

Collaborations In Faith: NGO Development Policies In Northern Argentina

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ABSTRACT: Faced with images of corrupt, authoritarian, and ineffective Latin American states, some NGOs have managed to establish themselves as efficient and flexible organizations, guardians of the “common good.” Appealing to a techno-moral language and interweaving a political-legal vocabulary with moral judgments, some NGOs in Latin America have found an appropriate field in the development processes involving agents located in different local, national, and transnational domains. This field of interactions becomes especially interesting to analyze regarding how local processes intertwine with global agendas. This work aims to shed light on the interconnections between different local and transnational players in the construction of a development political culture. We aim to understand different aspects defining the collaborative relationships and tensions between local denominational NGOs and denominational international cooperation agencies. With this interest, and from an ethnographic approach, a political process of alliance between NGOs of denominational origin is analyzed within the framework of a land restitution process in the region of Pilcomayo, province of Salta, Argentina. The process was marked by the position of different players: Fundapaz, Asociana, Misereor and *Pan para el mundo* [Bread for the World]. This work shows how a context of col-

laboration and tension interactions and relationships was shaped from the perspective of one of the NGOs that played a leading role in the process.

Introduction

Faced with images of corrupt, authoritarian, and ineffective Latin American states, some NGOs have managed to establish themselves as efficient, flexible, and democratic organizations (Martinez Novo 2006). The moral language to which several of these organizations appeal has played a central role in their positioning as defenders of rights and guardians of the “planetary village,” the “common good,” and the public interests (Kamat 2004; Hours 2006). Appealing to an authority based on a techno-moral language interweaving a political-legal vocabulary with moral judgments (Bornstein and Sharma 2016), several NGOs in Latin America have found an appropriate field to carry out development processes or, as Bebbington and Graham (1993) point out, they became “vehicles for development.”

The “desire to improve” is part of a shared moral language, and it is in this sense that it connects national and transnational development NGOs. Programs that aim to improve the population’s living conditions, which seek to solve problems and to produce transformations, have shaped the landscape of different countries in the world. Nietzsche (1889) warned us that in all periods there has been someone who wanted to “improve” people, and that this was called moral antonomasia. The desire to improve draws attention for its persistence and for the inevitable distance between what is proposed and what is achieved. The results of improvement programs were not always a failure. Some improvement programs implemented by NGOs brought about the changes people desired: water network, sewerage, paving, construction of schools and health

centers, etc. Others failed to fulfill what they proposed, but this did not prevent the desire to improve to be used once more as the basis for new programs. Murray Li (2007) warns us about how the desire to improve is located within the field of power that Foucault called governmentality. I find inspiration in these ideas to think about how the moral discourse on which the desire to improve is based functions as a device obscuring the fact that what is at stake is the control of human behavior through calculated methods.

In the present era, the challenges to programs that used to be based on “desire to improve” schemes, appear today combined with the language of rights, which is increasingly codified in national and transnational laws. The desire to improve is intertwined with a law vocabulary, which configures different moral sentences. Since 1970, there has been a simultaneous growth in the neoliberalism and the expansion of awareness regarding legality and rights. The expansion of the discourse of rights and the institutions and the defense of human rights became interconnected with techno-moral discourses of humanitarianism and development, which propose technical solutions to moral and human problems (Bornstein and Redfield 2011; Bornstein and Sharma, 2016). The growing importance of rights-based discourses in global politics interconnects technical and moral languages. The vocabulary of rights assumed a central role in the development discourse.

“Development,” as a political and moral project permeating daily life activities, becomes an important meeting and interconnection place for different worlds/lives experiences and languages between players located in local and global spaces. In the dialogues, encounters, and frictions between national and transnational players, a development political culture takes shape. I consider the interconnections within the framework of movements occurring simultaneously in several fields (people, commodities, ideas) which have an important degree of contingency and incoherence, including the unpredictable

and contradictory nature of human experience (Heyman and Campbell 2009). Some authors have suggested that in order to understand the global-local interface, it is necessary to pay attention to transnational cultural flows and their relationship with local cultural spaces (Hannerz 1992; Sassen 1994; Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). I analyze interconnections from an approach that emphasizes the making and re-making of social situations and formations, and the unpredictable, incoherent, and contingent nature of movements (Heyman and Campbell 2009).

This paper aims to shed light on the interconnections between different local and transnational players in the construction of a development political culture. Its objective is to understand different aspects that make up the collaboration relations and tensions between NGOs. With this aim, and from an ethnographic perspective,¹ an alliance project between local NGOs of denominational origin and international cooperation agencies is analyzed within the framework of a land restitution process in the Pilcomayo region. The process was marked by the position of different players: Fundapaz, Asociana, Misereor, *Pan para el Mundo*, and Lhaka Honhat. One of the conditions that made the project possible was the construction of common work guidelines, to which I refer as partnership and collaboration relationships among local NGOs. Fundapaz had experience in processes of restitution of land to indigenous people and *criollos*,² but had no presence in the Pilcomayo before the project. At the time of its inclusion, Asociana was the only NGO working with indigenous people and the only one in the area.

This work shows the context of interactions and relations of collaboration and tension from the perspective of one of the NGOs leading process. In order to explain how the network of collaborative relationships between local NGOs and cooperation agencies was woven, I reconstructed the origins of Fundapaz in the 1970s based on an analysis of life stories.

The value of these trajectories is based on the fact that stories evoke and knot together different spatial and temporal memories (de Certeau 1996), which are intertwined with values, beliefs, and daily practices. I adopt Tsing's (2005) idea of "friction" as a lens to analyze how the interactions and relations of collaboration and tension between the different players were modeled and made possible the construction of a development political culture in the Salta province. The text presents two different moments of analysis. It begins with the ethnographic present, analyzing a process of land restitution in the region of Pilcomayo developed since the year 2000, to later reconstruct, by means of life stories, the emergency context of the local organizations of denominational origin in the Argentinean *Chaco* in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the Argentine *Chaco* region, different missionary projects were carried out by the Catholic and Evangelical churches. Franciscan and Anglican missions played an important role in the *Chaco Salteño* [the area of the Chaco region belonging to the province of Salta]. During the 19th century, the land bordering the Chaco was predominantly Franciscan missionary territory (Teruel 2005). The Anglican Church also has a missionary tradition in the North of the country. Its pastoral work began in San Pedro, in the province of Jujuy, to then extend its work to the Chaco region. The Anglican presence was constant from the beginning of the 20th century, except during the Malvinas War (Carrasco 2009). At the beginning of the 20th century, a Scandinavian Pentecostal mission settled among the aborigines of the *Chaco Salteño* (Ceriani Cernadas 2011).

The evangelization work carried out by the Catholic and Anglican churches in the region took a new direction in the 1970s, while other forms of being present emerged in the region from religious practices. In a previous work (Castelnuovo 2010), I suggested that the missionary work found a new format in the creation of local non-governmental organizations since the late 1970s, which emerged by combining the development

discourse with a religious-moral language and the language of rights. This was how some Anglican and Catholic missionaries channeled the social work they had been carrying out with some indigenous peoples and *criollos* in the area. The pastoral practice oriented towards development, by means of the creation of local non-governmental organizations, and found in this way a crack in the political context of civic-military dictatorships that took place in Argentina between the 1960s and 1970s.³

The Presence of Denominational NGOs in the *Chaco Salteño*

The performance of denominational-based development NGOs in the *Chaco Salteño* dates back to the early 1980s. By then, the first major development initiative in the region had already taken place. In the mid-1960s, Anglican missionaries promoted an agricultural program as one of the activities included in living at the mission. In 1914, the Anglicans bought a plot of land along the Bermejo River and founded *Mision Chaqueña* [Chaco's Mission] in the San Martín Department, which was the first Anglican mission in the province of Salta. In order to improve their material situation through the creation of job opportunities, the aborigines were invited to join the program (Wallis 1986). Members of the Wichí people had moved from different parts of the Northwest to *Mision Chaqueña* with the hope of finding a better life. During the 1960s, the perception of the Anglican missionaries regarding the socioeconomic situation of the indigenous groups in Salta was that it had deteriorated, "and this led them to feel obliged to provide a definite response" (Wallis 1986: 17). The Anglican Church's Christian initiative aimed to create economically stable and independent communities, and the main way found

for this was agricultural production. As part of the program, a corporation was created to transfer responsibilities and legal rights to the indigenous people. However, the project became a "great failure" that accumulated large debts, and in the early and mid-1980s, many of these people decided to return to their homes. From then on, agricultural production and commerce programs were left aside, and simpler organization schemes were sought, emphasizing the production for self-consumption. This was the context found by the Foundation for Development in Justice and Peace (Fundapaz, for its Spanish acronym) when it began its work in the town of Los Blancos, province of Salta.

Fundapaz was created in 1973 in the city of Reconquista, province of Santa Fe. The creation of Fundapaz was deeply related to the need for organizations that could provide financial and technical assistance during the production. The creation of these organizations was part of a broader pastoral project⁴ promoted by several dioceses in the Northeast, and particularly the diocese of Reconquista. The Northeastern bishops⁵ led and participated in an intense political organization of rural origin, which led to the creation of the Catholic Rural Movement in 1964 and to the emergence of the Agrarian Leagues in 1970. The bishops led various actions defending small farmers' rights, as well as supporting the demands from other sectors, such as education workers (Verbitsky 2009).

The organizations' origins explain the persistence of collaborative relationships with the dioceses of the North and the Catholic Church. The organizations were the result of liberation theology and of the *San Miguel* Document that was the Declaration of the Argentine Episcopate as regards the Second General Conference of the Episcopate, held in Medellín (1968), where Latin American bishops openly expressed their commitment to assume a preferential defense of the poor. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) made a profound reform of the church possible, which in Latin America was consolidated through pastoral practices such as liberation theology, and

which in Argentina took the shape of theology of the people and the working class and slum dweller priests (Spinelli 2013).

Pastoral actions of various kinds were developed under the idea of the Theology of Liberation, which resulted in the formation of the National Aboriginal Pastoral Team⁶ (Endepa) in 1984. The pastoral actions recovered contributions of Aboriginal theology origin and the centrality of the right to the land. This pastoral vision was in line with a broader indigenous pastoral movement in Latin American, especially with the experiences of the *Conselho Indigenista Misionario* of Brazil, the Missions National Team of Paraguay, with the ideas of the Jesuit Xavier Albo, in Bolivia, and those of Samuel Ruiz Garcia, the bishop of Chiapas, Mexico. In 1987, an aboriginal pastoral team was formed in the town of Morillo, province of Salta, as part of the initiatives promoted by the diocese of Oran. In the early 1990s, this team created Tepeyac, an organization based on the social branch of work carried out by the Catholic Church. As it had already happened in other Catholic spaces, development appeared as a sensitivity that generated new forms of going on mission (Lida 2012).

The evangelization work carried out by the Anglican Church in the *Chaco Salteño* region also took a new direction in 2000, when the diocese created the Social Accompaniment Foundation of the Anglican church of the North of Argentina (Asociana, former *Iniciativa Cristiana* [Christian Initiative]). Its character as a Protestant religious organization in a province with conservative Catholic roots, as Carrasco (2009: 176) says, makes Asociana not be "another NGO in the area." Asociana works within the framework of the Anglican Church. It is a foundation of the Anglican Church and, in that sense, it is an NGO but with complete conviction of Anglican catechesis. In addition to its liturgical objectives, it also has the objective of defending the rights of indigenous people. The background of the work done by the Anglican missionaries with the indigenous communities (organization and reclamation of lands)

were central in the direction Asociana took.⁷ Its evangelizing work, initially focused on the Rivadavia Department, extended to reach the San Martín Department, both in the province of Salta.

Confessional non-governmental organizations operating in the *Chaco Salteño* registered their actions within the framework of the most heterogeneous development policies, and they did so by placing themselves as partners and, in others cases, assuming a position as technicians, appealing to a professional expertise field. Health, education, housing, and the right to land and production are among the main core ideas of their action. This led them to become involved in the preparation and implementation of socio-economic diagnoses, the reconstruction of narratives, and the preparation of maps of indigenous and *criollos* groups, the teaching of training in rights, the organization of workshops and fairs for producers, the commercialization of products, and the technical advising on productive and community infrastructure projects.

Prior relationships and experiences of local Catholic and Evangelical churches with international agencies from churches of the same denominational origin generated the right conditions to obtain financing. Thus, through this articulation, the local denominational NGOs managed to obtain financial support for their actions. The main sustenance of the denominational NGOs with a Christian vision came from the Misereor agency, which is the episcopal work of the German Catholic church for cooperation towards development. Misereor finances development projects with a Christian vision, and among its objectives, it includes the promotion of social justice, fighting poverty and exclusion, and the promotion of the development of human beings in all its aspects.

Fundapaz developed a diversified financing policy; however, the agencies that supported it were mostly of the same denominational origin. Among the main sponsors of its projects in Salta were Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo*, a Cooperation

Agency for the Development of the Evangelical Churches from Germany. For its part, Asociana received support from the Anglican church of England, and it had the financing from *Pan para el Mundo* for the work it undertook within indigenous communities. The local denominational NGOs developed collaborative relationships with international cooperation agencies, which were basically of the same denominational nature. In effect, the collaborative relationships between these players shaped and modeled the development policy of each one of the local organizations.

The Pilcomayo Project: Tension, Negotiation and Collaboration

In the year 2000, Fundapaz and Asociana agreed to be part of a joint claim for fiscal lands in the Pilcomayo region regarding fiscal lots No. 55 and 14 of the Rivadavia Department, province of Salta.⁸ By then, Asociana was already developing a socio-organizational project in the Pilcomayo region, and one of the results was the creation of Lhaka Honhat, an inter-ethnic organization including members from the Chorote, Chulupi, Tapiete, Toba, and Wichi peoples. From this indigenous organization, the first land reclamation had been presented as a single title application for all the communities and before the provincial State.⁹ The application for a single title intended to counteract the government's project for making assignments to each community and *criollo* families of individual titles for plots of land. The last claim¹⁰ was made for the total surface of the fiscal lots (an area of 650 thousand hectares) and arose from a mapping carried out by indigenous people with the technical assistance of Asociana.¹¹

The provincial government had rejected the claim because it considered that it excluded *criollo* families living in the lots with rights to the land that the State recognized. It was then that

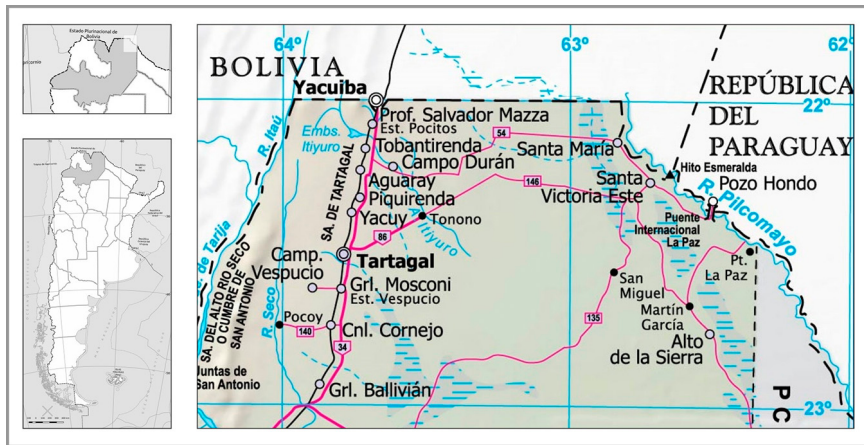


FIGURE 1. Argentina, Salta Province, and the Pilcomayo Area
(courtesy of Instituto Geográfico Nacional, República Argentina)

Asociana contacted Fundapaz¹² and proposed that it intercede, discouraging the claim of land by the *criollos*. This was what one of the persons responsible for Fundapaz recalled:

Asociana approaches Fundapaz saying... with the idea of reclaiming 650 thousand hectares for the indigenous people. And Fundapaz says no. We started the talks with Asociana before 2000. What Asociana and Lhaka Honhat wanted were 650 thousand hectares for themselves. We told them no, that the *criollos* also had rights, and that eventually, if Fundapaz joined that process, it would be based on the idea that the *criollos* also had rights and that we had to dialogue to reach an agreement on how much would correspond to the *criollos* and how much to the indigenous people (Jaime 2017).

This first moment of tension between the interests and perspectives of the denominational organizations gave way to the first dialogues, from which they laid the foundations of the work they intended to carry out. The path to reach agreements and build trust between the organizations was full of tensions and different opinions on the views that both had regarding

the rights of the groups. If Asociana, on the one hand, considered that Fundapaz did not accept indigenous rights, on the other, it believed that “our job was to convince the *criollos* of the superiority of the indigenous rights,” recalled one of the members of Fundapaz when describing the difficulties of this first stage. This is how one of my interlocutors described this initial stage of dialogues that ended with an agreement between non-governmental organizations:

There were almost three years of talks with Asociana to reach an agreement. If we were part of it, it would be to present a joint claim, if not, we would not. We had to have a common strategy, we told them. Regardless of whether they worked with indigenous communities and us with *criollos* families (Jaime 2017).

The process of dialogue between the denominational and indigenous organizations (as this first moment of conversations and meetings was called) involved defining and agreeing on common aspects of strategy and methodology regarding how to carry out the joint claim for the lands. As part of this initial dialogue, Lhaka Honhat, with the advice of Asociana and Fundapaz, understood that if there was no solution for the *criollos*, there would be no solution for them either.

For Fundapaz, there were mainly two advantages in this way of presenting the claim: on the one hand, “to give greater strength to the claim before the province” in accordance with its guidelines, and on the other, to include and defend the rights of the *criollo* settlers, as they also had rights over the land. If indigenous rights were legitimized due to their ancestry, for Fundapaz, the *criollos* also had the right to claim, as they understood that their presence in the area had been part of a state project from the beginning of the last century, which “moved them and used them to guard and guarantee the occupation of the northern border,” as one of my interlocutors from Fundapaz stated. Unlike the natives, their rights and their

ability to claim based on them were unknown to the *criollos*. Fundapaz followed the process by providing training on the Law of Twenty Years Possession of the Civil Code¹³:

We are talking about something that was totally new and unknown to them. They started from something. "I have lived here for many years. This is mine. Mine and also my family's." That was a whole issue, to work on the issue of rights. It was a whole process, a discovery on their part to learn that if I have rights, I have to exercise that right, but for that, I have to know what my rights are (Jaime 2017).

For the trainers, informing of the Law of Twenty Years Possession had different purposes, in addition to the *criollos* becoming aware about their rights. Through the trainings, it was expected that they would assume a stronger position in the claim that would revert to a position of inequality towards the indigenous people, and that they would also consolidate their rights. Based on these differences, different authorities and legitimacies were built around the claim. One of the people in charge of Fundapaz expressed it in this way; "In those first meetings, the *criollos* trembled, they did not know how to speak in front of the indigenous people who had been working with Asociana." Fundapaz was aware of the historical relations of confrontation, hostility, and asymmetry between natives and *criollos* in the area. In that sense, it interpreted that the submissive behavior of the *criollos* towards the natives, in different moments during the dialogue process, should be seen as a sign of positive change in the relations between the groups, an investment regarding the terms in which the relationship between *criollos* and aborigines had been carried out historically:

Asociana, especially Maria and Luis, could not see that it was already an achievement the facts that the *criollos* asked the Wichi to please do not break the agreement including the *criollos* in their claim. The *criollo* is the one who asks the

Wichi, after years of bad relationships and discrimination from the part of the former towards the latter (Pedro 2013).

To address part of these problems, Fundapaz technicians encouraged the *criollos* to create an organization that would nucleate and represent them in such a way as to be able to dialogue with the indigenous organization, non-governmental organizations, and the provincial state. They had to go out to visit the “posts” of the *criollo* ranchers, call them to meetings, encourage them to set up an organization nucleating and representing them; these were some of the actions the Fundapaz technicians undertook. Until then, there were no records in the area of a dialogue between organizations or spaces representing indigenous people and *criollos*. In this regard, one of the technicians recalls that when he started working in the area, the Organization of *Criollo* Families¹⁴ (OFC, for its Spanish acronym) had been established for a few years:

[The OFC had] three years as an organization of a culture that had no organizational culture, that has that dispersed mode of habitability, of members that are one to two kilometers away from each other and who see each other at wakes, parties and birthdays, let's say. However, there was already a proto-organization for the OFC, the neighborhood organizations were already organized. And from 2002-2003, the OFC was formed as such, with a representation of three delegates from each of the neighborhood organizations, which were twenty-two. So what I did at the beginning, I did a tour first, I went through all the posts by motorbike, all the posts, they were six hundred, I went all the way. Some welcomed me, others were indifferent, and others treated me badly. So, well, like that, I already had a first idea of those who were in favor or against (Augusto 2017).

The process of land restitution was considered by some *criollos* as the thing that caused the bad relations and conflicts between them and the aborigines, and essentially, as an “English

Anglican" foreign project. The formation of the neighborhood organizations and the creation of the OFC between the years 2002-2003 were developed in a climate of distrust and suspicion regarding the interests of Fundapaz, which at times was seen by the *criollos* as part of a "strategy of the British crown to keep for itself the plots of land." At least this was what one of my interlocutors told me while describing a scene in which, while touring the *criollos* posts, he had been threatened and pointed at with a gun.

However, for Fundapaz, not all the *criollos* who claimed land had rights under the terms prescribed by the Law of Twenty Years possession of the Civil Code, in its Article No. 4015. The Code recognized only those possessors with an owner's spirit and who had lived in the place for a continuous period of twenty years. It was necessary to comply with a series of requirements posited by the Law to grant the property right, and this was the work that Fundapaz undertook through the management of documents that served to accredit land rights in accordance with the terms defined by the State¹⁵:

Fundapaz accompanies the *criollo* families telling them, "Look, you have to present a folder that proves that you have been there for twenty years, in an uninterrupted and peaceful way, and with an owner's spirit. This means, you have to prove that you have been there for twenty years, that you have not had any conflicts with your neighbor, and that you have done so as an owner, that is, that you have carried out a set of investments in the territory you are claiming." Then, the folders were created, they were presented, and the government said yes to this, no to that. That's why there are some, for example, Barroso, who did not qualify; it was Barroso's mother the one who qualify. He did not meet the twenty years requirement (Jaime 2017).

The Pilcomayo Project was the work plan that brought together local non-governmental organizations, indigenous and *criollos* organizations, and international cooperation agencies.

Fundapaz and Asociana presented the Project before Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo*. The objective of the claim met these agencies' interest of including into the agenda the problems of indigenous and peasant land in Latin America. The actions aimed at the recognition and divulgation of rights was a central requirement for their support. Although Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* had financed previous projects of local non-governmental organizations and therefore knew their respective approaches, the truth is that the project initially aroused some suspicion on the part of the agencies. Fundapaz was sure regarding the work they intended to carry out; however, Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* distrusted the project. The person responsible for presenting and convincing the cooperation agencies recalled the observations he received regarding the project:

I remember, because the director of *Pan para el Mundo* came; that was like two or three days of traveling and talking. And the guy ends up saying to me, "Look, I think all this is very difficult, and I think it is very difficult for this to happen, but your fervor seduces me," more or less those were the words, and... "We are excited and we will decide to support you." With Misereor it was more or less the same. Then, the first two projects are annual projects, where Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* finance fifty percent of Asociana and Fundapaz' work each. The project was a single project, fifty percent was financed by Misereor and the other fifty percent was financed by *Pan para el Mundo*. The agencies saw all this very difficult: the level of conflict, whether it was possible to reverse it; secondly, the magnitude of the project, six hundred fifty thousand hectares, one thousand two hundred fifty indigenous families plus five hundred *criollo* families, a monstrosity; third, the negativity of the province to accede to this claim. And then, Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* were aware of that. The issue was to start something that could fail miserably (Jaime 2017).

The difficulties of the Pilcomayo Project were several: that an area of 650,000 hectares was being claimed, the fact that

this area was on the border with Bolivia and Paraguay, that 1,250 indigenous families and 500 *criollo* families were affected by the claim, and the idea and willingness of the province to implement a different project. The provincial project had a spirit of developmental integration¹⁶ and sought to promote the commercial integration of investors and entrepreneurs from Bolivia and Paraguay. In the words of one of my interviewees, “Juan Carlos Romero never wanted it, never wanted it. He had a different project. There were even conversations to bring Mennonites from Paraguay and Bolivia to build Mennonite colonies. Something similar to what was done in the *Chaco Paraguayo* [area of the Chaco region belonging to Paraguay], and to sell them to private companies.”

Fundapaz did not ignore these obstacles when it managed to convince the agencies to finance the project with its presentation. The project was co-financed by Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo*, each one of them contributing 50%, respectively. This unique project integrating all the NGOs was managed by Fundapaz, which was responsible for transferring the funds to Asociana. Misereor and Asociana funds were the main economic contribution received by the project.¹⁷ During the first two years, the projects were annual; later, they became quarterly projects and, in 2015, a last project was presented for three years.

From then on, the cooperation agencies began to be included in the discussions regarding the rights that *criollos* and indigenous people had over the lands at stake. Although on a general level both agencies seemed to meet and support peasants and indigenous people’s land claims, the truth is that they privileged the indigenous vision, which prioritized the rights of this group over those of the *criollos*. Fundapaz was aware of the different positions and opinions the agencies held about the groups. Nor was it alien to the indigenous-inclined vision of Asociana. However, its greatest concern in this regard had

to do with how these assessments and positionings affected the relationships of local organizations:

Pan para el Mundo held a very indigenous inclined vision, and the indigenous inclined vision was that the natives' rights were superior. I remember there were strong debates in which we said, "Look, you cannot hold that position... You have to contribute to a dialogue, an agreement, an understanding between Fundapaz and Asociana." That position radicalizes the positions of one and the other. And that was what happened. They were grotesque things. Misereor noticed this and had another attitude, it was more balanced (Jaime 2017).

The financing allowed the organizations to develop various actions aimed at sustaining the proposal of land distribution. The idea was to produce information, underground water studies, basin maps, socioeconomic surveys, etc., that allowed the development of a proposal for distribution, and to later reach consensus among the players that were part of the dialogue process.

In 1999, Lhaka Honhat Civil Association filed a complaint before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which led to what was called the friendly settlement table.¹⁸ This space was proposed as a place and instance of dialogue through which it was expected the players involved would reach a solution. The table was formed by Lhaka Honhat and the provincial and national governments. The table held a monthly meeting for five years.¹⁹ At this "friendly solution" table, the *criollos* and Fundapaz were also heard.

One of the first actions undertaken by the OFC, with the advice of Fundapaz, was the recognition of its areas of use, and this was done using the same system used by Lhaka Honhat (Geographic Information System Global, better known by its acronym, GIS). Also within this framework of activities carried out jointly by the organizations, Fundapaz and the OFC took a census of the *criollo* population and a diagnosis that allowed

them to become familiar with the situation in terms of access to health, education, and basic services: water, light, and sanitation.

There were no real, realistic censuses. There was no information available. There was a total information void. It was not known how many people there were, or how many *criollos*, or whether there was water or not. At that time, electricity was only available in Santa Victoria [town] and the engine was on from morning until 12 at night. That was the service there was. The hospital was a disaster. It was like Africa when we arrived. There was a lot of hunger, a lot of hunger (Augusto 2017).

At the same time as the friendly settlement table meetings were being held, Lhaka Honhat, OFC, Asociana, and Fundapaz carried out their own meetings with the aim of reaching an agreement regarding different aspects dealing with the distribution of land.

I remember that the issue of water was being analyzed, a member of Fundapaz told me. Who would own the water pond located in Tres Pozos was being analyzed. The *criollos* had made a pond, which is a swelling in natural waters. They dig and raise it, and the result is a very large water reserve. And that impressive work had been done by the *criollos* in five years with shovels and a hydra truck. So, that was being discussed. The natives said no, that it was their area of traditional use, and that they went fishing there. And the *criollos* said, “no, you go fishing there because we made that job. We have broken our backs, and the water is there because of the work we have done. Otherwise, you would not have water” (Augusto 2017).

The relationships between the different players involved in the process were marked by moments of varying degrees of tension. Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult moments in the relationship was when dealing with the process of agreeing on

the distribution of land between the natives and the *criollos*. The main obstacle in this context came from the different forms of productive use. The *criollos* had a livestock production mode, while the indigenous people practice hunting and gathering in combination with other strategies of social reproduction. The advance of livestock, the overload of animals for the amount of land available, which cause erosion, degradation, and deterioration of the environment is and was a factor of constant conflict with the indigenous people. The way in which the groups use the resources as well as their respective productive systems, were central considerations to legitimize the presence of indigenous people and *criollos* in the fiscal lots, while maintaining their ways of life. One of the technicians of Fundapaz recalled how different aspects that make the livestock production mode of the *criollos* served in the construction of land claim. The issuance of certificates from a sanitation organization belonging to the Argentine state, which supervised and certified the livestock production, the area where cattle gather to graze, where they sleep or rest, and the size and average age of rodeo cattle at the time of the round-up. The following testimony illustrates these aspects:

SENASA [National Service of Food and Agriculture Area Health and Quality] had just started to vaccinate, I believe in the year 2000 or 1999. That is, it started only a few years ago, and with that, rights also began to be accredited, with the round-up. You see, in the twenty years possession you have the right to acquire the property over the surface used by you, and in the case of the farmers it is according to the round-up size, because there is an equivalence of space per animal load; so that was also important, in what places, how many animals they had, all that (Augusto 2017).

Fundapaz had agreed with Asociana not to support productive projects with *criollos*. Within this framework, what it did was to carry out other kinds of initiatives, such as pro-

posals for forest exploitation, conservation, production and distribution of forage, beekeeping, etc. Fundapaz knew that many of these actions could be seen as investments that would prove permanence and occupation of the lands being claimed. Within that tension, it developed its work. About this, one of my interlocutors said:

We worked on productive issues dealing with improving livestock production, the beekeeping issues, the issue of forage production, improving of self-consumption. The goal was, it was always present at least in Fundapaz, that it was necessary for the *criollos* to make a restructuring of their livestock production way, that they had fewer animals and higher productivity, not full cycle production but calves production, and that it was necessary to lower the pressure on the vegetation and the livestock load (Jaime 2017).

The actions it carried out were seen as a step in a larger project in which land titles for indigenous people and *criollo* families were seen as a first step to carry out productive development programs. The focus Fundapaz has on productive development and its support for livestock production strategies must be considered a factor in the tensions between the players, particularly as Fundapaz understands that this contrasts with the idea Asociana has of the indigenous people and their conservationist model based on hunting and gathering.

For them, the indigenous people have to live like that, from hunting and gathering, with no animals or agriculture, a position many considered had been built on the basis of the first and great productive project, which had been implemented by the Anglicans and which failed, and also on the theory of hunting and gathering developed by a German consultant of Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* agencies²⁰ (Jaime 2017).

In this sense, Fundapaz understood that, while Asociana emphasized the contradictions between the productive and living modes of indigenous people and *criollos*, its work consisted in favoring the understanding and seeking to dissolve antagonisms between these groups.

Fundapaz acknowledged that its intervention produced tensions between indigenous people and *criollos*. Many of the tensions were linked to the fact that the organization had developed technical and productive assistance for the *criollos* ranchers, and this reinforced the image that the indigenous people already had of it as a threat. The organization was also aware that the clashes between these groups had clearly begun before its arrival to the region. In a way, I understand that these factors were considered in their strategy for working with the *criollos* when they sought to transform the agreement into a mechanism to balance tensions and conflicts between the groups. At least this was what one of the Fundapaz technicians told me he had tried to do:

I interceded a lot to convince the *criollos* to be part of it. That is to say, when the dialogue began...There were always asymmetric relations between the *criollos* and the natives, and to recognize 400 thousand hectares for the natives and 243 thousand for them...To recognize more to the natives when they have said that they do not used the land... Convincing the *criollos* to recognize more land for the indigenous communities was one of the most difficult parts of the work, and I believe the essential part of the process. Without that, there would be nothing. Without that, there would be nothing or the claim would still be going around. It seems to me that that was my great contribution: to show that it was possible, that it was not bad, and that it was fair. I do not know if this is the correct word, but there was some justice in that proportion for the distribution (Augusto 2017).

The process of land distribution concluded with the recognition of 400 thousand hectares for indigenous communities and 243 thousand hectares for *criollo* families. The surface identified as territory of traditional indigenous use reached 530 thousand hectares. In order to achieve greater compensation for the *criollos*, they ceded 130,000 areas of little use. The fact that the claimed areas were superimposed meant that a relocation plan for those *criollo* families affected began to be organized. Through the land restitution process, which involved claiming, mapping and narrating, distributing and accrediting presence in the space, I sought to highlight the forms collaborative relationships and tensions between denominational NGOs assume, and the interconnections with international denominational cooperation agencies from the perspective of one of the NGOs leading the process. In order to explain how this network of collaborative relationships was woven, I reconstructed the origins of Fundapaz in the 1970s, based on an analysis of life stories.

Agents of the Religious Development Policy: Incupo and Fundapaz

Several of the dioceses of Northeastern Argentina were created in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and are grouped under the banner of fighting poverty through the development of pastoral work. Influenced by liberation theology and the renovation of the Catholic Church, but also concerned about the living conditions of thousands of producers in Northern Argentina, the prelates of the Northeast released the letter entitled "The Bishops of the Northeast Speak to Their People" in 1969. On it, they make public the harsh living conditions of rural people in terms of health, education, housing, justice, and food. These affirmations were based on a diagnosis the Diocese of Reconquista had commissioned, under Misereor²¹ recommendation, to the Center for the Economic Development

of Latin America (DESAL, for its Spanish acronym), a Chilean institute (Murtagh 2013), which determined that “the main cause of poverty was the illiteracy that plagued the rural population.” The diagnosis was financed by Misereor and was the starting point for the subsequent elaboration and presentation of a project to the same agency.

The rural inhabitants were loggers, farmhands, and laborers from the North of Santa Fe, the provinces of Chaco, Formosa, and Santiago del Estero, a great majority of whom had lost their jobs with the closing of *La Forestal*, an English company in charge of the forest exploitation in the *Chaco santafesino* [area of the Chaco region belonging to the province of Santa Fe] since the last quarter of the 19th century, and which had the *Cuña Boscosa* [forest area in the province of Santa Fe] as its focus. The end of this regional economy altered the life of the populations and forest towns that had emerged as a response to the industry needs in earlier times (Brac 2015).

This was the context of the province of Santa Fe when, in 1969, the Bishop of Reconquista, Monsignor Iriarte, promoted the formation of the Institute of Popular Culture (Incupo, for its Spanish acronym) from a pastoral group, with the objective of developing a literacy program. “There was a lot of illiteracy in those forests [of the *Cuña Boscosa santafesina*] that were so huge and without roads,” recalled one of the founders of Fundapaz who had had the opportunity to visit the area accompanied by Incupo’s founder.²¹

The literacy program developed by Incupo took different sources of inspiration: “human promotion,” a Christian concept of importance since the end of the Second Vatican Council, which means an integral human development: the promotion of the person, of his family and the community; a radio literacy experience with adult peasants carried out in the late 1940s by the priest Jose Joaquin Salcedo in Bocaya, Colombia, and the methodology and pedagogy of Paulo Freire based on his literacy proposal through the “prompt word” that promoted

a dialogue among adults based on their experiences through the use of slides, images, drawings, and photographs. The work adopted the method of the prompt word, and it merged itself with the Christian vision of human promotion. This was at least what one of the founders of Fundapaz recalled about the work carried out by Incupo:

The first sentence, the first word was home. The house as a family environment, as a refuge, a meeting place, as a social base, let's say. The words were transmitted on the radio; they were given the contents of the words. There were about 20 prompt words: house, bread, tree. The words, the things, the experiences of the people, of their environment. So, Incupo, the way in which the program progressed, for example, was through an explanation to the people of how to improve the home, how to improve the house, how to make the adobe so that they have more, to improve it, how to make the roof, so that if they had a few *pesos*, they would paint it (the roof) white to avoid the *vinchuca* [*Triatoma infestans*] (Eugenio 2017)

Through the literacy program, Incupo, together with the diocesan Reconquista pastoral team, registers the need to have an organization that could support third-party initiatives from financial and technical-productive points of view. In this process the idea of creating a new organization then began to be devised. They called this organization Fundapaz. Its beginnings were possible due to the relationship between the bishop of the diocese and the Congregation of Sisters of the Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This female Catholic religious congregation of pontifical right owned a valuable real estate property in the heart of the city of Buenos Aires, which they decided to put up for sale. Influenced by the pastoral work that was being carried out in the Northeast, the directors of the congregation decided to undertake a missionary practice and to create and donate the funds to Fundapaz. The original proposal was that Fundapaz, through these funds, could “support the projects

of organizations, pastoral teams and human and diocesan promotion teams that shared a Christian development vision," recalled one of Fundapaz's pioneers.

Fundapaz was created in 1973 as a lay organization assuming a Christian mission and vision of development. The organization maintained a close relationship with the church and also with promotion teams.

The financial support to organizations was made through the funds Fundapaz had received from the donation. It supported projects of organizations such as the Association for the Promotion of Culture and Development (APCD, for its Spanish acronym) in 1986, promotion teams from the west of Formosa in Ciervo Petiso, among other initiatives.²³ One of the founders recalled the technical assistance provided by Fundapaz in an Incupo project in La Leonesa, a town in the East of Chaco province, in the Bermejo Department, on the border with the province of Formosa:

We start a job, with some preparation. Incupo had already worked in some areas and we started in the East of the Chaco. We supported that project technically. It was a group of Guaraní *criollos*, a mixture of Guaraní people and *criollos*, for them to improve their small production in the place (Eugenio 2017).

The first Fundapaz actions were framed in a complementary form within the activities Incupo had been developing. The close relationship that characterized both organizations was differentiated in their individual profiles, as one specialized in education and communication, while the other focused on the technical and financial aspects. This made their joint work seen as complementary. In the words of one of Fundapaz' pioneers:

Incupo had a charisma, a style that came from the social aspect. They were popular communicators, they worked on the radio. While the technical teams of Fundapaz have a

technical preponderance: veterinarians, agronomists, economists; the social appears later. At first the idea was that, with Incupo as example... They could not tell the farmer he needs to learn to read if he does not even have a potato to grow. That is why the work was done simultaneously (Eugenio 2017).

Fundapaz continued their involvement with third-party projects financially and technically for a while until it started to develop its own projects and sought financing. Its first project at the beginning of the 1980s was in the *Cuña Boscosa santafesina* and was financed by the Inter-American Development Bank. In the 1970s, the government of Santa Fe had implemented a plan of colonization and land delivery, through which they had benefited many of the former loggers of *La Forestal*, and the idea then was that they could make productive the plots they had received through the project. One of my interlocutors defined the work carried out as “a plan for the removal of trunks, because the lands that had been stripped down of logs and the trunks were left, and to make the land productive for livestock and agriculture, it was necessary to remove the trunks.” The project was mainly a livestock project and was developed through two components: a technical and financial assistance and training component, and a portfolio for loans.²⁴ Incupo took charge of the promotion among the loggers’ families and the organization, while Fundapaz focused on technical assistance in productive matters. About that first project implemented by them, one of those who worked on the team recalled:

The loggers had received parcels of 180 and 200 hectares, I believe. Then, we gave them loans so they could hire a dismantling company. So that each small producer could clean those hectares. The company went and pulled the trunks out, left the field free, and they could have cows, they could have a vegetable garden and some cows with good pastures. We had to prepare the pastures. There was grass in that area. The credits were of, for example, one

thousand pesos. And with those one thousand Argentine pesos they bought X quantity of cows. We later found out how much the kilo of meat was in the market of Liniers, in Buenos Aires. The credit was equivalent to the kilo of meat (Eugenio 2017).

The various proposals the organizations undertook were conceived and developed during a period (1966-1973) of military civic dictatorship. The diocesan bishops of the North provided protection to the pastoral and development work the organizations undertook; nevertheless, their work did not stop being considered as an “incitement to the uprising in arms” and as a “threat” to order by the forces in power. These years were marked by persecutions, detentions, and disappearances; the demobilization of peasants and indigenous people meetings; the interruption of literacy programs; attempts to shut down projects and programs; and campaigns to spread fear that affected both organizations. One of my interviewees told me they were labeled “subversives” and, likewise, he recalled the performance of the Bishop of Reconquista, who had intervened as a lawyer on several occasions to obtain information on missing persons of the organizations, or for the freedom of some members.

The Incupo stations used the national radio network and many private radio stations in the North. They covered... at a given moment they covered all the (...) up to the moment when national radio, the military, the military government, questioned Incupo because they said it was disorienting people, and that they were there, hiding in the woods. [They said] that it was working socially with people, inciting them, let's say. Provoking them to rise up in arms. Then, they interrupted the national radio network. [...] I was detained twice and Silvia Pereda was also detained; with me twice because... [I also remember once that] we had gone with Silvia to the town of La Leonesa, Chaco. We went there and we had to go to a meeting with a group of ranchers. We arrived at noon, the heat was crazy. We

went around, it was noon, trying to find a place to buy something, even some bread and a drink. The little town was all unpaved roads, there was nothing. Everything was closed. We took a turn and, suddenly, we see in the rear view mirror, a bicycle watchman with a mauser on his shoulder coming towards us. We stopped and the guy told us we had to go to the police station. We went to the police station. "What are you doing?" "Well, we have a meeting." Then, this desperate guy used a telephone, an old one with a handle at that time. Well, they had us arrested until everything was cleared up. We stayed there a few hours until, I no longer remember how long, finally, they let us go to the meeting with the certainty that nothing was happening. We were in full meeting, on the side of a pretty little lagoon, we were there and, suddenly, a van, a pick-up with three or four policemen standing in the box, came to interrupt the meeting. You can imagine the people! The peasants would have been thinking "These people (us) what are they getting us into; what have we done wrong for this ...?" That was once. The truth is that with the military it was a difficult thing to work, they believed we were subversives (Eugenio 2017).

The technical-productive profile of Fundapaz was shaped both from a methodology standpoint and from a way of undertaking the work. As stated by Occhipinti, the organization chose "not to emphasize a religious message in favor of a technical mission," but the languages of commitment and social justice ideals were intertwined with the technical vocabulary (2005: 107). In the Christian vision of development centered on "human promotion" that framed their work, they combined and articulated metaphors of "progress." Its project was based on the idea that it was necessary to "improve" the conditions of the population in a certain way by offering them technical assistance in production.²⁵ In this sense, as stated by Murray Li (2007: 2), it is interesting to note that "improvement schemes make sense to the extent in which they can frame problems in terms of viable technical solutions." This suggests the fact that not all but some problems were identified. In the case of

Fundapaz, the solutions to the problems regarding the people's living conditions came hand in hand with being able to offer them support from the socio-productive point of view. On this point my interlocutors, repeatedly and in different ways, stated:

When production improves, making a vegetable garden, for example. If they produced cotton, but they bought the lettuce in the village, then we taught them how to create a vegetable garden, farm production, chickens, to have some pigs, some goats or sheep, and some dairy cows, do you see it? Improving the living conditions in every way, of course, helping them improve their houses too... (Eugenio 2017).

Our main job is the organization of people. If we visited a producer, the first job when visiting a producer was: And, you, "do you have a relationship with your neighbors?" "No, it's far away." Well, then, the idea was to push them together. Both in the Incupo groups, the learning groups, and outside them, where Incupo was not present. The producer was invited to do it. Tell me, "do you have a female pig? Do you have a male pig?" "No, I do not have a male pig," "And do you know if your neighbors have one?" "Yes, I think he has" "Why don't you ask him for it and you offer him something else?" (Eugenio 2017).

This is a job that is not appreciated, you do not see the work. Because it's not like building a neighborhood, building some houses that, once you finish, it remains and you see that it's beautiful and everything. But this job is not a job that you can see. But you notice all the advances in the communities, how people are respected today. Then it is a job, in which you see all the changes that have taken place... Families that live well, that live better than how they used to live before. That have started to teach their children that this should be continued. Because it is the most important thing. Because everything is fine, the motorbikes come, the cell phones, the computers, but they have to continue to maintain their culture, their language, their way of living peacefully as they used to (Augusta 2013).

The desire to improve appears in the most varied forms in the testimonies cited. What is never in doubt is that it is necessary to improve the population's living conditions. The most appropriate method to achieve this would seem to be the one offered through productive techniques, or at least that seemed to be the way Fundapaz considered the most correct one. "To produce more and better" appear as the formula to achieve an improvement. "Improving" or "better living" imply leaving some things behind, but not everything. As the last testimony illustrates, people are expected to "move forward" in certain areas, but others, such as culture, language and peaceful way of life, must not be altered. The desire to improve can be thought of as an expression of governmentality (Foucault 2006), which seems to be trying to model human behavior by means of calculated methods.

The actions of Fundapaz extended to other provinces: Chaco, Corrientes, Santiago del Estero, and Salta. In this province, it carried out initiatives in two areas: from 1980, in the town of Los Blancos; Embarcación from 1987-1988; and later, from 2000, in Santa Victoria. Los Blancos and Santa Victoria are towns located in the Rivadavia Department while Embarcación is located in Departamento San Martín.

The possibility of expanding to other provinces was related to its relationships with diocesan teams in the North and also to the fact that it received financing for its projects from different cooperation agencies. In general, the cooperation agencies supporting these initiatives were of the same denominational origin. One of my interviewees referred to this in the following way:

Fundapaz had knowledge of the agencies of the church or of the areas of the church. In Europe, there was more supply than demand. Fundapaz has the advantage of starting a relationship with the agencies from the beginning, towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. There were many agencies with funds. The relationship begins and there

was recognition that allowed us to gain access to a lot of financing: Misereor, *Pan para el Mundo*, Adveniat; French Caritas; Wilde Ganzen from Holland; Cardenal Léger, and the Italian CEI.²⁶ Fundapaz came to receive financing from 12 agencies between 1980 and 1996! (Jaime 2017).

The collaborative relationships between non-governmental organizations, ecclesiastic dioceses, and financing cooperation agencies laid the foundations for a way of carrying out development activities in the region. In the case of Fundapaz, its development policy began as an initiative that was complementary to the work that other organizations were performing, until it advanced towards the construction of its own profile. This policy articulated a common vision and concern regarding human promotion together with different players (the church, cooperation agencies, and other local non-governmental organizations, many of the same denominational origin), and developed a specific imprint regarding technical and productive aspects from their participation in processes of land restitution and management.

Conclusions

This paper sheds light on the interconnections between different players within local and global spaces framing their actions within the field of development policies. Through an ethnographic approach, I explained the value of understanding the interface of the global and the local, with attention to the relationships that makes it possible for local cultural spaces to be linked to transnational cultural flows. I highlighted how interconnections are based on collaboration and alliance relationships that do not develop externally to tensions and differences based on the position of the players involved. In these interconnections, I detailed how a development policy was modeled, and how this in turn legitimized a way of acting

and being present by one of the local NGOs, which played a leading role in the process. The interconnections were shown as an instance replete with dialogues and frictions in the context of a broader dispute regarding the development policies defined by NGOs. The analysis shed light on how NGOs are born within a context that includes a void in development policies from the provincial and national state point of view, through which the NGOs found a favorable field to carry out development policies.

The reconstruction of the emergency process of denominational NGOs and their first development actions and experiences in the *Chaco salteño* highlighted how a network of collaborative relationships between these local organizations and cooperation agencies is woven. The analysis traced that first moment in which the relationships between religious players and NGOs originated, and how, from then on, the social work that Catholic and Anglican missionaries carried out with some indigenous people and *criollos* in the area was channeled through local non-governmental organizations. Development appears as a new framework to carry out the social work of the churches. This new way the churches found to be present through the formation of NGOs did not mean these became an extension of the former, but it rather reflected on the privileged way of channeling help. From then on, it can be observed that in several of the analyzed NGOs, a religious, moral, and rights language is articulated within a technical development discourse. I have also analyzed some factors that made possible the emergence and development of denominational NGOs, finding in this sense that the support they received from the international financing agencies of the same religious origin played an important role. These relationships of collaboration shaped the strategy developed in terms of funding, which, as it emerges from the work, is based fundamentally on church agencies. Those collaborations allowed the NGOs to construct themselves from a position of

relative autonomy with respect to the national and provincial states.

The analysis of the Pilcomayo Project hinted at how denominational NGOs with different views and development policies developed collaborative relationships that prioritized the construction of alliances within a paradoxical tension of finding a way to present a claim to the national and provincial state, while modeling their claim in accordance with the demands of these states. The analysis of the project focused on the perspective of one of the NGOs and shows the role that NGOs undertook for the claim to be channeled, adjusted, and modeled to the State's guidelines, such as its condition of recognizing both indigenous people and *criollos* as inhabitants of the disputed lands. Thus, the NGOs appeared at different moments of the process carrying out state functions (carrying out a census, elaborating diagnoses, maps, producing reports, etc.), with the objective of consolidating the rights of indigenous people and *criollos*. The organization and awareness work that Fundapaz undertook regarding the rights of the *criollos*, among other tasks, hints at how this group was formed within a simultaneous process of recognition of the scope of their rights and the creation of a land claim, a claim that, in order to be accepted, was framed within the guidelines imposed by the State, which validated its actions and recognized its legitimacy, accepting the state regulation of the lawsuit. In other words, the NGOs validated the State's "framing" of the natives' and *criollos*' land reclamation. The NGOs actions were, at different times, crossed by a framework that led them to assume as natural that the restitution of lands was possible insofar as the rights of both groups were recognized, in that they took the form of a civil organization and accredited occupation within the terms established by the State.

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NOTES

- 1 I carried out ethnographic interviews with the NGO members and performed participant observation during fieldwork campaigns in Salta in 2012 and 2013.
- 2 The "*criollos*" are open-land ranchers who have occupied the area for three or four generations, particularly in the interfluvial areas, in isolated family settlements known as "posts." In general, the posts are located several kilometers away from the nearest neighbor. The term "post" is used to refer to the house, the pens, the ponds, while the grazing is carried out in large areas along the length and width of the fiscal lots.
- 3 Three military dictators followed one another: Juan C. Onganía (1966-1970); Roberto M. Levingston (1970-1971); and A. A. Lanusse (1971-1973).
- 4 The pastoral orientation of the Catholic Church had emerged as "a different way of conceiving religious practice linked to social processes" (Suarez 2016: 52). For some analysts, the Catholic church "had become a 'battleground' and a place of 'protest against poverty'" (Kearney 1986), while others considered this occurred in parallel to the Vatican intensifying its disciplinary agenda, due to fear of the radical projects within the church and in particular, of liberation theology, in 1980 (Alonso 1986, cited in Scheper Hughes and Campos Machado 2016).
- 5 In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the bishops V. Zazpe of Santa Fe, A. Devoto of Goya, J. J. Iriarte of Reconquista, I. S. Di Stefano of Saenz Peña, J. A. Marozzi of Resistencia, R. M. Scozzina of Formosa, J. Kemerer of Posadas, and F. Vicentin of Corrientes were in charge of the dioceses of Northeastern Argentina. Bishops like Di Stefano and Kemerer retreated from their more combative positions (Verbitsky 2009).
- 6 Endepa is related to the Episcopal Commission of Aboriginal Pastoral (CEPA, for its Spanish acronym), which belongs to the Episcopal Conference of Argentina.

- 7 The foundation *Mision La Paz* was the most ambitious project of the missionary work (Carrasco 2009).
- 8 The fiscal lots occupy the North-East extreme of the provincial territory, where the border area constitutes a tripartite boundary between Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.
- 9 The Association of Aboriginal Communities, Lhaka Honhat, was born in 1992 when everything seemed to indicate that the provincial government would grant the title of ownership of their lands to the indigenous communities living on the plots. The indigenous organization unifies a group of villages-communities-headquarters in fiscal lots 55 and 14. There existed a government project to divide lot 55 in order to grant individual titles of parcels of land to each community and *criollo* family. In 1991, the communities of the fiscal lot 55 initiated a territorial survey that gave shape to the claim and which included the two fiscal lots. The first claim of 1984 for lot 55 by the indigenous communities included 243 hectares (Personal communication Morita Carrasco). A detailed study of this process can be found in Carrasco (2009).
- 10 The country recognized in 1994, through the reform of the National Constitution, the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of indigenous people. The province of Salta, in its reform of the Provincial Constitution of 1998, recognized the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the indigenous peoples of the province. Prior to the 1994 reform, Law No. 23,302/85 had already created the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (an entity in charge of the recognition and registration of native peoples), and other ad hoc bodies from then on. The provinces did the same. In the province of Salta, Law No. 6,373 of June 1986 (called "Promotion and Development of the Aborigine"), which created the Provincial Aboriginal Institute (IPA, for its Spanish acronym), was established. In 2000; it was replaced by Law No. 7121 for the "Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Salta," which in turn created the Provincial Institute of Indigenous Peoples of Salta (IPPIS, for its Spanish acronym).
- 11 The mapping was financed with the support of Survival International, *Para para el Mundo*, ICCO (Inter-ecclesiastical Organization for Development Cooperation), and the Anglican church of the North of Argentina (Carrasco 2009: 35)
- 12 Fundapaz had participated in a land claim that began in 1989 and ended in 1997 with the granting of land deeds in the name of the Wichi communities and *criollo* families in the town of Los Blancos, South of the Rivadavia Department. Sixty thousand hectares were granted to 200 families. With the titles, a second stage of relocation

and compensation to the *criollo* families, investments and technical assistance in infrastructure projects, and the creation of coexistence agreements for areas of common resources began. These actions, such as the measurements of the 60 thousand hectares, were financed with projects from the Misereor and *Pan para el Mundo* agencies, and they presented a project to the European Community through an Italian NGO: *Asociacion de Amigos de Espiritu Santo* [Association of Friends of the Holy Spirit]. This NGO had financed rural education projects linked to the EFAs (English: School of Agricultural Family). The joint work of Fundapaz and the pastoral team of the diocese of Oran was carried out in the fiscal lot 23. There, the pastoral team worked with the Wichi community of Los Baldes and Fundapaz with *criollos*. For its part, Fundapaz worked with *criollos* and natives in fiscal lots 15, 17 and 19. The entire process of land delivery was jointly carried out by the bishopric of Oran and Fundapaz.

- 13 The Velez Sarsfield Civil Code (1869), in its section 4015, establishes the ownership of real property and other real rights based on the continuous possession during twenty years, with the intention of having the thing for oneself, without the need of title and in good faith on the part of the possessor, with the exception of easements for whose prescription a title is needed.
- 14 OFC is a civil association and has legal personality.
- 15 The provincial government created a Provincial Executing Unit in 2006 to carry out the process of accreditation of rights. This process was carried out in two parts. The first one ended in 2006 with the presentation of approximately 60% of *criollo* records. The second stage ended in 2009 and there was an advancement of 30%.
- 16 During J. Carlos Romero's first administration, the integration of the province to the world capital market was promoted. With this idea, the creation of the Southern Commercial Integration Zone (ZICOSUR, for its Spanish acronym) was promoted, which included Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and the provinces of Northern Argentina. J. Carlos Romero was the governor of the province of Salta (1995-2007) and is a member of the *Partido Justicialista* [Justicialist Party].
- 17 Misereor receives resources coming from donations, but two thirds of the projects' budget come from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of the German government.
- 18 Lhaka Honhat had presented its complaint after the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation rejected an appeal for protection, previously presented in the province, from the construction of an international

bridge in Mision La Paz, which affected the communities (Carasco 2009). The friendly settlement is a mechanism provided by the IACHR as a mediation period between the petitioners and the State. It is anticipated that the way towards a friendly resolution is through a series of meetings to reach agreements.

19 As I do not intend to carry out a detailed reconstruction of the process, I will only say that, at one point, during the talks, the provincial government abandoned the meeting and unilaterally presented a proposal for a "resolution" to the Inter-American Commission.

20 The theory of this German anthropologist and consultant Volker von Bremen had great influence on the region's development organizations. His thesis consists in proposing an environmental philosophy of the indigenous people of Chaco through which they would have passive attitudes towards the environment. This explains why the indigenous people do not seek to transform nature through production, but seek their integration with it and its conservation (Gordillo 2006: 280). His work is a critical analysis of the development projects implemented in the *Gran Chaco* region and was commissioned by a group of German churches to understand the failure of productive projects among indigenous people.

21 Murtagh (2013) signals that the relations between the bishops of these dioceses and German organizations such as Misereor and Adveniat began during the Second Vatican Council, where there were meetings between bishops and delegates from these agencies.

22 The life stories of the founders and members who participated in this first stage were central to reconstructing the emergency context of these NGOs (See also Murtagh, 2013). With this objective, I carried out a significant number of in-depth interviews with the founders, as well as with those who make up the technical staff. I do not use their names in order to preserve their anonymity.

23 The creation of the first School of the Agricultural Family of Argentina also took place in the 1960s, in Reconquista, Santa Fe. The pastoral teams of Bishop Iriarte, among whom were the Pereda, participated in its creation. This educational proposal was inspired by a French experience of alternative training promoted by the church and developed by the French priest Pierre Granereau.

24 The financial assistance was carried out through a loan portfolio. They were ten-year loans and the loan operation was implemented through the Rural Society.

25 My purpose is not to condemn, but to understand the rationality of improvement schemes by focusing on development policies that aimed to change a state of affairs.

- 26 Adveniat is a German Catholic organization that supports the Catholic Church initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean. Caritas France is a service of the French Catholic church that provides moral and material support throughout the world. Wilde Ganzen is a Dutch organization, based in Netherlands, that supports people in developing countries by funding projects from small scale development organizations such as NGO's, foundations, private initiatives. The Italian Episcopal Conference is the Committee and Service for charitable interventions in favor of the countries of the Third World.

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