‘the living conditions of the urban dweller ... require more proximity with nature, benefiting his/her physical and mental wellbeing’ and the unique beauty of that area had the potential to ‘provide for human’s need of proximity with nature’ (GERM 1975: 27, viii, my translation). Species conservation was surely an objective, but it became the centre of attention only in the early ‘90s, when it was acknowledged that ‘[t]he colonization process of Rio Grande do Sul, as well as population growth and land occupation by successive economic cycles ... caused a drastic reduction in the area occupied by native forests ... and ecosystems of equal importance to the maintenance of the ecological balance’ (DRNR 1997: 11, my translation). The Park management plan, when telling Itapuã’s history, does not refer to any indigenous presence in the recent past. On the Park’s brochures, the only reference to the indigenous heritage is: ‘Itapuã means tip of the stone in Tupi-Guaraní’.

5.1.1. *Public negotiation*

The debate about the presence of the Guaraní in Itapuã area was publicly raised at the Federal Prosecutor’s Office in 1998 (MPF 1998-2006). During multi-stakeholder meetings, the Guaraní expressed their concerns about nature, trying to explain to environmental administrators that their lifestyle is not a threat to conservation. In October 2003, Juarez – the village’s chief at the time – said he could not comprehend why the authorities were worried if part of indigenous culture is to care for the environment. He insisted they just hunt and fish for subsistence (ibid: 205). In another meeting, another Guaraní leader, told the environmental authorities not to be scared. He said they wanted a space in the Park but they would respect it (ibid: 512).

In meetings held by the Park Counsel in 2004, members discussed whether the Guaraní lived in the area or not, and most members conclusively declared there was no recent indigenous presence in the Park (ibid: 544-596). At the end, Guaraní statements were not taken seriously and no proofs were produced to prove their traditional occupation, which strongly legitimated the prohibition of Guaraní access to the Park up to this day.

¹³ Terborgh 1999

5.2. The village that did not exist

As a result of my historical investigation, no doubts remain about the Guaraní recent residence in the Park, and therefore, that Itapuã is a traditional territory. I located five Guaraní who actually lived in the Park area in the past (currently living in other villages in Brazil) and took their testimonies. I also interviewed eight former residents of the area who corroborated the information provided by the Guaraní. The testimonies provided solid evidence of their presence in many of its locations. I also found six newspaper reports from 1973 to 1975 describing the Guaraní villages in Itapuã.

Stories were not homogenous because there were at least three Guaraní villages on different hills in the Park area, all within the current untouchable forest area. All former residents remember seeing them around for several years. Almost nobody who lived in the area would go to the Guaraní villages as they were extremely difficult to access (Corrêa 1974). Zero Hora (1973) mentions the presence of more than 60 Indians, 17 families, and 10 traditional houses. Reasons for leaving the area vary greatly: two Guaraní said they left out of fear,¹⁴ three others said it was due to water scarcity in times of no rain. Four ex-residents stated they were impelled to leave because of their lifestyle. They were hunters and due to increased visibility with the creation of Park and media visits they were not welcome anymore.

5.2.1. *Incursion in the Park*

In order to establish that there had been settlements in the area now designated as a Park, Benito, a 97 year old Guaraní and former resident of the area, came from his village in Santa Catarina to Porto Alegre and we entered the Park together. He indicated where he used to live and another former resident indicated another village site. Nothing similar to a village could be seen on the spot: we could identify the place because the terrain was plainer and the forest cover was younger. After excavating a little we found some pieces of cloth and glass. I took GPS points of the village sites and later compared the spots with the 1978 air photo. Given the extent of vegetation, if there had been no settlement clear spots in the image should only be observed where there are granite rocks. When comparing my GPS data to the air photograph, the cleared spots did not correspond to the rocky area, but exactly matched the settlement locations indicated by Benito (Figure 15 and Figure 16).

¹⁴ The military would train and shoot in the Park.



Figure 15: sites indicated by Benito and another former resident

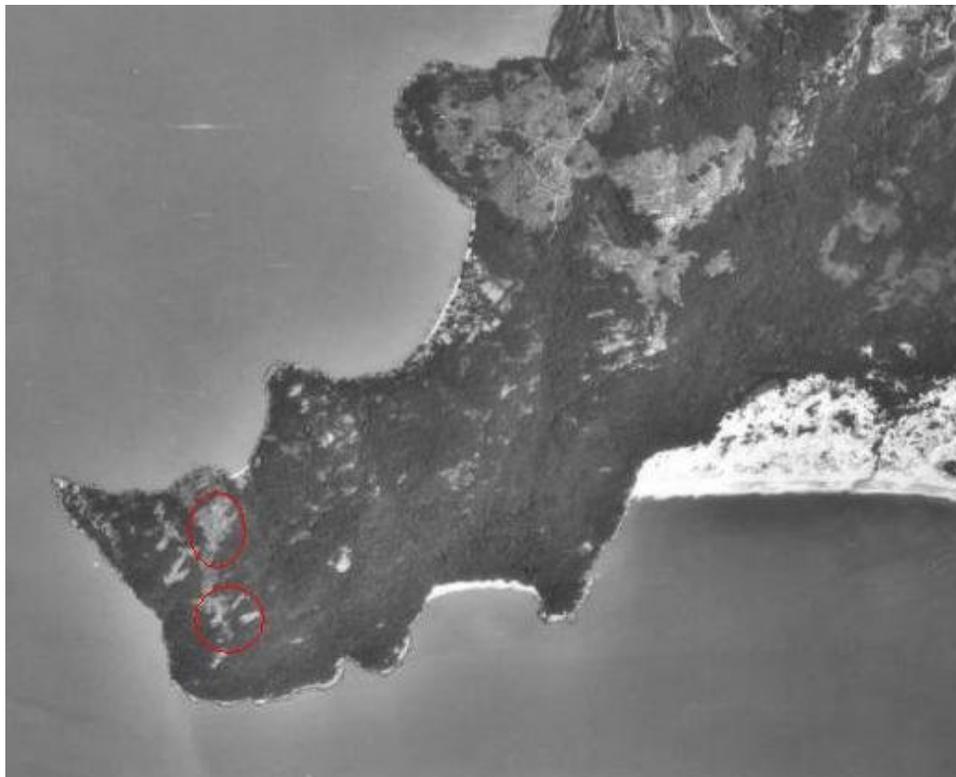


Figure 16: 1978 air photography, village sites in red (Metroplan)



Figure 17: old village sites (red circle), park and current village

5.3. Invisibility

On the one hand, the Guaraní have historically made an effort to live as far as they could from state vigilance in order to maintain their lifestyle (Ladeira 2004; Post Darella et al. 2004; Brighenti in Bertho 2005). This may have contributed to their problems given that, on the other hand, literature also shows that traditional peoples were often purposely ignored by governments upon creation of conservation units, regarding those areas as untouched and unoccupied places (Fortin and Gagnon 1999: 202; Diegues 2002: 9; Shepard et al. in press: 1). Decisions about park use and management have been commonly made by a small, but influential, scientific and political elite applying top-down approaches (Whitesell 1996: 415; Vermeulen and Sheil 2007: 434). Being more influential than local communities, their interests tend to prevail. Decision-makers are usually far from local people's reality and implement their ideas without consideration of whom they are impacting (McCabe 2002; Colchester 2003: 59). In interviews, environmental administrators continued to deny the Guaraní presence in the Park area in the recent past. DEFAP director said there were no proofs.

6. THE GUARANÍ: PART OF THE PROBLEM OR PART OF THE SOLUTION?

In this chapter I intend to point out some aspects raised on the literature about indigenous natural resource management and the limitations in the exclusionary model of nature preservation. At the same time, I attempt to synthesize some of the points made throughout this paper, and to present, at the end, a position I identified as conciliatory during the interviews with stakeholders, showing a path towards the integration of environmental and indigenous interests.

6.1. Indigenous contributions to the environment

A number of recent studies indicate that conservation is possible without strictly protected area regulations (e.g. Buck et al. 2007: 132). Traditional inhabitants directly depend on local resources so they are willing to prevent their extinction (Schwartzman et al. 2000: 1355; Diegues 2002, Colchester 2003: 24), having developed techniques to manage their lands sustainably and institutions to regulate access to resources (Vermeulen and Sheil 2007a: 435-436). While it is very expensive to pay guards to patrol a large park area, people living on their traditional territories impede incursions by outsiders at their own cost (Molnar et al. 2004, Shepard et al. in press: 2). In Brazil, there are several studies showing that indigenous territories are better preserved than conservation units (e.g. Schwartzman et al. 2000: 1353; Ladeira 2004: 236). A recent study in the Brazilian Amazon demonstrates that while the rate of deforestation in 2006 in federal parks was 1.52 per cent, in indigenous territories it was only 1.10 per cent, with the latter receiving much fewer financial resources from the government (COIAB 2008).

The Guaraní have specific ways of managing natural resources. For instance, they classify forests types (ka'aguy poruey, ka'aguy etehápe, ka'aguy karape), determining where they are allowed to hunt, collect or cut down trees, and preserving the areas of primary forest (Felipim 2004: 304-305). They also preserve certain species, such as palm and cedar trees, due to their sacredness (Brighenti 2005: 43-44). Many of their practices enrich biodiversity, such as plant and animal species dispersion around their territory that occurs as a result of their mobility in the Atlantic Forest domain. Their organic farming, besides preserving genetic diversity of crops, provides food for the local fauna.

6.2. Limitations in the exclusionary model

In spite of the harshness of strictly protected area policies, several scholars recognize that, in general, there is a lack of scientific evidence showing how much parks gain or lose with the presence of traditional populations (Schwartzman et al. 2000: 1352; Brechin et al. 2003). Also, consistent answers for questions such as 'How many species do we want to protect?', 'How big should a park be to protect a certain species?', 'What kind of natural resource use is inappropriate?', 'Which areas are of fundamental importance?' and, 'How are we going to achieve our goals?'; remain largely unanswered (Barrow 1993; Terborgh 1999: 62; Sheil 2001). The idea of preserving the environment in 'islands' is also problematic, as it focuses conservation efforts in limited spaces, while harmful large-scale development projects advance in the surroundings. The State Environmental Secretarial Office, for instance, forbids indigenous access to preserved areas at the same time as it issues licenses for cellulose companies and recreational hunting.

At the same time as the protectionist model excludes traditional peoples from their lands, the proposed solution to tackle the poverty that follows from their displacement is usually the production of new economic opportunities for them, such as their engagement in ecotourism (Brechin et al. 1991; Terborgh 1999: 121). This type of economic alternative often ends up being unsustainable not only in social but also in ecological terms. While protectionists say that our society's consumption patterns are a threat to nature (Gartlan 1997: 216; Terborgh 1999: 19), when people are no longer allowed to live off their land, they are forcibly introduced into the cash economy, becoming dependent on it for their survival and consequently changing their material expectations.

6.2.1. Local protectionism, environmental policy and indigenous peoples

Alongside the adoption of such an exclusion model, environmental administrators interviewed in the present study demonstrated they were largely unaware of indigenous people's lifestyle, aspirations and interactions with nature. This lack of knowledge directly impacts the way conservation policy is carried out in the State. For instance, the declaration of the member of the Park Counsel (heading 4.2.2), comparing the Guaraní to people who live in Porto Alegre suburbs, is a rather serious accusation, but unsubstantiated. People from the suburbs generally live in a very violent and threatening environment, and normally aspire to follow the same lifestyle of the urban dweller, with access to goods, a formal job, and good social status. Guaraní villages are silent and peaceful places, where even children are rarely repressed. As it was observed, when they have money they hardly buy durable goods. The Guaraní are not willing to 'integrate' and follow jurua's lifestyle, seeing the future of their children in their villages and resist conforming to the state's education system. They do not plan to be rich and are not disputing a dwelling space in the urban centres – they want to live in the forest. Also, the declaration from DEFAP about indigenous nomadism and the critiques from IBAMA about their agricultural practices (chapter 3), despite contrasting, only attest once more to how ill-informed they are about how indigenous peoples are affected by state and federal conservation units. As Diegues (2002: 2) puts it: 'The authorities who are responsible for the preserved areas perceive the traditional inhabitants as destroyers of wildlife, which eliminates any real opportunity for their inclusion in the conservation project.'

Protectionists' concern about the Guaraní population growth also seems to lack consistency. Indigenous peoples represent 0.2 per cent of the Brazilian population, and in Rio Grande do Sul the Guaraní account for 0.02 per cent of the State population. They used to be 2 million in the 15th century and are now about 70,000. Even if their population growth is now higher than the national average population growth, it should be seen as a positive sign of recovery of this group, rather than a threat to the environment. Besides, the Guaraní hardly reach numbers that would excessively pressure the resources of an area (Figure 7).

Arguments used to justify why indigenous presence in the local context would be harmful to nature do not coincide with the findings from this research, and indicate that local environmental policy is ill-informed when taking positions against the Guaraní.

6.3. Conciliators – searching for common ground

Protectionists argue that they share no common interest with local peoples: to local communities, the primary value of nature is economic (Gartlan 1997: 216), social and/or cultural (Robinson 2007: 443), while they are 'by definition concerned about extinction' (Redford 1992: 420). Some

are certain that local people are incapable of preserving biodiversity: '[t]he vision of humanized protected areas by the new paradigm will lead to a biologically impoverished world' (Locke and Dearden 2005: 5).

During fieldwork I interviewed a number of people, whom I am calling conciliators, composed of people willing to reach a balanced discussion between the presented diverging viewpoints. They are either multidisciplinary professionals or natural scientists in contact with traditional populations and interested in ethnoecology. All of them are acquainted with environmental issues as well as with the Guaraní people.

CURICACA coordinator emphasized their NGO 'systemic approach' that focuses on the inclusion and debate among different views, attempting to reach a consensus. He, as well as an ecology professor from UFRGS, stressed the need for negotiation between actors. Delicate issues, such as people-parks, require time for discussion to build up consent, which unfortunately environmental departments do not have. People in administrative roles often do not remain for long in a position, relying on the political situation.

The local Human Rights Coordinator for Indigenous Peoples – a biologist and anthropologist – said she had no doubts that the best solution for the preservation of the State's remaining biodiversity is to have the Guaraní as partners. She believes the Guaraní can come back to live in Itapuã, even though it might be necessary to negotiate their access to some areas, 'but they are open to partnerships', she stressed. She criticized the model of preservation in the islands and the academic approach to preservation focused on the 'natural resource', which neglects ecological and human interactions. And she stated:

'The [Guaraní natural resource management] is a model that, if coupled with the forest, is compatible with it. The colonialist model is incompatible ... It puts down the forest ... to develop another resource whose product is probably not even going to be consumed in this territory, it will be shipped to Europe... The indigenous model is local, so the energy flow stays. Any biologist knows that if the energy flow stays, the system is not losing, it might only be under transformation ... but it is embracing the resource... The Guaraní are a biological corridor of Atlantic Forest, they are dispersing species throughout that territory... Is it in accordance with conservation? I think it is totally compatible. What is incompatible here in the south is the opposition between the environmental and indigenous rights movement.'

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Obstacles

The factors I identified as hindering the advancement of the debate in Itapuã towards a more consensual solution are:

1. the adoption of a protectionist approach to conservation by influential environmentalists involved in local policy;
2. their lack of knowledge about the Guaraní (and indigenous peoples in general);
3. the ambiguity of the legal framework, enabling different stakeholders to take a stand and harden their positions legitimately.

I verified, through the history of the conflict and mapping of relevant environmental stakeholders, that environmental policy and decision-makers tend to follow the fortress conservation paradigm, trusting that exclusion of people from protected areas is the best way to preserve the environment. Their education and training are very specialized, often without any contact with the populations they will be affecting. This detachment, both in theory and practice is, I believe, the core cause of such conflicts, as decisions are based on assumptions rather than facts. I consider the ambiguousness of the legal framework to be a reflection of the contrasting views in Brazilian society.

Other organisations have also been delaying the pace of resolution of the Itapuã case, as in FUNAI's neglect, the poor communication between relevant agencies and the temporariness of key administrators in their positions. Indigenous activists, for their part, may also have limited understanding of the complexity of environmental issues. However, at present, the most influential actors with power to modify the environmental policy affecting indigenous peoples are protectionists themselves.

It is essential to tackle environmental policy makers' lack of knowledge about indigenous populations. If policies that affect vulnerable populations are to be implemented by the government, their justifications must, at least, be based in reality. I believe one way to overcome this problem is to foment more interdisciplinary debates. Given that 90 per cent of the world's protected areas are inhabited by traditional populations (Redford et al. 2007: 2), interactions between biological and cultural diversity need to be better understood. People-park conflicts will not have a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Cases must be analysed in their particularity, as ethnic groups respond to societal changes differently.

The conciliator group provided a good example of how people's perspectives can change, depending on how acquainted one is with both conservation and indigenous issues at the local level. I agree with the Human Rights Worker's point that it makes no sense for environmentalists to oppose their interests to the Guaraní's. The result is a 'lose-lose' game, which weakens both the already fragile environmental and indigenous movements while the enemy enters through the front door. Cellulose companies in the State are there to prove it.

7.2. The village that did exist

An additional important finding of this research was the establishment, beyond reasonable doubt, of the Guaraní recent residence in Itapuã Park area. It demonstrated how their right has been denied and their claims unjustly dismissed. On the one hand, this highlights the need to empower Guaraní voices in the establishment of historical truth. On the other hand, the intense and diverse methods I used - combining oral histories, local archives, participatory mapping with the Global Positioning System, and air and satellite imagery - points the way forward to the clarification of countless similar cases.

Looking at the Guaraní from Pindó Mirim and examining their current lifestyle in the context of literature about their past, it becomes clear that they have been struggling to maintain their cultural practices, notwithstanding the precarious condition of their villages, and that these have little impact on the environment. Listening to their opinions and aspirations, one realizes that they are not willing to change their lifestyle and engage in the market economy. If their elders die without being able to pass on their teachings to present generations, a whole body of knowledge will be lost and their culture will collapse, as it can only be alive in nature.



Figure 18: Guaraní from Itapuã, 1973 (Zero Hora)

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This paper is an edited version of my dissertation for the MSc in Anthropology and Ecology of Development at UCL. Shortly after I finished the MSc, the National Indian Foundation started the land demarcation process of Itapuã, recognizing the Guaraní claims to identify their traditional territory, and invited me to take part in the study as a research associate.