

RESOURCE CONFLICTS BETWEEN LANDHOLDERS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN MATO GROSSO DO SUL, BRAZIL: POLICIES, SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This contribution aims to point out central aspects of resource conflicts between extensively producing landholders and the Guarani Kaiowá population of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The focus lies on the crucial role of indigenous reservations, both as consequences and as sources of resource conflicts and on the policy frameworks, which have, historically and presently, evoked violent clashes between these parties. Additionally, the lack of resources within these reservations will be addressed in relation to generational factors.

Mato Grosso do Sul designates a crucial region for the Brazilian agribusiness and export sector given its production of cattle, soy, sugarcane and bio-ethanol. Due to the establishment of large-scale landholding entities in the form of ranches and plantations, its landscape experienced a profound transformation from predominant woodland to steppe land in the course of the last century. In this context, the indigenous population of the region, mostly Guarani Kaiowá, was gradually dispossessed of its land and forced to live on a small fraction of their traditionally occupied area, in order to make room for export oriented agro-industries. With the aim of clearing the land from indigenous inhabitants, the Brazilian government established eight reservations in the beginning of the 20th, which have accommodated displaced Guarani Kaiowá families and communities ever since. These reservations suffer from overpopulation, poverty, a lack of arable land and other resources essential for their physical and cultural reproduction. Aside from the partly fatal implications for their physical wellbeing due to a lack of possibilities for maintaining

their traditional economy, the environmental destruction and spatial concentration coupled with a paternalistic administration of indigenous lands have severely challenged their cultural integrity. As a consequence, the Guarani Kaiowá are considered one of the indigenous peoples the most affected by malnutrition, alcoholism, violence, homicide and suicide in Brazil. However, given the recognition of indigenous land rights by the Brazilian constitution of 1988, Guarani Kaiowá families and communities continuously leave the reservations to fight for their rights by occupying privately held land, demanding the demarcation as indigenous territory.

It is against this background that the proposed contribution presents the reservations as consequences of resource conflicts, resulting in particular from the historical land grab experienced by the indigenous population, as well as sources of resource conflicts, namely in terms of an on-going fight over land due to the precarious living conditions prevailing within the reservations. Apart from a critical examination of indigenous actors and large-scale landholders as well as their discourses regarding land use practices, the state and its ambivalences between indigenous and economic policies, strategies and legal frameworks will also be addressed. Based on the author's results gained during a 4-month field study, the paper furthermore aims to analyze the impacts of severe resource scarcity on the young generation and their perceived future perspectives while simultaneously revealing their relationship to land and conflict, bearing in mind that the majority of this generation was born inside the reservations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian State of Mato Grosso do Sul accommodates the majority of the largest indigenous group of Brazil and has, the second highest population rate of indigenous people after the state of Amazonia. About 40.000 Guarani are living in Mato Grosso do Sul and most of them refer to themselves as Guarani Kaiowá.

At the same time, Mato Grosso do Sul designates a crucial region for the Brazilian agro-business and export sector with the breeding of cattle, the production of soy, sugarcane and Bio-ethanol. Due to the establishment of extensive landholdings in the form of ranges and plantations, the landscape of Mato Grosso do Sul underwent a profound transformation from predominant woodland to steppe land in the course of the last century. The high degree of deforestation caused the disappearance of forests within a few decades. This process accelerated in the 1950's due to the increasing immigration of settlers and reached its climax in the 1970's because of the rapid expansion of soy plantations induced by a booming demand of soy on the world market.

In this context, the indigenous population of the region experienced a gradual displacement and were forced to live on a small fraction of their traditionally occupied area in order to make way for private landholders and export oriented agro-industries. Today, the Guarani territories of Mato Grosso do Sul mount up to 40.400 hectares, which corresponds to about 0,7% of their traditional territory (see Grünberg 2002: 232). On the one hand, the lack of possibilities for maintaining forms of a traditional economy resulted in drastic consequences for their physical wellbeing. On the other hand, the environmental destruction and spatial concentration in combination with a paternalistic administration of indigenous lands posed severe challenges to the maintenance of their cultural integrity. As a consequence, the Guarani Kaiowá are considered one of the group of indigenous people most affected by malnutrition, alcoholism, violence, homicide and suicide in Brazil. The high suicide rates among teenagers registered since the 1980's are particularly alarming.

Nowadays, the majority of the Kaiowá people in Mato Grosso do Sul live in three different types of settlements: Some live in reservations that have been in place since the beginning of the 20th century and have been

demographically growing ever since. Others live in indigenous territories demarcated in the 1980s and 1990s, which experienced less political interventions from outside and face less socio-economic and violence-related problems nowadays. The third types of settlements existing today are squatter camps along rural roads and at the margins of private landholdings. The inhabitants of those camps demand the legal recognition of the occupied land as indigenous and traditionally occupied territory.

Given the recognition of indigenous land rights by the Brazilian constitution of 1988, Guarani Kaiowá families and communities constantly leave overpopulated reservations to fight for the access to those lands from which they were displaced. In doing so, they occupy privately held land and demand their demarcation. The lack of implementation measures related to their demands for legitimacy impels provisional and scanty occupation sites to turn into permanent settlements – where living conditions are precarious, land and other resources scarce and access to social and health services as well as technical infra-structure are non-existent (see Pereira 2007: 23ff). Additionally, landholders, afraid to lose their property, do not only use political pressure and lobbying to defend their property rights, but also resort to violence. They engage gunmen and militia to threaten communities, burn down their houses and kill indigenous leaders. Inhabitants of those settlements constantly face the threat of being overrun by a car entering the sites on purpose. Generally, such offenders are neither charged nor denounced. This situation is a clear expression of the client-patron-relationships between big producers and the rural judiciary, and symbolizes the institutionalization of discrimination against indigenous people in Mato Grosso do Sul.

The ongoing conflicts over land and associated resources such as soil, wood and water – resources crucial for traditional forms of subsistence economy – express differing discourses about legitimate land holding forms. The Guarani Kaiowá as well as Guarani researchers refer to the occupations as “retomadas”, meaning “retakings”, a term that emphasises the original, natural and rightful access of indigenous groups to the land in question. At the same time, landholders and local press designate those occupations as “invasion”, pointing out the breach of property law that is committed by occupying groups and causing the

criminalization of the occupying actor.

Occupation and squatter settlements may be seen as most visible and obvious outcome of resource conflicts involving indigenous people in Mato Grosso do Sul today. Yet, they have to be understood as part of a broader conflict, rooted in the historical land loss experienced by the Guarani Kaiowá during the last century. Therefore, the focus of this contribution is placed on the policies leading to historical and contemporary violent clashes between involved parties, including policy-driven land grabs and political ambivalences. Furthermore, the crucial role of indigenous reservations, both as consequences and sources of resource conflicts shall be discussed. In the last section, the chronic lack of resources within reservations will be addressed as well as the impacts this has had on the younger generation.

2. POLITICS, LAW AND ECONOMICS FRAMING HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY RESOURCE CONFLICTS

For a better understanding of the living conditions and conflict situations of the Guarani Kaiowá population, it is of crucial importance to examine the political, legal and economic frameworks, strategies and developments, which affected their lives and territories during the last century.

THE INTEGRATION PARADIGM

Until the end of Brazil's military government in the late 1980's, politics concerning indigenous people were merely following logics of integration and assimilation. This approach was manifested in the constitutions of 1943, 1946, 1957 and 1969 (see Vierhapper 2008: 45). Besides, in 1973 the Statute of Indians was adopted that introduced a system of tutelage, putting indigenous people under the tutelage of the FUNAI – National Foundation for Indigenous Affairs (see Vierhapper 2008: 61ff). Indigenous people obtained a status comparable to minors, meaning that they did not obtain full citizen rights. The Statute classified degrees of integration and thus aimed to rule the process of civilization (see Estatuto dos Índios 1973). Despite the recognition of full citizenship by the constitution of 1988, the tutelage system was not explicitly abolished, resulting in a legal ambiguity concerning indigenous parties and the responsibilities of the FUNAI today.

In matters of territories, land rights were never given political priority, since the indigenous peoples were expected to be integrated into the national society and capitalist economy. During military rule, indigenous land issues were subordinated to economic and security policies and were mainly treated in reference to the military protection of borderlands and the exploitation of resources for the national development (see Carvalho 2000: 465f). Policies concerning indigenous people were handled with a focus on “the integration of their lands into the expanding national economic frontier” (Carvalho 2000: 465). Land in question was treated as “vazio” (empty) and “terras de ninguém” (land of nobody), that could and should be incorporated into the ideology of the “ordem e progresso” (order and progress – a reference to the emblem of the Brazilian flag) (see Pacheco 2011: 173f).

The integration paradigm in the political sphere along with the economic interests in unexploited inlands finally led to the establishment of today's reservations in Mato Grosso do Sul. In the interim of 1915 and 1928, the SPI – Indian Protection Service, first federal organ to treat indigenous affairs and predecessor of the FUNAI – established 8 reservations in the southern region of Mato Grosso do Sul. Their basic concept was to settle the Guarani inside those limited territories in order to gain land for deforestation and agricultural development. The government encouraged settlers from other parts of the country to acquire those “undeveloped” lands using subsidies and big state-driven settlement projects as incentives (see Brand 1997: 73f). Although the settlers were not the first ones to carry out commercial activities on Guarani land, they were the first who effectively changed the natural landscape and the distribution of land. As early as in the 1890s the region was opened for the extraction of Mate, which affected indigenous communities directly by hiring them as labour force (see Mura 2006: 74ff). But the Mate company's interest focused on activities of extraction and not on the possession or the deforestation of lands. Consequently, the indigenous communities were not expelled or hindered to enter their lands (see Brand 1997: 60ff). This changed with the arrival of the settlers who, in fact, claimed the possession of the land based on land titles assigned to them by the state and who, effectively, expelled indigenous inhabitants from the acquired land.

There was a general assumption that during

the development process indigenous people were being “civilized” and finally incorporated into the capitalistic logic of rural production as peasants and smallholders (see Brand 1997: 118; Brighenti 2010: 177ff). The reservations were meant to accelerate this process by facilitating the administration of the indigenous inhabitants and favouring mechanisms of cultural and economic assimilation. The SPI, later FUNAI, as well as Christian missionaries established administrative, social and health institutions to lure displaced Guarani into the reservations (see Mura 2006: 83). Following this logic, the administration organs classified them as either “aldeados” or “deasaldeado”, meaning those who “already” live in reservations and those who “still” live in the woods. Brand (1997: 6) underlines the contradictory logic behind this classification. Since “aldeia” means village, those “aldeados” were the true “desaldeados”, as they were forced or pushed to leave their villages and migrate to the reservation.

As the indigenous habitants were seen as a merely temporary phenomenon that would gradually disappear through assimilation processes, the disposal of relatively small territories, administered by a federal organ, seemed reasonable. In consequence, the ideology of assimilation and integration was used as a justification for robbing indigenous peoples of their lands and territories and destroying their natural environments.

THE CONSTITUTION OF 1988

The constitution of 1988, adopted at the end of the military rule, officially abandoned the approach of integration. The cultural diversity of the state and the cultural identity of indigenous people including their social organization, customs, languages, creeds, traditions and their own learning methods were recognized and set to be protected by the state (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 1988: Article 231, Article 215,1, Article 210,2).

In addition, land rights were introduced granting the indigenous people the exclusive access to lands they traditionally occupy, “it being incumbent upon the Union to demarcate them, protect and ensure respect for all of their property” (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 1988: Article 231). This right applies to the land on which they traditionally lived, as well as to those lands they used for their productive and cultural activities, including

their “exclusive usufruct of the riches of the soil, the rivers and the lakes existing therein” (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 1988: Article 231,1 and 2). Accordingly, the constitution recognizes that the indigenous right to land precedes the state’s legal system, therefore, the lands “are inalienable and indisposable and the rights thereto are not subject to limitation” (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 1988: Article 231, 4). “Acts with a view to occupation, domain and possession of the lands [...] or to the exploitation of the natural riches [...], are null and void, producing no legal effects” (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 1988: Article 231, 6).

At the time of implementation, the Constitution of 1988 represented a pioneer document in the area of indigenous rights due to the quantity and quality of collective rights aiming at the self-determination of the indigenous people living in Brazil. Yet, the shift in the legal sphere did not guarantee a shift in the political one. In fact, the democratization process was not accompanied by an opening of the political system to formerly excluded or marginalized groups. Eventually, pro-indigenous mobilization groups diminished after their work for the constituent assembly, while the political opposition of the mining and agricultural sector maintained their political influence on the federal and regional level (see Carvalho 2000: 468ff).

Against this background, a more complex picture emerges when it comes to implementation measures. So far, big indigenous territories have been demarcated only in the Amazon, where natural fauna is still conserved to a large degree, where a great part of lands is not privately owned, and where land prices are not as high as in agro-business regions such as Mato Grosso do Sul. Additionally, the indigenous land claims in the Amazon are backed by international organizations of environmental protection (see Grünberg 2002: 253f). Consequently, 98,61% of the demarcated indigenous territories are located in the Amazon, while merely 1,39% of 115,499 Hektar are located in the rest of Brazil (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs 2013: 160).

In Mato Grosso do Sul, a series of territories were demarcated following the adoption of the new constitution, precisely between 1989 and 1994. Those indigenous territories constitute a very important achievement of the Guarani

Kaiowá land rights movement. Yet, those territories have turned out to be relatively small and no further territories have been demarcated since then (see Grünberg 2002: 251f). In effect, the land situation of the Guarani Kaiowá is still precarious and they are far from being effectively protected from negative impacts resulting from the expansion of rural production sites. The majority of the indigenous people still live in overpopulated reservations and depend on state-run subsidies to treat hunger and poverty.

The responsibility to change this situation lies with the state, which is obliged to implement constitutionally granted rights. Hence, the adoption of a law is not enough to assert indigenous rights to their land, if there is a lack of policies aiming on its implementation.

ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND POLITICAL AMBIVALENCES

The lack of policies concerning the implementation of indigenous land rights is related to political ambivalences, economic interests and historical logics of distribution. Brazil is characterized by a highly unequal distribution of land with the majority of arable land concentrated in the hands of only a few. During colonial times, a close connection between the property of land and political power emerged in form of the “latifundia”. This form of large land holding has continued to exist until today, resulting in an exclusionary and elitist access to land. Due to the importance of rural production for Brazil’s export economy, no government, ever since, effectively broke with the unequal distribution or with the political power of rural elites. In fact, structural inequalities were rather consolidated than weakened both by the military regime, as by following democratic governments which pursued neoliberal strategies (see Hammond 2009, Pereira 2003). Up until today, the government promotes the development, growth and modernization of large-scale rural production sites, which are considered a fundamental part of Brazil’s economic development.

In this context, Mato Grosso do Sul constitutes an important region for soy and cattle export, as well as for Brazil’s growing biofuel industry. As a consequence of the rising importance of biofuel on global markets, the production of sugar cane has become increasingly profitable and demands more and more land. The state plays a crucial role in the enticement

of producers and investors, as well as in the establishment of production sites (see Pereira et al. 2012: 7ff). The region’s production sum of sugar cane as well as the land designated for this purpose rose by almost 40% between 2009 and 2012 (Pereira et al. 2012: 7). Additionally, the export of sugar cane for ethanol fuel production increased by more than 60% between 2010 and 2012 (Matos 2011, cited from Sullivan 2013: 455). The agro-business boom witnessed since the 2000s has led to a rapid increase in land prices and an influx of foreign investment capital (see Sullivan 2013), which not only complicates redistribution measures as dispossessed farmer and investors call for compensation, but also confirms the state in promoting this profitable industry.

The enormous economic importance of the region and prevailing neoliberal policies have severely affected the government’s commitment to indigenous land rights. On the one hand, the state recognizes the legitimate access of indigenous communities to their traditionally occupied land and sets up mechanisms for the restitution of indigenous territories. On the other hand, however, it simultaneously promotes large-scale landholdings on the very same land, subsidizing the expansion and modernization of rural monoculture production for the aim of economic development (see Aylwin 2009: 28). This has brought about political ambivalence and resulted in the existence of parallel and apparently opposed policy tools, strategies and legal texts, some of them directly contradicting constitutional regulations of indigenous land rights (see Pereira et al. 2012). Summing up, there are mechanisms working *for* the demarcation of indigenous territories and mechanisms working openly *against* it. In addition, this dualism is far from being balanced. As Guarani- researcher Brand puts it in an interview (IHU 2010), the indigenous leaders are very aware of the fact, that there are two kinds of judiciary – one that works fast and efficient treating the rights of landholders, and one that works slow and inefficient treating the rights of indigenous people.

THE CONFLICT PARTIES

Landowners have employed various strategies to assert their interests. At the federal level they act by lobbying and ensure the political involvement of their representatives. At the local level, they do not shy at using violence to defend their properties. This happens against

the background of the characteristics of the Brazilian rural space, which Hammond (2009: 157) describes as dominated by „clientelism, particularistic justice, the lack of clear property demarcation and the lack of state monopoly of the use of violence.“ Considering that the central government often lacks in representation at local levels and that influential economic producers maintain paternalistic relations with local courts, the violent acts committed against indigenous people are hardly ever legally prosecuted.

Moreover, indigenous people, as well as other marginalized groups, lack possibilities of political representation and participation. Therefore, they rely on “direct action” (Hammond 2009) to articulate their interests, applying the strategy of land occupation in order to attract the state’s attention and claim their rights.

Furthermore, large-scale landowners have exercised considerable influence on the media so as to further their interests. Local Media coverage reflects the prevalent discourses of landholders, acting and arguing in accordance with logics of economic development and capitalist standards of productivity, and emphasizing the benefits of agro-business for the Brazilian society. As a consequence, indigenous perspectives on the on-going conflicts are mostly suppressed and frequently marked as impeding factors to rural development, turning indigenous claims into a danger or harm for society (see Pereira et al. 2012, Guimarães Focaches 2010, Kroyer 2014: 24ff). Due to the oversimplified representation of the “índios” in media, their land claims are hardly supported by the local population. Regardless of the fact that the Guarani are a crucial part of the history of Mato Grosso do Sul, and despite the obvious precariousness they are living in, there is no broader awareness of their situation among the urban non-indigenous population living next to them. As a result, interactions with the indigenous population are dominated by prejudice and social segregation (see Kroyer 2014: 24ff).

Sullivan (2013: 453f) puts the on-going conflicts over land in the context of a “struggle over perceived land-use practices“, where divergent land use practices are linked to different narratives of the past and the future. Today’s landholders see themselves as the pioneers of the region, who have established a right to their land through legal appropriation and hard work, contributing to the development of “an imagined national territory” (Sullivan

2013: 454). They position themselves in clear contrast to indigenous people and their land use practices. Indigenous territories are seen as “unused”, as they don’t produce productively and therefore allegedly do not constitute a benefit to the Brazilian nation.

The Guarani Kaiowá’s views of land in general and land use practices in particular, however, differ significantly from those of the landholders. In fact, their connection to the land which they belong to and rely on does not correspond to Eurocentric conceptions of private property and possession, nor to capitalist norms of production and productivity. Following Guarani mythology, their land was given to them as a gift, enabling them to realize their “way of being” (see Mura 2006: 425, 105ff). They refer to their land as “tekoha”, with “teko” meaning culture, norm and custom, and “ha” referring to the realization of the latter (see Meliá et al. 1978, Pereira 2004: 116). In this sense, land is understood as a necessary precondition for their physical reproduction and their traditional economies. Equally important, however, it is the basis for an autonomous social and political order, maintaining and evolving cultural norms and traditions. Territory and territorial belonging, consequently, are crucial parts of indigenous identity and cultural reproduction.

3. RESERVATIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN HISTORICAL AND TEMPORARY RESOURCE CONFLICTS

As outlined above, the reservations were established with the aim of clearing land from indigenous inhabitants to facilitate non-indigenous settlements and economic production. The reservations served as reservoirs for displaced people, who lost their lands and the access to the woods and rivers.

Acknowledging their historical and contemporary importance, this section examines reservation both as consequences of resource conflicts, resulting from historical land grabs and related processes, and as sources of resource conflicts. . The on-going fight over land has to be understood in conjunction with overpopulation and the bad living conditions prevailing within the reservations, which constitute significant obstacles to the physical and cultural well-being of the Guarani Kaiowá.

In the 1980s the population living in reservations grew significantly due to two parallel

and interacting processes. On the one hand, the accelerated process of deforestation, initiated in the 1970s, was a major contributing factor as more and more indigenous settlements were destroyed and their inhabitants expelled. Many communities retired to areas where forests were still intact, but as logging activities proceeded, those possibilities gradually disappeared, putting the Guarani under increasingly intense pressure to migrate to reservations (see Brand 1997: 105f, Mura 2006: 86ff). On the other hand, a change in work opportunities contributed to their spatial concentration. When foreign settlers emerged on their territories, many Guarani were hired to work on the newly established landholdings. This work consisted mostly of logging activities and other rural work and served as a substitute for the loss of income resulting from the extraction stop of Mate. Most importantly, they were tolerated to stay with their families in peripheral regions of the landholdings in remaining woodlands. This type of work led to a process, denominated by Brand (1997: 86ff) as “esparramo”, meaning spread or dispersion and covering the time of the 1960s and 1970s. As soon as even the peripheral regions of landholdings became subject to deforestation, they lost both their living space and income. This, in turn, led to an inversion of the “esparramo”, denominated by Brand (1997: 90ff) as “confinamento”, meaning the confinement within reservation borders. As contributing factor to the intensified confinement happening in the 1980s, Brand (1997: 91) identifies the creation of new work possibility in sugarcane and ethanol production sites. The reservations served as reservoir of potential cheap labour force for those sites.

As the loss of lands, forests and accessible rivers led to a decline of subsistence production, which increased the dependence on buying food and industrial products in near cities, income became an increasingly prevalent necessity. Due to the lack of other options, plantations and factories are still the main working places for most indigenous men living in reservations. Counting about 5000 to 8000 labourers in 2008, the Guarani constitute the main labour force of the entire sugar cane industry of Mato Grosso do Sul (see Aylwin 2009: 36). They suffer poor working conditions and get low wages. In addition, the hired men are either having long working hours or stay at their working place for long periods (called “changa”, see Thomaz de Almeida 2001). The resulting absence of men at home has brought about significant changes in family life (see Kroyer 2014: 40).

In light of described processes, today the majority of the Guarani Kaiowá population, that is to say 75%, live inside the 8 reservations that were demarcated in the beginnings of the last century (Brand et. al 2011: 99). As much as 19.600 people are living merely in the three biggest reservations Dourados, Amambai and Caarapó on a territorial extent of 9.500 hectare (FUNASA 2009, cited from Aylwin 2009: 34). Among them, Dourados is the most affected by overpopulation and associated problems. Given the close proximity to the second biggest city of Mato Grosso do Sul, the population density makes the reservation seem like a peripheral city slum whose population is made up by indigenous people.

The overpopulation, coupled with deforestation and politics of integration, is related to a series of problems, that challenge the concepts of the “tekoha” understood as the land on which the Guarani Kaiowá realize their way of being. According to Brighenti (2010: 68f), the “tekoha” consists of three spatial dimensions: the physical dimension, the agrarian dimension and the socio-political dimension. The confining process harmed all of those dimensions. In the physical sense, the alteration of the ecological environment, precisely, the loss of forests, affected the entire territory and marked a traumatic shift in the life of the Guarani. On the one side, woods served as source of food as they allow hunting activities. On the other side, forests were important points of reference for the religious and social life, as they were home to spirits and animals, with whom the Guarani maintained vital relationships (see Grünberg 2003, Grünberg 2002). As woodland disappeared, a big part of traditional knowledge got lost, with the human-nature relationship changing significantly.

With respect to the agrarian dimension, the loss of land and lack of arable land within reservations, made the maintenance of an agricultural subsistence economy difficult. The insufficient autonomous food supply in combination with low income and monetary poverty led to a series of health problems among the Guarani. During the 1990s a big part of Kaiowá children suffered severe undernourishment. The media attention on undernourished children brought the government to provide food baskets for Guarani families up until today. In consequence, autonomous food production has continued to decrease while physical dependence on external actors has

increased, impeding the restoration of economic autonomy and organizational self-determination.

The socio-political dimension of the *tekoha* that contains aspects of political and social relationships, and comprehends land as a necessary precondition for an autonomous social order, was violated in various ways. The administration of the territories by non-indigenous officials followed a paternalistic logic and introduced a new political structure, which had significant impacts on social and community life (see Meliá et al. 2008: 84). Therefore, Pereira (2004: 324, 350) emphasizes that the “confinamento” was not only a spatial process, but also a cultural one. As the reservations were conceived as sites of concentration, civilisation and integration, organizational structures and settlement patterns of the indigenous inhabitants were largely ignored in their conception. In contrast, the dispersion followed by the confinement broke with traditional settlement patterns and impeded an autonomous territorial organization. Extended families were split up and forced to live side by side with members of other extended families. This situation led to internal rivalries and conflicts prevailing until today, since kinship is the basis of socio-political and socioeconomic cooperation and non-cooperation (see Pereira 2004). The political importance of kinship can be traced by the position of the “capitão”. It was created by the FUNAI to manage internal conflicts and to provoke a centralization of power inside the reservation. Following described logics of cooperation and rivalries, families being close to this kind of leadership achieve greater political representation than others.

In addition, external actors intervene directly into the internal organization. In the beginning this was realized by FUNAI and catholic missions. During the last decades, also other institutions established centres inside the reservations, such as health stations, social services, evangelical churches, schools and NGOs. Their organisation and administration follow their own ideologies, conceptualized beyond indigenous logics. As a result, most of them are not working in line with internal organisation patterns, but rather parallel to them (see Mura 2006: 437ff). Besides, they do not treat the complexity of kinship relationships, and therefore, tend to ignore internal power relations, contributing in that way to the marginalization of some families and stigmatizing them as “problematic” (see Pereira 2004, Kroyer 2014:

38). Additionally, there is a growing tendency to employ indigenous inhabitants in these institutions. As access to these jobs is again linked to kinship ties, and considering that these jobs are linked to a stable and good salary as compared to plantation work, internal power inequalities are increasingly accompanied by economic factors.

Considering the described aspects, the indirect and direct intervention by non-indigenous actors have contributed to the establishment of a centre-periphery-dynamic inside the reservations, as access to resources and political power as well as to employment and prestige are unequally distributed and linked to kinship. Some institutions constitute poles of power, where certain families participate in a vivid way, while others do not (see Kroyer 2014).

Another problematic factor generated in the reservations and interrelated to the aspects described above is that of violence. In fact, both, suicide and homicide rates are alarmingly high inside reservations. Suicides among the Guarani Kaiowá have been documented since the 1980s, especially in the biggest reservations and particularly among the young between 12 and 21 years old (see Brand et al. 2001). Given the correlation of the confinement process and the significant increase in suicide rates, Brand (1997) identifies a direct link between the suicides and the deteriorating territorial situation of the Guarani Kaiowá. According to the CIMI – Indigenous Missionary Council – suicide rates have been still rising during the last years with a total of 684 Guarani Kaiowá committing suicide between 2000 and 2013 (Fasolo 2014).

In reference to homicide, 162 indigenous persons were killed in Mato Grosso do Sul merely between 2007 and 2010 (CIMI cited from Rangel 2011: 16ff). On one side, the murders are committed by non-indigenous in the context of conflicts over land and land occupations as cited above. On the other side, they are committed in the context of inter-family and intra-family violence inside reservations. The highest level of violence is in Dourados, where the territorial situation is the most precarious.

Like suicide and homicide, also the high levels of domestic violence have to be understood in the context of the living conditions the Guarani Kaiowá face today, since violence never used to be a part of the traditional upbringing of

children (see Jesus do Nascimento 2013:189f). Lots of those violent acts are committed under the influence of alcohol, as alcoholism is another major problem in the reservations, severely affecting men and women as well as children and youth

Against the described background, the conditions of living provided in the reservations do not permit its inhabitants to assert the right to a self-determined and autonomous life according to their own cultural norms. On the contrary, the forced confinement inside reservations is linked to a series of problems, which put at risk the physical as well as the cultural reproduction of the Guarani Kaiowá. Reservations neither constitute an appropriate alternative to the lost territories, nor do they accord to constitutional rights concerning indigenous people. Neither did reservations meet the initial expectations of provoking a rapid economic and cultural integration into the non-indigenous society, nor did they help to break ethnical segregation. On the contrary, socio-spatial separation and discrimination against indigenous people continue to prevail in Mato Grosso do Sul.

In addition, it has become clear that the concept of reservations as a living space where indigenous people reside and remain has failed, because the Guarani Kaiowá still claim access to the land they once lived on and belong to (see Pereira 2007). Lack of arable land, overpopulation, internal marginalization, conflict and violence constitute reasons for many families to leave the reservations in search of other potential living spaces, such as urban peripheries or their traditionally occupied territory. Most of these families do not participate in described poles of power established inside reservations, and therefore do not see any other options to ensure a better future for their family apart from the recuperation of their traditional land (see Brand 2004: 143f, Pereira 2004: 324f). In that sense, the “retomadas” – as they call the occupations of private landholdings aiming on its demarcation as indigenous territory – can be seen as means to resolve conflicts and tensions, as well as to recuperate a certain autonomy of the occupying family. Or rather, as Colman (2007: 96) puts it, the “retomadas” can be understood as an effort to restore and stabilize social relationships as well as the relationship between humans and nature, and to realize the reestablishment of the “tekoha” by transcending the physical as well as socio-cultural limits set by the reservations.

The Guarani Kaiowá land rights movement, starting in the 1980s, in a certain way broke with the confinement process, at the very time when the latter reached its peak (see Brand 1997). Given the rapid population growth among the Guarani, the claim to their traditionally occupied territories will not decrease in importance. In fact, the Guarani population has doubled during the last thirty years (ISA, cited from Brand et al. 2011) and the necessity to provide more land by identifying and demarcating part of their original territory is more acute than ever. In consideration of the lacking political will to expropriate landowners as outlined above, “retomadas” will continue to play a crucial role in resource conflicts and the indigenous fight for their land rights in Mato Grosso do Sul.

4. RESOURCES, CONFLICTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION

In this section the implications of the contemporary living conditions discussed above for the younger generations shall be examined. In doing so, it addresses the impacts of the chronic lack of resources, the conflict involving their people and the intercultural environment they are living. Today’s youth living within the reservations were born after the peak of the confinement process. In contrast to their parents or grandparents, most of them have never lived on the lands their families were forced to leave. Consequently, they refer differently to land and related conflicts than older generations do. This section mostly draws on primary data collected by the author in the course of a 4-month field study in Mato Grosso do Sul with a focus on the reservation of Caarapó For further reading referring to indigenous and occidental concepts of youth, aspects of ethnic identity and belonging, generation gaps and related conflicts, indigenous schooling and intercultural education, as well as perceived future perspectives and relevant discourses, see Kroyer 2014.

GUARANI KAIOWÁ YOUTH TODAY

Treating Guarani Kaiowá youth, the understanding of youth shall not be reduced to denominate a specific age group, but follows its conceptualization as a dynamic category that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood following socio-cultural aspects (see Pérez Ruiz 2011, Kroyer 2014: 59ff). In many societies, age does not define a person, their rights and obligations, but rather the social and family status obtained. Therefore, youth rather designates the

gap between sexual and social maturity, with the latter implying the capability of independently sustaining a living and of starting a new family. As to the Guarani Kaiowá biological and social maturity did never coincide, as it may be the case of other indigenous societies. Instead, the interim was always of great concern for traditional education and combined with an intense and specified transfer of traditional knowledge and instruction (see Meliá et al. 2008: 175ff). Also, transitional events were well defined. While initiation rituals marked the transition from childhood to youth symbolizing sexual maturity, marriage and having children marked the transition to fully independent community members. As a precondition of a marriage, the male Kaiowá had to demonstrate that he was able to maintain a family economically by means of subsistence economy such as hunting, fishing and agricultural activities (see Meliá et al. 2008: 179, Silvestre 2011: 144f).

The loss of land together with the confinement process has had significant impacts on productive and reproductive factors of the Kaiowá communities, as shown above. This consequently affected the factors determining the perception of someone as child, youth or adult. The lack of land and other resources, the lost access to rivers and woods, as well as the integration into labour markets and the introduction of occidental concepts of school education have effectively changed the characteristics of economic independence, social autonomy and the conditions of starting a family. The knowledge of how to cultivate land and how to sustain a family autonomously was partly replaced by the competence of gaining access to monetary income. Similarly, the acquisition of knowledge, formerly solely provided by family and elders, was partly replaced by school education. Both aspects contributed to a rise in the average age at marriage and prolonged the period of economic dependence on the family (see Silvestre 2011: 149, Kroyer 2014: 81ff). Working abroad at plantations or ethanol plants is associated with long periods of absences from the community, meaning that economic dependence is frequently obtained at a later stage than in the case of involvement in subsistence economy. As far as school and education are concerned, graduation is viewed as a welcome precondition of starting a family by both parents and students, contributing to a stigmatization of teenage parents (see Kroyer: 82f). These aspects have resulted in a prolonged transition phase to adulthood and the emergence of a large group of

young unmarried people, differing significantly from the productive and reproductive characteristics previous generations had at their age (see Silvestre 2011: 149).

Analogously to the shift in productive and reproductive factors, the symbols of life stage transition have experienced profound changes. Graduating from school or earning money abroad can be interpreted as contemporary “rites de passages” as they symbolize maturity and independence (see Thomaz de Almeida 2001, Alcantara et al. 2006). Likewise the access to consumer goods, such as mobile phones and cars, tend to replace the prestige formerly acquired through traditional knowledge (see Pereira 2004: 181f). Hence, the alteration of the ecological environment and economic livelihoods has led to a shift in prestige-norms and consequently to a disruption of traditional generational relationships among the Guarani Kaiowá (see Kroyer 2014: 63).

The Guarani as a whole have been subject to long and intense intercultural contacts due to early missionary interventions, working relationships, foreign administration of their territories and close proximity to cities and have consequently adopted many material and nonmaterial aspects from the majority society. However, today’s youth is most affected by intercultural transfers given the easy transport to cities, school education involving non-indigenous teachers and mentors, and broad access to information and communication media. These aspects constitute sources of new individual and collective dimensions of identification (see Kroyer 2014: 88ff, 111f). In consequence, they constantly cross and redefine cultural borders, negotiating their curiosity for non-indigenous goods and ideas with indigenous concepts of belonging and affirmation of their indigenous identity. In this regard, it is of crucial importance to break with polarizing and simplifying concepts of tradition and modernity and to understand their perceived and lived conflicts and tensions by means of the interculturality of everyday life (see Kroyer 2014: 121ff).

In conclusion, the social category of youth was not initially created by aspects of modernity such as schools and labour markets, although these factors did certainly change its social significance. In addition, crises related to this phase of transition, such as depression, addiction, auto-aggression and violence increased in intensity along the process of land

loss and confinement. Alcantara (et al. 2012) ascribes these problems among the youth to a crisis of belonging and the condition of living a permanent state of “in-between”. On the one hand, they do not feel accepted by their families and communities in many cases, as family relationships inside reservations are often complex, involving problems of domestic violence and alcoholism. (see Kroyer 2014: 95ff). On the other hand, they experience economic exclusion, ethnic discrimination and social marginalization in relation to the non-indigenous society, which makes it difficult for them to build up a positive feeling of self-esteem as Guarani Kaiowá. Their living context requires a constant dialog between cultures, societies, norms and values that make up their environment. According to Alcantara (et al. 2012), the difficulties of holding this dialogue balanced and establishing a positive sense of belonging, increases the risk of drug use and alcohol abuse as well as suicide.

PROSPECTS, LAND AND CONFLICT

In the course of her field work the author sought to examine the perspectives young Guarani Kaiowá identify for themselves. In doing so, she focused on youth attending schools. Today’s youth constitutes the first generation that has access to school education on a very broad level due to the establishment of primary and secondary schools inside reservations. That way, schools, nowadays, play a crucial role in constructing and influencing discourses on future prospects on the individual and collective level. Besides, they became an important centre of reflection on indigenous knowledge, intercultural education, cultural self-determination and self-affirmation, as well as on the on-going conflicts over land and resources (see Kroyer 2014: 102ff). This reflection is realized mostly by indigenous teachers, who are increasingly replacing non-indigenous ones in reservation schools. Due to their higher education, their secured employment and stable income, as well as their responsibility to transfer knowledge, they became a new kind of elite and leadership, contributing to a certain loss of the prestige of traditional leaders (see Kroyer 2014: 104f). At the same time, however, they constitute a major political and intellectual force in the struggle for the rights of their people and often act as mediator to non-indigenous institutions of support. Their effort to implement a differentiated indigenous school aims at affirming their ethnic identity and cultural knowledge, while at the

same time learning to deal with non-indigenous systems of knowledge, acquiring intercultural competences and establishing ways to overcome social marginalization (see Silvestre 2011: 166).

In regard to the relationship the youth has to land and their living space, the presented results accord to the data collected during focus groups with school attendees in the reservation Te’ykue, Caarapó. Referring to traditional forms of subsistence economy and contribution to the family food production, the majority of the youth interviewed do not show great interest in working on the field (see Kroyer 2014: 110f). On the one hand, this can be seen as a consequence of broadening school education. Spending more time in school inevitably means spending less time helping older family members at home and on the fields – places where economic and social competences used to be taught to the young. Besides, school education vividly contributes to discourses on employment and higher education, undermining the importance of subsistence economy (see Kroyer 2014: 100ff). On the other hand, the depreciation of subsistence production relates to the appreciation of wage labour, because as they say, working on the field, “you don’t get money” (see Kroyer 2014: 110). Eventually, financial income nowadays is not only a necessity in the light of lacking of natural resources, but also a point of reference for the quality of life. Accordingly, all of the interviewed youth emphasise their willingness to complete school and enter a professional or academic education aiming to eventually find employment inside the reservation – meaning, the institutions imposed from outside, above all, schools and health stations (see Kroyer 2014: 112ff). At the same time, nobody expressed the wish to leave indigenous territories in search for jobs. In this context, they mention the proximity to their families, as well as the open space, the calmness, the trees and lakes, which they enjoy inside the reservation. They show great interest in the cities and look forward to study there, but as permanent living space they prefer the proximity to woods and lands where they feel they belong to (see Kroyer 2014: 122ff). This serves as an illustration of the connection they have to the land on which they are living, although they do not explicitly aspire its cultivation.

Part of a generation born after confinement process, they wish to maintain their living space as they know it, while at the same time reducing the negative factors prevailing within the reservations, such as violence and drug

addiction. For that reason, they support the on-going land occupations, even if their own family is not involved actively. Aware of the historical land robbery, the overall lack of resources inside reservations and the high population growth, they highlight the importance of expanding the Guarani Kaiowá lands to guarantee a life in dignity to their people (see Kroyer 2014:120f). Additionally, the solidarity relating to the “retomadas” is very strong and profound, as can be illustrated by the following case. In February 2013 an indigenous boy was shot by a farmer, while fishing in a river on a landholding adjacent to the reservation Te’yikue. His family buried his body on the land he was killed on, so as to demonstrate that this land originally belonged to the indigenous population. Doing so, they occupied the land and called for its demarcation as traditional territory. The whole community including the youth showed their solidarity with the occupying families by frequenting the occupation site. After all, on-going conflicts over resources do not become less important, not even for a youth who was born and raised inside reservations borders.

Moreover, it needs to be pointed out that the expectations the young express regarding future prospects do not correspond to the quantitative data of educational formation among the Guarani Kaiowá. In fact, graduating from school is still a privilege and far from being the norm. Out of 1466 pupils registered in 2012 in Te’yikue, only 15 were in their final year (Kroyer 2014: 50). Common reasons for dropping out of school include lack of family support, the necessity of earning money to support the family financially, pregnancy and marriage. For those who actually graduate from schools, the transport to the study sites can already cause a financial problem. And finally, job offers inside reservations, as aspired by a great part of the youth, are very limited and, as examined above, linked to kinship ties (see Kroyer 2014: 115f). Therefore, schools did not, effectively lower the dependence on low wage labour at plantations and ethanol production sites which continue to be the most accessible jobs for young Guarani, including minors (see Alcantara et al. 2012: 138, Silvestre 2011: 167). Besides, pupils do not represent the whole youth, nor does the school leadership represent the whole community. Reservation schools constitute institutions of political and economic power and are dominated by certain families. That way, they further contribute to the internal marginalization and stigmatization of non-participating families (see Kroyer 2014: 114ff).

4. CLOSING WORDS

Concluding, indigenous schools constitute an important arena of educational reflection and political articulation of the Guarani Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul, aiming at improving living conditions, revitalizing cultural knowledge, combating marginalization and supporting land occupations. But they do not offer solutions for neither the community as a whole nor the lack of resources the people are confronted with. After all, the difficulties the Guarani Kaiowá face to guarantee their physical and cultural reproduction are directly related to the massive loss of land and the on-going expansion of export production in Mato Grosso do Sul. As emphasized in this paper, today’s reservations do not constitute a viable solution to this problem. In contrast, they frequently are the reason for violence and poverty.

The state, its ideologies and policies have clearly prioritized the economic opening of Mato Grosso do Sul to support the expansion of export production, to the disadvantage of the original population of its region. And as shown in this paper, the state, its ideologies and policies continue to do so, despite and contrary to its constitutional legal framework, thereby fuelling conflicts over resources between landholders and indigenous people.

Aylwin (2009: 69), in his report for the International Workgroup of Indigenous Affairs, accuses the Brazilian state of committing both genocide and ethnocide against the Guarani Kaiowá, as measures taken have inflicted both physical and cultural damage to this people. Until today, the Guarani Kaiowá cannot enjoy any protection against the negative effects of the turbo-capitalistic economic system established on their lands. The living conditions inside reservations are not compatible with neither their physical and cultural necessities nor their right to autonomy and self-determination. In fact, the Guarani are still one of the indigenous peoples the most affected by conflict, violence, homicide and suicide.

Consequently, the demarcation of traditionally occupied territories as granted in the constitution has to be given top priority to. The ultimate responsibility to realize the constitutionally granted rights of the Guarani Kaiowá as well as to establish policies that aim on preventing violent conflicts over resources and lands with private landholders lies with the state.

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