

Educational transformations, territorial transformations: on the expansion of formative school experiences in the intercultural rural space of Misiones (Argentina)

Transformaciones educativas, transformaciones territoriales: sobre la ampliación de las experiencias formativas en el espacio social rural intercultural de Misiones (Argentina)

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Abstract

In this article, we reconstruct the process of expansion of formative experiences among the Mbya Guaraní people in the province of Misiones (Argentina). From a historical-ethnographic approach that favors a historical and contextual reading of the relationship between schools and the intercultural rural social space. With this perspective, we account for the historical ups and downs of “the school” of Jakutinga from a complex historical plot in which the catholic church, the state educational policies and the indigenous men and women become visible as actors of a process in which the territorial issue and the educational demands are intertwined. Thus, we report on the transformation of this institution that was originally a school to teach literacy to indigenous adults, Mbya-Guarani, which in 2009 became a secondary school with an artistic orientation exclusively for Mbya youth, which by retaking the pedagogy of alternation became known as the “EFA of Jakutinga” and since 2015 enabled the incorporation of non-indigenous students, to finally, as of 2020, change its orientation to Agro-Environment.

Palabras clave: rural social space – Interculturality – formative experiences – Mbya-guarani students – Secondary rural education.

Resumen

En este artículo reconstruimos el proceso de ampliación de las experiencias formativas entre los y las mbya-guaraníes de la provincia de Misiones (Argentina). Adoptamos un enfoque histórico-etnográfico para abordar la relación entre las escuelas y el espacio social rural intercultural. Desde esta perspectiva evidenciamos los vaivenes históricos de “la escuela” de Jakutinga a partir de una compleja trama en la que

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cobran visibilidad la iglesia católica, las políticas estatales educativas y los y las indígenas como actores de un proceso en el que se imbrica la cuestión territorial con las demandas educativas. A partir del derrotero de la escuela, damos cuenta de la transformación de esta institución que fue en sus orígenes una escuela para alfabetizar a adultos indígenas mbya-guaraníes, que en 2009 se transformó en una secundaria con orientación artística exclusiva para jóvenes mbya, que al retomar la pedagogía de la alternancia pasó a ser conocida como la “EFA de Jakutinga”, desde 2015 habilitó la incorporación de estudiantes no indígenas y, finalmente, a partir de 2020 cambió su orientación de Arte a Agro-Ambiente.

Palabras clave: espacio social rural – interculturalidad – experiencias formativas – estudiantes mbya-guaraní – escuela secundaria rural.

Introduction

In this article we will analyze the expansion of the formative experiences of the Mbya-Guarani within the transformation of “the school” of Jakutinga, an indigenous community located in the southeast of Misiones, Argentina, which cannot be understood apart from the transformations of what we call here the intercultural rural social space (Cragolino, 2001). The school where we conducted our ethnographic work is located in the rural area of Cerro Romero (Municipality of Gobernador Roca) and is now called the “Tajy Poty” Intercultural Bilingual Institute (IIBTP), although it is also known as “Jakutinga EFA”. 70% of its students are indigenous and 30% “creole”. It is recognized as the only intercultural School of the Agricultural Family (EFA) of the province for having adopted the pedagogy of alternation and teaching linked to its environment, two aspects that characterize that group of schools nucleated in the Union of Schools of Agricultural Families of Misiones (UNEFAM).

This institution was created to offer literacy programs to Mbya-Guarani indigenous adults, with a boarding school regime and room to house whole families who attended it from different communities¹ of the province of Misiones, Argentina. In 2009 it became a secondary school only for Mbya youths, and since 2015 it began to incorporate “colonist” and “creole”² – that is, not indigenous – students. In 2020 it changed its orientation from Art to Agro-Environment.

Following an ethnographic historical approach (Rockwell, 2009), we have since 2017 done research on the links between Mbya-Guarani communities and schools located in the southeast of Misiones (Golé, Rodríguez Celín, 2017; Golé, 2023). By analyzing formative experiences, the research presented here anchors its scale of analysis on everyday life (Heller, 1977), understood as a fabric in which structural and historical are simultaneously experienced and constructed by individuals. Thus, in order to understand the expansion of the formative experiences of Mbya-

1 The term *community* responds to the denomination given by the Argentinian State to Mbya residential units. This is a consequence of a legal process that went beyond the juridical level and is used in the everyday life of Misiones to refer to Mbya-Guarani villages. We will provide further information in the methodological section.

2 The social structure of the province of Misiones is made up mostly by population that identifies itself ethnically as Mbya-guarani, colonist, and creole. The latter two correspond to descendants of European and frontier migrants, respectively.

Guaranis linked to the transformations of that school we need to anchor them on intercultural educational policies.

Initially, in Misiones, these policies have reproduced the mandates of sociocultural assimilation (Cebolla, 2005) and have later been reduced to dimensions of the tongue and culture, promoting a folklorized, de-historicized and idealized rescue of diversity (Padawer, Hecht, García, Enriz, Borton, 2017) rather than regarding them as emerging from conflictive relations between structural inequalities and sociocultural differences (Diez, 2016).

Based on our experience in that institution and due to our concern to learn about the transformation of relationships between the rural social space (Cragolino, 2001) and the “intercultural experience of life” (Rockwell, 1997), we want to learn more specifically how the transformations of educational and productive processes in the province Misiones (Argentina) that structure the expansion of the formative experiences in the school of Jakutinga are linked, which challenges and opportunities are offered by the pedagogy of alternation (planned for agricultural producer families in the province of Misiones, especially colonists) to the Tajy Poty proposal for indigenous youths, and what are the implications of this expansion of formative experiences for the social reproduction of the Mbya in the intercultural rural social space.

Methodology

In this research work we use mostly a historical-ethnographic approach (Rockwell, 2009) to address the expansion of the formative experiences of the Mbya-Guaranis in a school in the intercultural rural social space (Cragolino, 2001) of Misiones. Throughout our field work we have sought to establish continuous contact with the communities, the school, and the students, in order to conduct participant observations (Batallán, García, 1992) in different institutional spaces of practice, as well as dialogical approaches, especially informal conversations, open and biographical interviews (Achilli, 2005). We had seven field work stays, each of them lasting for a week, in which we spent the night in the school, visited communities (Andresito, Katupyry, Tape Porã, el Chapá, Mbokajaty, Guaporajty, Jakutinga), walked through areas (Yacutinga,³ Pastoreo) and nearby cities (Gobernador Roca and San Ignacio), attended regional festivals (Fiesta Provincial de la Mandioca and Fiesta Provincial del Horticultor, Fiesta Nacional del Inmigrante), conducted workshops with youths, among other activities such as participating in the First Regional Network Forum “Intercultural Education and Rurality: Post Pandemic Effects”, held by the school in Gobernador Roca. We also linked up with teachers and principals of the primary schools in which we conducted previous field work (Instituto Katupyry Poty) and with teachers, students and graduates of the Professor Degree Program in Agrarian Science and Environmental Protection (PROCAYPA) from which several teachers in the institute were alumni.

³ Yacutinga is located in the Municipality of Gobernador Roca, in the Department of San Ignacio. The community bears the same name as the nearby area, although in the Mbya phonetical transcription it is written as Jakutinga.

We sought to situate the formative experiences through socio-demographic statistical data (National Population Census, 2022; National Agropecuarian Census, 2018) and national educational data (National Ministry of Education-Annual Data Gathering, 2023; Prudent, Paredes, 2023) in order to inscribe them in the social, historical, and productive context. To the same end, we have analyzed secondary sources such as norms and documents drafted by state institutions (Muzzopapa, Villalta, 2011), especially ministerial resolutions at the middle level of the EIB provincial modality, laws regarding the recognition of indigenous people such as the “Regime of comprehensive promotion of the communities” (Ley 2727/1989), seeking to identify their objectives, mandates, and lines of action. The data analysis is conducted permanently by identifying themes, social categories or fabrics interpreted through theoretical categories that allow us to give new meanings to the ones attributed by the protagonists to the events (Rockwell, 2009). In this respect, throughout the article we understand *community* as a social category in use. The term is proposed through the national normativity (Law 23302/1985; Law 26160/2006) and the provincial one (Ley 2727/1989), although important warnings have been made for the case of the Mbya-Guarani, pointing out how this reference circumvents the recognition of this population as “nation” or “indigenous people” (Gorosito, 2013).⁴ Likewise, attending to discussions in anthropology (Mercado, 1989; Neufeld, 1988) about the category, we note that it must be viewed critically, understanding that the term essentializes and blurs social relationships which are the product of historical processes and relationships of social inequality.

Lastly, the historical-ethnographic approach maintains that a theoretical positioning is fundamental for the construction of research problems that guide the comprehensive description (Rockwell, 2009). For this reason, in the next section we will present these theoretical standpoints along with the presentation of the school.

Theoretical standpoints for the reconstruction of the formative experiences at Tajy Poty

The secondary school where we located our study is the IIB Tajy Poty (“blooming pink trumpet tree”, in the Mbya-Guarani language), located in the rural area of Cerro Romero (Municipality of Gobernador Roca, neighboring San Ignacio and belonging to the department of the same name). The school is located next to the Mbya community of Jakutinga, in 75 hectares acquired by the bishopric of Posadas in the early 1980, thanks to the intervention of priest José Marx. The

⁴ The use of the term *community* to refer to contemporary Mbya residential units in Misiones responds to Law N° 2727, sanctioned in 1989 and known as “Law of the Aboriginal” (now called “Regime of comprehensive promotion of communities”), which led to territorial fragmentation and the multiplication of smaller units, recognized based on a regime of juridical personality and enrollment in a record. It replaced a previous norm, Law N° 2435, called “Law of the Indian”, which recognized the autonomy of the Guarani in Misiones, the “Guarani people” as a subject of law, and the reassurance of their traditional itinerant way of life. The latter had a historical reparation inspiration and was based on a program of systematic consultation with the Guarani. That work was carried out in the different settlements of the province by the Intercultural Linkage Group of the National University of Misiones, coordinated by Ana María Gorosito Kramer, and the Aboriginal Division of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Education of the province. Thus, the land that Law 2435 recognized as belonging to the “Guarani people” became the property of each separate community (Seró, Kowalski, 1993).

institute is also known as the EFA of Jakutinga because it follows the proposal of the EFAs, based on the principles of the pedagogy of alternation.

Like the EFAs of the province, Tajy Poty's history is linked to Catholic educational initiatives and participates in the orientations corresponding to privately managed schools. In this context, it is supervised by the Provincial Service of Private Teaching of Misiones (SPEMP), and also shares in the proposals organized by the EIB Area of the provincial Ministry of Education for public schools. As we will detail below, it is one of the few secondary schools in the country that combine the intercultural and the rural modalities. To analyze the everyday school life in which these modalities, we will present a brief history of the educational policy framework that constitute its structure.

We have followed the notion of formative experiences (Rockwell, 1995), which refers to the set of everyday practices and interactions in which the actors participate actively, appropriating knowledge, values, and ways of life. This notion proposes considering the processes of social and cultural reproduction through the different learning environments experienced in daily life. By learning about the formative experiences of teachers and students at Tajy Poty we were able to identify different expressions of the diversity of identities at Misiones, as follows: teachers who were alumni of PROCAYPA and do some kind of colonist production, other alumni of PROCAYPA and other EFAs who identify themselves as creole, indigenous teachers, Mbya-Guarani students, creole and colonist students. Within these daily interactions, we cannot help but notice the cultural complexity of the society of Misiones in its pluri-ethnic particularity, a population that comprises over twenty different nationalities (Gallero, Krautstoft, 2010). Likewise, given the importance of taking into consideration the Mbya presence in the rural space of Misiones and their agency as constructors of it from a specific and systematically subordinated social position, we observe that it is necessary to highlight its intercultural character.

Hence, we propose the notion of intercultural rural social space, following the conceptualizations of two authors: first, the notion already mentioned of rural social space, proposed by Elisa Cragolino (2001) in her doctoral dissertation, in which she analyzes the link between education and social reproduction strategies in families of peasant origins in the north of Córdoba (Argentina). The author defines that concept to take into consideration both "the social determinations that have an impact on the practices of the families and the schools, as well as the social environment of which they form part" (*ibid.*: 24). Thus, we propose putting aside notions such as rural community used in discussions about education, which tend to view individuals and social groups as homogeneous totalities, and that of agrarian social structure, which does not allow us to address the individuals' experiences.

Secondly, we expand the reference to Elsie Rockwell, following what she defines as the "intercultural experience of most people in the world" (1997: 29), also quoted by Padawer and Diez (2015) as "intercultural life experience". The author analyzes the cultural dynamics in the

school as a result of the daily life shared by different individuals, and explains the importance of viewing culture as a product of the social contingencies and historical moments lived by these people. Hence, we must understand the intercultural experiences of life in the social formations that make up the intercultural rural social space.

In previous work (Golé, 2020, 2023) we analyzed the transformations of the know-how implied in productive activities linked to the recreation of the *ñande reko*; that is, the “way of being Mbya”, which we linked to disputes over the control of an intercultural rural social space, which since the 1970s has been increasingly conditioned by productive models trending towards agroindustry and the growing participation in the school where they “learn to cope” (Padawer, 2014) with the contradictions generated in the *ñande reko* by the relationships with the *jurua* (white people). Since then, practices that reconfigure that way of life have begun to develop: a gradual insertion in schooling for almost five decades, work as Indigenous Assistant Teacher (ADI) for two decades and still in a process of formalization of professional conditions, the lengthening of middle-level in the last fifteen years, and an emerging teaching formation. Likewise, and linked to the productive dimension, these transformations are expressed in the recent organization of some Mbya families to commercialize their crops as an option that allows them to spend more time in the community instead of working for others and, linked to all these processes, a trend to settle for longer in the same community.

These practices implied in the transformation of Mbya daily life involve individual and social strategies of diversification to have access to the elements required for social reproduction in the new contexts which, according to Mura (2011), are accompanied by increasingly flexible family organizations. These educational and productive transformations show the relationship between an increasingly limited access to the wilderness and its resources, which is very salient in contemporary indigenous territorial claims, and at the same time the establishment of Mbya communities near cities like San Ignacio to have access to work linked to the *jurua* and state resources such as hospitals and schools. Thus, following Mura (2011), we may see that simultaneously with the transformations of the rural social space the technical experiences are diversified by the expansion of the cultural and technical *stocks* through new productive and educational practices among which we point out the schooling oriented towards the Agroenvironmentambiente.

Reflecting on practical and situated knowledge has been important to address the intersections between education, territory, and knowledge. We will rely on different contributions to inquire about the participation of the Mbya in the dispute for the dynamics adopted by the school. From different theoretical frameworks but in the same direction, we will also rely on some productions that follow the line about situated learning started by Lave and Wenger (1991), who propose that the practices of construction of knowledge generate processes of identification based on common work that shape inherently conflictive and unequal commu-

nities. We will first refer to Briseño-Roa (2023), who analyzes indigenous knowledge indigenous and the community life of teachers, students, and elders in indigenous community secondary schools of Oaxaca (Mexico). Since 2004, these schools have followed an alternative public model based on the autonomy of the communities to choose contents to be worked on through research projects. Through the notion of education based on the territory (*land-based education*, in the original), Briseño-Roa argues that indigenous knowledge is a more of a practice rather than an object, thus questioning school practices centered around the possession of knowledge by the teachers and the textbooks and displacing the school as a space of learning with greater prestige (*ibid.*, 2023).

We continue with the contributions of Padawer (2011, 2014) and Hirsch & Padawer (2024), centered on ethnographic studies in the province of Misiones, which study the transformations of learning spaces and help to view them as environments in which a practical know-how is produced. Padawer (2011, 2014) inquires into the formative experiences of the young Mbya and colonist generations linked to the productive activities of the adults. For the Mbya, these activities are modified by an ever more limited access to the wilderness, which affects aspects such as the acquisition of materials and foods or the recognition of many species of animals and plants, and definitely the repertoire of indigenous knowledge. Thus, she identifies technical changes in the way that productive activities are conducted (especially hunting, gathering and handcrafts) and inquires about the role of the school in the Mbya students' learning of traditional practices. She also discusses the processes of vindication at school of the Mbya referents of communities in San Ignacio, which identify the importance of the EIB to foster the learning of Reading and writing in Spanish for the younger generations, and value the school experience as an important practice to "learn to cope" with the relationship with non-indigenous people better than their ancestors, in a context of ecological, productive, territorial, and social changes (*ibid.*, 2014). In turn, Hirsch & Padawer (2024) analyze the EFA in Misiones to reexamine the theory/practice dichotomies in specific educational and school contexts where articulated agricultural and domestic practices are central components of the educational proposal.

We anchor our conceptualization of the expansion of formative experiences on the theoretical-methodological elaborations presented in this section and referred to consider other types of production of knowledge and practices as part of the repertoires of knowledge generated in the rural social space of Misiones. We also inquire about the challenges and opportunities present in the daily school life of the current EFAs of Jakutinga where, articulated to the local educational and productive transformations, these new modes of *ñande reko* and "learning to cope" with relationships of the *jurua* are constructed and practiced.

Development

The rural e intercultural educational policies: some references to situate the process of expansion of the Mbya-Guarani formative experiences in Misiones

Different contributions analyze the rural secondary educational policies in Argentina and notice the progress towards the schooling of young people since 2004 (Schmuck, 2020; Olmos, Palladino, 2019; Escobar, 2017). Montesinos *et al.* (2009) summarize much of the debate around the obligatory character of middle school, highlighting the instrumental value of a certificate as an expectation of a better future insertion into the job market and society. They also address the expansion of the secondary level that began in the context of the educational reforms at the end of the twentieth century, characterized by the incorporation of social groups that had historically been denied access to that educational level. The importance of National Education Law N° 26.206 (LEN), sanctioned in 2006, stands out for having established the modality of rural education as a framework for the expansion and consolidation of the access of youths to the educational system, as well as their permanence and completion, corresponding to the obligatory character of the middle level for all the population of the country, also established in that piece of legislation.

Rural secondary education was expanded throughout the country as a consequence of the universalization of primary school and its traction towards other educational levels (Cappellacci, Ginocchio, 2010), the increase of the length of obligatory schooling (Tenti, 2003), and the demand of rural families for more education (Cragolino, 2001). This educational modality was diversified and extended, with a current educational offer that comprises agricultural technical schools, alternative schools, itinerant schools, boarding schools and school mediated by ITs (Meléndez *et al.*, 2019). Within this diversified offer, the pedagogy of alternation is of special interest for this article since, as we will elaborate below, it is the format currently adopted by the school under analysis.

Among the policies underscored for these modalities are the Project for the Improvement of Rural Education, aimed at supporting education in rural environments, which has also been the main instrument of financing of the actions in EIB, another modality established by the LEN (Serrudo, 2011) directed towards indigenous peoples. To reflect on the formative experiences at Tajy Poty we must account for the inclusion of indigenous youths in the middle level, taking into account that the notion of interculturality requires a critical view to analyze educational policies and social inclusion dynamics (Diez, 2016). Hecht, García Palacios, Enriz y Diez (2015) suggest viewing intercultural education in Argentina as the result of processes of social and educational democratization, attending to the historical treatment of diversity in the educational system, which since the middle of the nineteenth century followed the paradigm of assimilation and uniformity, and after the 1980s-1990s, that of interculturality, to analyze its place in the definition of public policies and reformulation of mandates.

Along the same lines, Novaro, Diez & Martínez (2017) note that the recognition de la diversity and interculturality does not end questioning mandates of assimilation and integration but coexists with traditional ways of educational nationalism, which remains both in the norms, curricular choices and selection of educational orientations and in daily life and school practices (Novaro, 2016; Martínez, Diez, 2019). In this respect, Ezpeleta & Rockwell (1983: 86) already indicated that “the possible re-articulation of knowledge through social conceptions other than that of the State can only exist through the mediation of collective social subjects”, underscoring the massive presence of subordinated classes in the educational system as a condition for this to happen.

Intercultural secondary education forms part of the expansion of the intervention in the indigenous EIB in Misiones. As in the case of the rural modality, its expansion is linked to the proposal of the Ministry of National Education,⁵ within the LEN which is constituted over previous experiences since the mid-1970s, and over policies which since the early twenty-first century began to define the normative framework of the provincial EIB. The history of EIB in Misiones is linked to formative initiatives for indigenous people promoted by the Catholic Church since 1975 (Enriz, 2010) and strengthened by the provincial government through the creation of bicultural-bilingual primary schools since the late 1980s (Cebolla, 2005). The implementation of the National EIB Frontier Program in Misiones nucleates the EIB initiatives since the 2000s in schools on the border with Brazil, and around 2005 it was extended to local indigenous populations through the incorporation of bilingual (Spanish and Guaraní) teaching assistants and a specific school subject of Mbya language and culture in schools with over 80% of Mbya-Guaraní students (Enriz, 2019).

The EIB modality is concentrated in rural areas and represents 82% of the rural schools (Alia-ta *et al.*, 2020). In regard to the situation of indigenous students, the province has a greater percentage of illiterate indigenous population aged 10 and older (14.9%), while 24% of the indigenous population aged 4 to 17 do not attend school, so this jurisdiction stands out as the one with the lowest level of overall school attendance in the whole country (González, 2019).

Secondary school presents itself as an incipient area in terms of EIB educational policies regarding the level of primary school. As the Technical Team of the Institute of Linguistic Policies and the EIB Area of the Ministry of Education of Misiones reports (Bañay, 2016), there are 57 primary education units (48 public and 9 private) and 15 secondary schools (13 public and 2 private in the EIB modality). In more recent and retrospective work, Núñez (2019) points out that the gap between the enrollment of students in the different levels has been very significant: by 2009 there were approximately 2,100 Guaraní students in primary school, less than 70 students in secondary and barely a dozen in higher or tertiary education.

⁵ Demoted since late 2023 to the rank of Secretariat of the Ministry of Human Capital.

In many Mbya communities of Misiones there are public and privately managed schools as a result of the demands of community referents, but also due to the establishment of the EIB modality throughout the country. In previous research work (Golé, 2023) we observed that middle education also becomes important because there is a concern of the adults about the continuity of the schooling of the children who had begun attending school for several years, with greater frequency and permanence than previous generations, which translates into expectations that youths can have access to, continue, and complete their secondary education to get a higher education that will be beneficial for them and for the Mbya people.

Results

When we began our work we asked a number of questions about the expansion of the formative experiences of the Mbya-Guarani in the intercultural rural social space of Misiones. After presenting the educational policies that structure daily school life, we will analyze in this section the links between education, territory, and knowledge. Our interest in analyzing such experiences in regard to the local educational and productive transformations allows us to understand the contexts of practices that update the ñande reko and the strategies to “learn to cope” with relationships with the *jurua* in the intercultural rural social space.

Following the theory of situated learning (Lave, Wenger, 1991; Lave, 2015) we suggest that through their daily practice individuals re-negotiate meanings of the past and the future through the construction of meanings in the present, by being members of a sociocultural community who participate in the social practice when they conduct specific activities (Lave, Wenger, 1991). We have organized this section in two sub-sections.

Hence, our first question links the implications of formative experiences for the Mbya social reproduction in the midst of territorial disputes in contexts of expansion of the agroindustry since the 1970s. The second question presents some challenges and opportunities presented at the EIB of Jakutinga as a space of expansion of repertoires of knowledge in the current formative experience of the young Mbya generations in that space.

The expansion of the Mbya-Guarani formative experiences and the intercultural rural social space of Misiones

In previous work we reconstructed the links between the territorialization processes of some of the current Mbya-Guarani communities after the establishment of educational institutions (Golé, 2023).⁶ We observed then the settlement of Mbya families in communities, attending

⁶ To elaborate on the territorial links between schools and communities, we will offer a rough contextualization in which we retrieved information gathered in a mapping that shows the villages with schools in their territories. The “Guaraní Retã” Continental Map (2016) shows 120 Mbya communities in the province of Misiones. However, an earlier (2013) map provides more detail on the information that concerns us: The “Comunidades guaraníes” map, available at the online library Infraestructuras de Datos Espaciales (IDE) of the Government of the Province of Misiones, which shows 112 Mbya communities, 32 of which have schools (8 privately managed), while two schools near the communities appear as “schools with aboriginal students”. From this information we may conclude that in Misiones approximately one in every four

especially to their location in rural spaces of San Ignacio for the last four and a half decades. These processes are closely linked to the inter-ethnic relationships, especially those with actors of the Catholic Church who initially mediated the linkage of those families with the State, especially about health and educational issues. We follow Pacheco de Oliveira's conceptualization (1998), which proposes the concept of *territorialization* to view the ways in which colonization appropriates the territory and reorders the populations who inhabit it in order to enforce its domination. Through the concept of *detrterritorialization-reterritorialization* (Haesbaert, 2013) we explain how this indigenous collective stakes its territory now, in a context of advancement of the non-indigenous society over spaces where the previous generations of the Mbya circulated more freely, in a territory to which three national States were incorporated in the nineteenth century: Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina, specifically the province of Misiones.

Both the increasing closeness of inter-ethnic relationships and the incorporation to the school, which in the case of Jakutinga included the construction of an institute next to the sector in which the families settled, show the technical complexity required to take form as Mbya communities since the late twentieth century. In particular, the process of conformation of that school shows a series of interactions that include state and religious agencies of different hierarchies, as well as variations in the articulation between public and private management that still persist today. The processes of conformation of communities like Jakutinga took place within the period of greater expansion of schools among the Mbya in the province, which began in the late 1970s, went on in the following decade, and gradually became consolidated in the 1990s, and whose coverage continued to expand until now, albeit without going much deeper into the model.

As we have noted, the territorial demands of the Mbya in Misiones are closely linked to the educational ones. The educational field has been the object of dispute between state agencies and the Bishopric since the late 1950s, due to the projection given by Bishop Kemerer to the Dioceses of Posadas, but by the late 1970s the indigenous question also began to be an issue of local dispute (Gorosito, 2006). It was in 1978 when Antonio Martínez, the Mbya spiritual leader of Fracrán (Municipality of San Vicente, Guaraní Department), asked Kemerer to set up a school in the community. This demand gave rise to the "Comprehensive Development Program" destined to Fracrán and Perutí since 1979, which was in charge of the Instituto Superior Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (ISARM) and the Foundation Cardenal Döpfner, created the previous year to support the Bishopric's educational and social and cultural welfare.

The program that extended until 1990 in Fracrán and Perutí was defined around three key concepts: "adaptation, integration, and aculturation of the Guaraní aboriginals who inhabit and

Mbya communities had a school in their community spaces in 2013. According to the map "Comunidades Guaraníes", 30 of the communities have a deed of ownership of the land. Among the communities that do not have a deed is Jakutinga, bordering "Tajy Poty", whose land has been bought from private owners by the Bishopric of Posadas. These data are approximate, since the Mbya territorial dynamics are characterized by their mobility and their resistance to evictions, which may lead to the formation of new communities. Likewise, it is not easy to have access to updated official maps or to systematic and centralized information about the communities.

will inhabit the Missions of Perutí and Fracrán” (Archivo Fracrán y Perutí del ISARM, Carpeta: “Proyecto (1980-1982)” in Amable, 2007: 131). It also underscored socio-economic development objectives, and for its execution required the permanence of the teachers in the schools to do follow-up work. It also included different subprograms: housing, drinking water, energy, hygiene, and a health home for sedentary life, child and adult nutrition, skill-building for work, and education (Amable, 2007).

Enriz (2009) inquires into the effects of that project of intervention in the Mbya sedentarization processes. Other contributions that refer to that problem are those of Seró and Kowalski (1993), who criticize especially one of the underlying program lines: the conversion of the indigenous people into small rural producers as a strategy for their sedentarization. The description of the central concept of *adaptation* defined by the Comprehensive Development Program expresses that tendency: “Our task at this level will consist of facilitating for the aboriginal people the passage from a semi-nomadic life as hunters, fishermen, or badly paid laborers to a sedentary life as peasants responsible for their own land and qualified artisans” (ISARM, Archivo Fracrán y Perutí, Carpeta: “Proyecto (1980-1982)”, in Amable, 2007: 131).

The history of the ecclesiastic work and interventions in Fracrán and Perutí, two communities located in the central part of Misiones, is important to show the work done in parallel by priest José Marx in Jakutinga. This community was also a central part of the intervention of religious actors of the Catholic Church in the schooling of the Mbya. Many families settled in Jakutinga in the late 1970s. They came from Pastoreo, a rural area in the municipality of San Ignacio, where they had lived in a “field” area (that is, natural fields interspersed by “wilderness”, specifically the ecosystem of Paranaen fores, “field and wilderness” correspond to the bioma that characterizes the south of Misiones). There they worked mostly in tasks linked to the growing lumber industry, some in *obrajes* that still exploited the native wilderness, and others in plantations of *kiri* (*Paulownia tomentosa*).

When they lived in Pastoreo, the families had met Priest Marx, who since 1970 became a central figure in social work with the Mbya of the southeast of Misiones. Marx obtained the deeds to the lands of the community and the school of Jakutinga, as he later did with the lands of other villages. The priest, from the Order of the Divine Verb, obtained the lands of Jakutinga through the donation of 75 hectares to the Bishopric by an old female inhabitant of the area which were later given in commodate to the community. In early 1980, around eight Mbya families made up the community of Jakutinga, which was not in its present location but about 2,000 meters from it, kept away from contact with the colonists (Bañay, 2016).

In 1983, Marx founded the Provincial School N° 659 and named it after a priest from the Jesuit missions: “Padre Antonio Sepp”. Marx acquired the land again on behalf of the Bishopric and managed the construction of the school, as well as a number of sheds for Mbya families. To raise funds he asked for different donations, mostly from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of

Germany (Bañay, 2016). When the constructions were ready, the families of Jakutinga moved to their present location very near Provincial Route N° 6, which at that time had just been drawn.

Marx's initiative could be seen as part of a longer history, since both state and religious initiatives, especially those of the Catholic Church, have coexisted since the foundation period of the national educational system, between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. They have maintained different positions over time, from assimilation and even evangelization projects to the support of ethnic affirmation processes, and from the mandate of the teaching of a national language using only Spanish to bilingual literacy programs (Hecht *et al.*, 2015; Enriz *et al.*, 2017).

Marx's impact on the recent history of Catholic education in the province was significant. The priest's actions began at an incipient moment of the relationship between the provincial State and the Guaranis (as they were called then), so those years may be viewed as a preamble of the normative discussions about the territorial issues of the indigenous people that came about since the return of democracy in 1983.⁷ Besides the primary school of Jakutinga, he also founded the school around which this article is centered, the only indigenous agricultural secondary school in Misiones.

The current bilingual intercultural secondary institute modified its meanings and its structure as time went by. In early 1990, its priority was the literacy of the adult Mbya, so the boarding school regime inspired in the EFAs that Marx had introduced before in the province for colonists was adopted in Jakutinga to implement the educational offer to indigenous adults (Golé, 2023). It was also known as EFI (Indigenous Family School), as a teacher who worked there in its early years told us, "it was a little bilingual and a little like the EFAs" (Field record, San Ignacio, 3 November 2023).

As I have mentioned before, the formation of this school took place in a key moment of the relationship of the Mbya with the provincial State. In 1989 a new law replaced the one passed two years before, prescribing a specific way to constitute legally the indigenous communities recognized by the State as a condition to grant a deed to the land: start the juridical personhood process and register in a public registry of communities. In that context, the demand for a school to teach literacy in Spanish became especially meaningful since it took place in a moment in which the dispute with the provincial State and different indigenistic actors demanded that the village chieftains master reading and writing in the *jurua* language.

In an incipient way, the transition from a primary school for adults to a secondary school for Mbya youths in 2009, reconstructed in this article, underscores a transformation and expansion of the formative experiences of the different generations who, although not at the same ages as those expected by the educational system, were able to complete their primary education and study at least part of the secondary level. The latter was linked to an increase in the offer of

⁷ The period of democratic inauguration that followed the last civic-military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983).

literacy programs promoted by Catholic referents and aimed at the children to facilitate their access to the primary level and, at the same time, progress in establishing “bilingual-bicultural schools” managed by the state in Mbya communities, which had begun to operate in the mid-1980s (Cebolla, 2005). The school had its first cohort of alumni in 2013, and since that year it has had an average of eight alumni a year (Field record, Cerro Romero, 1 November 2023).

As we will elaborate in the next sub-section, non-indigenous students have been incorporated to the school since 2015, although most of the other students are indigenous (between 70 and 80%, while within the *jurua* group some colonists were incorporated, most of them creole). In 2020, after a change in the administration, the school modified its orientation to an Agro-Environmental one, incorporating the lines of action of educational policies at a provincial, national and local level regarding environmental education, climate change, and food sovereignty.

The EFA of Jakutinga: The recent Agro-environmental orientation Agro-Ambiente and the pedagogy of alternation in the formative experience of Mbya youths

In previous research work (Golé, in printing) we mentioned the incorporation of agricultural practices different from the “traditional” ones, such as the production of crops to sell. There we reflected on the tension in the ways of being Mbya, such as they are usually defined in their interactions with the *jurua*. In that work we observed individual “technical choices”, which are relevant because they generate novel technical repertoires and, following different contributions (Mura, 2011; Padawer, Soto, Oliveri, 2020), we understand that they also transform their socio-economic links with their environment. Studies like that have allowed us to discuss the relationship between being and doing and, in turn, view the Mbya productive activities as part of a number of combinations of practices and productive techniques as well as strategies to view domestic organization and the organization of accessible and available resources over time, to address the productivity and creativity of the Mbya to sustain themselves in contexts of crisis and transformation (Golé, in printing). In other work (Hirsch, Padawer, 2024) we saw how actions generate identifications that they mention as “finding themselves”, in reference to their sense of belonging to their daily environment.

Reflecting on these transformations that tension their identifications linked to specific activities invites us to think that the agricultural orientation adopted corresponds to productive transformations of the communities of students addressed above. In this sub-section we will reconstruct the expansion of repertoires de knowledge in the current formative experience of the young Mbya generations at the EFA of Jakutinga when discussing teaching practices that respond to the EIB modality and the pedagogy of alternation within the recent Agro-Environment orientation. Rockwell (2007) has pointed out that the meanings of the school do not change because a State agency decides it but that they are instead the gradual result of other, larger-scale processes such as financial and economic crises, demographic changes, social movements, concentration of political power, etc., added to their daily co-construction.

As we have mentioned, in 2020 the school changed its orientation. One of the aims of this change was to go back to the initial project of priest José Marx, the founder of the school who died a few months after its inauguration, who had intended to bring the agro-technical and environmental protection of the EFAs to the secondary school for the Mbya (Informal conversations with the rector of Tajy Poty, Cerro Romero, 31 July 2023). This was linked to the intentions of some referents of the local Catholic education to generate transformations in the life of the Mbya communities regarding their productive and food practices. The administration also believed that the new orientation might favor the linkage with agricultural projects of state agencies and NGOs to obtain material resources and thus deal with the needs of the institution and its students, among which were improving the student dormitories, the construction of restrooms and other aspects of the social, cultural and sport life of these youths.⁸ Furthermore, the change of orientation of the school was associated by some teachers and students with better nutrition both within and outside the school.

As we explained in the Introduction, the school is known as the EFA of Jakuntinga because of its linkage to priest Marx and the UNEFAM. Priest Marx sought to introduce this pedagogical format because it made it possible both studying secondary school in rural areas and also learning based on agricultural practices in the students' own production to strengthen bonds between families, communities, and territories (Interview with the rector of PROCAYPA, Capioví, 20 October 2022), which favors "finding themselves". From the start, the EFAs took into account the concern of peasant families about their children's education regarding their being able to attend school without ceasing to work in the families' lands. Their foundational aim was to facilitate the access to and permanence in school of young children of small rural producers and to work on themes and practices that link them to their environment and favor their attachment to it. Thus, the leading role of the parents' associations and the recovery of the rural families' know-how are distinctive characteristics of these schools. The pedagogy proposed by these schools is thus anchored on two principles organized based on alternating between periods of stay at school and at home, learning from practice and choosing contents linked to local productive knowledge (Dinova, 1997).⁹

School days at the EFAs are extensive. They generally start around 6 a.m. and finish at around 10 p.m. After having breakfast and tidying up their bedrooms, students have classes from 7 a.m. until noon and from 2 to 7 p.m., which include both classes in the classroom and in different didactic productive sectors (horticulture, apiculture, animal husbandry, among others). Around

⁸ We highlight the participation of the IIBTP in the "Provincial Contest of Agro-innovation" aimed at the students of the last grade of 25 Institutes of Agricultural Teaching (IEA) and 29 Schools of Agricultural Families (EFA), presented by then Minister of Education Miguel Sedoff and Minister of Family Agriculture Marta Ferreira. The school was awarded the first prize (tablets and cellphones for the students and \$2'000,000 for the Institute).

⁹ The EFAs originated in the southwest of France in the early twentieth century, when they were created by Catholic priest Pierre-Joseph Graneau, along with rural families and youths from Sérignac-Péboudou. See Chartier (1985) and Gimonet (2009).

noon (between 12 and 2 p.m.) they carry out activities linked to cleaning, food, maintenance, rest and leisure. Around 8 p.m. they have dinner, followed by 5 minutes of reflection about what happened during the day or, in some cases, different cultural and political activities (e.g. assemblies, cultural evenings with different types of performances, readings chosen by the students, and religious and spiritual activities).¹⁰

The first EFA of the province of Misiones is the one in San Ignacio, founded in 1986 by priest José Marx and located approximately 30 km from the EFA of Jakutinga, which is the subject of this work.¹¹ There are now 29 schools of this type in the province. Since 2018, the EFAs in Misiones are ruled by Law VI N° 211, which regulates their operation within the LEN. Based on these regulations, many institutions have also been able to offer Higher Technical Education, receive funds from the National Institute of Technical Education, and develop learning environments shared by both levels. The schools award the official degree of Bachiller Agrario (Alonso, 2021; Hirsch, Padawer, 2024).

In Misiones, most of their students come from colonist families (German, Swiss, and Polish families who settled there in the early 1900s) whose parcels range from 5 to 70 hectares. There are very few students from urban areas, who are children of peasants, or even fewer from Mbya-Guarani communities. The IIBTP is thus a challenge for the pedagogy of alternation by focusing on new students, the Mbya youths, since their main pedagogical formulations rely on agricultural knowledge that can be supported by the family production of the colonist tradition (Hirsch, Padawer, 2024), which makes it a challenge for this system to help young Mbya to “find themselves” in these proposals.

In this framework, the school designed and implemented didactic-productive sectors such as protected horticulture, floriculture, apiculture, rabbit breeding, the *sisteminha* with fish or aquaponia, and is preparing, improving or restructuring others such as pig or poultry farming, whose work rooms are being prepared and which the students are gradually approaching. They were all designed or implemented by different teachers trained in Agrarian Sciences who were alumni of the PROCAYPA, located in Capioví, in the north-center of the province. Through the consolidation of these sectors it is possible to observe the transition from the orientation of the Bachelor's degree in Art to one in Agro and Environment, a transition from the wilderness to an orderly environment organized through an agro-ecological approach to family agriculture.

10 For further details on the relationship between theory and practice in the different learning environments at the EFAs in Misiones, see Hirsch & Padawer (2024) and Alonso (2021).

11 In Argentina, the first EFA was opened in 1969 in Reconquista (Santa Fe) by Jean-Claudie Gimonet. From Santa Fe, it was extended first through the center of the country (provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Santiago del Estero), nucleating their management and diffusion through an organization called Association for the Promotion of Schools of Family Agriculture (APEFA), based in Reconquista. Following the tradition started in France, each school is founded after the request of a group of families that then congregate in an association and take charge of its management. In the 1980s the educational proposal of the EFAs was extended to the northeast of the country (provinces of Corrientes, Chaco, Formosa, Salta, and Misiones), keeping the same type of funding, curriculum, and organization (Plencovich, 2013). For further information on the EFAs in Argentina see Forni, Neiman, Roldán & Sabatino (1998), Miano & Lara (2018), and Petitti & Rodríguez (2023).

The didactic-productive sectors designed and/or implemented by teachers who graduated at the PROCAYPA follow the agro-ecological approach of their education, and their teaching in the schools may be understood as part of the construction and reproduction of a practical agro-ecological knowledge which is of great importance in Misiones. Through their formative experience in secondary school the youths integrate themselves into diversified personal and collective strategies linked to obtaining the resources needed for their daily life in the new contexts of transformation of agricultural space, oriented by a search for better material conditions to pursue the autonomy and defense of Mbya territories and reclaim their *ñande reko*, which is still their main concern and struggle (Gorosito, 2013; Golé, 2023).

The participation of the students in that transformation is gradual, since the first generation to study with the new orientation will graduate at the end of 2024. That group of students began their secondary school in 2020 and started to study subjects that included practices in the didactic-productive sectors, alternating them with theoretical subjects in the classroom, in their fourth year.¹² Doing guided practices with room for experimentation, observation and participation in spaces such as the agro-ecological orchard or the poultry and rabbit farming sector familiarize students with recent agricultural knowledge. This cohort began their formation especially with rabbit breeding.

As we mentioned above, the pedagogy of alternation generates opportunities for indigenous youths. In previous research (Golé, 2023) we observed that the modality of EIB with alternation is advantageous for the communities because in that way the youths do not have to travel long distances daily. We saw that going to Tajy Poty is an alternative chosen by the Mbya families of approximately 20 communities, mostly located in the south and center of Misiones and a few in the north, due to the longer distance, for their children to complete their secondary school. The larger number of Mbya students and the insertion of the school in a community context are also important since the links with Jakutinga, the village with which it shares a territory, and El Chapá, a village near the school, are important for that institution; for example, the link with the female chieftain of Jakutinga, who is a health promotor and attends to the health issues of youths in a center for primary health care located in the village, and previously with the *opygua* (Mbya spiritual leader) who lived in El Chapá. These are some of the practices that link the educational proposal of Catholic actors with aspects of Mbya daily life, and which school administrators and teachers often underscore to highlight the integrative and intercultural character of the school.

Other practices in which the integrative meaning of interculturality is discussed are those that refer to food. There is a concern about incorporating to their diet certain vegetables cha-

¹² Secondary school is divided into a basic cycle (first and second year) and an oriented cycle (third, fourth, and fifth year). Formation in Agro-Environment begins with the oriented cycle: theoretical subjects in the third year and practice in the didactic-productive sectors in the last two years.

racteristic of colonist horticulture (especially lettuce, arugula, tomato, red pepper, and squash, among others) that are produced in the didactic-productive sectors of the school, so the school included a nutritionist in their team. The youths discussed the knowledge of Western nutrition at breakfast and dinner when they chose not to eat this type of foods (Field record, Cerro Romero, 28 October 2022). This implied a still ongoing negotiation process in which these vegetables are tried and adapted to students' taste.¹³ After observing this process, the teachers who work in the didactic-productive sectors decided to prioritize the first approaches to agricultural production through work with animal production instead of horticulture (Field record, Cerro Romero, 31 July 2023). These observations lead us to consider the questioning of the school knowledge and contents through the practices of the students (Hirsch, Padawer, 2024; Briseño, 2023), which in turn construct new repertoires of possibilities (Mura, 2011).

The history reconstructed here has implied closer interethnic relationships, as exemplified by the incorporation to the school, which in the case of Jakutinga led to the construction of a primary school ("Padre Antonio Sepp") and another one which became a secondary school (Tajy Poty). In particular, the process of conformation of the schools in Jakutinga shows a series of interactions that include state and religious agencies of different hierarchies, as well as variability in the articulation between public and private management that persists to this day. These changes take place in an intercultural rural social space in transformation, in which the schooling of the Mbya, first with literacy programs for adults and then with schools for children, is incorporated as part of new cultural and technical stocks for the conformation of communities according to the normativity – given the importance of literacy for their registry and deeds – and to inhabit that space. More recently, secondary education (completed by the first youths in Tajy Poty in 2013), and currently the change of orientation of the school, produce redefinitions in those formative experiences that allow us to glimpse new expansions to a higher level.

Final Considerations

In this article we reconstructed the institutional and territorial fabric of the intercultural rural social space of Misiones through a historical-ethnographic approach to discuss the expansion of the formative experiences of the Mbya in the only intercultural agrarian secondary school that follows the pedagogy of alternation. We listed some of the main motivations that defined the change of the school's orientation, some of them anchored in the foundations of the pedagogy of alternation, and others linked to changes in the "traditional" Mbya modes of subsistence, which emerge in their relationship with the contemporary society of Misiones.

We analyzed the intersections between education, territory, and knowledge through the theory of situated learning. In this respect, we were concerned with delving into the issue of ter-

¹³ We would like to underscore that the Mbya eat vegetables grown in *rozados*; that is, in areas razed with machetes and burned with vegetable residues, which do not require artificial irrigation, especially corn, cassava, yam, peanuts, melon and watermelon, plus native species gathered in the wilderness, especially fruits and roots.

ritory by describing how it is connected to educational demands. To do this, we reconstructed the process of conformation of Mbya communities since they began to constitute their territory in a current format since the 1970s. Its relevance in regard to the schooling process allows us to account for the complex fabric in which the Catholic Church, the state policies and the indigenous people become visible as actors in a process of demands for land, and at the same time for schools.

Towards the end of the article we did a first systematization of an ongoing process into which we would like to continue delving, the recent change of orientation to Agro-Environment of the EFA of Jakutinga. We inquired especially into the participation of the Mbya students in the configuration of a school space that tends towards the expansion of the didactic-productive sectors and puts the wilderness aside. Through a discussion on how the expansion of formative experiences contributes to the expansion of cultural and technical stocks, we hope to contribute to understanding the ways of inhabiting and constructing the intercultural rural social space and the re-updating of the ñande reko by the younger Mbya generations.

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