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Contraband City:
Geographies of Extralegal Work and Life in Paraguay's Frontier Economy

by
Jennifer Lee Tucker

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
City and Regional Planning
and the Designated Emphasis
in
Global Metropolitan Studies
in the
Graduate Division
of the
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Summer, 2016

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Jennifer Lee Tucker

Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Teresa Caldeira, Chair

Over the last half century, a state-planned Paraguayan port town on the Brazilian border (today Ciudad del Este) transformed into a key hub in global trading networks. Called by some the “largest illicit economy in the Western Hemisphere” (Brown, 2009), Ciudad del Este’s border trade has provided livelihood for tens of thousands of small-scale Brazilian traders and Paraguayan street vendors who connect the Brazilian middle classes with cheap consumer goods from East Asia. The vibrant border trade also draws diaspora businessmen from Lebanon to Seoul. Paraguayan state policies protect the tax differentials that enable the border trade in its legal moments and—directly and indirectly—have enabled the practices of contraband for which the city is known. Indeed, legal transgression is an economic strategy that transcends class and imbricates state officials. As a hub city crucial to global commodity circulation, Ciudad del Este is a strategic site from which to study the emergent forms of governance that enable expanding networks of extralegal trade, and the regulation of informal economies more generally. Not only are extralegal economies a crucial means of livelihood for the poor across the Global South but the political relationships that enable these trade networks—and their supportive spatial forms—can buttress exclusionary trajectories of urban development.

Yet critical scholarship on Latin American cities has largely neglected the articulations between extralegal trade networks, state practice, and everyday urban politics. My work addresses this gap with a critical ethnography of regulatory practice and city-building from Ciudad del Este’s founding as the eponymous port town of the authoritarian president Alfredo Stroessner, through its zenith as a contraband hub, to contemporary state projects to “formalize” the border trade and urban space. This dissertation draws from archival research, fifteen months of participant observation and over 100 in-depth interviews to examine the cultural politics of extralegality as a mode of livelihood, accumulation and city-building.

In this dissertation I argue, first, that state-formation, urban planning practice and contraband economies are co-constitutive, that is, each is a historically specific process emerging

in and through dynamic inter-relationships with each other. Crucially, new modes of frontier governance retain intense flexibility in interpreting and enforcing the law that characterized authoritarian rule. However, contemporary spatialized strategies of governance articulate new visions and capacities of the local state to act as an agent of frontier urbanization. Second, frontier state practices inscribe the extralegal economy into the built environment through a spatial form that I call *contraband urbanism*. Even as official discourse promises to formalize the border trade, through contraband urbanism local state officials make urban spaces for the extralegal economy through state-sponsored transgressions of the law, while also generating uncertainty over tenure rights for street vendors. Contraband urbanism is also an imaginative project, and I describe how local state actors harness ascendant discourses of the city as a globally competitive unit, while smuggling in the very economic practices that are supposedly banished by the formalized city. Third, I complement this macro-level analysis with a focus on the micro-politics of the regulatory interface between municipal officials and Paraguayan street vendors. I describe how municipal officials govern *through* regulatory uncertainty, practices which reverberate through collective ‘structures of feeling.’ Unpredictability and negotiability in municipal enforcement practices are so central to the city’s spatial management that the emotional reverberations of regulatory uncertainty must be thought of as an effect of the state. The resulting affective politics of precarity challenge notions of the independent, liberal self, and point to an imagining of urban belonging which is based in the needs of interdependent urban residents, rather than in the equal rights of citizens before the law.

These findings are relevant for understanding the dynamics of extralegality more broadly, including the ways in which outlaw economies, and their supportive spatial forms, are internal to globalized capitalism. Further, these findings point to the necessity of rethinking the orienting purpose of cities in ways that valorize rights to livelihood; promote urban development policies that include the urban poor as protagonists of development, rather than as beneficiaries; and expand the sites of urban politics to include the affective dimensions of governance.

To my parents:
who instilled curiosity about the beauty and hurt of the world
and an ethics of engagement with both

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 The State Made Us *Contrabandistas*

In 2013, the municipality of Ciudad del Este, Paraguay convened a planning meeting to address the latest crisis, declines in the vibrant border trade that has—for four decades—marked the city as a land-locked entrepôt. Traders import consumer goods worth several billion USD from East Asia and then subsequently re-sell to Brazilian buyers who, in turn, resell the goods in other South American cities.¹ The commodities in question—everything from iPhones to fake Gucci handbags—move through a confusing mix of legal, illegal and informal practices, including contraband (Figure 1). Wide-spread rule-breaking spurs hyperbolic statements about the city, especially in the English-language media, as when one journalist called the city “the largest illicit economy in the hemisphere” (Brown, 2009). At its peak in the late 1990s, tens of thousands of small-scale vendors and hawkers competed with elite traders for Brazilian buyers.

In the planning meeting, a representative from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Nomei Haudenschild, commented that her working group needed to understand why businesses in Ciudad del Este undervalued imports and exports (*subfacturar*)—a key contraband practice—thereby avoiding paying the full tax burden owed to the national treasury.² One businessman scoffed at the question, saying they undervalued goods to stay competitive. Another businessman chimed in, “it’s the state that has turned me into a *contrabandista!*” (“*el gobierno me hizo contrabandista*”). A sharply-dressed businesswoman and head of an important business association, Paula Romero, shared her own story which helps illuminate the role between contraband and state practice. Romero recounted a phone call she received from a customs official who brusquely ordered her to register her makeup imports under a different customs category. The switch reduced her tax bill, and she would then be expected to pay 1/3 of the savings to a customs official and another 1/3 to an intermediary.³ In Romero’s telling, the making of *contrabandistas*—a local term which describes the people who engage in

¹ This estimate, compiled with research assistance from CADEP (Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya), is based on nationally available statistics of the value of imports that are subsequently re-exported. These calculations suggest the value of re-exported goods grew from 1.9 billion USD in 1997 to 4.6 billion USD in 2012. These statistics do not account for smuggling or widespread practices of undervaluing imports and exports. Economists at CADEP point out the various ways that the value of the border trade is not captured through tax collection, impedes national industrialization policy and conflicts with the regional customs union Mercosur (Masi, 2006; Masi & Álvarez, 2005; Ruiz Díaz, 2011).

² In this dissertation, I follow standard ethnographic practices of anonymization. With the exception of elected public officials, I use pseudonyms for all interlocutors, including street vendors, community leaders, and municipal officials. Many identifying details have been changed, including the gender of some individuals, street names and the names of some vendors associations.

³ The specifics of these payoffs are hard to verify with certainty. Two different interlocutors explained the same logistics of this three-way split, which was also reported in a USAID-funded study on the electronics industry (Penner, 2006). I am less interested in the specifics of the payouts than the logics and stakes of reordering the border trade.

contraband—differs from explanations provided by neoclassical economists who argue individuals choose “exit” from state regulation when they “feel overburdened by the state” (Schneider & Enste, 2000, p. 77). Rather, state practice facilitated, and even encouraged, law-breaking economic practice. The entangled relationships between economic and state practice are a key problematic I explore in this dissertation. One common approach decries contraband economies as corrupt violations of the supposedly separate spheres of legal and illegal economies. In contrast, I interrogate particular, situated ways that outlaw economies are internal to globalized capitalism.

Figure 1: Map of the Tri-border region



Source: Sam Pepple, Sample Cartography (cited in Folch, September 6, 2012)

As an observer of this meeting, I noticed that the assembled group was remarkably unfazed by Romero’s admission of involvement in customs fraud and her descriptions of how state representatives facilitated, and even demanded it. Those present agreed that competitive pressures forced frontier businesses to undervalue their imports and exports, and were well aware of the networked relationships running through state spaces highlighted by Romero. When Brazil and Argentina slashed the high protective tariffs in the later stages of the transition away from Import Substitution Industrialization in late 1980s, the easy arbitrage opportunities of earlier decades—based in Paraguay’s relatively lower tax burden than its neighbors—began to shrink. Today’s margins for re-exportation are slim. As if borrowing from a World Bank playbook on good governance and the so-called “capable state” (The World Bank, 2005), the group also agreed that the appropriate role for the state was as “facilitators” (“*facilitadores*”) of private sector initiatives. The governor Lucho Zacarías said the state should “generate the conditions so

that private sector initiatives go well.” Here the phrase “private initiatives” glossed a range of economic practices, a good number which of transgressed legal codes.

Throughout this dissertation I stress that legal transgression is an economic strategy that transcends class. Non-compliance is part and parcel of the livelihood practices of the urban poor in Ciudad del Este as it *also* is a commonplace accumulation strategy of frontier elites, a point underscored in the planning commission meeting by casual talk of contraband logistics. The flexibility of law and ambiguity constitutive of regulatory practice are key dynamics that underpin both the border economy and recent frontier urban development projects. Thus, concepts like illegality—and its counterpart informality—cannot be unthinkingly applied to Ciudad del Este; they are terms that can only be understood in relationship to their vernacular use and careful study of the sorts of relationships and politics these terms enable.

Indeed, the meeting centered on the difficult task of “formalizing” the border trade, a project which the meeting participants described as “restructuring the city” (*reconversión de la ciudad*). The language of restructuring the city highlights the links between the spatial and the economic. The stakes of restructuring the city are another one of this dissertation’s central problematics, and I argue that looking at the border trade through a spatial lens opens up new ways of understanding Ciudad del Este. Contestation over the city’s urban development trajectory are bound up in who gets to claim space to connect to the border trade, and on what terms.

Paraguay’s frontier economy is crucial for the nation’s poor. A small elite holds most of the country’s wealth and land, and poverty rates in Paraguay are among the highest in Latin America, despite a fast-growing economy. Today, some 20,000 small-scale Paraguayan vendors, taxi-drivers, moneychangers and traders work in the city’s border trade. In this context, Ciudad del Este represents opportunity amidst deep socio-economic inequality. Indeed, some scholars cite Ciudad del Este as a prime example of “globalization from below,” because the urban poor, and not just elites, are able to capture some benefit from morphing geographies of global trade (Aguar, 2012; Béliveau & Montenegro, 2010; Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012; Rabossi, 2008).

No representatives of street vendors’ organizations joined this particular planning commission meeting, and their absence signaled a particular relationship between the municipality and vendors, in which street vendors tend to be seen as clients or beneficiaries rather than protagonists of urban development. However, in spite of their exclusion from this meeting, street vendors are a forceful presence in local politics and agents of the production of urban space. The absence of street vendors’ voices around this table gestures to ongoing conflicts over what sorts of urban subjects belong in the city. Indeed, meeting participants often circled back to questions of the place of street vending in the group’s visions for urban development. Throughout the meeting, the businessmen present called for “cleaning” (“*limpiando*”) the streets, that is, mass evictions of street vendors.⁴ Divisions among frontier businessmen are important in city politics, but, as a group, they tend to align behind a vision for a future city in which streets are for circulating shoppers, not working vendors. Governor Zacarías, in contrast, stressed his priority was “a solution for everyone,” including vendors, who also represented a important

⁴ I used the gendered form “businessmen” intentionally. While a small number of businesswomen participate in the frontier economy, I want to highlight the gendered dynamics of frontier commerce and political practice that are not significantly attenuated by the presence of a few women in meetings like this one.

political constituency of Governor Lucho Zacarías and his sister-in-law, Sandra McLeod de Zacarías, the mayor.

This planning commission meeting crystalizes the stakes of long standing struggles over the legitimacy of various means of accumulation and strategies of livelihood in Ciudad del Este, many of which transgress legal codes. As such, it provides context for the three interrelated sets of questions I address in this dissertation. The first set concerns the repertoire of spatialized practices of governance, which enable Paraguay's frontier economy. Thus I ask: how is urban space and the border economy regulated by different actors, forms of authority and practices of governance? I begin by looking at Paraguayan histories of economic experimentation, and, relatedly, their intertwined relationship with frontier city-building. I contend that the production of this frontier city and the border economy are co-constitutive. A historical, spatio-temporal perspective is required to understand the surprising emergence of Ciudad del Este from a frontier outpost to a key node in global commodity circuits. I address this question through three scales: the frontier, the city and the street. These are key sites enabling globalized circuits of commodity flows, and unfold into questions of urban development trajectories, extralegal livelihoods and the politics of urban space.

The second set of questions has to do with the strategies, tactics and experiences of the urban poor as they negotiate for urban space and livelihood in a difficult city. I ask: how do street vendors experience and respond to these forms of state practice? How do street vendors legitimate their extralegal claims to city space? How is the state referenced, imagined and conjured in these negotiations? I prioritize the experiences of street vendors for two reasons. First, Paraguayan street vendors are crucial economic actors and agents of urbanization. The volume of trade conducted on the streets of Ciudad del Este—rather than routed through the numerous discount-shopping galleries—is unknown but substantial. Further, the physical presence of vending infrastructure is perhaps *the* defining feature of the city's particular urban form. Secondly, the city's urban politics cannot be understood apart from conflicts over the place and future of the street market, contestations in which street vendors figure prominently. A significant portion of the frontier economy's rents accrue to non-Paraguayans, who arrive from elsewhere with the capital and trading expertise to establish themselves in the border trade. In the frontier economy's racialized hierarchy of business success, most Paraguayans occupy the lower echelons. Yet a competing imaginary co-exists with this reality. Street vendors call the city an *olla popular*, or a soup kitchen, arguing the city should benefit poor Paraguayans as well as Brazilian, Lebanese, Chinese and Korean entrepreneurs. Municipal officials and business leaders take up this discursive frame, stressing the importance of the frontier economy for both the national interest and poor Paraguayans as they push their own policy agendas in the capital city.

As I began to understand more about the intense negotiability of law governing the border trade and the use of space, a new set of questions emerged regarding the affective politics of precarity. This field of negotiation and regulatory uncertainty, included law and regulatory practice in unexpected ways, on the balance reproducing the terms of inequality. However, at the same time, negotiability created small openings for street vendors. I observed precarious women vendors engage their bodies and mobilize affective interconnections with municipal officials to extract temporary concessions to remain in the street market. Thus I asked a final question: how does affect, emotion and this politics of the body work politically? My studies of the affective politics of precarity opens up into questions of the relationships between the construction of gender and the production of space.

1.2 Arguments: Learning from an “Off the Map” City

Ciudad del Este is stereotyped as a space of lawlessness outside of state control. In the post-9/11 era, the US security apparatus (Abbott, 2004; Treverton et al., 2009) and sensationalist news coverage (Brown, 2009; Rohter, 2001; Webber, 2010) have depicted Ciudad del Este as a “wild west” of piracy, smuggling and criminal financial networks (Carless, 2014). Indeed John Pogue, the director of *The Fast and the Furious*, is adapting the graphic novel *Ciudad* for film, which uses Ciudad del Este as a spatial metonym for criminality, describing it as a “lawless” and “dark and dangerous place” (Parks & Russo, 2014, pp. 26–27) (Figure 2). It was these stereotypes that participants in the planning commission meeting sought to address through plans to restructure the city. In this dissertation, I write against these overwrought narratives of lawlessness and state absence, which provide crude caricatures of state practice and provide unhelpful maps for those of us concerned with social justice.

In what follows, I demonstrate how state actors govern through historically-specific repertoires of regulation, systems of governmental practice that take on the production of space as a means to enable particular economic forms. Contestations over the built environment between street vendors, foreign entrepreneurs and state actors are also conflicts over whose bodies and what livelihood strategies belong in the city. Indeed, these conflicts extend to the *raison d’etre* of the city, urban life and national belonging. Crucially, economic practices articulate with different ways of using urban space to circulate consumer goods and extract capital from moving commodities in, through and out of Paraguayan territory. This means that conflicts over what sorts of economic practices belong in the city are also contestations over spatial practice and urban form. Geographers have long demonstrated that space is a social product and a constitutive force in social relations, rather than an inert background. One key contribution of this dissertation is to show how frontier trade economies are forces of urbanization, producing particular kinds of urban spaces.

My main argument concerns the ways in which economic practice is governed through contestations over the use and form of urban space in Ciudad del Este. The Paraguayan transition toward democracy—instantiated by the fall of the Stroessner dictatorship in 1989—impelled local state actors to rework their old authoritarian practices of governance, marked by repression, arbitrary detentions, state violence and a near-continuous, officially-declared state of emergency.⁵ I find that new modes of frontier governance, operative today, retain an intense flexibility in interpreting and enforcing the law, practices that also characterized authoritarian rule.

⁵ The Stroessner regime ruled under a near permanent state of emergency, in which the powers of the state to grant itself exceptional powers were deployed as the norm. The state of emergency was ritually lifted for sham elections every five years.

Figure 2: The graphic novel *Ciudad*



Source: (Parks & Russo, 2014)

However, these spatialized strategies of governance articulate with new visions and capacities of the local state to act as an agent of frontier urbanization. I found that governance is not about aligning actions with the law, but rather enabling the extralegal transborder trade through intense negotiability in the realm of urban rights, border commerce and the spatial management of street vendors. I identify this repertoire of governance practices as *regulation by ambiguity*, which operates through contingent enforcement of the law and negotiability over the use of urban space. These findings contribute to scholarship on state practices under democratization in Latin America, detailing how old authoritarian state practices articulate with new urban priorities of formalization and competitive global cities. I also suggest the concept of regulation by ambiguity as directed spatial management can be generalized to other settings where extralegal work is the norm.

I also found that frontier state practice inscribes the extralegal economy into the built environment. Through this spatial form, what I call *contraband urbanism*, local state actors promote the extralegal economy by making urban spaces through state-sponsored transgressions of the law. Contraband urbanism inscribes the extralegal economy into the built environment and generates uncertainty over tenure rights for street vendors, even as official discourse promises to

formalize the border trade. The material form of contraband urbanism is evidenced in high-end riverfront development enabled by land deals cut by municipal officials, highly flexible management of vendors in the street market, and the increased importance of state-sponsored clandestine ports (*puertos clandestinos*) for the border trade. Contraband urbanism is also an imaginative project, and I describe how local state actors harness circulating referents of the competitive global city, while smuggling in the very economic practices, which are supposedly banished by the formalized city.

I argue that frontier economies and border towns are not deviant economic and political spaces. Instead they are sites where the dynamics of extralegal trade and the negotiability of law are accentuated and thus more visible. Given the twin calamities of growing inequality and inadequate social supports for the poor and downwardly mobile, the import of extralegal economies must be underscored. An expansive literature analyzes the urban underpinnings of contemporary global economic transformations (D. Harvey, 1982; Lefebvre, 2003; Massey, 1995). Outsourcing disperses sites of production while the rise of financial capital, immaterial labor, and the ‘creative class’ throws in question old categories of work and labor. The “financialization of everything” extends to urban space as the rise of secondary circuits of capital, generated from property and infrastructure, gains prominence in relation to production (D. Harvey, 2005, p. 33). Furthermore, economies based in circulating rather than producing consumer goods are on the rise (Castells, 2010; Neuwirth, 2011) mixing officially registered trade flows with unregistered, extralegal trade. While the scale is unknowable, these economies of trade and circulation are crucial to the urban poor across the Global South (Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012).⁶ Thus my study contributes to an analysis of the resurgence of merchant capital as a key, yet understudied phenomenon.

Over the last five decades, Paraguayan state strategies of regulating transborder commodity flows, encouraging contraband and managing frontier subjects have changed in relationship to political, economic and social transformations at different scales. As such, I situate this research on the regulation of the frontier economy in debates about the configurations of millennial capitalism (J. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001). By millennial capitalism, I mean the surprising and confounding mutations in the socio-historical processes of capital and labor, production and consumption, and law and violence, that generate stark, uneven geographies of extreme wealth and bare life, and which are radically reconfiguring contemporary “ontological conditions-of-being” (J. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 293). The processes of neoliberalization—necessarily incomplete, variegated, placed and contested—individuate, and push toward the expansion of market logics and the disembedding of labor power from its social context. Of course, these world-historical processes are necessarily articulated through placed histories and culturally mediated processes of self-recognition in which race, gender, generation and other configurations of identity play a constitutive role.

Ciudad del Este is a globalized hub in spatially extensive geographies of extralegal trade and a relay in South–South circuits of commodities and capital. Yet, as a small country squashed between two economic powerhouses, Paraguay tends to be overlooked or imagined as an aberration from continental processes of modernization, economic development and democratization. A Peruvian friend working with Paraguayan immigrants in Buenos Aires

⁶ The elaborate quantitative methods which estimate the value of global “shadow economy” at \$10 trillion USD are rooted in an untenable dual economy model in which legal economies are bounded from their illegal counterparts (Schneider, 2011; Schneider & Enste, 2000).

described Paraguay as “lost in time,” invoking the lingering myth of modernization, of predetermined stages of development through which Paraguay had yet to pass. The imaginative mappings of progress and lack implicit in my Peruvian friend’s comment reflect a common, spatialized narrative of progress, which is also present in the social sciences, despite a chorus of convincing arguments that this narrative is both empirically invalid and Eurocentric. Thus, I put this research on Ciudad del Este in conversation with debates on larger-scale processes of millennial capitalism to highlight how the city is embroiled in—and productive of—eminently contemporary processes. Thus, my study of one nodal city unfolds into an analysis of capitalist globalization’s “*interconnected* trajectories of sociospatial change” (G. Hart, 2004, p. 91 emphasis in original).

I also push back against these spatialized progress narratives by considering the relational production of space. Following Doreen Massey’s path breaking work (Massey, 1994, 2005), I understand the city as a nodal point of dense connections that cannot be thought apart from their interrelationships to multiple elsewhere. The spatially-extensive interconnections that make Ciudad del Este what it is today include the material pathways of commodities, diaspora Chinese, Lebanese and Korea businessmen, small-scale Brazilian traders, and globally-circulating ideas of the modern city. Indeed most of the businesspeople at the Municipality planning meeting discussed in the opening section of this chapter were not ethnic Paraguayans. Further, internal migration pathways link the city to the countryside, as the spread of industrial agriculture decimates smallholder farming, displacing *campesinos* who arrive in Ciudad del Este seeking work. Thus, I demonstrate how Ciudad del Este is a regulatory node attracting, territorializing and then re-circulating commodities from export-processing factories in East Asia with end consumers in Latin America.

My argument that Ciudad del Este is a nodal city—not a bounded unit—is also an epistemological argument that cities in Global South are necessary sites of knowledge production. A growing body of scholarship in postcolonial urban theory challenges the presumed universality of theory generated from a small set of North Atlantic cities (Bunnell & Maringanti, 2010; McFarlane, 2011; Parnell, Pieterse, & Watson, 2009; Robinson, 2006; Roy & Ong, 2012; Simone, 2010). Hegemonic “geographies of theory” (Roy, 2009) produced the conceit that such cities could yield universal theory, imagining cities in the Global South as sites of derivate social process (Mbembe, 2004; Santos, 2007). Most cities of the world simply fall “off the map” or are reduced to sites of interesting empirical evidence, but not sites productive of generalizable theory (Robinson, 2006). This position elides the relational construction of space through translocal processes as well as the mutual constitution of modernity’s underlying epistemologies, forged in the colonial encounter. Of course, cities in the Global South have long been sites of colonial and economic experimentation as well as sources of emergent global phenomena.

This Masseian lens is increasingly used in geography and urban theory, but is under-appreciated by both scholars and practitioners of urban planning. This disciplinary oversight means planning theory relies on canonical assumptions about development and urbanization that are empirically invalid for most cities in the Global South. For instance, many cities in the Global South experience urbanization without economic growth, evince tight ties between the state and its so-called outside, and face increasing informality across many domains of life (Watson, 2013). The mismatch between mainstream planning theory and urban dynamics in the Global South yields policies based on inappropriate assumptions (Pieterse, 2008). Thus I situate this dissertation—generated out of an urban planning department and centrally concerned

with the public production of space (Yiftachel & Huxley, 2000, p. 907)—as an intervention in planning theory. One of its key contributions to planning theory is to start from the empirical realities of a key city in the Global South as a site of producing planning knowledge. My contention is that critical, theoretically sensitive research is a precondition for effective, justice-oriented planning interventions.

This dissertation also considers the cultural politics of extralegality as a mode of livelihood, accumulation and city-building in Paraguay’s frontier economy. I use the term extralegal to signal the limits of binary distinctions between legal and illegal, formal and informal, a distinction I draw out in the next section. Paraguay’s transborder economy confounds these categories, as evidenced by discussions of how the state makes *contrabandistas* in the planning commission meeting discussed in the opening section of this chapter. State actors, spaces, and spatio-economic practices are folded into a broader field that encompasses contestation over the boundaries of the legal and illegal. Furthermore, the scale of the extralegal border trade is surprising: at its peak, in the 1990s, analysts estimated its value at as much as \$10 billion USD, more than the GDP of the nation at that time (Abínzano, 2005).⁷ These conditions make Ciudad del Este a strategic site from which to study the emergent forms of governance that enable expanding networks of extralegal trade. Emerging scholarship in geography is studying how legal and illegal economies are “genetically entwined and encoded in the DNA and ‘normal’ operations of contemporary capitalism” (Hudson, 2014, p. 1).⁸ My work adds to these debates in two ways. First, I offer an analysis of the co-constitution of state-formation and contraband economies. Secondly, I complement this macro-level analysis with a focus on the micro-politics of the regulatory interface between state actors and urban entrepreneurs.

I argue that attention to multiple scales is necessary to understand the surprising durability of Paraguay’s extralegal trade. If the first half of this dissertation considers the production and management of frontier city space, then the last two chapters zoom into the politics of bodies and affects. Through studying street vendor politics, I argue that regulation by ambiguity reverberates through collective structures of feeling. Indeed, I describe how municipal officials govern *through* regulatory uncertainty. Unpredictability and negotiability in municipal enforcement practices are so central to the city’s spatial management that, I argue, the emotional reverberations of regulatory uncertainty must be thought of as an effect of the state. Further, this collective state of affective uncertainty, I show, is politically useful for exclusionary municipal reform projects. Yet, there is a paradox. The uncertainties of regulation by ambiguity produce a distressing condition of affective uncertainty at the same time that these regulatory uncertainties are the very ground from which street vendors are able to make claims to the city. This contradictory dialectic of affective uncertainties is a better lens through which to analyze relations of rule in Ciudad del Este than the commonly deployed models of transactional clientelism.

In addition, I argue that street vendors work emotional fields to their own ends, strategically engaging the emotions of municipal enforcers as a means to delay eviction or procure a temporary relocation. By “touching the heart” (*tocando el corazon*) of the right local official—in the words of one municipal bureaucrat—precarious women vendors defend their

⁷ Abínzano includes an estimate of unregistered trade. The precise number is, of course, not possible to estimate.

⁸ While illegal and outlaw economies have long been considered in disciplines like anthropology, the sociology of crime and legal studies, these bodies of work rarely have a spatial lens.

claims to space, exploiting legal uncertainties. I call one of these affective strategies “testifying” and another deploying “the aggressive body.” With the term *testifying*, I want to highlight the intensity of emotion called forth as Guaraní-speaking Paraguayan women narrate the proof of their livelihood need. As evidence, women speak of the embodied hardships of poverty and invoke a discursive register of moral obligation, which imagines a state that has care-taking obligations to the poor. Women vendors also turned to provoking discomfort and shame in municipal officials by trespassing boundaries of acceptable gendered bodily dispositions, displaying their aggressive body. In the tradition of feminist theory, which refuses a split between reasoned politics and emotional life, I argue that these affective politics of street vendors should be considered properly political.

Testifying, as a contingently successful tactic, reveals the extent to which regulatory relationships between local state actors and frontier entrepreneurs are characterized by negotiability and dealmaking. Affective capacities operate through a “between-ness” which contest the presumption of the emotionally contained autonomous individual (Bondi, 2005; Brennan, 2004). Rather than “liberal transacting individuals” (Ferguson, 2013, p. 226), the study of emotion helps illuminate how notions of relational personhood—made through networks of dependent, interconnected selves—better explain the durability of hierarchical networks of contingent reciprocity between municipal officials and street vendors. I argue these affective politics point to an imaginary of urban belonging based in the needs of interdependent urban residents rather than in the equal rights of citizens before the law. As a challenge to the lingering liberal notions of the self within urban theory, I argue that studying vendors’ body politics is an important contribution to theories of urban politics. One important contribution of this perspective is that it allows an analysis of how this emotional between-ness acts as a relational bond that materializes the state.

1.3 Governing an Extralegal Economy

At the planning commission meeting discussed in the opening vignette, participants disagreed as to the spatial form that state projects should promote in order to achieve *reconversión* (restructuring the city). Aiming to keep re-exportation competitive under new regional conditions, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce representative, Noemi Haudenschild, proposed dropping the total tax burden on strategic consumer goods to the precise point that would eliminate the financial incentive for smuggling, in effect legalizing contraband. She listed the city’s competitiveness factors, including commercial “know-how,” (she used the English word), thereby legitimizing frontier businessmen’s knowledge of the placed specificity of global factories, local warehouses, paperwork practices, “friendly” customs officials, clandestine ports, and countless other materializations of the extralegal economy.⁹ While Haudenschild’s model attached exceptional status to particular consumer goods, Rodolfo Aquino—the president of a controversial local chamber of commerce—promoted a strategic

⁹ The discussion turned around a Ministry of Industry and Commerce proposal for three overlapping, negotiated customs lists which provided exceptional status, and lower tax rates, to 649 consumer goods. These lists form the backbone of the city’s re-exportation trade. Haudenschild proposed more strategic use of these lists to balance the goal of maintaining the profitability of re-exportation while also protecting nascent national industry. Haudenschild also wanted to base the tax burden on the willingness to pay of importer/exporters, asking, “what is the tax level that we have to have so that there isn’t undervaluing [of imports and exports].”

frontier zone (*zona comercial estrategica fronteriza*). Imagined as a zone of legality within a larger space of widespread non-compliance, businesses would apply for entry in order to benefit from a near-zero tax burden. Once inside the zone, they must comply with the law, attaching the exceptional tax status to the person, inside an exceptional space. Aquino argued that the “rot” of corruption infected the fabric of the city which was thus beyond recuperation. *Reconversión* was then only possible in a completely new space of commerce. Aquino’s plans echoed a long unfulfilled desire of frontier businessmen to zone the city as duty-free.¹⁰ Paula Romero’s private sector initiative, *Asociación Plan de Desarrollo del Este*, represented another developmental vision: state infrastructure investments in roads, transit infrastructure and waterfront redevelopment, in accordance with a master plan (*plan directora*) developed by the private sector. The hinge for this vision was sleek, friendly (“*acogedora*”) spaces of shopping and consumption. The flagship mall Shopping del Este exemplified this vision, sporting both the spatial signifiers of global consumerism—aesthetically, it could be a mall in Anytown, USA—yet built through a construction pathway littered with irregularities. A Lebanese business magnet agreed with Romero about the need for infrastructure development, launching into a poetic manifesto of the wealth generating capacity of the country, especially the frontier region, given more adequate infrastructural preconditions. He concluded, “...with infrastructure, contraband and informality, will be eliminated.” Here he used informality as a code for the commercial activities of the 5000 Paraguayan vendors and peddlers who sold from streets and sidewalks in the busy eight square blocks of the central city.

The social sciences have a long history of studying informal work, in part because of the importance of these economies for the urban poor. In many Latin American countries, informal economies are the primary way the urban poor make ends meet. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), rates of informal, non-agricultural jobs in Latin America range from 30.7% in Costa Rica to 73.6% in Guatemala (ILO, 2014).¹¹ The ILO calculates the rate of informal employment in Paraguay as 63.8%. Pioneering researchers like Keith Hart considered informal economies as the survival-oriented labor of the poor (K. Hart, 1973). In the seventies and eighties, scholars of development imagined a separate, transitional informal sector, a so-called dual economy which, according to the stage theories of the time, signified underdevelopment and incomplete modernities (Lewis, 1955). Predictions abounded that informal economies would be displaced by on-the-books ones as countries proceeded up the

¹⁰ Prior spatial strategies demarcated specific zones through legislation for *zonas franca* (duty-free zones) with very low total tax burdens. In 1971, law 237/71 established a 10-hectare Zona Franca Internacional and Law 523/95 established another duty-free zone, Zona Franca Global del Paraguay S.A.. For a variety of reasons, most trade was not organized through these exceptional spaces. In the 1960s and 1970s, a legal figure called *despacho en transito*, covered the re-exportation sector. In 1978, the regulatory figure shift away from zoning towards lists of exceptional goods through the Tourism Regime (*El Regimen de Turismo*). A wide variety of smuggling and tax evasion practices existed alongside convoluted, and sometime conflicting, regulations. Thus the international reputation that the city itself was a duty-free zone was incorrect, but the misunderstanding captured the experience of buyers who paid very low or no taxes, but through a range of importing and exporting practices that operated at oblique angles to convoluted legal regimes—developed through state projects—to enable re-exportation.

¹¹ These researchers who use this informal/formal binary—and there are many of them—differentiate between the *informal sector*, production and employment in unregistered businesses; *informal employment*, non-compliant with national labor legislation (which might include workers in formal firms), and the *informal economy*, which includes “all firms, workers and actives that operate outside the legal regulatory framework of society and the output they generate” (Meagher, 2013, p. 2).

“development ladder” (Rostow, 1959). Neo-Marxists retorted the informal economic sector needed to be understood as structural, subordinated subsidization of capitalist expansion (Moser, 1978; Portes, Castells, & Benton, 1989). Today the dominant definition of informal economies is “income generating activities operating outside the regulatory framework of the state” (Meagher, 2013). Indeed, both the free market enthusiast Hernando de Soto (De Soto, 1989) and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2002) agree that the presence or absence of state regulation defines informal economies.

Following this formal/informal typology, today most social science scholarship centers on the linkages between formal and informal economies. A smaller body of work considers how informal workers challenge the labor movement (Bairoch, 1976; Geertz, 1963; Kurtz, 2004; Marx, 1867 [1852]) or self organize to make claims (Bhowmik, 2005; Cross, 1998; Rosaldo, Tilly, & Evans, 2012). In contrast, my work focuses on the regulatory interface between state actors and urban entrepreneurs. It is in these intersubjective, everyday regulatory relationships that political authority, and the boundaries of legitimate work, are performed, reiterated and contested. My contention is that understanding the durability of extralegal economies requires a focus on the everyday practices of governance that enable them.

I use the term extralegal, rather than informal, to encourage thinking *outside* the binary of informal and formal, a dichotomy that can confuse informality with a sphere of unregulated activity. Definitional debates occupy a considerable slice of the informality literature, revealing disciplinary orientations and epistemological assumptions about the relationship between state, economy and society. Among those who reject the dual economy model, there is still debate about how to theorize the relationship between state practice and economies enabled by legal transgression. I want to emphasize two points. First, legal and illegal economic practices are often hopelessly intertwined, so much so that anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom coins the term *il/legal* to highlight their interconnections (Nordstrom, 2007, p.xviii). Secondly, illegal economic practice is not the outside to capitalism, but rather, it is “encoded in the DNA and ‘normal’ operations of contemporary capitalism, integral to the workings of the capitalist economy rather than a marginal and unusual anomaly” (Hudson, 2014, p. 1). Thus, a key task of this dissertation is to move beyond mapping the mutual imbrication of formal, informal and illegal economies to demonstrating the spatial embeddedness of the transborder economy, also a part of its animating matrix. In so doing, I contribute to emerging scholarship on “geographies of the illicit” (T. Hall, 2012).

A large, parallel literature on peripheral, auto-constructed housing settlements likewise studies informality. My research focuses on extralegal work, and the related urban spatialities that enable the extralegal border trade. However, I do draw from these critical urbanists studying housing because they go beyond investigating the politics of formal to informal linkages, thereby offering important theoretical resources for studying the politics of informalities in divided cities.¹² Oren Yiftachel shows how the designation of legality or formality reflects social contestations worked out through relationships of power (Yiftachel, 2009). This perspective emphasizes ongoing *processes* of informalization or formalization. State actors are part of these contested processes, rather than neutral mediators. Examining urban land conflicts in Brazil, James Holston describes how law is an “instrument of calculated disorder” which sets the terms of extralegal dispute resolution, usually in favor of the powerful (Holston, 1991, p. 695).

¹² A similar set of debates in the Africanist literature on land tenure (Berry, 1993; Peters, 2002, 2004) and economic life (Guyer, 2004) considers related themes of negotiability.

Ananya Roy argues that informality is a mode of urbanization. One of its features, she says, is “unceasing negotiability” in the boundaries of legitimate urban occupation and construction (Roy, 2002, p. 18). State power draws the official line between legal and illegal (Portes et al., 1989). However, keeping these designations negotiable, in practice, can be a source of value, or a mode of governance (Wigle, 2014). I bring these theories of negotiated legalities from housing to my study of urban work, where much less research addresses questions of how the state manages informalized space.¹³

Understanding the social mechanisms that regulate the extralegal border trade is a precondition for intervening to construct more equitable economies, especially given the conjunctural shifts of globalized capital. Across geographies, insecure, temporary, and contract-based labor is expanding, characterizing an increasing number of labor relations and experiences (G. Friedman, 2014; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Neuwirth, 2011; Standing, 2011). The Standard Employment Relationship and a unionized workforce are revealed as historically and geographically restricted dynamics, fraught with racialized and gendered exclusions, having a “deep impact in a limited part of the world for a relatively short period of time” (Breman & van der Linden, 2014, p. 940). Contra theories of the multitude popularized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the rise of various forms of cognitive, affective and immaterial labor is not unifying workers across old class divisions or impelling productive forces towards a radical, liberating transformation of work (Hardt & Negri, 2001). Further, governance relationships which run through the extralegal can be “particularly resistant to reconfiguring through policy instruments and external interventions,” entrenching the interests of the political elite (Parnell et al., 2009, p. 234). One key contribution of this dissertation is clarifying the social mechanisms through which elite, regressive projects pull power from a tangled, interpenetrating relationship between extralegality and political authority.

1.4 State Formation and State Practice on the Triple Frontier

Ciudad del Este is a privileged site from which to study how informal and illicit economies are “fundamentally linked to the...re-composition of state power” (Roitman, 2004, p. 192). Considering the reinforcing relationships between extralegality and state power goes against the grain of most scholarship on the subject which sees informality as unregulated or operating beyond the reaches of state control. Further, the spatial dimensions of political authority as a buttress and result of extralegal economic relationships has not been systematically explored within geography and urban studies. However, emerging work is bringing extralegality to the field of economic geography (T. Hall, 2012; Hudson, 2014).¹⁴ My research adds to these debates by demonstrating that state actors promote *contraband urbanism*, making urban spaces through state-sponsored transgressions of the law. Contraband urbanism inscribes the extralegal economy into the built environment and generates uncertainty over tenure rights for street vendors, even as official discourse promises to formalize the border trade.

¹³ Ryan Devlin’s important work on the management of street vending in New York City is a key exception (Devlin, 2011).

¹⁴ An analogous intervention offers a critical geographic perspective on corruption as constitutive of capitalism (Murphy, 2011).

In Ciudad del Este, widespread rule-breaking involves networks of state actors, what Paraguayans call *esquemas*, roughly translating as schemes. Paraguayans invoke *esquemas* to describe networks of actors profiting from contraband, questionable land deals, bribes or kickbacks. Crucially, *esquemas* are made in and through state spaces, enabled and encouraged by state actors. Political authority runs through *esquemas* and necessitates thinking extralegality and state power together. I was repeatedly confronted of rumors detailing the specificity of *esquemas*: traffic police created bottlenecks and then charged for access to alternate routes; on-duty police officers provided security detail for private individuals or businesses, for a price; hundreds of municipal employees, hired during elections season, could only keep their jobs if they turned out votes for incumbents. The term *esquema* evokes complex, durable, relational networks, made up of actors wielding considerable power and operating with impunity. Indeed, the Stroessner regime worked through *esquemas*, divvying up the patrimony of the state amongst an elite clique of supporters, deploying law to define itself as outside the law.

Understanding *esquemas*—their everyday logistics and their force as they circulate in the political imaginary of residents—is key to understanding urban development and the frontier economy. I chose to link *esquemas* with state practice, rather than cordoning it off as a corrupt aberration. As I argue in the next chapter, corruption limits critical thinking about political authority in Paraguay and elsewhere in Latin America, relying on a universal standard of state practice from which corruption is an exception. Further, it locates the problem in individual actions rather than systems and social processes.

As an alternate approach, I turn attention to the geo-historical processes which institutionalize power in Paraguay's borderlands and which necessarily materialize in grounded, social practice. I bring together lineages of state theory out of political anthropology and critical marxism, which, from different angles, write against a Weberian ideal-type or the model of coherent, bounded, agentic nation-states.¹⁵ Despite this robust, critical literature, there remains a tenacious Hobbesian imagination of the state as the condensation of popular will, the source of social order, possessing a self-contained agency and a spatial congruency with the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. The critical perspectives I rely on contest the view of the state as the institutional form of the general interest, as imagined in much of social contract theory. The problem with the Weberian conception of the state is that, through its lens, spaces like Ciudad del Este are interpreted as produced through state absence. Thus, the co-constitution of state power with extralegal economies is overlooked.

I rely on the concept of state formation, understood as an ongoing, processual process in which popular culture shapes—and is shaped by—statecraft and practices of power (Alonso, 1995; Joseph & Nugent, 1994). State formation works through hegemony, that is world views—tending to reflect the interests of the dominant classes but always contested—that naturalize specific constellations of social relations (Gramsci, 1971). Part and parcel of this

¹⁵ In contrast to neo-Weberians (Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985) who essentialize the state/economy split, ascribing the state the characteristics of the Enlightenment subject – bounded, self-possessed and willful—much Marxist theorization of the state historically revolved around debating the relationships between capital and the state, and the precise manner in which the state organizes and maintains capitalist social relations (Miliband, 1969; Poulantzas, 1975). Both bodies of work reproduce the notion that the state and the economy are discrete spheres of activity, even as one literature focuses on the capacities of the autonomous state to regulate the economy while the other details the particular mechanisms by which the state enables capitalism.

process is the ongoing foreclosure of other possible modes of social organization in practice and thought. Rather than a top-down project of interpolating dominated classes, against their best interests, into the world views and values of the elites, all possible social orders require ordering views and values, concepts and cultures, as well as a means to integrate a critical mass of supporters thereby reproducing the enabling set of social relation and grammars of social action.

By relying on theories of state formation, I want to emphasize that class and situated capitalisms matter a great deal in conditioning particular historical trajectories (Coronil, 1997; D. Moore, 2005). However, against top-down or economic deterministic readings of hegemony,¹⁶ I emphasize Gramsci's "epistemological historicity," (Thomas, 2009, p. 324), his position that there are always a multiplicity of "various philosophies or conceptions of the world," each arising out of particular socio-historical conditions (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326).¹⁷ Thus the task of the philosopher, for Gramsci, is not to uncover eternal, abstract truths—about class formation, for instance—but to mine the conditions of daily life for more politically-enabling philosophies. State formation also emphasizes the paradox that the state is "both an ideological construct and concrete institutional ensemble" (Ballvé, 2012, p. 604). Thus the commonsense notion that the state is an agentic thing is a mystification.¹⁸ I also rely on state formation as a means to emphasize the spatialities of statecraft. Situated relationships of rule are always spatialized, gaining meaning in and through the spaces of everyday life (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Rose, 1999; Scott, 1998).

Political anthropologists focusing on state practice insist that the analytic category of the state be problematized, rather than assumed. Thus, Nugent and Krupa propose thinking of the state as a "folk term...[that] masquerades as an analytic category" (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, p. 2).¹⁹ I rely on approaches from political anthropology to study the everyday state for two

¹⁶ In contrast to the reductionist, top-down or dualistic readings of Perry Anderson or Louis Pierre Althusser, for Gramsci hegemony is relational, a "dialectical unity" (Thomas, 2009, p. 138) of situated processes of coercion and consent, stitched together by praxis.

¹⁷ Gramsci says, "Philosophy in general does not in fact exist. Various philosophies or conceptions of the world exist, and one always makes a choice between them" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326).

¹⁸ The political sociologist Philip Abrams argued the state is more mystification than social fact (Abrams, 1988). For Abrams, the crucial political reality requiring study is the persistence of the state-idea, a socially produced misapprehension which masks the "disunity of political power" and inhibits "seeing political practices as it is" (Abrams, 1988, p. 79). Abrams argued instead for the study of how "politically organized subjection," is made possible by the idea of the state. Projecting itself as "above" political practice and invested in safeguarding the "general interest," the state-idea enables the expansion of capitalist social relations while also engaging important discursive work of mystification. The project, then, is a "radical unmasking" because "the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practices as it is" (Abrams, 1988, p. 81). Timothy Mitchell identifies the "state effect" as a wide array of social practices that produce a collective misapprehension of a boundary between state and economy (Mitchell, 2002) or state and society (Mitchell, 1999). Rather than a porous boundary, threatened by "penetration" by external interests, divisions are "drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained" (Mitchell, 1991, p. 78). Historical anthropologist Fernando Coronil emphasizes the mutual constitution of the illusion of a mask and the practices of masking, what calls the "mystifying unity of the mask and the masked" (Coronil, 1997, p. 11).

¹⁹ French critical theorist Henri Lefebvre begins from a similar position, querying the nature of the state and state power by laying out a series of possibilities, "Enumeration of hypotheses. The State? A conscience, the consciousness of the nation? A 'moral' or 'legal' person? A 'substance' or a set of

reasons. First, repeated, quotidian encounters with state agents—like seeking a vending permit from a municipal bureaucrat or hearing the mayor promise tenure security at a rally—are key arenas where ordinary citizens come to understand what the state is supposed to be. Political anthropologies of the state also offer a crucial set of theoretical resources to understand the concrete practices that operate across and through the legal/illegal binary. This helps debunk the view that a realm of legality is coterminous with state space.

The state, as experienced by the urban poor in Ciudad del Este, is complex and contradictory, including felt failures to deliver care and embodied presences, which enact violence, like evictions. Despite the litany of broken promises and failures to support the material well being of many in the long democratic transition, it remains a site in which poor Paraguayans continue to invest hope. I follow Krupa and Nugent’s work on the “affective life of the state” as a range of meanings, affects, and promises that “seem to inhere in the state” (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, pp. 14–15). With this ethnographic approach, I interpret how street vendor politics materialize the state, including through gendered displays of the aggressive and vulnerable body. The forms of contingent solidarity binding vendors to the local state are enacted through regulatory relationships that are highly gendered. Affect and emotion are part of the state-subject suture in intersubjective interactions between representatives of the state and its subjects. But more than a link between two separate entities—citizen and state—it is through these everyday practices of governance that the state congeals, in the imaginations of frontier subjects, as an entity. This imaginative conjuring is a necessary part of investing the state-domain with power. I intentionally locate an analysis of the practices, which conjure the state in my chapter on the body. My aim is to demonstrate that the body and the scale of individual felt experience are important arenas from which to understand how a dispersed social field comes to be understood, in the popular and academic imagination, as the state.

I also use an ethnographic approach to study state practice in Ciudad del Este in order to approach how the state is felt and made real in these zones where the distinctions between law and transgression are difficult to discern. My position is that the extralegal is not a state of disorder that exists prior to the state or as a space outside the reaches of state capacities for control. My approach differs from that of Carolyn Nordstrom—a key anthropologist of the illicit—who explicitly theorizes an inside and outside of state practice. She says “I use the term ‘shadows’ (rather than criminal or illegal) as the transactions defining these networks are not confined solely to criminal, illicit or illegal activities - but they do take place *outside* formal state institutions (Nordstrom, 2007, p. 36 emphasis added). Rather, I align my work with anthropologists studying how, in daily life, “the frontier between the legal and extralegal runs right within the offices and institutions that embody” the state (Das & Poole, 2004, p. 14). This approach on state practice helps underscore how legal uncertainty, conflict and violence are not temporary states passed through on a ladder of upward, forward development.²⁰ Rather, they are

relations? A reality? A firm? A “subject”? An “object”? Or the name for an absence, a simulation? For “being” or collective presence?” Would it be the “reflection” or the result of a social structure (classes)? A sum of functions? The exercise of Power? Or “something” else, to be discovered and defined?” (Lefebvre, 2009, pp. 95–96).

²⁰ Das and Poole draw on Agamben’s state of exception, although they are concerned with the *everyday practices* that traverse and confound the distinctions between law and the extralegal, rather than an abstracting a singular *logic of power* from archaic Roman law. Refracting Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, Agamben interprets the power of the sovereign, and therefore the state, as residing in its capacities to enact a state of exception, therefore inhabiting a space both inside and outside the law, a

eminently modern, “chronic,” the fuel of a peculiar dialectic (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006 p. viii). However, anthropologists of the state looking at spaces of extralegality tend to focus on the magical, spectacular, and extraordinary (Das & Poole, 2004; Mbembe, 2001; Taussig, 1997).²¹ To be certain, the sudden, mysterious fortunes made through the border trade—enabled by shadowy relationships to state actors and through state spaces—do enact a certain spectrality. However, I focus on the quotidian interactions between urban entrepreneurs and local state officials, rather extraordinary performances of state power, thereby drawing from anthropologies of the everyday state (Greenhalgh, 2008; Gupta, 2012; Ismail, 2006). Thus I bring an ethnographic approach to analyzing state practice into conversations with emerging work on geographies of the illicit.

1.5 Globalizing the Periphery

In its broadest sense, postcolonial theory is “a sign to address the murky entanglement of knowledge and power,” in which both are enmeshed with projects of colonialisms, old and new (Coronil, 1997, p. 178). I bring the perspectives of postcolonial theory to my study of Ciudad del Este for two reasons. First, postcolonial theory offers important insights into the discursive construction of spaces, like Ciudad del Este, commonly understood to be one of modernity’s laggards. Secondly, postcolonial theory, like transnational feminist theory, is a way of thinking different forms of domination—enacted through difference—together. I follow Fernando Coronil’s call for a “tactical postcolonialism” which engages legacies of scholarship by Latin American thinkers (Coronil, 2015). I also take inspiration from Ruhul Rao’s plea for “reparative readings” of postcolonial theory and critical marxism (Rao, 2016).²² Both Coronil and Rao are more interested in using politically-enabling theories—what Coronil names as an intellectual orientation committed to “open ended liberatory possibilities”—than claiming allegiance to particular lineages of thought in well-worn academic battles (Coronil, 2015, p. 190). As bell hooks argues, all theories are “flawed gifts” which may illuminate some aspects of power and political possibility, while missing others (hooks, 1996, p. 50; Rao, 2016, p. 10).

By locating my research in conversation with postcolonial urban theories, I insist contraband urbanism in Ciudad del Este is an eminently modern process, made through relational

“zone of indistinction” (Agamben, 2005). Das and Poole follow Agamben’s concept of “bare life” materialized in the figure of *homo sacer*, the legally killable man, for whom society does not mourn. While taking issue with Agamben’s abstraction of pre-political life, Das and Poole none-the-less are concerned with practices producing the constitutive exclusions bounding the political domain, internalizing valued-life and expelling life deemed un-valuable. As the bounding practices are intensely political, the “outside” is produced and maintained and therefore must be understood as internal.

²¹ Poole says the mode of regulation commonly understood as the state “oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being,” transmutations that contribute to the unintelligibility of state authority (Das & Poole, 2004, p. 225). Similarly, both Taussig (Taussig, 1997) and Mbembe (Mbembe, 2001) locate the effectivity of state power in the ways magic, display, spectacle, the divine and the extraordinary inhabit everyday epistemologies of authority and power. Like theorists of state formation, for Das and Poole the state is emergent, a place-holder for a set of “political, regulatory and disciplinary practices that constitute, somehow, that thing we call ‘the state,’ (Das & Poole, 2004, p.3).

²² Others have sought this middle path between critical marxism and poststructuralism. For instance, Hansen and Stepputat call for working within the “space between a Gramscian and a Foucauldian position of power, government and authority” as a site of productive tensions (T. Hansen & Stepputat, 2001, p. 3).

connections to other elsewhere of modernity. Postcolonial theory, like all knowledge projects, is inflected by the concrete conditions of its emergence, in this case grappling with the legacies of colonialism in Asia, and later, Africa and the Middle East. One key task of postcolonial studies has been to theorize colonialism as a fundamental and formative historical force, without ascribing it totalizing power. Edward Said critiqued the discursive means by which the subject of history becomes synonymous with the West (Said, 1979) while Dipesh Chakrabarty's argued for "provincializing" Europe, in order to demonstrate how Western theories—generated from particular places—masquerade as universal (Chakrabarty, 2000). In an analogous move, Bonaventura de Sousa Santos proposes a "southern epistemology" to counter the "monocultures" of authoritative knowledge organized around linear time and hierarchical social categorization schemes, thereby decentering dominant, Western ways of knowing (Santos, 2010). The postcolonial task is a double one: first to demonstrate how particular colonial histories come to stand as universal while, second, revealing universalism itself as a contested place-holder in engaged struggles with rival world views (Spivak, 1999).

For several reasons, there is no coherent body of scholarship that can be designated Latin American postcolonial studies. Latin American independence from colonial rule stretches back into the early 1800s, producing a distinctive regional history. Indeed, Latin America, as an idea, is a construct with a colonial history (Mignolo, 2009). Further, Latin American scholars have their own legacy of theorizing colonial relationships between core Western countries and the so-called periphery, including foundational thinking by dependency theorists (F. E. Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; dos Santos, 1970; Quijano, 1974). While critics of dependency theory argue against its structural, economic, state-centric approach (R. Brenner, 1977), dependency theory nonetheless importantly shaped critical approaches to theorizing uneven development.

A distinctive race politics has also long been constitutive of Latin American state-making and development. As the Peruvian political philosopher Jose Martiategui noted in the 1920's, the continent's "original sin" is the foundational exclusions that formed Latin American states "without and against the Indian" (Mariátegui, 1925, p. 208). Anibal Quijano's notion of the "coloniality of power" describes the articulation of race—as "a mental construct of modernity" importantly forged during the Conquest—with projects of capital accumulation and labor exploitation (Quijano, 2000, p. 234). If postcolonial studies out of the Asian context has revealed the Eurocentric bias of Western-influenced knowledge practices, then a key contribution of scholars of Latin America has been to "globalize the periphery: to recognize the world-wide formation of what appear to be self-generated modern metropolitan centers and backward peripheries" (Coronil, 2015, p. 189).²³ The Latin American expression of modernity's global processes—which include and yet always exceed capitalism—has been called "postoccidentalism" (Mignolo, 2000).

These provocations from postcolonial studies have been taken up within urban theory. Theories of world cities proposed that a small number of North-Atlantic city-regions act as avatars of late capitalism, command and control centers of a new territorial organization of the globalized economy (Knox, 1995; Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 2000). Inside such an imagination, there is a tendency to transpose "spatial difference into historical sequence" (Robinson, 2006, p. 4) and

²³ Using the language of the periphery does run the risk of reinscribing spatialized imaginations of the West and the Rest, to use the apt language of Stuart Hall (S. Hall, 1992). However, I believe the utility of this language in pointing out hegemonic imageries—which continue to undergird notions of progress—outweighs the drawbacks.

consequently relegate cities in the Global South to the lower rungs on a developmentalist ladder. Even critical urbanists sometimes resort to models in which global processes of urban capital imprint variegated local landscapes. While attending to spatial differentiation through “variegated neoliberalization” (N. Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010) or “planetary urbanization” (N. Brenner, 2013) these theories still presume that formative processes originate from “above” or in the Global North. A movement to provincialize urban theory challenges this legacy, aiming to render particular the urbanization paths of core North Atlantic cities that have been masquerading as universal (Robinson, 2006; Robinson & Roy, 2015; Roy, 2009; Sheppard, Leitner, & Maringanti, 2013). These urban theorists add analyses of the relational production space to postcolonial theory by adding to Chakrabarty’s analysis of (western) History 1 and (subordinated/Southern) History 2 (Chakrabarty, 2000). Against “geohistory 1”—the linear development of territorially bound units progressing along predetermined urbanization and developmental paths, “geohistory 2” insists on seeing “differentiated places interpenetrated by uneven, emergent connectivities” (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 896). The authors continue:

Rather than imagining well-defined territories, such as global regions of North and South, differentiation emerges at every scale, shaped by how residents of any place, living prosperously or precariously, are differently positioned within and through the trans-local processes (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 896).

Keeping our analysis fixed on the relational production of differentiated places is a key framework for understanding Ciudad del Este as eminently modern, as a globalized hub in spatially extensive geographies of extralegal trade and a relay in South–South circuits of commodities and capital. It is also a means to discard theories that focus on deviation, lack, backwardness or underdevelopment. Rather, what is at stake are particular projects of livelihood and space-making, as they reproduce, contest, or stand at oblique angles to hegemonic projects and practices of power.

Contraband urbanism gains traction as its proponents mobilize globally circulating ideas of city-ness; hegemonic, but contested, notions of what some have called global urbanism. Global urbanism is a “loose bundles of ideas and practices that travel across the world,” which tend to evince unshakable confidence in market solutions to social problems, World Bank authorized models of ‘good governance’ and faith that ‘best practice’ solutions are replicable across a wide variety of context (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 896). Contraband urbanism references this bundle, while also articulating authoritarian governing logics and the extralegal economic practices that are supposedly banished by the formalized city. Part of the success of contraband urbanism lies in its deployments of the referents of global urbanism, like sleek shopping malls and campaigns to formalize’ street vendors.

As I focus on the production of Ciudad del Este as a nodal city, I also emphasize the importance of street vendor politics in making urban space and contesting the region’s urban futures. Further, the most marginalized vendors—often Guaraní-speaking Paraguayan women—engage a particular politics of the body as they testify or deploy the aggressive body. These gendered techniques aim to impact the emotional field of municipal officials who claim the discretionary authority to expend or revoke permission of sell. I add to discussions on the affective politics of precarity, arguing that local political techniques intensify the lived economic

insecurity of street vendors through a suite of governing strategies. Bringing this affective politics of the body to urban studies pushes the field to broaden what sorts of actions are considered to be properly political. In focusing on these gendered body politics, I add to a growing literature inspired by Partha Chatterjee's work on the "politics of the governed," that is contentious political practices by marginalized residents organized as part of a population to be cared for, rather than citizens with equal rights before the law (Chatterjee, 2006). Taking seriously these body politics, I argue, is a key part of projects to globalize the periphery.

1.6 Methodology: A Critical Ethnography of Development

As a site of ongoing experimentation in regulatory practice, Ciudad del Este is a strategic site from which to study the systems of governance organizing an unruly city and transborder economy. Between 2011 and 2015, I conducted fifteen months of on-site, ethnographic research. Rather than an ethnography of one border city, I conceive of my research object as the production and regulation of the transborder economy and the frontier space that responds to and enables it. As an interpretive methodology, ethnography is uniquely able to problematize the categories of scholarship and social practice that are naturalized or taken as given. Further, ethnographic methodologies enable analysis of how social actors create meaning through everyday practice and quotidian social interactions. The everyday is one site, among others, from which we can understand the production and maintenance of relationships of power, and the worldviews that enable them (D. Smith, 1987). Planning theory increasingly recognizes the necessity of ethnographic research to understand everyday planning practice in divided cities (Healey, 2003; Holston, 1998; Rankin, 2010). My aim is "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" of regulatory practices in a space understood as operating outside the law (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 221). Inductive knowledge can be generalized through an iterative process in which empirical research and theory-building reciprocally inform each other. In this way, my ethnography of political-economic technologies of government in Ciudad del Este contributes to developing theory from an off-the-map city in the Global South.

I follow Gillian Hart's methodology of a critical ethnography of development (G. Hart, 2004). This approach centers the relationships between two socio-spatial and historical forces, what Hart calls 'big-D' and 'little-d' development (G. Hart, 2002b). Big-D development is a coordinated, post-World War II project of intervention into the social, economic and political affairs of countries in the Global South. Little-d development is the much longer process of the uneven expansion and transformation of capitalism. This framework draws from Cowen and Shenton's historicization of development as immanent process (little-d) and intentional project (big-D), in which the dislocations of capitalism require and call forth ameliorative efforts, which the authors describe as trusteeship (Cowen & Shenton, 1996). Critical ethnographies of development diverge from their close cousin global ethnography (Burawoy, Blum, George, Gille, & Thayer, 2000) by their insistence on centering the relational production of space (Massey, 1994) and a particular reading of articulation as a "dialectical relationship between the concrete-in-history and the production of knowledge" (G. Hart, 2007, p. 97). Hart explains this by saying,

A processual and relational understanding refuses to take as given discrete objects, identities, places and events; instead it attends to *how* they are produced and changed in practice in relation to one another (G. Hart, 2007, p. 98).²⁴

Seeing the practices by which Ciudad del Este is produced as a exemplar, if disparaged, city of globalization is a way to speak back to typologies of world-class cities, and the hegemonic claims to urban knowledge that sustain them. But perhaps more importantly, shifting the gaze from the *lived experiences* of globalization to the *production of particular global places* highlights the myriad contingent trajectories that made possible today's territories of poverty and landscapes of exclusion. Highlighting these contingencies lays the groundwork for the production of more politically enabling concepts, in the tradition of radical scholarship that aims not just to interpret the world, but also to transform it.

My approach also draws explicitly from feminist epistemology, which insists that all knowledge is situated and partial, necessarily produced from a “complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body” (Haraway, 1988, p. 589). With this foundation, then, the aim is to produce “better accounts of the world”—rather than eternal, objective truths produced from an impossible outside—through recognizing the possibilities and limits of particular placed modes of seeing (Haraway, 1988, p. 590). Thus, part of this project is a study of urban processes through attention to the everyday exigencies of city life, while seeking to learn from the experiences, stories, strategies and tactics of marginalized urban residents. This approach does not assume precarity and exclusion necessarily produce clear-seeing actors. Rather the perspectives of marginalized vendors, like all forms of knowing, offer a situated, partial—yet still crucial—perspective from which to understand the workings of power.

Studying the regulation of extralegalities is not a straightforward affair. To approach it, I triangulated different methods and entry points: participant observation, 109 in-depth interviews and archival analysis. Since the 2000s, several state projects sought to maintain the profitability of the border trade while re-habilitating the image of Ciudad del Este as a competitive global city. One strategy I engaged to study extralegality was to focus on these state projects—two municipal, two national projects and one bi-national—which purported to formalize urban space and the border trade. These projects were: 1) A project called the Pilot Plan to partially regularize some street vendors by extending tenuous use-rights and infrastructure upgrades; 2) a 2013 municipal project to “order and clean up” city streets allowing for observation of the regulatory relations between vendors and local officials (the Thirty Day Plan); 3) an elite-led project promoting formalization through the near-elimination of taxes and tariffs on the electronics trade; 4) high-end, though non-compliant, shopping mall development on the most contested piece of riverfront real-estate, the nine hectares, and 5) an bi-national effort to register traders and importer/exporters selling goods from a list negotiated with Brazil (RTU).

I conducted interviews in Spanish or the indigenous Guaraní. Guaraní is widely spoken throughout Paraguay, although most mestizo Paraguayans do not identify as indigenous. The language persisted despite its prohibition under Stroessner and remains the language of family

²⁴Gillian Hart draws from Stuart Hall's interpretation of articulation (S. Hall, 1996). Many scholars within the critical traditions work with subjectification and the power-knowledge relationships through Foucault, although Marx and Gramsci's notions of the philosophy of praxis and organic intellectuals also grapple with these questions (see: S. Hall, 2003).

and friends for the popular classes. In contrast, Spanish is the language of bureaucracy and power and today many urban elites associate the Guaraní language with rural life, poverty, and an anachronistic past. Paraguayan mestizo culture valorizes indigenous language and mythology as heritage that binds together the Paraguayan nation, at the same time that indigenous groups face exclusion and discrimination. The embrace of the Guaraní language and the rejection of indigenism by many mestizo Paraguayans index a complex linguistic politics that required constant negotiations. With some vendors, speaking Guaraní fast-tracked the process of establishing trust through a set of repeated introductory exchanges, marked with laughter and a bit of wonder that I, a white North American woman, spoke Guaraní, albeit with an unfamiliar accent and a restricted vocabulary. In other moments, skeptical vendors or, more often, municipal employees rebuffed my attempts to connect across difference through the Guaraní language. By responding to me in Spanish they marked a boundary of familiarity that they chose not to cross with me.

Everyday Practices of Regulating the Street Market

Throughout this project, I have sought to understand the everyday working lives of street vendors. To do this, I conducted participant observation over the duration of the research period, spending many hours talking with street vendors, sipping cold tea, and attending meetings of three different vendors associations, each with very different views on the best way to protect the livelihoods of their members.

My early attempts to understanding life in the street market were made possible by the relationships I built over two years as a Peace Corps volunteer working in a small rural Municipality in a district several hours north of the capital city. During that time, I lived for several months with a generous family, in a small room behind their hardware store, goods sourced through family connections in Ciudad del Este. Eight of my host's siblings worked in the border economy, two of whom immeasurably supported my initial forays into understanding the dynamics of life and work on the frontier.

During extended fieldwork I conducted over most of 2013, conflict intensified over the boundaries of legitimate vending activities through three state projects: the Pilot Plan, the Thirty Day Plan and development of the nine hectares. Thus, I was able to observe a range of forums through which competing visions of urban futures were duked out: vendors association meetings, sporadic protests, a brief occupation of the nine hectares by the urban poor, the proceedings of a planning commission, the launching events of the *Asociación Plan de Desarrollo del Este*, municipal ribbon-cutting events and political rallies in advance of the 2015 municipal primaries. Following a wave of spot evictions in the street market, I also accompanied three different groups of vendors as they negotiated for permission to sell again from the street market. To understand these projects, from a variety of perspectives, I also conducted thirty open-ended interviews with a range of economic actors whose work centered on the street: vendors, association leaders, taxi drivers and political brokers known as *operadores*. These interviews centered on everyday economic practice, individual and collective trajectories in the street market, and their political engagements.

I also sought to understand the everyday relationships between municipal officials and street vendors. Through everyday governance relationships, state authority is contested, performed and reiterated. In these intersubjective encounters, street vendors and state actors

negotiate the boundaries of legitimate economic practice and urban belonging. I glimpsed some of these dynamics during my participant observation, and heard many stories about vendor's experiences with municipal officials at different moments in the city's development. In June of 2013, the Municipality launched the Thirty Day Plan, to enforce zoning ordinances regarding the use of space by vendors. I received permission to shadow municipal officials as they systematically swept through the street market. This campaign made unusually visible the everyday regulatory relationships between street vendors and local state actors, as enforcement actions and negotiations repeatedly unfolded on the streets. The Thirty Day Plan helped me see how vendors displayed their vulnerabilities during these negotiations, in emotionally charged encounters with uncertain outcomes, regardless of whether vendors' occupations of space were aligned with the law. Furthermore, it provided a unique opportunity to compare what municipal officials do, to what they say they do, especially in a context when many regulatory interactions take place off the public grid in negotiated settlements. I also conducted thirty interviews with municipal officials to clarify local logics of regulation: urban planners, local politicians, city council members, ex-mayors, municipal officials, and the front-line enforcers of municipal policy, known as *fiscales*. In addition, I interviewed seventeen other local leaders: journalists, historians, democracy activists and a cadre of anti-corruption lawyers involved in lawsuits contesting the Pilot Plan and municipal-backed development on the nine hectares.

Furthermore, I was surprised by how much I learned about local state practice through my failure to access its archives through official channels. Nearly all my requests for planning documents, ordinances and maps were effectively, although never officially, denied by municipal officials.²⁵ However, my attempts to navigate the local bureaucracy are a window into the inner workings of a labyrinthine local state and the felt experience of negotiating with various municipal authorities. When I first asked a municipal director for a census of vendors in 2011, the administrator claimed the census no longer existed. In an explanation tinged with lament, he used an imagination of Paraguay's incomplete transition to democracy to explain the absence. "We are in Paraguay," he said apologetically, "here we don't keep track of things like that." By 2013, I had learned more about the particular rituals required to make things move in the municipality. A friend described one such practice as "walking behind" (*andando detras*) paperwork, as it slowly snaked between different municipal offices, picking up stamps and numbers, before it might work its way to a municipal official empowered—and disposed—to take action. *Andando detras* signals the constant work required to keep these circuits of paperwork and networked relationships in motion. The stakes of my own bureaucratic campaign, of course, are orders of magnitude lower than for street vendors who seek permission to sell in the street market, often their only way to earn their daily bread (*el pan de cada dia*). However, my experience does refract the lived experience of vendors as they sought regularized status through slow and sticky bureaucratic channels. Rather than municipal archives, I relied on parallel circuits of state documents, pulled from the personal archives of activist vendors or the files of anti-corruption lawyers. Like in many matters in Ciudad del Este, the pathways to accessing documents run through relationships that deviate from how law delineates public records are to be accessed.

²⁵ The municipality also denied access to Itaipú officials to a key census of street vendors, indicating that other government agencies, not just foreign researchers, had trouble accessing municipal documents.

Histories of Frontier City-Building

Another part of this project involved constructing a history of city-building and public space appropriations as records of charged conflicts over who benefits from the border trade. For this, I relied on interviews with key historical figures, including the first generation of street vendors, three ex-mayors and key urban planners associated with city founding. Archives are notoriously thin in Paraguay, but I uncovered documentation of frontier conflict and city-building in the archives of the Museum of Justice (Centro de Documentación y Archivo para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos). Colloquial known as the Archives of Terror, this archive contains two tons of documents detailing state repression and violence by regional authoritarian regimes during the Cold War. The archive is usually used to find information about state violence and extra-judicial killing during the authoritarian Stroessner era (1954-1989). I read this archive against the grain, gaining glimpses into conflicts over the early organization of the street market. I also analyzed print media coverage of key moments of conflict over the regulation of border commerce: the regional Governor Uranaga's links to contraband in 1990s and a multi-day bridge blockage in 2001 which shuttered the city and paralyzed national exports. I also relied on the exculpatory memoirs of key city founders, appointees of the Stroessner regime, who meticulously replicated state documents I was unable to access through the municipal archive.

In addition, I arrived as shopping mall development picked up steam on the nine hectares, the most contested parcel of frontier real estate. Through legal documents of court proceedings and interviews with street vendors, I traced the convoluted legal history of this parcel, expropriated to relocate street vendors but now developed by an alliance of frontier business interests and municipal state actors. The morphing juridical status of the nine hectares reveals the shifting spatial strategies of governance, including spatial illegibility as mode of municipal governance.

Regulating the Border Trade

In addition to the local practices of ordering the street market, I also sought to understand the national politics conditioning urban development the border trade. In this effort, I was supported immeasurably by researchers at the economic think tank, *El Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya*. The director, Fernando Masi helped me make sense of the complicated national accounting practices through which economists attempt to quantify different kinds of trade and its impact on national economic growth. CADEP also provided research assistance in compiling a complex history of border trade regulations, an archive of fifty years of statutes and laws governing trade. Fernando Masi also facilitated access to key national policy and regulatory agencies. To gain a sense of the national regulatory landscape and the political reverberations of border commerce in the capital city, I interviewed twenty-three national-level government officials, policy-makers, Ministry heads and elected representatives as well as directors of third-sector development agencies.

It was not possible to systematically observe the full range of everyday practices that move commodities into and through Ciudad del Este, and then across the Paraná river by bridge, boat or plane. Indeed these crucial, structuring relationships function through being difficult to see or definitively pin down. Studying these economic relationships required an oblique approach. As I describe in this dissertation, the moments of flagrant law-breaking tend to be concentrated, often onto marginalized *paseros*, a Spanish term for the workers who ferry

shipments across the border. Alternately, goods travel through *esquemas*, shifting, negotiated alliances which link state spaces—like the customs office—to extralegal ones—like the dozens of clandestine ports which dot both sides of the Paraná river. As open secrets, observers repeatedly commented to me that these relationships of extralegality are “known by all” (*todos se saben*). However, demonstrating too much interest in the specifics of these trade networks is dangerous. Attempts to reform the practices of customs officials have been met with violence and local journalists have recounted deciding not to cover contraband *esquemas* because of the risks of retaliation. However, I was able to partially map the current structure of contraband routes, through surprising, causal encounters that threw up reflections of the material manifestations of the border trade. For instance, an resident taking me on a tour of her rough, riverfront neighborhood casually pointed out the road that led to the crucial, clandestine ports, spatial manifestations of the open secretes that make possible the border trade.

Unsurprisingly, I found it harder to access elite businessmen and actors who were directly connected to the moment of contraband when a commodity crosses the border. I conducted nine interviews with frontier businessmen and their advocates about the logistics of the border trade, and their perceptions of the challenges of regularizing their businesses. I also observed the daily workings of a controversial chamber of commerce that forcefully promoted formalizing of border trade through the legalization of contraband, via various schemes to slash taxes and tariffs on border commerce. I also relied on a series of USAID-funded reports that provided a detailed glimpse into the practices of large-scale *contrabandistas* through interviews with frontier businessmen in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Finally, I found the Archive of Terror contained surprising tracings of contraband under Stroessner’s long rule.

Positionality and Narrative Authority

Throughout this project, I have struggled with the “estrangements and oddities” of ethnographic research in a place that is not my own (Caldeira, 2001, p. 7). Feminist ethnographers have long interrogated myriad pitfalls of studying across power-laden difference, even arguing feminist ethnography exposes research subjects to a higher “risk of exploitation, betrayal, and abandonment” than the positivist methods which intentionally instantiate distance between researcher and subject (Stacey, 1988, p. 21). The political economy of ethnography is necessarily extractive, transforming life experience into data. Researchers often hold more capacity to turn ethnographic encounters into products or outcomes that are personally beneficial. I addressed this, in part, through keeping analytic attention firmly on practices of power, and by incorporating the practice of “studying up” (Nader, 1972). However, my debts remain, especially to the many street vendors from whom I learned so much. The ethnography, this end product of the labors of learning across difference, is never enough.

Learning Guaraní was one way I sought to instantiate commitment to a place, not my own, and to my interlocutors who helped me along the way make sense of my experience. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I took on the project of learning Guaraní with some reluctance, wary of investing in a language with only eight million speakers worldwide. But I felt also compelled by the project, soon sensing how deeply the Guaraní language imprinted social life. Learning Guaraní, for me, became a necessary, but incomplete step of what feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak calls “deep language learning,” the slow and laborious process of accessing different epistemologies, worldviews and “cultural infrastructures,” which often cannot be understood without linguistic competence (Spivak, 2007, p. 103). Access across difference is always

incomplete. However, the goal of deep language learning is not total knowledge, but rather a functional cultural, historical and, I would add, spatial literacy that enables projects of meaning making. Of course, ethnographers usually speak or learn the language of their informants. The politics I point to are specific to a bilingual country, like Paraguay, where many urban resident (though not all), speak Spanish. Thus the researcher—foreigner or monolingual urbanite from Asunción alike—must chose Guaraní, the language of many a Paraguayan heart, because necessity will not force her.

Returning to Paraguay for my dissertation research – the site of my Peace Corps service – was another way I sought to contend with the difficult politics of international research. On the one hand, returning to a country I knew well made pragmatic sense. Yet it was also predicated on my relationship with a dubious development organization forged out of Cold War paranoia (Cobbs, 1996) and seen by the likes of George W. Bush as a vehicle for spreading the “compassion of our country to every part of the world” (Bush, 2002). Given the tenacious, bipartisan proclivity of US foreign policy to confuse “compassion” with empire and plunder, I have felt the weight of my association with an institution of empire. I closed my service by publishing a short essay for an in-house magazine titled, “A case against the Peace Corps,” reflecting on the links between altruistic agency, US imperial interests, the Peace Corps and American “cultural arrogance”, as I called it then. In one sense, desire for exoneration from these weighty ties of complicity tinged my motivation to return to Paraguay. Yet, anthropology (Visweswaran, 1994), geography (Bell, Butlin, & Heffernan, 1995; N. Smith & Godlewska, 1994), urban planning (Roy, 2006), and area studies (Cheah, 2008) are also caught up in imperial histories and legacies of epistemic violence. My point is that crossing over from the practice of Development, to the study of D/development does not produce purity or eradicate complicity. In the end, for those with the relative privilege of a US academic pedigree, there is only “the impossible space between the hubris of benevolence and the paralysis of cynicism” (Roy, 2010, p. 40).

The ethnographer is always bound by, and complicit in, various interrelated geometries of power (Massey, 1994). My own ethnographic position was conditioned most intensely by whiteness, gender, class and US citizenship, which twined together in ways that opened some doors while closing others. Across Latin America, social hierarchies operate through a “pigmentocracy” in which light skin is correlated with higher social status (Telles, 2014). Particularly in the capital city, a site of intense Development industry practices of consultancy and expertise, whiteness and the Berkeley logo on my business card coded me as a legitimate researcher. While whiteness worked in similar ways in Ciudad del Este, the impacts of national identity became more convoluted. My US passport provided a certain measure of personal safety, especially as I navigated the fraught waters of studying the links between state authority and extralegality. But Ciudad del Este is less connected to circuits of Development expertise than the capital city. Indeed, citing security concerns, the Peace Corps does not place volunteers in Ciudad del Este, and requires special authorization for volunteers who wish to visit. Without a locally recognizable figure of the Development worker or foreign researcher, many of my interlocutors found it hard to make sense of my motives. “Aren’t there social problems in the US for you to work on?” asked one inquisitive observer. The gender politics of authority and access were also present throughout, and I discuss what they tell us of state practice and extralegal networks in Chapter Six.

A further ethically fraught endeavor is the politics of representation involved in translating a city from the Global South for audiences in the English-speaking academy. Teresa Caldeira notes that ethnographers often carry around “untouched, implicit, unspoken about” referents against which their field sites are compared, especially for international researchers like myself where “home” is also the hegemonic center (Caldeira, 2001, p. 8). My engagement with postcolonial urban theory is an explicit effort to undo these hegemonic imaginaries of how a city is supposed to work. Yet, the tenacious grip these dominant mappings of progress and lack held on my mind surprised me, and surfaced as I cast about for language to describe the workings of the frontier economy, repeatedly discovering words like “disorder” on my hook, a word which carries the implicit reference of ordered cities against which disorder is read. Of course, these hierarchies are written into the language of the Anglophone social sciences.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

The first part of this dissertation, “Spaces of Livelihood as Sites of Government,” addresses the question: how are urban space and the border economy regulated by different actors, forms of authority and practices of government? My approach brings together questions of spatial and economic practice, by considering this question through three scales: the frontier, the city and the street. Thus Chapter Two, “The Frontier,” interrogates the specific history of frontier city-building and the ways in which it enables the Paraguayan border economy, particular circulations of commodities and livelihoods of differently positioned urban entrepreneurs. In the next chapter, “The City,” I present my concept of *contraband urbanism*, demonstrating how local state actors capably promote urban forms that enable the extralegal border trade, making urban spaces through state-sponsored transgressions of the law. By studying the cultural politics of extralegality as a mode of livelihood and city-building, I demonstrate how contestations over the built environment are also conflicts over whose bodies and what livelihood strategies belong in the city.

Chapter Three “The Street” takes the street market as a key site organizing global networks of extralegal trade. In it, I address the questions: How is the street market ordered and managed? What social practices trace the contested boundary around legitimate economic and spatial practice? To do this, I focus on the spatial and discursive dimension of everyday regulatory relationships between municipal planners and street vendors. Most development studies scholarship assumes states attempt to impose spatial order and clearly delineate the boundaries of legal economic practice, even if state power is attenuated in borderlands (Mitchell, 2002; Scott, 1998). However, I find that municipal officials in Ciudad del Este govern through producing spatial and legal ambiguity. Thus, in this chapter, I describe the repertoire of governance practices I call *regulation by ambiguity* which operate through contingent enforcement of the law and negotiability over the use of urban space. In so doing, I demonstrate how frontier state actors govern through regulatory uncertainty, generating flexibility in categories of legal economic practice and producing illegible urban spaces as a modality of rule.

The second part of this dissertation, “Rethinking Everyday Urban Politics,” addresses how street vendors experience and negotiate state practices like regulation by ambiguity, as they extract livelihoods from the street market. Rather than assuming a politics of resistance which pushes back against practices of power, from a position of exteriority, I examine how street vendor politics both contest and buttress state and economic projects.

The chapters in this section expand the field of politics beyond the traditional bounds of urban theory, by taking on affect and the body as sites of politics. Chapter Four, “Uncertainty” considers the politics of emotion as constitutive of relationships of governing. Regulation by ambiguity and the intense negotiability of law produce patterns of interior states within street vendors, emotions, affects, feelings and aspirations. Emotion is not “individualized subjective experience” but rather a “relational, connective medium” (Bondi, 2005, p. 443). Ongoing regulatory encounters, made through emotionally charged negotiations, determine the livelihood options of many of the urban poor. I study the collective experience of tenure uncertainty and the temporality of waiting for relocation after eviction, as well as the emotional registers these relationships engender. In so doing, I argue affect is part of the spatialized apparatus of governing. Yet emotion cannot be fully programed or contained. Indeed, there is a paradox: the legal and spatial ambiguity producing affective uncertainties is the very ground from which street vendors are able to make claims to the city. Understanding the contradictory dialectic of these affective politics provides a lens through which to understand the operations of power managing this frontier city.

Conflicts over socially legitimate economic and spatial practices are also contestations over who belongs in the frontier city. Chapter Five, “The Body, ” explores the tactics of precarious women street vendors as diagnostics of power. I demonstrate how street vendors strategically engage emotion to exploit the uncertainty inherent in regulation by ambiguity. In charged regulatory encounters, women aim to incite favorable emotional states in officials by invoking their embodied vulnerabilities or, under different circumstances, by purposefully trespassing norms of feminine decorum so as to frighten away municipal officials. I call the strategic displays of bodily vulnerability testifying to invoke their emotionally charged dynamic and ethical injunction. Alternately, women vendors threaten to disrobe, hurl sexualized insults, and chastise male bureaucrats for unmanly behavior, which I call displaying their aggressive body. The resort to these tactics of the body reveals the contingency inherent in regulation by ambiguity. Yet, street vendor politics call attention to the uneven distribution of economic precarity and bodily vulnerability. It is a politics rooted in the universal experience of the precariousness of life itself (Butler, 2004). However, this politics of the body must be held in tension with other translocal arenas of political action, scales which have been largely shut off to street vendors.

Part 1: Spaces of Livelihood as Sites of Government

CHAPTER 2

The Frontier: Histories of Political-Economic Experimentation

2.1 Introduction: Not an Island Surrounded by Land

The Paraguayan literary giant Augusto Roa Bastos famously called his country an “island surrounded by land.” In this oft-repeated line, Roa Bastos conveys a felt sense of geographic, cultural and linguistic isolation, a sentiment common among the Paraguayan urban and upper classes. Yet, Paraguay has one of the most open economies in the region. Ciudad del Este is a regulatory hub in geographically extensive networks of extralegal trade. Rather than an isolated aberration, the country has always been bound up in global convolutions of capital, regional geopolitics, ongoing processes of state formation, and continental processes of colonial encounter. Understanding Ciudad del Este requires interrogating the historical constitution of these geographies of connection and disconnection, which are simultaneously imaginative and material.

When I arrived in 2011 to conduct fieldwork, the city buzzed with the commercial activity of thousands of street vendors and small-scale Brazilian buyers. On the ride into the city from the Guaraní International Airport, a friend’s boisterous brother captured the centrality of the border trade to city life, proclaiming, “here, everybody sells” (*aquí todos venden*). Despite the declines in trade since the late 1990s heyday, the city felt like a hub, rather than an island. About 5,000 street vendors sold from sidewalks and streets, within the eight square blocks of Ciudad del Este’s *microcentro*, the “mini-center.” Vendors occupied every available inch of street and sidewalk space with their incrementally, self-built infrastructure. Tarps and tin roofs protect vendors against rain and the fierce Paraguayan sun, shading narrow corridors that remain between vendors’ stalls and storefronts. Business owners constantly complain about losing street front visibility as vendors block store entrances. Parts of the market feel like an overcrowded labyrinth, darkened pathways stacked high with fake Gucci handbags; pirated CDs; cheap lingerie; contact lenses to lighten brown eyes; fishing rods; racks of fake leather jackets fuchsia to fawn; towering stacks of colorful blankets made from Chinese fabric and hemmed in frontier factories earning the stamp “made in Paraguay.”

The participation of the poor in global circuits of commodity flows leads Rabossi, Ribeiro and Mathews to identify Ciudad del Este as an exemplar site of “globalization from below,” which they define as the “transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal, sometimes semi-legal or illegal transactions” (Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012, p. 69; Rabossi, 2008). Ordinary, often poor, residents seek bottom up solutions in the wake of a severe shortage of on-the-books jobs and social safety nets. Celebratory, journalistic accounts describe the scaled-up commercial possibilities accompanying globalization as enabling a shift from the “economy of desperation [to]... the economy of aspiration” as the poor gain access to non-local markets (Neuwirth, 2011, p. 18). Globalization from below relies on a more ethnographic frame, centering the everyday experiences of negotiating livelihoods through these economic practices. Globalization from below produces alternative sites of globally-linked transactions—hubs—into what the authors call a “non-hegemonic world system” (Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012, p. 223). In this perspective, globalization from below is “a warmer, more human form of neoliberalism,” offering crucial livelihood possibilities rooted in free

market logics, evading state regulation, yet without “[severing] human social bonds” (Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012, p. 18). Centering the experiences of the popular classes as agents of globalization offers an important counterpoint to narratives which construe globalization as a singular, inevitable process bearing down from above (Bauman, 1998; Gill, 1995) or the celebratory accounts which construe capital as coeval with opportunity (T. Friedman, 2006). However, shifting the gaze from the lived experiences of globalization to the production of particular global places demonstrates a more ambiguous verdict on the political possibilities of such trans-local economies.

In this chapter, I study the ongoing construction and reproduction of global capitalism from the vantage of a frontier city where extralegality is the norm. Rather than study this site as an aberrant deviation, I argue the forms of contraband capitalism at work in Ciudad de Este can help illuminate the articulations of political authority with diverse economic projects. Against the imagination that reads Paraguay’s frontier economy as a deviant economic and political space, I argue it is a site where certain practices of power become more visible. Commodity circulation and arbitrage distinguishes the frontier economy from industrial capitalism’s hinges of production and innovation. If the expansion of industrial capitalism relied on state violence to enclose the commons and create the free laborer, the coercive power of the state acts differently here. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between state projects and extralegal commerce, describing how state formation proceeds through rule-breaking economic practice. The frontier city is key here, as infrastructural proof of the modernizing capacities of the authoritarian state and as the substrate of the border trade.

Here, the frontier is a polysemic conceptual category, acting in at least three registers. The frontier acts as a 1) concrete spatial site marking an edge of state power, 2) a zone of contestation between different political economic orders and 3) as a place of the productive mixing of the legal and illegal. I argue all three registers of the frontier are at work in the transformation of Paraguay’s border town from an outpost into a globalized hub city.

The frontier, as a metaphor, conjures expansion against prior limits, insides and outsides, and the incompleteness of social forms, like nation-states, which are commonly taken to be pre-given or even totalizing. In the first sense, frontiers can signify the spatial expansion of a colonial understanding of civilization, which sets itself against a threatening, pre-modern outside. In this view, that which lies past the frontier of civilization is constructed as a wilderness or a savage Other that requires taming. Fredrick Jackson Turner’s influential thesis linked American democracy to the country’s expanding frontier (F. J. Turner, 1893). Vast New World lands were imagined as “empty” and available in spite of diverse indigenous societies. The frontier drew labor surplus westward, Turner argued, infusing American culture with an individualistic, libertarian and violent pioneer ethos. Ana María Alonso details the connections between a frontier imagination and state power, in her study of Mexico’s northern borderlands.

In the New World the frontier is conceived as a liminal space, betwixt and between savagery and civilization... where society’s domestication of nature is always contingent and threatened. As an outpost of the civilized polis, the frontier is viewed as lying at the margins of state power, between the laws of society and the freedoms of nature, between the imperatives of obedience and the refusals of defiance. The liminality of the frontier, its location on the creative margin between the wild and the social, makes it the locus of liberty and possibility (Alonso, 1995, p. 15).

Thus, frontiers might be thought of as sites that challenge the authority of the nation-state. A popular story of the mid-century colonization of eastern Paraguay describes the region at that time as the terrain into which the civilized nation had not yet extended. The regional historian Miranda Silva described the national civilizational task as a calling to build Puerto Presidente Stroessner—Ciudad del Este’s forerunner—in the terms of prior absence, “...to think of a city in the middle of the jungle...where roads did not even exist. Nobody dared to come and live in these parts, where the most savage and ravenous wild beasts stalked the exuberant virgin green jungles of Alto Paraná” (Silva, 2007, p. 296). Thus this first register of the frontier imagination construes a prior pre-social state of nature into which the liberal nation-state must extend its civilizational order. The state projects instantiating a presence might be thought of as part of the intentional projects of big-D Development. Further these projects of performing the state often depend on exclusions, as liberalism constructs and depends on its outsides—the disenfranchised woman, landless man, captive slave, denigrated Indian—thereby securing its own borders with violence (Losurdo, 2011).

Marxist accounts foreground capitalism’s recombinant frontiers in the second sense of the term, as the logics of capital expand into spaces and lifeworlds hitherto operating through alternate logics. Rather than an founding, finished moment of enclosure, primitive accumulation is an complex of ongoing processes necessary to stoke the fires of capitalism’s growth imperative (De Angelis, 2004; Perelman, 2000). Under neoliberalization, the terrain of capitalist expansion itself expands from land and labor into hitherto non-commoditized arenas, like public education or clean air through carbon trading (D. Harvey, 2005). These marxian insights are useful so long as capitalism is understand as multi-linear and contingent, rather than as a teleological, universal and singular logic. Frontier, in this second, political-economic register, can be linked to little-d development, the immanent, contingent and contradictory process of the expansions and transformations of capitalism. Approaches positing a singular logic of capitalism argue that geographic variation results from processes of uneven development, the view of dependency theorists, or that the situated encounter of global processes with the specificity of particular places produces variation (N. Brenner et al., 2010). Rather, Paraguay’s particular economy of circulation works through ambiguous relationships to the logics of globalized capital. In this chapter, I describe the transformation of eastern Paraguay from a site of extractive speculation to a booming commercial hub for merchant capital.

Anthropological work points to the third register of the frontier. Rather than a contested boundary between capitalism and its outside, Tsing argues frontiers are “interstitial places” which mix and confuse practices which tend to be thought of as opposed, like the legal and illegal (Tsing, 2005, p. 27). Instead of the extension of liberal law and order into pre-social spaces, Tsing argues,

...frontiers *create* wildness so that some—and not others—may reap its rewards. Frontiers are unregulated because they arise in the interstitial places made by collaborations among legitimate and illegitimate partners: armies and bandits; gangsters and corporations; builders and despoilers. They confuse the boundaries of law and theft, governance and violence, use and destruction” (Tsing, 2005, p. 27 emphasis added).

This register of the frontier takes on the discursive construction of legitimacy, and its instantiation in legal practice and institutional norms, even as patterns of social practice diverge, sometimes wildly, from what is “supposed to” happen according to law and official bureaucratic procedure. Yet, this register of the frontier—as interstitial zone of confusion—is also connected to practices of accumulation, which Tsing signals as she underscores differential access to reaping frontier rewards. In a “Feminist manifesto for the study of capitalism” Tsing and others argue for “[revealing] the constructedness...the messiness and hard work involved in making, translating, suturing, converting, and linking diverse capitalist projects” (Bear, Ho, Tsing, & Yanagisako, 2015). “Revealing the constructedness” is a key task of this chapter. I want to highlight the articulations between these three different registers of the frontier as a lynchpin of the constructedness of the frontier economy and of the state itself.

Understanding the production of place necessitates a historical approach. Donald Moore describes the sedimentation of history in which the “past” is not a completed epoch but a lingering force. Past dynamics haunt the present, enabling particular modes of power, practices of resistance, processes of subjectivation and techniques of negotiation. Moore describes the upwelling of the past into the present in Kaerezi, Zimbabwe:

...[the] landscape of rule was not the result of a serial succession of new rationalities and administrative designations *occluding* previous power relations. Rather, previous sedimentations remained consequential even as they became reworked (D. Moore, 2005, p. 3).

This spatial language—*landscapes* of rule and contested *territories*—insists on the interrelationships between history and the production of place. Likewise, the production of place necessarily unfolds in relationship to processes at multiple scales. Gillian Hart describes these trajectories of socio-spatial change as the “ongoing processes through which sets of power-laden practices in multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life at different spatial scales constantly rework places and identities (G. Hart, 2002a, p. 13).

Contemporary Paraguayan landscapes of rule articulate layers of authoritarianism with state-sponsored economic dealmaking. These practices of power are reworked by discourses of participation and the competitive world-class city as well as geopolitical shifts and global economic restructuring. In the first century and a half after independence from Spain (1811), state developmental strategy swung from autarkic, inward-focused development to extreme openness, and Paraguay remains today one of the most open national economies on the continent. As a city, Ciudad del Este is yet young, founded in 1957 as Puerto Presidente Stroessner. Initially, the city materialized desires of authoritarian state planners to stabilize a national presence in the hinterlands. Contraband economies grew alongside frontier urban development from the beginning, both with direct and indirect support from the state apparatus. A view of the past is a necessary platform from which to analyze the present. Thus, this section traces these trajectories and experiments, tracking the intertwining of everyday life, scaled up processes of regional geopolitics and economic transformation. The vantage of the frontier boomtown offers an important, situated place to interrogate the ‘how’ of the interlinkage between extralegal economic practice and state power.

2.2 Antecedents

Some historical accounts describe the eastern frontier region as an “abandoned zone,” absent of the state projects until the 1950s (“*una zona abandonada del país*”) (Nickson, 1981, 2005, p. 223). However, I argue that by the late 1800s frontier projects were in full swing. In this section, I trace the regional political economic transformations and murky conflagrations between state practice and economic exploitation, histories that shape the current conjuncture.

Early Economic Experiments

State-led economic experimentation began with independence from Spain in 1811. In contrast to the mercantile economic strategies of Paraguay’s neighbors, the self-proclaimed Supreme Dictator, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia (1814 - 1840), pursued national economic self-sufficiency.²⁶ Francia forcibly nationalized all land, confiscated the property and assets of foreigners and founded *Estancias del la Patria*, or Homeland Ranches for national food production. Landlocked, Paraguay depended on fluvial routes to the Río de la Plata, ports controlled by Buenos Aires and Montevideo (Figure 3).²⁷ Autarky was thus as much a pragmatic response to Argentinian control of access to external markets as a nationalist ideology of self-sufficiency.

Francia’s dictatorial experiments with “Jacobin egalitarianism” turned into the state socialism of Carlos Antonio López and later the reckless anti-imperialism of his son Francisco Solano López (Rivarola, 2010, p. 5). The López father-son duo sought modernization via European expertise, reversing Francia’s ban on immigration. Yet, in contrast to the regional trends of mercantilist development, Paraguayan economic policy remained defiantly protectionist and proceeded without external debt financing. Paraguay’s debt-free development built the first railroad on the continent as well as an impressive iron works (Fernández Martínez, 2015).

A nationalist revisionist history, still present in popular discourse today, interprets early autonomous national development as Paraguayan greatness, subsequently stolen. In the iconic *Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano interpreted Paraguay’s autarkic period as resistance to British imperial ambitions to integrate Paraguay into the global economy on subordinate terms, calling Paraguay “Latin America’s most progressive country... [a] last bastion of national resistance in the heart of the continent ...[and a] dangerous example” (Galeano, 1975, pp. 188–189). Even Augusto Roa Bastos, whose life work wrestles with the pathologies and ongoing reverberations of strivings toward absolutist power, contributes to this interpretative reclamation of Francia. His autobiographical writing reflects,

²⁶ José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia served as Consul of the Republic between 1813 and 1840, a period interrupted by the brief rule of Fulgencio Yegros. In 1814, Francia declared himself Supreme Dictator.

²⁷ The port was controlled privately by the *Compañía Argentina de Navegación*, although in geopolitical squabbles Argentina tightened the screws, denying passage or charging exorbitant rates.

Figure 3. Paraguay map, c 1600



Source: Wikimedia Commons²⁸

²⁸ Paraguay map, c 1600 Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_New_Map_of_South_America_Drawn_from_the_latest_Discoveries.jpg

Under the government of the famous Dr. Francia, pioneer of the republic and builder of a Nation-State founded on the principles of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Paraguay experienced effective autonomy and independence before any other country on the continent. None of the [other Latin American] Liberators were able to achieve anything similar as a result of the Emancipation struggles which they led (Bastos, 1987, p. 217).

In his difficult masterpiece, *I, the Supreme (Yo, el Supremo)*, Roa Bastos writes the voice of Dr. Francia as schizoid, alternately occupying the position of “I” (*Yo*) and “Him” (*El*), voices in conflict over the moral legacy of Francia as a historical, nation-building force. Further complicating the narrative structure, other voices haunt the novel: “unknown handwriting” which appears in the dictator’s journal, Francia’s conversation with his dog, Sultán, and historical footnotes. *I, the Supreme* represents Roa Bastos’ self-identified project of writing a “counter history, a transgressive and subversive replica of official historiography” thereby revealing the impossibility of an objective, factual history (Roa Bastos, cited in Weldt-Basson, 2012). However, it is Roa Bastos’ autobiographical reflections that capture popular sentiment over Francia, more liberator than tyrant.

The terrible War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870) marked a before and after in projects of Paraguayan state formation and economic development. Solano López, alternately understood as a mad tyrant or an valiant anti-imperialist (Saeger, 2007), ambitiously sought to build regional alliances capable of contending with the two continental powerhouses: neighboring Brazil and Argentina. Contesting the imperial ambitions of the Empire of Brazil, Solano López responded to a Brazilian invasion in Uruguay by sacking the Brazilian town of Corumbá thereby sparking the confrontation that set Paraguay against the combined forces of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. One of Latin America’s bloodiest wars, the war killed as many as 70% of the adult male population.²⁹ Some Paraguayan historians describe the war as genocide (Bethell, 1996, p. 12).³⁰ Only the valiant grit of the fiercely determined populace, or a reckless patriotism that sent children to doomed battlefields, saved Paraguay from being divvied up between Brazil and Argentina. Indeed, the secret Treaty of the Triple Alliance between Brazil and Argentina, which

²⁹ The numbers of Paraguayan deaths are controversial. Academic estimates range from a low of 21,000 (Reber, 1988) to 69% of the prewar population (Whigham & Potthast, 1999). Regardless, the country had a small population before the war, a few hundred thousand, and after the war the skewed male-female ratio led some commentators to call Paraguay “a land of women.”

³⁰ Roa Bastos also described the War of the Triple Alliance in anti-imperialist terms: “The economic interests of the British Empire, which was penetrating the region and seeking dominion over it, could not allow the dangerous utopia of self-determination in this little landlocked country to continue to exist. Thus, at British instigation and with British support, the financial powers of the Brazilian Empire and the oligarchies of the River Plate (themselves dependent on England) planned to so-called War of the Triple Alliance. Over a five-year period, between 1865 and 1870 Paraguay was razed to the ground, two-thirds of its population was exterminated and more than half its territory stolen” (Bastos, 1987, p. 217).

predated the war, spelled out the Paraguayan territory each of the three countries would lay claim to after the war.³¹ As it was, Paraguay lost 54,054 square miles of land (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Map of Paraguay with detail of land lost to Argentina and Brazil in the War of the Triple Alliance



Source: Wikimedia Commons³²

³¹ Drawn out post-war negotiations were eventually mediated by US President Rutherford B. Hayes. Argentina did not annex the entire Chaco region, as spelled out in the secret Treaty of the Triple Alliance, due to Hayes' support for Paraguay and Brazil's desire for a buffer between Argentina.

³² Map of Paraguay, Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Krigsteater_trippelliansekrigen.png

The war remains a touchstone in the Paraguayan national consciousness. War references dot my field notes, usually in the register of a deeply felt sense of injustice and outrage at stolen national greatness. Roa Bastos described the twinned calamities of war and serial dictatorship as producing “a reality that raved and ranted and spat shafts of history into the faces of the survivors,” an eloquent invocation of history’s living presence (Bastos, 1987, p. 217).

Reconstruction was arduous and halting. The post war truce called for Paraguay to pay the costs of the war incurred by Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Bankrupt, national leaders turned to the mass sale of public lands to English and Argentine speculators to pay the debts. After subsequent default, in 1885 restructured loans were backed by land warrants.³³ War-wrought devastation and tardy integration in global capital circuits set the stage for “the rebirth of Paraguay through British capital markets” (Schuster, 2015, p. 51).³⁴ This marked a new round of economic experimentation, in the form of mass land privatization, liberalization and an “extremely outward oriented” national economy (Abente, 1989, p. 77).

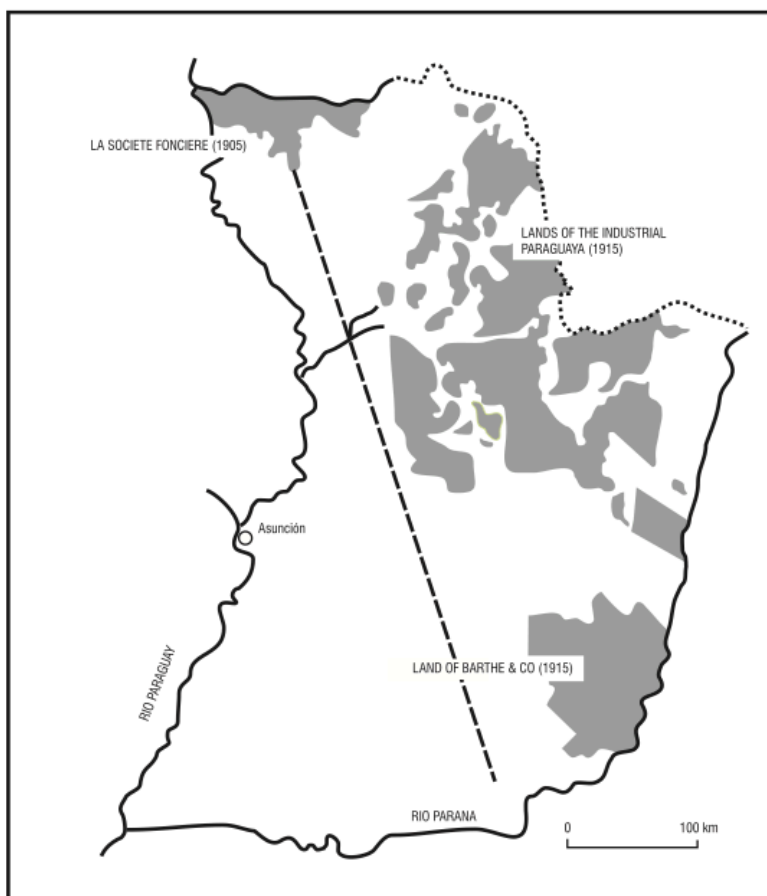
National rebirth produced the eastern region of the country as a site of speculation; of accumulation opportunities for British and Argentine capitalists enabled through the conversion of forests into bonds. It also signals the workings of the second register of the frontier, the transformation from one mode of accumulation to another. State-sponsored land-deals in eastern Paraguay turned the region’s dense North Atlantic Rainforest into an “enclave for extraction” (Vázquez, 2006, p. 23). *Latifundios*—huge landholdings controlled by an elite class of *patrones*—largely produced yerba mate, wood and hearts of palm. The largest holdings of the yerba mate producer, *Industria Paraguaya*, exceeded 2.6 million hectares (Vázquez, 2006, p. 24), an area greater than the US state of Wyoming (Figure 5). Yerba mate, a major national export, was produced under brutal labor conditions of indenture servitude, what the anarchist essayist and journalist Rafael Barrett described as “slavery, torment and murder” (Barrett, 1910, p. 35). Figure 6 maps three major land holdings in the eastern region of the country, which would later become important for Ciudad del Este’s founding. Rather than state abandonment, as invoked by Nickson, the historian Silva argues that land privatization required an “intentional forgetting” on the part of national politicians a convenient spatial amnesia that allowed for profiteering (Silva, 2007, p. 73).

³³ Schuster describes this speculative engagement as follows: “The association of bondholders who received “Land Warrants” as compensation for overdue interest, ultimately incorporated into the Paraguay Land Company in 1888, and charged the board of the Company with overseeing and administering the land in far-away Paraguay in the name of British financial speculators with little interest in developing the territories that they now putatively owned” (Schuster, 2012, p. 64).

³⁴ Paraguay first entered the landscapes of international credit markets, facilitated by London brokerages, through the Eight Per Cent Public Works Loan of 1871 (Schuster, 2012, p. 55). Schuster argues that the relationships of national debt, forced borrowing, default, and restructuring highlight the terms through which relationships of obligation—simultaneously financial and ethical—come to be understood (Schuster, 2012, p. 46). The rebirth metaphor draws from the famous last words of Solano Lopez, before Brazilian troops killed him. Conflicting narratives reconstruct his last words as either “I die *for* my country” or “I die *with* my country,” the later phrasing signaling a national death from which the country is still, perhaps, recovering.

Figure 5. Map of the *yerbales* in Eastern Paraguay

Mapa N° 1. Tierras de empresas extranjeras en la región Oriental en el año 1920.
Al Este de la línea de puntos solo habitan alrededor de 25.000 personas



Source: (Vasquez, 2006, p. 25)

Rafael Barrett's journalistic investigations of the *yerbales* describe the economic deal-making practices that linked national statesmen to indentured servitude.³⁵ An 1871 state decree wrote exploitative labor terms into law.³⁶ While indentured servitude was outlawed in 1901, state inspectors and regional judges continued to enable "dissimulated" slavery (Barrett, 1910, p. 37). Barrett detailed these deal-making practices—close ties between national politicians and plantation owners, running through bribes and judicial spaces—which foreshadowed contemporary *esquemas*:

³⁵ Silva says, "The exuberant, impenetrable jungles of Alto Paraná [were] totally ignored by the government.... [But] they forgot on purpose, not because of ignorance" (Silva, 2007, p. 73).

³⁶ The decree legally linked a "peon" laborer to his employer. Peons could not leave the *yerbales* without signed permission from the boss and those who "abandoned" their jobs could be sent to jail, and charged for the expenses.

[In Alto Paraná, you will find] a judge bought by the *Industrial [Paraguaya]*, The Mate or landowners of Alto Paraná. Local authorities are bought through a monthly bonus, as an accountant of the *Industrial Paraguaya*, confirmed for me. The judge and the boss eat, then, from the same money [take bribes]. Often, they are simultaneously national authorities and enabled *yerbateros* [plantation owners]. So Mr. B. A.—a relative of the current President of the Republic—is also political head of San Estanislao and paymaster (*habilitado*) of the *Industrial [Paraguaya]*. Mr. M.—also a relative of the President—is a judge in the fiefdom of the Señores Casados and also employed by them. The Señores Casado exploit the *quebraehales* [tannin-producing trees] through slavery—[Locals] still remember the murder of five laborers [*quebracheros*] who tried to escape in a boat. No need then, to wait for the State to reestablish slavery, it is through slavery that profit is made and justice is sold retail (Barrett, 1910, pp. 37–38).

Barrett uses the metaphor of “eating money” to describe dealmaking and kickback schemes between the judiciary and *patrones*. This imagery remains powerful today as critics invoke the same language (*ho'upa la plata*) to critique state practice. The murky status of regional businessmen, “simultaneously national authorities and enabled *yerbateros*” signals how the frontier as an interstitial space of confusion stretches back in time. *Esquemas* thus emerge as a key genealogical concept from exploitation on the *yerbales*.

I want to highlight the spatiality of these forms of political-economic authority. Politically-connected gentleman in the capital city worked through the bureaucracy of the state to imagine and construct eastern Paraguay as a space of international capital speculation, extractive profiteering and labor exploitation, made possible through mass privatization of state lands. The post-World War II rise of the Colorado Party would reconfigure this territorialization of the state.

Midcentury Colonization and the March East

Midcentury colonization projects sought to rework the spatialization of political authority and national population, intensifying into state projects that sought to tame the frontier, in the first sense of the term. With land reform, the Colorado party promoted eastward colonization and population presence, an expansion that was predicated on the violent erasure of indigenous life. State-led geopolitical reorientation turned the country toward Brazil, away from Argentina, even as the Stroessner regime sought to confront Brazil's expansionist stance. Infrastructure development on the frontier, including city-building, was to become key to the spatial expansion of state presence (Cristaldo, 2013). While state projects began to diffuse outward through a greater extension of Paraguayan territory, relationships of political authority remained routed through an extremely centralized and authoritarian state apparatus.

Volatile national politics after the terrible war of the Triple Alliance rotated a dizzying cast of Liberals through the presidency, while maintaining the country's new signature economic openness.³⁷ After WWII, the agrarian nationalist Colorado (Red) party took power in a coup, and soon seated General Alfredo Stroessner, a fearsome authoritarian who quelled disputes

³⁷ Between 1904 and 1939, twenty-two presidents served, nearly all from the Liberal Party.

through a mix of state terror and patronage. In the Americas, only Fidel Castro surpassed the duration of Stroessner's 34-year rule. Under Stroessner, the Colorado party led a fractious alliance of military men, *latifundistas*, and a small army of state employees, held together by "vast patronage machinery" which operated through dissolving the distinction between state and party (Guernica, 2003, p. 142). Gustavo Setrini describes these as straightforward relationships of exchange, saying Stroessner

...bought their loyalty through the exchange of public resources, especially land, employment in public enterprise, and public contracts related to the construction of the Itaipú Hydroelectric Dam, and by selectively granting opportunities for graft, smuggling, and illicit trade" (Setrini, 2010, p. 18).

Sixty years after Stroessner's ascension, a frontier politician would quip to me that the Paraguayan state is "a gang of friends" (*una banda de amigos*).³⁸

The durability of Colorado party rule exceeded Stroessner. Indeed, an internal coup, rather than popular mobilization, compelled his fall during a moment of global transition in 1989. Colorado party rule has been interrupted only by the brief presidency of the moderate priest and liberation theologian, Fernando Lugo (2008-2013). A coalition between the Colorado party and the Liberal party ousted Lugo in a "parliamentary coup," a lightning fast, show impeachment in 2012 (Marsteintredet, Llanos, & Nolte, 2013). If Paraguay was a late and hesitant arrival to Latin America's "Left Turn,"—a wave of progressive, redistributive elected governments—the 2012 impeachment foreshadowed the resurgence of the Right now rolling across the region. Colorado party hegemony, stabilized through a contingent mix of coercion and consent, required constant political, discursive and material maintenance. Setrini's listing of rural land, public sector jobs, Itaipú construction grants and access to the border trade names the medium of clientelistic exchange, without addressing the complexity of everyday relationships suturing together state and subject, or the tensions that threatened to tear the suture asunder.

Achille Mbembe demonstrates how the state salary, in postcolonial authoritarian African states, produced political subjects. He explains that authoritarian states can use the salary

...to buy obedience and gratitude and to break the population to habits of discipline. The salary was what legitimated not only subjection but also the constitution of a type of political exchange based not on the principle of political equality and equal representation, but on the existence of *claims through which the state created debts on society* (Mbembe, 2001, p. 47 emphasis in original).

Thus Mbembe focuses on the salary as a political technology that shapes subjectivities of a population as it also shapes state capacities. This poststructural approach breaks from an earlier era of structuralist research, which attributed Latin American authoritarianism to political economic transformation under conditions of dependency (F. H. Cardoso, 1978; Collier &

³⁸ The Colorado Party has also been called a "self-serving private association" (Hetherington, 2011, p. 238).

Cardoso, 1979; O'donnell, 1973) or a culture of subservience in the populace, alternately understood as pre-given (Morse, 1964; Wiarda, 1973) or historically-constituted (Koonings & Krujit, 1999).

Land reform was one lynchpin of the agrarian Colorado party coalition as well as a driver of population expansion into eastern Paraguay (Kleinpenning, 1987; Pastore, 1979). In response to dwindling supplies of arable land in central Paraguay for smallholders, the Colorado party fostered expansion into and colonization of the sparsely populated eastern region. Despite the redistributive potential, land reform concentrated holdings upwards (Morínigo, 2005).³⁹ However, the project enabled the Colorado party to perform a populist promise, that of bringing *campesinos* into the nation through landownership.⁴⁰ Key to Paraguayan Cold War nationalism, land reform worked through a national ideology of progress that constructed poor peasant *campesinos*—the majority of the population—as both the moral core of the Paraguayan nation and as incompletely modern subjects (Hetherington, 2011). Indeed, the state was made real precisely through the embodied interactions between *campesinos* and specific Colorado party members as they negotiated the extended bureaucratic processes of seeking state recognition of land claims.

The Colorado party has largely abandoned *campesino* constituencies in the transition to democracy. Contemporary national plans seek modernization of the countryside through export-oriented industrial monocultures, especially soy, rather than state-subsidized smallholder farming. No longer imagined as a moral core and link to Paraguay's agrarian past, today *campesino* organizing is constructed as criminal invasion of private property by dominant Colorado party politics and national media outlets (Nagel, 1999). This, in spite of the fact that Paraguay has one of the most unequal distributions of rural land in the world, and many *latifundistas* accessed land through *esquemas*, fraudulent land deals or through links to the Stroessner regime.

Contemporaneously with colonization through land reform, the authoritarian regime pursued a state project of infrastructure development on the border.⁴¹ Through the mid-century, the vast majority of the population lived in the three departments ringing the capital city, most as subsistence farmers. The department of Alto Paraná, the regional administrative division where Ciudad del Este now resides, was not formed until 1945.⁴² In 1950, less than 10,000 inhabitants lived in the department of Alto Paraná.⁴³

Prior to Stroessner's explicit state project of expansion in Paraguay's eastern region, *yerbales* dominated the landscape, although a small number of other colonial projects did

³⁹ Land reform was a force for land concentration, with 85% of land distributed to 2% of recipients (Morínigo, 2005).

⁴⁰ The failure of land reform to provide farmland to the poor is unsurprising, as it is frequently a political lightning rod (Borras & Franco, 2010; Zoomers & Haar, 2000). In fact, land reform involved an upward redistribution of land and set the course for the continued power of the conservative landed class after Stroessner's fall (Fogel & Riquelme, 2005; Morínigo, 2005; Pastore, 1979; B. Turner, 1993).

⁴¹ Here I follow Bob Jessop's use of the term "state project" to capture the loose ensemble of institutions and economic interests with more or less coordinated attempts to unify state power (Jessop, 2008).

⁴² Under the 1906 administrative divisions of the country, the entire eastern region was part of Encarnación. Alto Paraná was split in two in 1973, with the addition of Canindeyú to the north.

⁴³ Data from the Dirección General de Estadísticas Encuestas y Censos.

materialize the state in the region.⁴⁴ In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a few small pioneer communities sprung up, largely founded by veterans of the *yerbales*. The region is the ancestral home of several indigenous groups, including the Ava Guaraní, Mbya Guaraní and the Cãyguã. The politics and multiple violences of the colonial encounter shape frontier histories. In addition, anxieties about dissident activity in the uncontrolled frontier zone persistently surfaced in my archival research of state documents, and complaints of contraband, especially of coffee and sugar, emerge as early as the late 1940s.

In the 1950s, state projects of colonization began in earnest, impelled by the frontier imaginary of bringing the Paraguayan nation to the eastern region of the country. Colonization also reconfigured the spatialization of Paraguayan political authority. Several national projects contemplated colonization and territorial integration, explicitly modeled after the expansion of the US frontier (Hetherington, 2011). Stroessner's March East envisioned state presence in eastern Paraguay through impressive infrastructural projects: a frontier city and a road connecting Asunción to Port Santos, Brazil via a bridge over the Paraná river. National plans for eastward colonization sought territorial integration and population presence in the sparsely inhabited region. State planners expressed concern over Brazil's expansionist doctrine of flexible borders or "living frontiers" (*fronteras vivas*) (Parodi, 2002; Silva, 2007), as well as a steady arrival of Brazilian pioneers claiming land. Brazilian immigration would later spawn a new social identity, *Brasiguayos*, as these immigrants and their descendants gained official status as nationalized Paraguayans, but retained strong cultural ties to their country of origin. Today some departments on the frontier have foreign land ownership rates of 40% or more leading some Paraguayan historians to call Brazilian immigration a "silent invasion," the legal loss of national territory to foreign interests (Silva, 2007, p. 30). Further, both Brazil and Paraguay claimed the massive *Sete Quedas* waterfalls, a territorial dispute which continued into the 1960s.⁴⁵ Finally, overland access to Brazilian ports would break Argentine control over Paraguayan access to foreign markets.

The project of eastward colonization was enabled by particular frontier imaginaries of nationhood and racialized national belonging. State planners explicitly considered eastern Paraguay as "empty" and therefore available for state projects of colonization. The imagination of the region as empty appears in state documents that describe frontier landscapes as a "virgin jungle" (Ynsfrán, 1990, p. 108), a colonial-masculinist imaginary which envisions Western cultures bringing civilization to spaces outside modernity, marked by "anachronistic time," through the penetration of reason, progress and the like (McClintock, 1995, p. 65). One Paraguayan novelist, in the prologue to a memoir written by Stroessner's Interior Minister Edgar Ynsfrán, described Alto Paraná as "a savage adventure, the inaccessible refuge of escapees, those with damaged honor, the ashamed, the victims of poverty and dissimulated slavery" (José

⁴⁴ Prior, the Paraguayan state had a minimal presence, limited to a Catholic Mission, a public health campaign, and explicit support for *yerbales*. Catholic *Mission de Monday*, operative between 1910 and 1925, was built with state monies but disbanded after it failed to win many converts. State institutions responded to a malaria outbreak in 1946, sending public health officials from the newly formed Ministry of Public Health and Social Wellbeing.

⁴⁵ The dispute centered on whether Paraguayan borders, drawn up by Brazil after the war of the Triple Alliance, included the *Sete Quedas*.

Rivarola Matto in Ynsfrán, 1990, p. 12).⁴⁶ During the mid-century, settlers slowly, and violently, pushed the Aché, Mbya Guaraní, Cãyguã and other groups off of newly-desirable land or into deculturization camps (Maybury-Lewis & Howe, 1980; Reed, 1995; R. J. Smith & Meliá, 1978).⁴⁷ The violence of *campesinos*, ranch hands, and *latifundistas* included killings and epistemic violence, another round in a five hundred year process of colonization on the continental scale.

2.3 Boomtown

Ciudad del Este was founded as a frontier town in 1957 by Presidential decree as Puerto Presidente Stroessner. The eponymous port town of the authoritarian president sought state presence in the hinterlands. As mid-century state planners sought to expand the domain of the nation-state into the forested eastern region, soon other frontier dynamics emerged as constitutive of city-building, livelihood and profiteering. The explosion of the city's border trade in the last quarter of the 20th century instantiated a particular kind of economy, which works through confusions in the realm of legality. Early sedimentary layers for this frontier economy were laid by peculiar amalgam of authoritarian state power and the free reign of capital during mid-century colonization.

A Paraguayan Brasilia

The March East sought to consolidate a state presence in the eastern region and state planners envisioned the frontier in the first sense discussed, as a spatial challenge to the civilizational mission of the nation-state. City founding was a cornerstone of Stronista statecraft although Puerto Presidente Stroessner appeared first in state documents and only later as material form. Presidential decree number 24,634, signed by Stroessner in 1957, outlined the state rationale for a frontier city. The city was to serve a dual geopolitical function. On the one hand, the planned port town would materialize the infrastructure necessary for regional economic integration. The charter envisioned the city as a means to “unite with Brazil” (*unir con Brasil*) positing that the port town would be “a site concentrating regional possibilities” (*que sea punto de concentración de las posibilidades regionales*).⁴⁸ On the other hand, the unstable Stroessner regime had just taken the Presidency in a 1954 coup, and found a clarifying vision for the party in frontier expansion. While an extraction-orientation would continue to define regional logics of capital, the border trade would soon emerge alongside seeculative extraction as a site of accumulation opportunities. Indeed, frontier rents were soon to become key to Colorado party projects of rule, instantiating a particular form of state formation made in and through legal confusions. This period laid the groundwork for frontier political economic projects where rents are made by, in Anna Tsing's words, “creating wildness.”

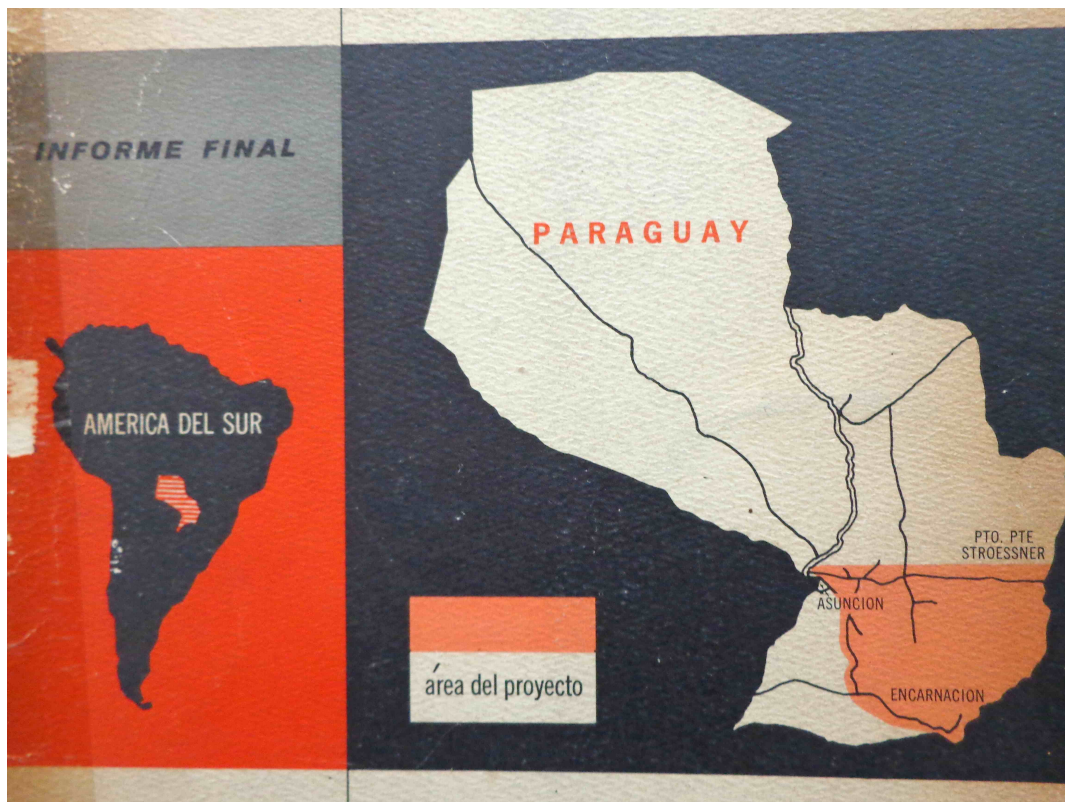
⁴⁶ The novelist Jose Maria Rivarola Matto, persecuted under Stroessner, distanced himself from political affiliation with Ynsfrán but wanted to laud frontier city founding as a “secular Paraguayan dream” (José Rivarola Matto in Ynsfrán, 1990, p. 12).

⁴⁷ In the 1970s, anthropologists and journalists accused the Stroessner regime of committing genocide against the Aché and other groups in order to gain access to land and mineral resources (Arens, 1976; Miinzel, 1976). Other reports contended that the devastation was the result of economic transformation rendering the traditional indigenous lands as valuable (Maybury-Lewis & Howe, 1980).

⁴⁸ Presidential Decree Number 24.634, January 28, 1957.

Stroessner charged Edgar Ynsfrán—an astute technocrat and his confidant—with the administrative and planning tasks of city founding. Overseeing the Interior Ministry under Stroessner, Ynsfrán was tightly tied to the state security apparatus, including a systematic state program of torture and disappearances. In retrospective memoirs, city-founders claim they needed exceptional foresight to choose the most propitious site for the city that would, decades hence, gain commercial prominence. Ynsfrán titled the chapter on his own city-founding activities as “we intuited the future” (*intuimos el porvenir*) (Ynsfrán, 1999). Yet, the location of the city was also compelled by forces exceeding the envisioning capacities of state technocrats. In 1955, one year before Ynsfrán’s 1956 security reconnaissance flight over the region, the *Comisión Mixta* (Mixed Commission) of Brazilian and Paraguayan officials set terms for Brazilian financing of Ruta 7 (Highway 7), connecting Asunción to the border (Figure 6). Road building is a key way for officials to materialize the presence of the state in Latin American frontier regions, even as roads are often made possible through an amalgamation of state, private sector and international funding sources (P. Harvey, 2014), as was the case of Ruta 7. A year later, a bilateral agreement laid out plans and financing for the International Friendship Bridge spanning the Paraná River, connecting Ruta 7 to the small Brazilian town of Foz do Iguacu, settled in the 1880s (Figures 7 and 8). Thus, contrary to Ynsfrán’s claims of technocratic visioning, the location of the future frontier city responded largely to the exigencies of Brazilian frontier settlement patterns and diplomacy.

Figure 6. Ruta 7 (International Highway 7)



Note: Ruta 7 links the capital city, Asunción, with the Brazilian coast via Puerto Presidente Stroessner. *Source:* (Government of Paraguay, 1960)

Figure 7. International Friendship Bridge



*Source: Wikimedia Commons*⁴⁹

⁴⁹ International Friendship Bridge, Retrieved from, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ponte_da_amizade_-_Friendship_bridge-_Paraguay_\(9623754507\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ponte_da_amizade_-_Friendship_bridge-_Paraguay_(9623754507).jpg)

Figure 8. Government propaganda for the International Friendship Bridge



Note: Alfredo Stroessner (left) and Juscelino Kubitschek (right). *Source:* Itaipú Archives

The flurry of state activity that followed the 1957 declaration was as much about performing the Paraguayan state at its edges, as it was about deploying the technical capacities of the regime to site a planned city. Only decades later would a sizable population settle at the confluence of two rivers and three international borders. The inaugural activities were initially ceremonial and evinced clear representations of the close ties between frontier city-building and the security apparatus of the authoritarian regime. Ynsfrán's exploratory crew of surveyors and military personnel boated up the Paraná River in 1958 but struggled to find the spot where the bridge would one day be built. Their primary task was ceremonial, driving Stroessner's 1957 decree, encased in a bronze tube, into a concrete landmark (Figure 9). After the bi-national commission performed the rites deemed propitious for the future port, for several years the entombed decree was all that intimated future frontier urbanization.

A sequence of presidential decrees set about building the paper scaffolding for the future city. Another presidential decree formed and appointed members of an administrative commission, charged with organizing urbanization, land sales and economic development.⁵⁰ The early work of city-building was carried out by a small number of personnel from an army battalion stationed in nearby *Yhuguy*, a local surveyor, and a representative of the national land reform agency. The state expropriated land from the *Industria Paraguaya* and several other private companies and individuals.

⁵⁰ Presidential Decree Number 25.209

Figure 9. Edgar Ynsfrán inaugurates the city



Source: (Ynsfrán 2012, p. 122)

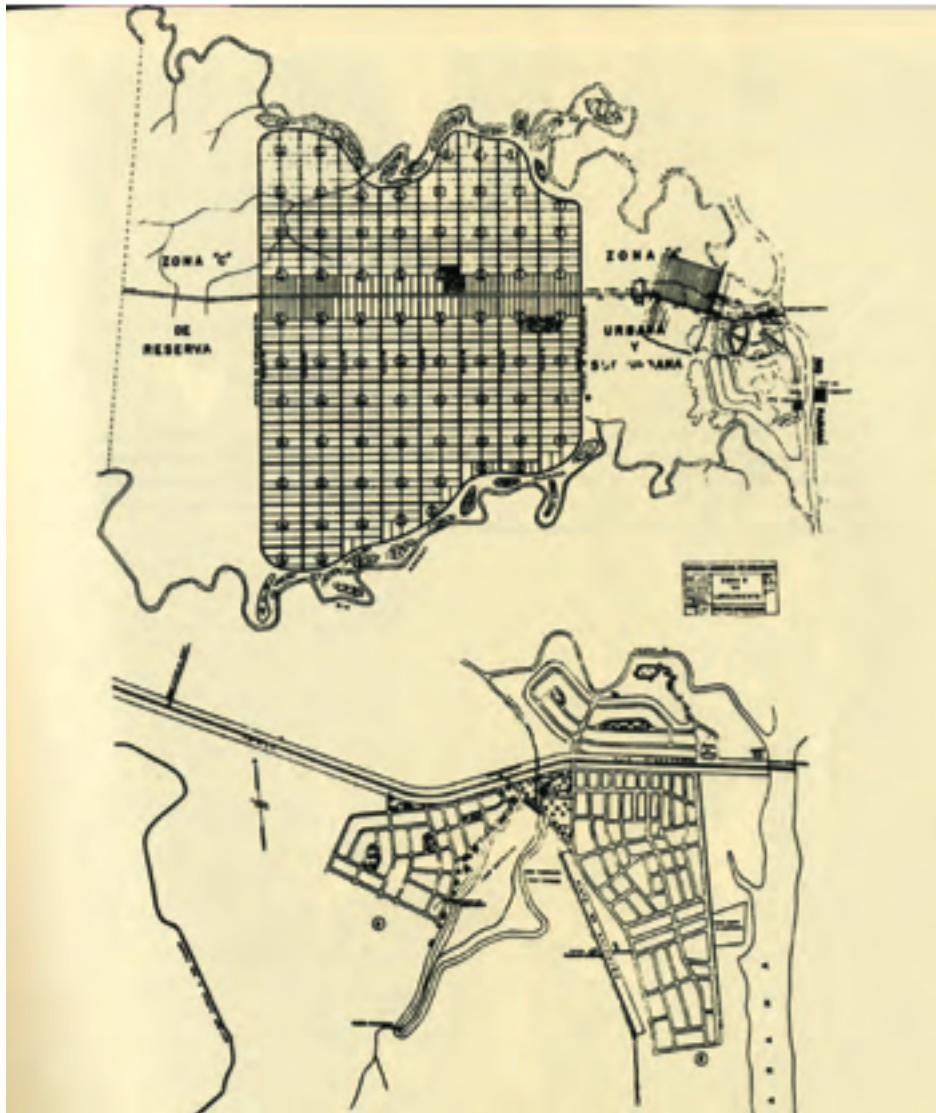
Expropriations, an exercise of state power, briefly nationalized 257,904 hectares of land, although new land titles did not exact transformations in the material uses of frontier space for several more years.⁵¹

In contrast to the developmentalist state strategies of Paraguay's neighbors, the administrative commission envisioned a frontier city made through a peculiar amalgam of authoritarian state power and the free reign of capital. After the inaugural expropriations, the administrative commission sought out the private sector as the appropriate agents of urban

⁵¹ In 1953, the Paraguayan state won a case against the *latifundista* Don Domingo Barthe, finding irregularities in the 1888 land transfer, which nullified all subsequent sales (*El estado paraguayo contra herederos de Don Domingo Barthe: Sobre nulidad de títulos y reivindicación de unas tierras situadas en el Alto Paraná*, 1953). The land remains contested with landless peasants making claims on lands once held by Barthe to this day (Fogel, 2012).

development. One of the commission's earliest acts was to recruit an astute businessman, Elias Saba, to spearhead urban planning. Saba bought 100 hectares of state land at fire sale prices, in exchange for a commitment to develop an urbanization plan, fund the construction of roads and build at least twenty homes.⁵² Saba's master plan, following state decree, proposed an urban zone radiating outward ten kilometers from the foot of the planned International Friendship Bridge, an industrial zone ringing the city center and a rural/urban boundary beyond which land was zoned for farming.

Figure 10. Urban plans for Puerto Presidente Stroessner,



Note: by Guillermo Hellmers commissioned by Saba. *Source:* (Ynsfrán 2012, p. 122)

⁵² Saba bought 100 ha of land for four million Guarani or about \$5,300 in inflation adjusted dollars (Silva, 2007, p. 345).

For a decade, urban construction proceeded slowly, relying on nearby military units for road and airport construction crews. Due to a labor shortage, an army regiment joined construction crews to build the airport, later excavating the man-made Lake of the Republic, built through donations collected by Ynsfrán from other municipalities. Daily, the appointed surveyor, a local man named Noel Lefebvre, set up an outdoor table at the bridge site, selling land between the hours of 8 am and 10 am. However, there was little interest in the President's port town and Lefebvre's land trade was slow.

Carlos Barreto Sarubbi, the first mayor of Puerto Presidente Stroessner, exemplified Stroessner's traditionalist wing of the Colorado Party, and a particular mix of paternalistic care, rent seeking and violence that enabled city-building. Barreto held the seat of mayor from 1975 to 1986, the twilight years of the dominion of the traditionalists' hold on the machinery of the Colorado Party and the state. As I prepared for an interview with Barreto, a friend joked about my meeting with the "dinosaur" (*dinosaurio*), a glib critique of how Barreto embodied an old patriarchal order, one which she thought belonged in the past. The friend correctly predicted Barreto, wearing white linen, would touch the back of my head during the formal greeting of kissing on the cheek, a gesture of masculine dominance. In the interview, Barreto recounted his populist vision for state sponsored land distribution.

It fell upon me to be Mayor and so it was my responsibility to settle people... The people who came here were poor, humble people. They didn't come with money, they came with hope of finding work... I would give them their place, their lot. I did the land parceling. I sold [the land] for a symbolic price, something like 30,000 guaraníes back then, and they had to pay 2,000 guaraníes monthly... poor people didn't have enough to pay for their land, just like today. And so the government has to help these people (Personal communication, September 2013).

Barreto presented himself—in the style of the traditional Latin American *caudillo*—as the caretaker of the people with whom he empathizes. At the same time, Barreto naturalized the skewed power relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The lines between public office and individual man are blurred in Barreto's vision, as he uses the first person singular pronoun to describe the work of parceling public lands for settlement colonies. Further, Barreto was almost certainly a key player in contraband and drug trafficking networks (Miranda, 2000) although direct lines of complicity are notoriously difficult to definitively pin down.

The city's fortunes changed with the construction of the mammoth binational Itaipú hydroelectric dam. Launched in 1967, the world's largest hydroelectric dam figured centrally in the Stroessner regime's plans to present itself as a modernizing force.⁵³ The super-sized scale and string of engineering feats "provided an unending catalogue of the spectacular for Stroessner" (Folch, 2013) (Figure 11). The dam, signifying man's power over nature, also represented the taming of the wild frontier and an important step towards instantiating state presence in a marginal space of creative tension between the social and the so-called uncivilized. Dam construction as statecraft was also mediated by popular contestation and violent repression by the authoritarian security apparatus (Folch, 2013). At the same time, construction contracts

⁵³ Itaipú held the title of world's largest dam until, in 2010, the Three Gorges Dam went online. While Three Gorges is physically bigger, Itaipú still produces more electricity.

and state salaries provided a new resource to bind loyal members to the Colorado party. As Mbembe argues, these salaries produce, rather than simply tap into, political ascriptive affiliation through which the state engendered relationships of debt with state employees (Mbembe, 2001).

Figure 11. An explosion for the construction of the Itaipú Hydroelectric Dam



Source: Itaipú Archives (cited in Cristaldo, 2013, p. 62)

Similar to the symbolism of the mega-dam, state planners imagined Puerto Presidente Stroessner as both a modernist endeavor and a pathway to modernity. A Uruguayan architect drew up plans based on Brasilia, the exemplar modernist city (Holston, 1989). Modernist urbanism sought to reshape social relationships through interventions into space. Urban form

was thus part of a mid-century ethos that sought to shepherd society beyond traditional, communal roots towards more so-called rational orders. For state planners, the city, like the dam, was a bid to instantiate infrastructural proof of the presence of a modern state.

The modernist impulse was most evident the relationships between urban space and state jobs. With Itaipú construction on the horizon, urban planners focused on neighborhoods and amenities for public workers. Urban development included state-owned housing stock for engineers, administrators and construction crews. Neighborhoods were segregated by economic function, with engineers and technicians living in what would become upscale neighborhoods in Area 1 and Area 2 while construction workers and their families lived outside nearby *Hernanderias* in Area 8. Brasilia's architects drew from the International Congress of Modern Architecture's (CIAM) formulation of "the Functional City," a vision that mixed the top down administration of urban space with desires to produce a more egalitarian society. Planners of Puerto Presidente Stroessner retained the commitment to top-down urban development but jettisoned the equity impulse. Holston's critique of modernist rationality demonstrates its limits (Holston, 1989). Plans excluded the many construction workers who built Brasilia, who, in turn self-built their own settlements in the peripheries. Further, urban residents repurposed urban space to reclaim the street life that planners sought to eliminate.

Puerto Presidente Stroessner materialized a rather different set of contradictions. Town planners anticipated accommodating the large Itaipú labor force. However, state planners did not respond to the second major frontier state project: the border trade. On the one hand, state efforts to build frontier infrastructure, especially Ruta 7 and the International Friendship Bridge, enabled the expansion of contraband networks. In the 1960s and 1970s, smugglers bypassed high Brazilian and Argentine taxes on luxury goods like perfume, whisky and cigarettes by importing these products from the US and Europe and then smuggling them into neighboring countries. The inauguration of these basic urban infrastructures, in a sense, democratized access to smuggling. Traders no longer had to rely on private landing strips for small planes to fly over dense forests.⁵⁴ Yet planners built a city for the Itaipú workforce rather than the continental trading hub that Puerto Presidente Stroessner would become, through trajectories enable by state projects.

Arbitrage Capitalism

Residents of Ciudad del Este often recalled the 1960s and 1970s as the slow expansion of the border trade, followed by a sudden, uncontrollable boom by the late 1980s. Early rural migrants arrived from the countryside offering their construction labor to Itaipú, yet many soon found the border trade offered more lucrative opportunities. Against the casual, or hyperbolic, assessment of the region as existing beyond the reach of the state, state practice set the conditions for the contraband and re-exportation boom, the legalized counterpart of contraband. State practice enabled the useful wildness of the frontier economy through the built form associated with urbanizing the frontier and through regulatory practice. As just discussed, state infrastructure projects transformed the material conditions for the border trade. Thus as the authoritarian state sought to perform its power through developing the frontier it also made

⁵⁴ Small-scale smuggling was active in this period along the northern "*fronteras secas*," or dry borders. Thus one could interpret the border trade boom concentrated in Alto Paraná as a temporary spatial arrangement of smuggling.

possible the democratization of contraband. In this section, I argue this seeming contradiction illustrates the relationship between big-D and little-d D/development in which intentional Developmental projects create the conditions for transformations in modes of capital accumulation. The political-economic transformation underway overlay the expansion of the border trade onto the speculative extractive logics of the prior era. To recall, prior state projects had enabled economies of land speculation and extraction on the *yerbales*. In this moment of transition, state-enabled expropriation brought land into the public domain for urban development, which was then quickly circulated out for private sector led urban development.

As Caroline Schuster argues, in this era of the Latin American developmentalist state, Paraguayan state planners viewed contraband as a theory of development (Schuster, 2012). Paraguay's southern cone neighbors followed Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), policies linked to Latin American dependency theorists and supported by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL). ISI mixed high tariffs to protect nascent national industry with strong state policies and subsidies to nurture homegrown manufacturing. By the 1980s, ISI had fallen out of favor among Development industry experts; however, ISI importantly enabled social and economic development in many Latin American countries (Baer, 1972; Blouet & Blouet, 2009). With a national population of less than two million in the 1960s, the small domestic market limited the applicability of ISI in the Paraguayan context. Instead, Paraguayan state planners offered their own theories of national economic progress, including state projects that would take on board the frontier economy as part of state projects of big-D Development. Thus I argue that the frontier economy was key to Paraguayan state formation.

I begin by fleshing out some of the practices by which commodities move through different intensities of extralegality as they circulate in, through and out of Paraguayan national territory. I call the twin processes of smuggling and re-exportation an "economy of circulation" because it eliminates the necessity to designate a stable relationship between legality and a given economic practice. As the anthropologist Fernando Rabossi describes, goods passing through re-exportation circuits often encountered moments of extralegality, a disjuncture between a given economic practice aimed toward circulating communities and convoluted legal codes (Rabossi, 2011). Economic practice on the border cannot be adequately thought through the binary typology of legal or illegal. The terminology of an economy of circulation focuses on the practices of actors moving goods to extract a particular kind of value, rooted in arbitrage, the extraction of value through taking advantage of price differences across space. As such, the term economy of circulation also highlights the distinctiveness of these economies, which are not oriented towards production.

Contraband extracts value through the evasion of tariffs and taxes. As a consequence, it does not generate much tax income for state projects of Development or redistribution. In contrast, re-exportation (also called triangulation, frontier commerce, or transit commerce) extracted value through arbitrage opportunities presented by the gap between high Brazilian tariffs—peaking at more than half of import value—and a lower Paraguayan tax regime. Undervaluation (*subfacturación*) is an intermediary strategy occupying a middle ground between smuggling and legal re-exportation. Importer-exporters—working with customs officials and through official procedures for moving goods through Paraguayan territory—underreport the value of their goods. Thus undervaluation works *through* national regulatory frameworks, even as it transgresses legal codes. Reliable estimates of the scale of undervaluation are not possible. However, a high-ranking ex-Minister explained the current prevalence and political potency of

undervaluation. In addition to a reliable revenue stream for party loyalists, the Minster speculated that customs officials used undervaluation to resist national efforts to reform the agency by reducing the amount of tax and tariff revenue delivered to the national treasury. An economist by training, the Minster emphasized he could not prove that customs agents slowed revenue collections as a strong-arm political tactic, limiting himself to the observation that “immediately, when there is an effort to reform [customs] personnel, revenue collections fall” (personal communication, September 2013).

Contemporary customs practices draw from legacies of state practice. Contraband and legal re-exportation both figured as lynchpins of authoritarian political-economic strategy. Historical accounts contend that the Stroessner regime maintained centralized control over contraband networks, divvying up permission to trade amongst supporters (Miranda, 2000; Setrini, 2010). Like land giveaways to military personal or potential political rivals, Stroessner divvied out access to contraband routes, a means to neutralize fractious competition. Indeed, Stroessner famously called contraband “the price of peace,” thereby explaining the political utility of the border trade as a means to placate restive rivals.⁵⁵ Between the 1947 Civil War and Stroessner’s rise to power in 1954, seven Presidents assumed office; Stroessner’s hold on the Presidency was by no means secure. Thus the political strategy of alliance-building through contraband can be read in this instrumentalist frame. While Paraguayan historiography identifies contraband and legal re-exportation as components of authoritarian political-economic strategy, I argue that the contraband/re-exportation economy also conditioned Paraguayan state formation.

Silva describes the triangular relationships between Stroessner, customs agents and customs brokers as follows:

In the city of Puerto Presidente Stroessner, there also existed “Godfathers” (“*Los Padrinos*”) who exercised control over the biggest [import/export] businessmen... Thus the “dispatches” [“*despachos*” or commercial goods] of these businessmen also were centralized under an elite group of Power (sic). From there, those who wanted to work in this profession necessarily needed to have the permission of these “powerful men.”... the important work of Customs Brokers was monopolized by these small groups, who obeyed and collected [rents] for “the crown” (“*la corona*”) (Silva, 2007, p. 51 quotation marks and capitals in the original).

Silva’s description emphasizes the intricate relationships between Stroessner, the Colorado party and contraband, emphasizing Stroessner (“the crown”) authorized the *padrinos* who controlled permission to engage in contraband. In Miranda’s description, the crown also received kickbacks from contraband. This description of the political relationships enabling the frontier economy invokes *esquemas*: complex, durable networks which run through state spaces. Similarly, an appointee of Puerto Presidente Stroessner’s administrative commission explained to me how authorized *contrabandistas* carried signed letters from Stroessner, allowing them to pass through customs unmolested. Centralization does not imply total control but points to the imbrications of the crown with contraband.

⁵⁵ While I was not able to discover the original quote from Stroessner, it is frequently cited in the secondary literature (e.g. Nickson & Lambert, 2002, p. 166).

Contraband is a surprisingly polysemic presence in the Archives of Terror,⁵⁶ two tons of state documents detailing state repression and violence by regional authoritarian regimes during the Cold War.⁵⁷ One register through which contraband appears in these state archives is as glimpses of contraband *esquemas*. A rural informant filed a report of “phantom planes” and “a landing strip strategically prepared for night landings” operated by a Cornel involved in contraband (CDyA, Box 9, Folder 1495). In 1976 Police Inspector Celso Cantero filed a report detailing a roadside confrontation involving a bus bound from Puerto Presidente Stroessner. An aggressive local police officer refused to recognize the authorizing letter (*carta permisoria*) from the Chief of Investigations granting transit permission for a box of machetes. The official report describes the scuffle.

“[The officer] broke open the box spilling its contents, making it known that he did not care that the merchandise pertained to the Chief of Investigations, that absolutely all the contraband that arrives from Brazil is Pastor Coronel’s (*es de Pastor Coronel*) and that he also didn’t care that the machetes were to be used for the grand procession of the Colorados” (CDyA, Box 25, Folder 1139).

The Paraguayan state has long built a legal structure for a portion of the border trade, even as state officials also benefited from contraband. National policy responses to the border trade reflected the outcomes of conflicts between different interests groups, producing an confusing amalgam of policies that sought to bring contraband inside the law alongside the persistence of state-sponsored practices of smuggling. A USAID-funded review of fifty years of Paraguayan customs law concluded “re-exportation... always had a legal regime in Paraguay that changed and responded to particular economic moments” (Penner, 2006, p. 8). Indeed, Paraguayan economist Fernando Ruiz Dias demonstrates that state authorities successfully extracted concessions in international negotiations to retain these arbitrage opportunities, even as the four Mercosur countries forged a regional customs union (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) (Ruiz Díaz, 2011). The legal codes governing re-exportation were convoluted and contradictory, spinning off exceptional regimes to enable the border trade. Two different legal strategies competed: a spatial strategy and a list-based strategy. The spatial strategy sought to designate exceptional spaces of commerce for re-exportation. A concurrent, and sometimes contradictory, list-based strategy incrementally added items to lists of goods subject to a lower overall tax burden. From 1970s onwards, the overall burden of taxes and tariffs trended downward.

Before 1970, re-exportation centered on luxury goods like whiskey and cigarettes, routed through Asunción or Puerto Presidente Stroessner, moving through Paraguayan territory through a

⁵⁶ The Archives of Terror, as it is colloquially known, is the Center for the Documentation and Archive for the Defense of Human Rights (*Centro de documentación y archivo para la defensa de los derechos humanos*), which I denote as CDyA.

⁵⁷ Contraband, in the Archives of Terror, invoked different registers of meaning, including as an image problem to be managed by the regime and as an anti-Stroessner critique in discourse of dissidents. Opposition to the Stroessner regime regularly critiqued “industrial contraband” or “contraband as philosophy” (CDyA, Box 61, Folder 1151), while the regime itself translated English language news reports that, for instance, described how “70% of Paraguayan foreign trade is based in contraband” (CDyA, Box 66, Folder 2482).

special transit tax (*despachos en transito*). In the 1970s, state regulators sought to include more goods in the re-exportation trade, spawning a series of exceptional import/export regimes. The most important was the Tourism Regime (*Regimen del Turismo*), which initially lowered taxes and tariffs on a list of select consumer goods. The Tourism Regime was also a spatial strategy in that its purview, initially, was limited to Puerto Presidente Stroessner and the northern border town of Pedro Juan Cabellero, and later, to the southern border town of Encarnación. For a short period in the early 1980s, the Tourism Regimen specified that all re-exportation commerce must circulate through the Zona Franca International, a monopoly concession operated by Business Company (sic), though soon revoked for “breach of fiscal obligations.”⁵⁸

Occasionally, state documents describe tax relief for the import/export sector as a solution to contraband. In the 1970s state legislators began to expand the regulatory framework for re-exportation beyond the transit tax. In 1972, decree 26.730/72 listed one rationale for the exceptional frontier tax regimes as follows, “tax concessions for certain products has been the most effective measure to counteract operations at the margin of legal tax provisions.”⁵⁹ Forty years later, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce pursued the same strategy at the Ciudad del Este planning commission meeting, discussed in the Introduction. Nomei Haudenschild described her list-based proposal to reenergize the border trade asking, “At what point do we need to have taxes so that there isn’t undervaluation?” However, the scope for re-exportation tax brakes has expanded considerably since the 1970s. Whereas the 1972 provision set the overall tax burden between 27.75% and 39.25%, today frontier businesses have successfully negotiated a total tax rate below 5% for the electronics sector. Thus one state strategy has been to bring contraband inside the law, that is, to adapt the legal regime so that the economic practice of circulating consumer goods across the Paraguayan border without paying a significant amount in taxes is now legal.

As the border trade exploded in the 1980s, so too did the number of small-scale entrepreneurs seeking to profit from the border trade, as trade expanded into electronics, pirated DVDs and brand knockoffs, like fake Gucci handbags. Street vendors organized into associations defend their right to sell from public space to small-scale Brazilian buyers known as *sacoleiros* or *compristas*. *Sacoleiros* sought cheaper prices on consumer goods for resale in urban centers across Latin America. Some *compristas* traveled more than 3500 km from northeastern Brazilian cities like Recife and Fortaleza to stock up on cheap, re-salable merchandise (Ribeiro, 2006). Brazilian policies toward *sacoleiros* has alternated between regularization and criminalization. In 1992, the per-capita quota of tax-free imports was raised to \$500 USD.⁶⁰ Subsequently, a series of border restrictions have reduced the amount of merchandise that can be brought across the border tax-free. These quota reductions have curtailed, to some extent, the small-scale cross-border trade. The work of *compristas* is sometimes called “ant contraband” (*contrabando hormiga*), evoking images of small creatures carrying large loads, tracing worn but unstable trails over long distances (Figure 12). *Contrabando hormiga* also conveys a sense of tedious and burdensome work; *compristas* have noted that their travels are long and stressful (Machado, 2008; Pérez Ortiz, 2004). These are risky business trips—some *compristas* borrow to finance their purchases and, if their purchases

⁵⁸ Finance Ministry resolution number 210/85

⁵⁹ State decree number 26.730/72

⁶⁰ In 1996 the quota was reduced to \$250 USD and to \$150 USD in 1997 (Penner, 1998). Campaigns to increase the quota back to \$500 USD were underway in 2015.

exceed the quota, they attempt pass through borders without being stopped by Brazilian officials to avoid the confiscation of their merchandise. Bus rides are long and their merchandise subject to seizure during random highway checks. Some liken the work to Russian roulette (Figueiredo, 2001, cited in Ribeiro, 2006, p. 243). Once in Brazil, many sell their goods amongst thousands of other sellers in places like Brasilia's Paraguay Market, now named the Imported Goods Market.

Figure 12. *Sacoleiros* on the International Friendship Bridge



Source: Reuters (cited in Folch, September 6, 2012)

This range of regulatory codes indicates national level politicians were committed to re-exportation as a strategy of development during the Stroessner era. Frontier rents contributed to stabilizing the Colorado party coalition such that Stroessner maintained a hold on power for thirty-four years, during a formative time of shaping institutional design and political culture. Further, national policy developed an armature of regulatory codes that provided the basis for the economy of circulation, in its legal moments. While much frontier economic practice transgressed these codes, officially registered re-exportation has, since the 1970s, been an important component of national economic growth (Baer & Birch, 1984). Further, even in transgression, the border trade exists in relationships to this convoluted armature of regulation. Thus, re-exportation and the parallel contraband trade shaped state formation.

2.4 After the Fall

The Stroessner regime fell in 1989, forced out by a factional coup inside the Colorado party. With the fall of Stroessner and international pressures for the outward signs of democratization, old authoritarian practices of regime-backed land theft and centralized monopolies over access to contraband routes were thrown into question. However, seamless narratives of teleological movement toward democracy and rule of law fail here.

For a decade, the economy of circulation, in both its legal and illegal moments, expanded. At its peak in 1995, registered re-exportation generated about \$4 billion USD, more than Paraguay's GDP at the time (Penner, 1998). The border trade boomed alongside a new round of political-economic experimentation, in Paraguay's longer history of utopian adventures and economic experiments. Contemporary everyday governance practice, conditioning the terms on which street vendors make claims on the state today, was importantly shaped in this period. In what follows, I show how arbitrage capitalism works as a repertoire of wealth creation strategies explicitly supported by state projects—both legal regimes and norms of practice within customs offices. As a support for Colorado Party hegemony, the economy of circulation is imbricated in state formation. I also draw out this argument further by looking at the twinned histories of economic experimentation and state formation, after Stroessner's fall.

Fraudulent Bourgeoisie

The fall of the Stroessner regime coincided with the slow rise of the frontier as a regional seat of power in national politics. During this period, regional alliances, most recently led by the upstart *caudillo* Javier Zacarías Irun and his wife Sandra McLeod de Zacarías, gained power in relationship to the administrative center of power located in the capital city.⁶¹ The election of border business tycoon Horacio Cartes to the Presidency in 2013, after the 2012 parliamentary coup, epitomizes the rise of the frontier in national politics.⁶²

Political volatility marked new rounds of contestations over political participation, governance practice and competing notions of economic development in the decades after Stroessner's fall. In Ciudad del Este—as Puerto Presidente Stroessner was renamed in the months after the dictator's ouster—the Colorado party has remained the primary political force, retaining a lock on elections. However, internal divisions within the party have been fierce as Stroessner's traditionalists, aligned with the military, faced off against an increasingly neoliberal business faction of the party. Both factions promoted the extralegal border trade, although the traditionalists tended to use frontier rents to support party machinery while the business faction engaged in profiteering as a self-evident good. In 2001, Javier Zacarías Irun won the mayoral seat, after campaigning on bringing order to the urban center. In 2013, Zacarías' wife, Sandra McLeod de Zacarías, won reelection, continuing the political dynasty. The husband and wife duo are the consummates representatives of the new neoliberal Colorado party faction which mixes authoritarian logics of governance with a new vision of producing a global competitive city.

⁶¹ McLeod assumed the mayorship through appointment when her husband, Javier Zacarías, abandoned his position for his presidential bid in 2007.

⁶² A lawsuit in Brazilian courts contended that one of Cartes' cigarette manufacturing plants supplies counterfeit cigarettes to the Brazilian market (Nickson, 2013). Cartes spent time in prison for currency fraud—although a Paraguayan court later expunged the charges—and the CIA investigated Cartes for suspected ties to a regional money laundering ring (Bargent, 2013; Romero, 2013).

Colorado party hegemony must be understood as an ongoing, unstable and contingent process. The fall of the dictatorship resulted from, and produced, instability in the Colorado ruling party coalition that had successfully held for nearly forty years. The increased volatility of the political process opened up spaces for a regional coalition of frontier politicians and business interests to claim more power relative to the seat of government in Asunción. Itaipú construction contracts and the boom of the frontier economy contributed to the formation of a new class of elite political actors. Paraguayan historian Juan Carlos Herken has called this group the “fraudulent bourgeoisie,” because their wealth is rooted in rent seeking, rather than productive economic activity (Herken, 1975, p. 52). Rent seeking and active participation in outlaw economies characterized both the traditionalists and the newly consolidated frontier power bloc. However, the place of paternal care was thrown into question by the promise of democracy and the spatial reorganization of political power.

What are the everyday practices through which the fraudulent bourgeoisie gain their wealth? Two key texts offer a surprising glimpse into contraband logistics: Miranda de Silva’s *Book of Gold: The Center of Paraguayan Customs Brokers* and a USAID-funded reports on the electronics trade, conducted by the NGO Paraguay Vende (Paraguay Sells) (Penner 2005, 2006). Both seek to portray re-exportation as a legitimate, upstanding economic endeavor that can be separated from the unsavory practices of contraband, trafficking and money laundering. Yet both texts must contend with the co-existence of the legal moments of re-exportation with contraband and undervaluation. The reports use a specific authorial strategy when describing extralegal practice in the border trade. To signal acts of legal transgression or the relationships that enable them, the authors liberally use quotations marks to set key actors or actions apart from the text. Silva, quoted above, sets off in quotations a string of actors and nouns when he described the work of customs brokers: “Godfathers” and “powerful men” grant discretionary access to customs brokerage work; these men control “dispatches” (*dispatchos*, the goods being circulated), and then funnel the kickbacks secured to “the crown,” that is the Stroessner regime. The Paraguay Vende report signals the durability of these systems into the late 1990s as they describe the state practices of undervaluation.

We reiterate, at the margin of the legal order established by the Tourist Regime, the Paraguayan customs authorities “tolerated” a regime of undervaluation, known in customs slang by the name “the little tablet” (*la tablita*). This scheme consisted of clearing containers of hightech goods through customs by weight. This system of undervaluation responds to a system of great simplicity and high commercial precision. After the values are registered in “*la tablita*,” the taxable value is determined, based on which customs clearance is effected by paying the tariffs and taxes established in the Paraguayan Tourist Regime for the settlement of internal taxes, plus the gratuity for the “linkages established by frontier agents.” Generally, three “agents” figure as “responsible” for the containers, once they have left customs: the customs broker (*despachante*), the financier, and a political “fixer” (“*puntero*”) (Penner, 2006, pp. 29–30, emphasis and quotes in the original).

These authors offset a string of terms linked to undervaluation and contraband: “agents”, “*la tablita*” as a practical technology of contraband, and networked relationships (“linkages established by frontier agents”). The Paraguay Vende authors also describe a similar system that

exists on the Brazilian side of the border, emphasizing that such *esquemas* are not an aberrant Paraguayan phenomenon.⁶³

Setting off a word in scare quotes is a means to introduce doubt or ambiguity about the fit between the word and the signified; that is, to problematize the word in scare quotes. The Paraguay Vende report makes policy recommendations aimed at retaining the competitiveness of the border trade through formalization. The report seeks to bring the economy of circulation more in line with orthodox market principles by positing a correlation between formalization and industrialization, a common assumption that assumes increasing D/development reduces informality. Formalization is predicated on the capacity to separate out the extralegal from the legal. And so, the Paraguay Vende report seeks to reframe the “know how” of *contrabandistas*, as the Ministry representative Haudenchild called it, as legitimate economic knowledge. To make this case, the report argues that the state, not frontier businessmen, demand practices of undervaluation. This recalls the vignette that opened this dissertation in which a businessman announced, “the state made us *contrabandistas*.” Similarly Silva, writing his book for the anniversary of the *despachantes* union, seeks to legitimate the work of customs brokers as crucial, licit economic activities. But the impossibility of representing in text the border trade without resorting to scare quotes and double meanings, of identifying the routes between contraband and the Crown, actually points to the co-constitution of outlaw economies with so-called legal ones. Further it points towards extralegal economies as part and parcel of state formation, rather than as a separate realm of activity that the state, more or less successfully, regulates and controls from a position of exteriority.

My argument differs from economistic accounts of national development which locate Paraguayan social problems in insufficient alignment with the D/development pathways assumed in neoclassical economic theory, or even in more critical accounts of dependency theorists, both which see the historical development of a singular capitalism, outside of which lies the world of contraband and outlaw capital. Herken, for instance, names the failure of the fraudulent bourgeoisie to promote development, because their wealth accumulation strategies are unproductive. In Marxist terms, the bourgeoisie, as a class, owns the means of production and seeks to protect their position in society through the social institutions of property and the expansion of capitalism. Yet it is also these owners of capital who propel economic development through productive investment. Herken’s position is thus that a stronger force of the “right kind” of capitalist development through bourgeoisie-initiated national industry, would set Paraguay on the right path. This movement is described in the evolutionary terms of modernization theory, a problematic approach that views spaces and economies in the so-called third world as consigned to what Chakrabarty describes as history’s “waiting room” (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 8). Further, it misses the co-constitution of the economy of circulation with state formation and, further, with scaled up processes of global capitalism.

⁶³ The authors of the Paraguay Vende report explained the Brazilian system, “The “mechanism,” as explained by a Brazilian businessman, is mediated by the “tolerated” existence of “shell companies” (*empresas de “portfolio”*), which acquire products at undervalued prices and take charge of “heating up” (“*calentar*”) the product prices until they rise to the real prices. They absorb the costs of moving money, internal transportation, and transferring the “real” payments to external providers (*pagos “reales”*)—the difference between the undervalued invoiced amount and the real value of acquisition in the international market—through the banking systems of “neighbor” countries (the Uruguayan “off-shore” [sic, english word in original] is ideal)—in order to, finally, “sell” the merchandise at prices equivalent to those on the international market, to the business that is really the proprietor of the same” (Penner, 2006, p. 30).

Liberated Territory

A key dynamic of frontier political authority, especially under the Zacarías-McLeod duo, is the localization of political authority. At the dawn of the millennium, outlaw capital remains crucial to state formation but the role of local and regional authorities has become much more pronounced since Stroessner's fall.

Offering their own accounts of the twinning of political authority and the economy of circulation, frontier residents often offered a much more spatially-sensitive analysis of regional politics than analysts working from Asunción or internationally who thought primarily through the scale of the national economy or the nation-state. One of these astute observations came from an activist lawyer as he described the spatiality of Javier Zacarías' congealed power. The lawyer described Ciudad del Este to me as "liberated territory" operated beyond or outside of the control of the national government. A spatio-temporal lens helps make sense of this latest reworking of the economy of circulation alongside Paraguayan state formation. Doreen Massey has described her spatio-temporal proposition by arguing against reading space as a surface or an inert container of action. Instead she lays out three propositions. Space, for Massey, is a "product of [multiscalar] interrelations... and always under construction" (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Further, space always contains a multiplicity of possible trajectories as she says, "Multiplicity and space [are] co-constitutive" (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Because the interrelations that constitute space occur through time, temporality is woven into this concept of spatio-temporality.⁶⁴

In the 1990s, two major changes reconfigured the territorialization of Paraguayan state power. The 1992, post-authoritarian constitution imposed checks on the power of the executive, while also promoting political and fiscal decentralization. Mayors and municipal councils (*junta municipales*) gained seats through direct election, rather than by presidential appointment. The constitution also established the post of regional governor at the department level. Further, municipal governments gained new authorities over urban planning and policy. The expanding regulatory powers of the local state opened up the municipality as a new arena of contestation. The 1992 constitution also directed royalties from Itaipú electricity sales to municipalities, providing a stable source of funds for local budgets. Indeed, rather than collect taxes, many municipalities relied on Itaipú royalty payments. The Constitution indicated that royalties preferentially should be used for infrastructure and public works.⁶⁵ However, critics argue that most municipalities directed a significant portion of royalties to salaries, using the derogatory term *planillero* to describe public employees in Mbembe's sense of an ascriptive bond of party loyalty (Bariero, 2015).

In addition, decentralization downscaled *esquemas* to a regional and local level. One key dimension of these spatialities of power is the relationships between the center of administrative power in the capital city and the frontier outpost. Whereas the Stroessner regime retained significant, although incomplete, centralized control over permission to engage in contraband, post-democratization decentralization has devolved control over the extralegal border trade. As

⁶⁴ Massey demonstrates how key structural and poststructural thinkers oppose space and time, and, for different reasons mis-theroize space (Massey, 2005, pp. 35–48).

⁶⁵ Article five of Law 3984 specifies that 80% of municipal royalties should be (*debe ser*) used for capital expenditures, while the remaining 20% can be used for recurrent expenses, like salaries.

the control of the contraband economy is devolved to a subnational level, local actors play a larger role in frontier modes of accumulation.

Further, the political strategies of the Zacarías-McLeod family dynasty have provoked a shift in regimes of spatial governance on the frontier, taking advantage of the increased autonomy of the local state to forge a new spatial relationship between the frontier and the center. One surprising consequence has been the extent to which the municipality of Ciudad del Este has carved out a space of political action free of oversight by the national government. The Zacarías-McLeod municipality exacted an effective decoupling of local governance from national oversight through the legal figure of municipal autonomy (*autonomía municipal*). The spatial power grab by the Zacarías administration is most aptly illustrated by its use of municipal autonomy to avoid legally required national audits of municipal budgets operated by the National Comptroller (*Controlaría General de la Republica*). The emergence of municipal autonomy is intimately entwined with the spatio-juridical history of the most contested piece of frontier real estate, the nine hectares, which I explore in depth in the next chapter.

Municipal autonomy, as a practical political technology, works by leveraging ambiguity around the limits of municipal prerogative. To avoid nationally mandated audits, the Zacarías administration established a parallel governmental body, the *Tribunal de Cuentas* (Audit Court). Rather than submitting municipal books to the National Comptroller, the *Tribunal de Cuentas*, approves or rejects the Municipality's filings in closed door proceedings, producing a single sheet of paper which approves or rejects the municipal filing. Multiple legal and legislative challenges have been brought against the *Tribunal de Cuentas*. However, to date, the Zacarías administration has been able to stabilize a coalition in Congress to block the legal actions that aim to force open Ciudad del Este's municipal budgets. The Zacarías administration has also deployed municipal autonomy to evade a legal mandate to contribute to the health care plans of municipal employees and to indefinitely postpone compliance with a court ruling to re-instate unionized public employees illegally fired in 2001. This bold power grab is enabled by involvement of regional judges in *esquemas*, which recall Rafael Barrett's description of the relationships between judges and moneyed frontier interests. The successful cloaking of municipal budgets amid intensifying national mobilizations for governmental transparency speaks to the success of the Zacarías administration's spatial strategy of carving out an exceptional regulatory zone. However, this too is a provisional arrangement, requiring constant political work to maintain. A 2015 national investigative commission failed to gain the votes necessary to force open municipal budgets, but another round of investigations is ongoing, at the time of this writing.

Municipal autonomy is one of the motivations for the activist lawyer's critique of Ciudad del Este as "liberated territory." The spatial analysis of the activist lawyer was also printed in a national newspaper, "Ciudad del Este [is] liberated territory [with] no rule of law" (Vanguardia, 2014). This reading argues Ciudad del Este and the eastern region of Paraguay operates as a space of exception, where the power of the state wanes. However, this perspectives overlooks the ways in which political authority, if increasingly local, still draws power from the ongoing articulations of extralegal economic practice and the state.

Some read *esquemas* and liberated territory through the lens of corruption. One stream of this scholarship tracks the ways in which decentralization articulated new pathways for old authoritarian practices of corruption and clientelism, albeit with more competition amongst factions of the Colorado party and more uncertainty and volatility in the electoral process. The

prominent Paraguayan historian Milda Rivarola calls this process the “decentralization of corruption” arguing it traps the country in a cycle which entrenches a non-responsive political elite and popular distrust in electoral politics.⁶⁶ These critics, inspired by the logic of the fraudulent bourgeoisie, identify a vicious cycle between non-productive economic projects and a so-called failing state. This chain of causality links non-productive economies, a limited tax base, inadequate state investment in social safety nets, graft, and clientelistic voting practices which, in turn, keeps the Colorado party—buttressed by a fraudulent bourgeoisie—in power. This cycle, and a set of specific institutional challenges, lead Nickson and Lambert to diagnose the danger of a failed Paraguayan state (Nickson & Lambert, 2002).⁶⁷

Luis Bareiro, journalist and Minister of National Defense under Fernando Lugo, argues Mayors funnel royalties to political operatives (*operadores*) who earn and keep their jobs by turning out votes. Bareiro calls the new crop of mayors elected under democratization, “a vampire army which we ourselves created” (*el ejército de vampiros a los que dimos origen*) (Bariero, 2015). With the metaphor of the undead Bareiro argues mayors live off of the circulatory blood of the country, the money of Itaipú. Turning to metaphors in which the nation-state is a body, Bareiro argues that the muscular, life-giving heart of the political institutions of the local state is its capacities to circulate its own money (blood), rather than parasitically sucking life from another, non-local, source. Itaipú, as an external source of revenue, eliminates the incentive to generate revenue locally, through taxing residents for collective goods and services. Royalties circumvent the reciprocal responsiveness enabled through the relationship of exchanging taxes for services. Rather than drawing life and legitimacy from capable governance and responsiveness to a constituency, vampire municipalities enact as shadowy imitation of political life, enabled by, he says, “terrifying *esquemas*” (Bariero, 2015). The local state imagined as a vampire army points to a profound disconnection between the source of democratic life and the source of political power.

Thus corruption emerges as a common conceptual category used to describe the political organization of the border economy and state practice in Paraguay more broadly. Corruption and clientelism are often identified as key contributing factors explaining Paraguayan underdevelopment, although analysts differ as to the location of the problem: weak institutions or cultural predisposition (Moreira, Raus, & Leyton, 2008; Nickson & Lambert, 2002; Rivarola, 2007). Classical liberalism sees corruption as a deviant practice that confounds the supposedly separate public and private spheres in two ways. First, politicians appropriate or steer state resources for particularistic gain through a range of practices like embezzlement, land appropriation, or the nepotistic use of the public contracting process. Second, usually classified as clientelism, they distribute public resources through personal networks instead of via rational criteria based in the equality of all before the law.

There are several reasons for my skepticism about the broad-brush use of corruption to describe economic and state practice in Paraguay, and elsewhere in Latin America. First, corruption thinking tends to locate the problem in individual actions rather than systems and social processes, although this is not a shortcoming of the Paraguayan and Paraguayanist scholars discussed in section, who all have an institutional critique. However, the implicit

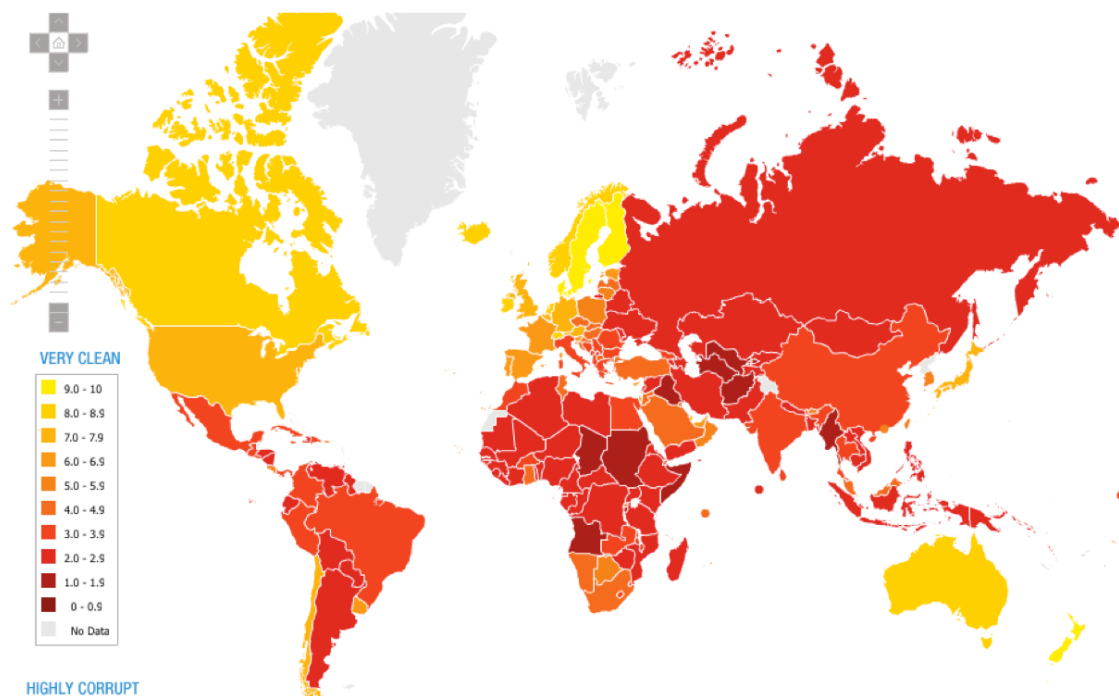
⁶⁶ Milda Rivarola, personal communication, October 2013.

⁶⁷ Nickson and Lambert assess the distinctive features of the Paraguayan public sector as “a relatively small size, an extremely low level of efficiency and effectiveness, a high level of politicization and an endemic level of corruption” (Nickson & Lambert, 2002, p. 164).

imaginary of the state affiliated with many uses of the category of corruption can be problematic. The frequency of resort to metaphors of regulatory capture used in these assessments of corruption is instructive. Nickson and Lambert describe the Paraguayan state as privatized, held captive by *external* private interests.⁶⁸ The metaphor of regulatory capture assesses the state as a bounded entity, available for capture by external forces.

Further, corruption can act as a code for the insufficient attainment of modernity. For instance, the global anti-corruption group Transparency International (TI) cyclically assigns quantitative rankings of corruption to the unit of the nation-state. The result maps a familiar geography, where most of the Global South is imagined as problematically corrupt, even inhabiting an earlier, less-modern stage of development (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Transparency International world corruption map



Source: Transparency International⁶⁹

The spatial mapping of corruption onto the Global South spurs a question asked by Arjun Appadurai in his analysis of the anthropological discourse of hierarchy in India. Why do certain ideas “become hegemonic in, and confined to, certain places?” (Appadurai, 1988, p. 45). He calls hierarchy a “metonymic prison” because it stands in for a geographical region while limiting critical thinking about the enabling social relationships and processes. Transparency International’s legalistic definition of corruption allows the USA to be coded as “clean” despite,

⁶⁸ For instance, they note a “recent legacy of a state captured by private interests” (Nickson & Lambert, 2002, p. 167).

⁶⁹ Perceptions of corruption world map, Retrieved from <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#map-container>

for instance, the recent Supreme Court case which equated money with free speech in order to gut restrictions on corporate campaign contributions to politicians. However, the processes by which capital infiltrates and animates politics in the Global South is coded as “highly corrupt.” Further, the Transparency International mapping necessarily relies on a universal standard of state practice from which corruption is an exception. It thus collapses a range of practices into one category. Thus, my argument is that the category of corruption limits critical thinking about political authority in Paraguay and elsewhere in Latin America. In my view, at stake are the situated relationships between political economic projects and processes of state formation, where the extralegal economy must be understood as imbricated and internal to each.

2.5 Conclusion

This historical chapter considers the sedimentation of history as a live force, conditioning present possibilities. In it, I have argued that the extralegal economy has long been a buttress of Paraguayan state power, necessarily with spatial supports. I outlined how state colonization projects expanded eastward as a way to presence the state in the region. In antebellum Paraguay—after the terrible war of the Triple Alliance through the 1950s—eastern Paraguay had been constructed as a site of land-based speculation. Mid-century colonization worked through all three registers of the frontier. First, the frontier revealed the incompleteness of the Paraguayan nation-state. Colonization thus sought to tame and “civilize” the region. Two major state projects—the Itaipú mega dam and Puerto Presidente Stroessner—were critical to this imagination of the modernizing state. Secondly, eastward expansion also extended a new political-economic order into what had been a zone of extraction. The emerging political economic order prioritized the economy of circulation, which mixed re-exportation and contraband. Thirdly, the frontier as a space of legal confusion and a space of ‘created wildness’ undergirded economic practice.

The fall of the Stroessner regime in 1989 marked a moment of re-ordering, in which the hegemony of Colorado party traditionalists was thrown into question. Several forces, including decentralization, marked a spatial reorganization of political authority. Regional alliances gained power in relationship to Asunción as a center of political-administrative power. The Zacarías-McLeod duo has been remarkably successful at un-coupling the municipal administration from national oversight. Political alliances have sought to maintain the profitability of the economy of circulation, but turned away from the centralized patronage relationships of the Stroessner patronage machine.

Attending to the spatial dimensions of state projects helps us read the frontier economy—in both its legal and illegal moments—as implicated in state formation and state practice. This is a critical corrective to most literature on the city, but also to scholarship within economic geography and urban planning that interprets extralegal economic practice as state incapacity or corruption. A more nuanced view of the economy of circulation must be read in relationship to the dialectical tension between intentional projects of big-D Development—like Itaipú and city-founding—with the immanent processes of little-d development, the expansion and transformation capitalism which include the dynamics of outlaw capital. Thus, this approach helps clarify how the economy of circulation is an expression of global capitalism, not a corrupt aberration. The next chapter considers how the Zacarías-McLeod municipality expressed a new amalgamation of authoritarian logics of power with faith in the inherent developmental

capacities of capital, given free reign of transgression. A key component of this new state strategy lies in the spatial form of contraband urbanism.

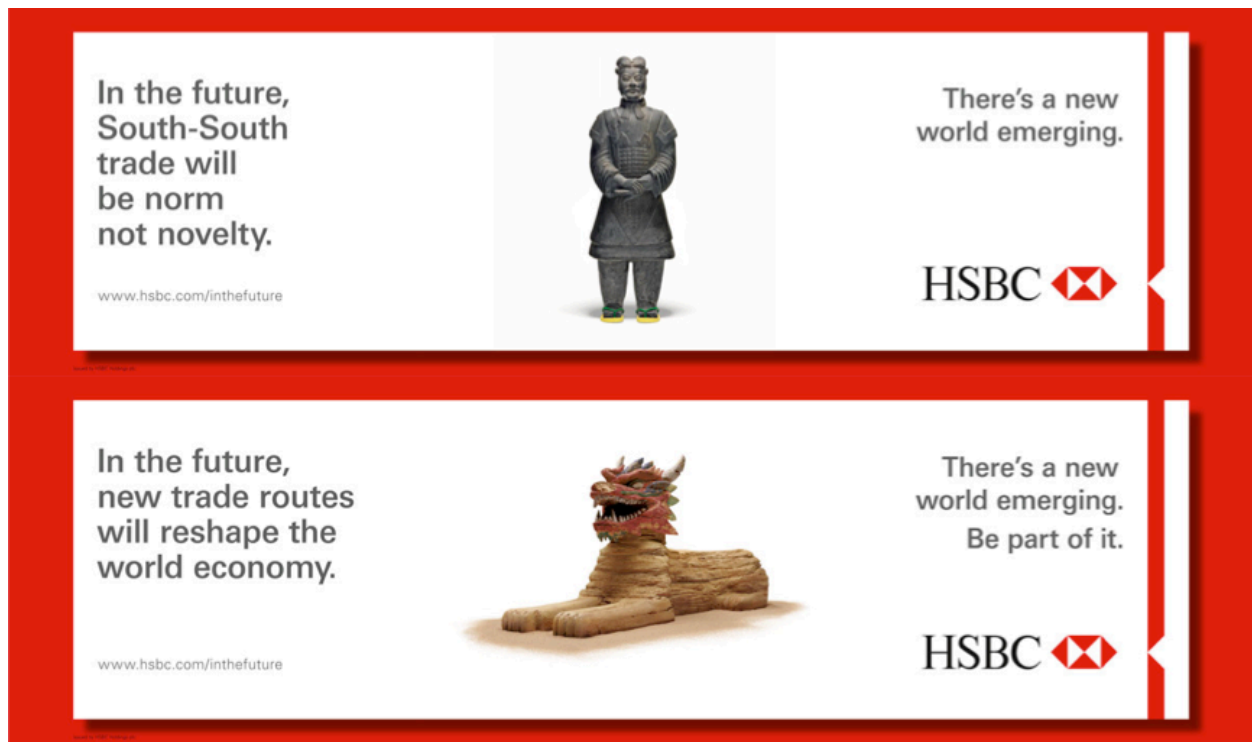
CHAPTER 3

The City: Contraband Urbanism

3.1 Introduction: Producing a Frontier City

New geographies of extralegal trade are made possible by specific physical places, with particular materialities. Yet representations of globalized trade, especially those in the discipline of economics and among policymakers, depict deterritorialized commodity flows which hover somewhere above the physicality of the local (Sparke, 2003). Illustrating this aspatial argument about the nature of global trade were two advertisements for the transnational banking conglomerate HSBC posted in the jet way of my Asunción-bound flight in 2015. One portrayed a sculpture mash-up. The head of a Chinese dragon sat incongruously on the body of a sphinx, the tag line saying: “In the future, new trades routes will reshape the world economy.” Another featured a granite statue of a Chinese warrior sporting yellow and green flip-flops, suggestive of the Brazilian flag. The tag line proclaimed: “In the future South-South trade will be norm not novelty” (Figure 14).

Figure 14. HSBC advertisements



Source: HSBC International Banking Service⁷⁰

⁷⁰ HSBC advertisements, Retrieved from <http://www.foresightinhindsight.com/article/show/3036>; <http://www.neromagazine.it/n/?p=16519>

The ads proclaimed a bold new economic future waiting on the horizon, poised to transform whole arenas of social life. The celebratory ads welcome the expansion of markets and the reconfigurations of global trade as “opportunity” which the viewer can participate in, and benefit from. The culmination of market expansion is imminent, transformative and equalizing, these ads suggest, echoing the analysis of Thomas Friedman’s flat world, rising tide hypothesis of globalization (T. Friedman, 2006). Another ad in the series predicts, “In the future, there will be no markets left waiting to emerge.” Thus the ads also suggest these imminent, transformed geographies of trade and economic opportunity are inevitable and totalizing. Absent the HSBC ads is any suggestion that markets have materiality. The images make reference to nation-states—China, Brazil and Egypt—in reworked geographies of trade, but the infrastructures of these transformed commercial spaces are absent. Rather, these ads suggest that nation-states are players in the frictionless virtual spaces of commodity futures, in which “exports will be transmitted, not transported.”

This aspatial vision belies the concrete spaces of manufacture and circulation enabling today’s reworked geographies of commerce. Of course, geography and urban studies contest notions of smooth space at the same time as these disciplines are launching pads for critiques of the ongoing reproduction of vast inequalities. However, geography and urban studies are just beginning to analyze the processes that write extralegalities into the genetic code of globalized capital. As part and parcel of the everyday, normal workings of the global economy—imbricated in contemporary geographies of wealth and poverty—everyday extralegalities deserve more analytic attention. The HSBC ads appeared in a moment of increasing public awareness of neoliberalism’s cozy cohabitation with crime: after the 2008 global economic meltdown and just before the 2016 releases of the Panama Papers. Indeed, in 2015, HSBC faced rolling scandals: from laundering money for the Sinaloa and Norte del Valle drug cartels to stashing 180 billion euros in tax havens during a single fiscal year.⁷¹ President Horacio Cartes tops the list of 82 Paraguayan elites with suspicious bank accounts in a Swiss HSBC branch, pointing to the normalization of elite transgression and its links to state formation and state practice. By opening this chapter with a vignette about a London-based banking conglomerate, I underscore that geographies of the extralegal are made as much through processes in the so-called core countries of the Global North as they are in ‘off the map’ cities of the Global South.

The last chapter demonstrated the historical co-production of Paraguayan state formation and the extralegal border economy. In this chapter, I contest the vision of markets-without-materiality by turning to the physicality of Ciudad del Este’s built environment, which I argue is constructed to enable new geographies of extralegal trade. I offer the concept of contraband urbanism to demonstrate how state practice takes on the production of urban space as a crucial constituent part of frontier political and economic projects. I find that state actors

⁷¹ In November of 2014, French regulatory officials charged HSBC with hiding 180 billion euros in tax havens during a single fiscal year. This follows a \$1.92 billion deferred prosecution agreement paid to US authorities, settling charges of laundering money for the Sinaloa and Norte del Valle drug cartels. During the French hearing, the treasury committee chairman enumerated the allegations of wrongdoing plaguing the bank, “interest rate derivative selling, Libor manipulation, Eurobor manipulation, mis-selling mortgages to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, Forex rigging, weakness in money laundering, credit default swaps ... rigging precious metals...various class action lawsuits over the Bernie Madoff fraud.” HSBC chairman Douglas Flint responded, “It’s a terrible list” (Wintour, 2015).

promote the extralegal economy through public interventions into the built environment, even as official discourse promises to legalize the border trade. In a city where extralegality is the norm, contraband urbanism binds together transgressive economic practice with supportive spatial forms. Thus, contraband urbanism is an assemblage of spatial practices, political technologies, economic activities and discursive understandings of city-ness. Contraband urbanism is also a means for differently situated actors to connect to the global, that is, to jump scales from the local level, the site of everyday life, to processes and imaginaries that are elsewhere: the street markets of São Paulo, the electronics factories of Shen Zen, the homelands of diaspora businessmen in Beirut or Seoul. Of course individuals and social groups are differentially able to connect—from their always-embodied localities—‘upwards’ to more global scales in order to extract value from translocal transactions. As an always-contested process, contraband urbanism is worked out in situated conflicts over the boundaries of urban belonging and legitimate economic practice.

The forms of accumulation at work in Ciudad del Este’s frontier economy call forth a different sort of urban space than the cities of industry, finance, tech, or petro-capitalism that have been well-documented in the urban studies and economic geography literature. I argue against reading this difference as pathology or as indicating an incomplete stage of Development. These positions, postcolonial scholars remind us, consign non-Western sites to history’s “waiting room” (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 8). Rather, we need an approach that locates contraband urbanism as constitutive of contemporary processes of modernity, made through relational connections to other, equally imbricated, elsewhere. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, *Infrastructures of Commence*, I analyze the physical form of contraband urbanism as constitutive of global modernities.

Attending to the relational production of space and scale—the analytic strength of critical geography and urban studies—undoes arguments that assign dysfunction or transgression as bounded trait of the Paraguayan case. These perspectives are indebted to the French critical marxist Henri Lefebvre, and his theorization of space as simultaneously a medium of social relations and a historically specific product of those relations. Every society, each with particular social relationships of production and reproduction, produces its own sort of space. As Marx demystified the commodity—a set of fetishized labor relations—Lefebvre denaturalized space. Decidedly not a neutral container of action, as Lefebvre notes, “Space is a social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 94). As a result, space can be a “a tool for the analysis of society” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 34). As a non-dogmatic, non-economistic and plural marxist, Lefebvre argues for understanding the interrelationship between materialism and idealism—as between material forms and mental constructs—as co-constitutive.⁷² Thus the

⁷² To analyze the production of space, Lefebvre’s proposed an interrelated triad of material form, mental conceptions and lived experience. Materiality and form in physical space (perceived space) are the result of the socio-spatial relationships of production—historical products—that also condition possibilities for future trajectories of change. Idealized representations of space (conceived space), exist as mental conceptualizations, especially the technocratic mapping, modeling and calculative techniques of town planning. Indeed urbanism, as an ideology, tends to produce urban space for capital and materialize alienation in the very fabric of the city. Lived space, the sensuousness of everyday experience, draws from a Nietzschean sense of rhythmic time and Heidegger’s stress on everyday life, dwelling and poetics (Elden, 2004). Lived space is the domain of alienation, yet it also contains the seeds of transformative possibilities as ordinary people rework or challenge hegemonic socio-spatial relationships. The

production of space is a unfurling process, a set of spatialized social relationships implicated in everyday life, and dialectally related to the means of their conceptualization.

However, Lefebvre is not immune from the tenacious tendency to imagine the West as source and originary location of historical capitalist change. Anticipating the rise of secondary circuits of capital made through property rather than production—which have been so crucial in the last half century of Western urban development—Lefebvre designated this “urban revolution” as an epochal shift (Lefebvre, 2003). Yet an unsettled critical marxist theory of value that considers land/nature in addition to the dialectic of labor and capital points to much longer, and geographically interconnected, “relational histories” (Coronil, 1997, p. 15). Thus, critical spatial approaches decenter the Eurocentric imaginary by demonstrating the historical co-production of situated social, political and economic projects across expansive Global North/South (or West/the Rest) geographies, what Gillian Hart calls “mutually constitutive processes, practices, and forms of power through which metropolises and (post)colonies make and remake one another” (G. Hart, 2007, p. 96).

While these critical spatialities are gaining ground in geography and urban studies, they are insufficiently taken up in planning theory and practice. I use an expansive understanding of urban planning as the “public production of space” to argue that the planning apparatus is dedicated to producing space for the frontier economy, in both its legal and transgressive moments, in order to underscore the importance of thinking about planning theory and practice from Ciudad del Este.

These relational geographies are as much imaginative as material. Across social class, the urban itself is a crucial “milieu of experimentation where diverse actors and institutions invent and aspire to new ways of being global” (Ong, 2011, p. 23). Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong highlight the referential practices of ascendant Asian urbanisms, worked through diverse arenas like city branding, South-South financing schemes and aspirational middle class politics (Roy and Ong, 2011).⁷³ While Ciudad del Este’s built form is a far cry from the world-class cities promoted by the boosters of global urbanism or the spectacular cities of ascendant Asia, circulating notions of the competitive world-class city are none-less-the present and productive in conflicts over Ciudad del Este’s form and future. Thus in the second section, *Spatial Imaginaries*, I analyze the productivity of two competing imaginations of Ciudad del Este: the city as a space of lawlessness and as a future global city.

Ciudad del Este is made through a range of interlinked spatial and economic practices by which urban actors access scales beyond the local. Occupation of urban space enables frontier actors—elite gallery owners, established street vendors and precarious hawkers alike—to participate in the transborder trade, accessing potential profit opportunities available through

relationships between the three terms of the triad (which Lefebvre also denotes as spatial practice, representations of space and representational space) is contested: Stuart Elden argues that lived space, mediates between the perceived and conceived (Elden, 2004, p. 189) while Andrew Merrifield argues that perceived space is the mediating term (Merrifield, 1993).

⁷³ There are, of course, fault lines between the critical marxist approach of Gillian Hart and Fernando Coronil and the postcolonial approach of Ananya Roy, Aihwa Ong and other scholars of urban assemblages. The former translates Marx and Lefebvre to conjunctural moments in the Global South. The latter draw from Martin Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world and Gayatri Spivak’s “itineraries of recognition,” (Spivak, 1993) in order to emphasize a transnational politics of visibility and intelligibility as constitutive of hegemonic notions of what counts as urban theory.

connecting to globalized commodities flows. Unsurprisingly, the material benefits are unevenly divided. Diaspora Chinese, Korean, and Lebanese businessmen own stores or discount shopping galleries the size of city blocks. In contrast, first and second-generation Paraguayan rural migrants, fleeing the slow collapse of the peasant economy, occupy street or sidewalk space, working as taxi drivers, moneychangers or vendors. The urban here is a platform, interpenetrated by opaque modes of accumulation that differentiate space, but in unpredictable and hard to see patterns. The urban poor and foreign frontier entrepreneurs alike are invested in projects of imagining and accessing the global. AbdouMalik Simone demonstrates how marginalized African residents, far from being trapped at the local scale, use the city as a resource to access non-local scales and urban elsewhere, what he calls worlding from below (Simone, 2001). Extensive trans-local migrant networks, rural-urban connections and various transgressive business opportunities enable livelihood. Simone describes how urban residents in Africa deploy creative preparedness and tactical engagement with fields of regulation through the “cultivation of permeable boundaries through which goods and money can pass with minimal regulation” (Simone, 2001, p. 23).⁷⁴ Thus, in the final section, *A Lived City*, I analyze the spatial strategies deployed by the urban poor to connect to the global, in particular practices of making do captured in the vernacular of *mbohenda*, a Guaraní term meaning both to make a place for and to find a solution.⁷⁵ I also situate street vendor politics as constitutive of contraband urbanism’s particular brand of electoral politics and situated practices of redistribution.

3.2 Infrastructures of Commerce

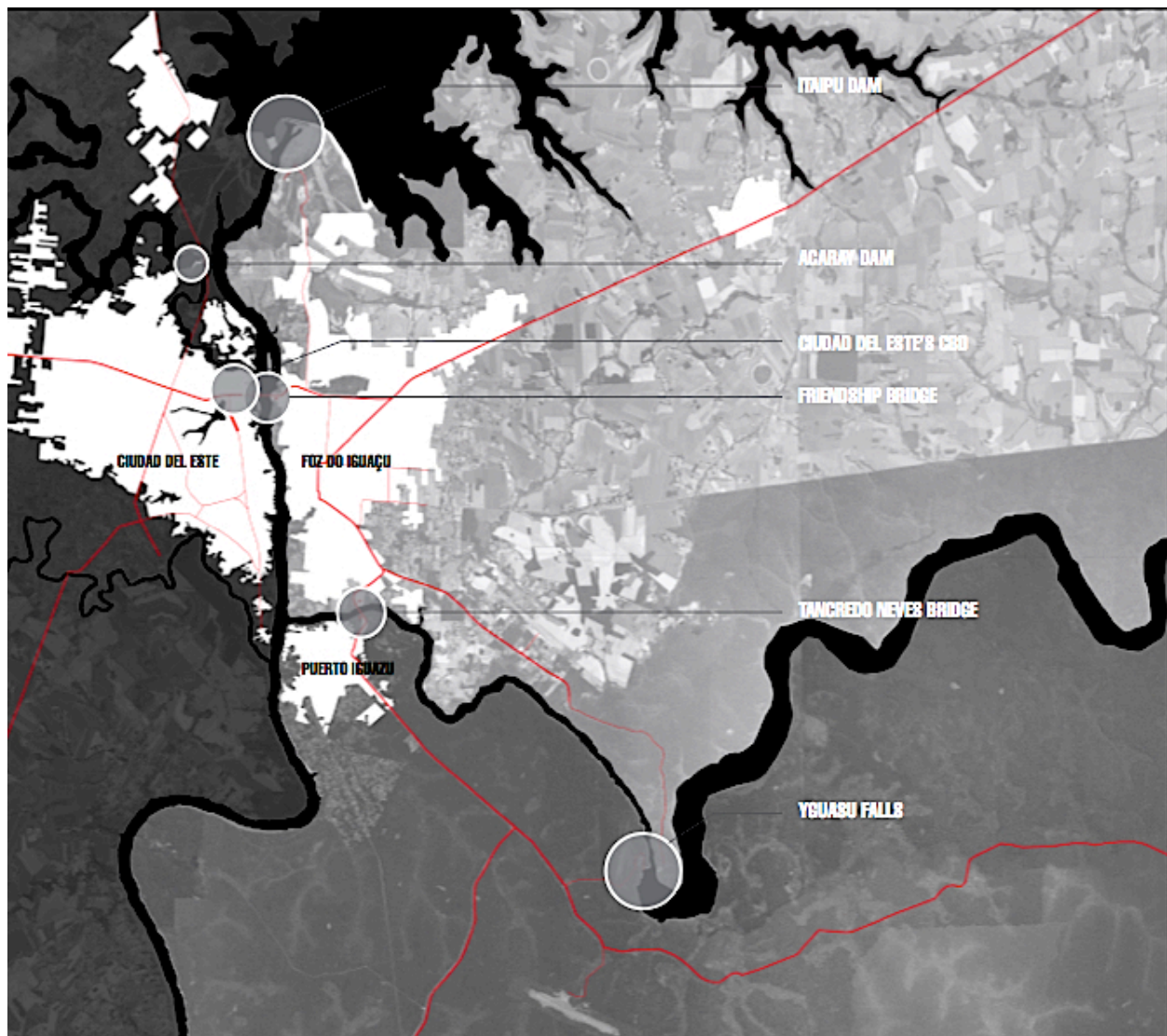
The movement of consumer goods worth millions each month calls forth a particular urban infrastructure (Figure 15). The materiality of these spaces of commerce matter. The economy of circulation depends on neighborhoods of strangely quiet warehouses, ports hidden in plain sight, and riverfront neighborhoods where daily life intertwines with the rhythms of nightly contraband logistics. Especially since 2006, the illicit materiality of clandestine ports has co-existed with a burst of sleek riverfront development, evoking another sort of world entirely. However, these two worlds are intimately intertwined. Frontier shopping malls depend on clandestine ports and the risky, precarious labor practices of *sacoleiros*—buyers—as well as *laranjas*, taxi drivers, and others who ferry goods to and across the international border. The legal transgression that characterizes clandestine ports necessitates social practices that effectively zone them as off-limits to certain social groups, like international researchers. After painting a picture of the city’s built environment, I describe these cloaking practices as producing a regime of differential visibility. I found two key practices effected spatial closure: narratives of spatialized danger and a set of practices called *blindaje* (blindage), contingent deals for protection between politicians, regional judges and *contrabandistas*. While the sleek malls

⁷⁴ The category “African urban residents” is Simone’s, which is certainly open to critique for its sweeping capaciousness.

⁷⁵ I am indebted to the Paraguayan researcher Sofia Espindola Oviedo for introducing me to the social practice of *mbohenda* during one of our many long conversations about Paraguayan politics and culture. As we strolled the streets of the capital city, Sofia pointed out a lone food vendor’s stall, precariously and ingeniously shaded by a tarp strung up from a Ficus tree with ropes and pulleys. Intrigued by *mbohenda* as a practice of resourceful place-making, I began asking street vendors in Ciudad del Este about *mbohenda*, and found it was a concept with purchase. Sofia emphasized *mbohenda*’s roots as part of the cosmology of the Guaraní people, for whom place and land figure centrally.

that characterize riverfront development call forth these cloaked spaces, representations of the city tend to parcel off spaces of contraband from infrastructures of licit commerce. I argue against this position, an imagination of bounded spaces that have edges congruent with the boundaries of legal economic practice. To emphasize this point, I discuss an exemplar of elite informality, the mall Shopping del Este, built on the nine hectares, a riverfront land parcel expropriated by the state to relocate street vendors. I argue that state practice under democratization has moved onto the terrain of legal obfuscation and the production of what I call spatial illegibility to obscure extralegal practice by state-sponsored *esquemas*.

Figure 15. Contemporary map of the region's infrastructure



Note: Map elaborated by Juan Carlos Cristaldo. *Source:* (Cristaldo, 2013, p. 22)

While this chapter focuses on the scale of the city and the interlinkages between clandestine ports and sleek malls, the practices of representation that split them apart are also at

work on a larger scale. Globalized capitalism, and the lauded spaces of production and exchange so celebrated by proponents of free trade—like Chinese Special Economic Zones that produce many of the goods circulating through Paraguay—depend on cities like Ciudad del Este. Fernando Coronil’s injunction to globalize the periphery involves making these kinds of linkages, across multiple scales. With the concept of occidentalism, Coronil describes the representational and knowledge practices of an Eurocentric imaginary, which, he argues produce

...polarized and hierarchal conceptions of the West and its Others... [by] separating the world’s components into bounded units; disaggregating their relational histories; turning difference into hierarchy; naturalizing these representations; and therefore intervening, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations (Coronil, 1997, p. 15).

This is what is at stake in re-theorizing Ciudad del Este’s spaces of contraband as made in and through their relationships to infrastructures of commerce that tend to be perceived as licit, like sleek shopping malls.

Spaces of Contraband

The city center, called the *microcentro*, concentrates the commercial activities of buying and selling in the eight-square blocks abutting the Paraná River and the International Friendship Bridge. The street market radiates outwards from Ruta 7, Paraguay’s major highway that slows to the four-lane San Blas Avenue bisected by a wide median as it cuts through the *microcentro* and across the International Friendship Bridge to Brazil. Downtown businesses range from shopping galleries, discount stores or warehouse-like showrooms called *los auto-service* to rented one-room storefronts. The incremental, often ad hoc occupations of street vendors aesthetically mark the city (Figure 16). Construction materials and durability of vending stalls vary considerably, with the most precarious vendors breaking down their stalls everyday, storing wares off-site, or selling from coolers or strips of cardboard laid across the sidewalk. Status differentiation within vendors can be read through the relative size and durability of their vending stalls or their spatial location within the street market. Municipal statute delineates three categories of vendors—*casilleros*, *mesiteros*, and *ambulantes*—using language describing commercial infrastructure as if attached to category of worker itself. *Mesiteros* translates as “the ones who table,” referring to the tables vendors use to display their commercial goods. The infrastructure of some *mesiteros* is semi-permanent, including small, square lockers for on-site merchandise storage. Others break down and set up precarious, self-built vending infrastructure daily, storing merchandise off-site. *Casilleros* command self-contained corrugated metal vending stalls with glass display cases and on-site storage. *Ambulantes* are peddlers or hawkers selling from carts or bags with no fixed claims to urban space. The municipal formalization project, the Pilot Plan, demolished the self-built stalls of vendors and non-compliant shopping galleries along the San Blas median. I discuss the politics of the municipal-owned vending infrastructure upgrades, which differentiate street vendors along a spectrum of regularization, in the next chapter.

Figure 16. Images of the street market



Source: Photos by author, 2013

Brazilian *sacoleiros* and shopping tourists chose from a range of spaces of commerce. HSBC clients would likely be most comfortable in the Mona Lisa shopping gallery, established in the 1970s by the Hammoud brothers, immigrants from Lebanon (Figure 17). Passing through its glass double doors under the two story half smile of Leonardo's muse, a shopper passes by two unsmiling armed guards and the jostle of hawkers who crowd the entrance. A blast of air conditioning circulates through six floors of brand-name makeup, clothes and gourmet food. Young Brazilian sales girls walk amid stacks of Davidoff Cool Water Woman perfume and Lancôme Hypnôse Instant Full Body Volume Mascara. Best-selling Tommy Hilfiger polo shirts are displayed next to Marie Severac whole duck foie gras and Smuckers strawberry jam. The Hammoud brothers present the Mona Lisa shopping gallery as "a part of Ciudad del Este's landscape" even as they self-consciously create an environment of un-rooted, global consumption.

The Mona Lisa luxury good emporium anchors discussions about the probity of border businesses. The Hammoud brothers are key political actors, joint partners in Javier Zacarias Irun's law firm and funders of the new city council meeting hall. However, less sleek shopping galleries, basement warehouses and smaller storefronts are much more common spaces of commerce (Figure 18). For instance, the Jebai center occupies a square block in the heart of the *microcentro*, ringed by a corridor of street vendors. Non-compliant electrical connections run from the building like spider webs and the gallery is routinely shut down for failing inspections, only to be reopened after, it is rumored, municipal inspectors have been paid off.⁷⁶ Inside, florescent lights buzz over the cracked linoleum corridors in front of 700 glass-fronted shops, specializing in electronics, perfume or toiletries. Each is rented by a businessperson, and staffed by low-paid vendors, young Paraguayans or Brazilians who cross the bridge each day to start their shifts at four or five in the morning. In a section dedicated to cell phone sales and repairs, vendors occupy small stands amid cardboard boxes of random plugs and phone parts, offering to unblock phones for a small fee. The crowds of buyers thin on the third of five floors, which are dominated by offices and warehouse space watched over by armed guards. On these floors a ceaseless rasping sound echoes as groups of young men cover boxes of merchandise with several layers of packing tape in preparation for their night-time journey across the river.

Storing merchandise is a key task for importers, vendors, exporters and *contrabandistas*. Meeting this need, warehouses dot the neighborhoods around the city center, leading one politician to comment that Ciudad del Este is "a city of warehouses." These warehouses are crucial way stations along commodities circuits connecting export-processing zones in East Asia with end consumers in Brazilian cities. While shopping galleries like Jebai Center bustle with activity, the neighborhood of warehouses is strangely quiet apart from occasional pairs of armed guards posted in front of quiet, hanger-like buildings.

⁷⁶ The national newspaper ABC Color calls the Jebai Center "a time bomb," saying "The Jebai Center gallery, with two towers and five floors, is one of biggest building complexes in the city. Every day, thousands of people circulate through the premises, including businessmen, workers, and tourists of different nationalities. Despite this, the structure is precarious. The electrical system is deplorable. Wiring is dangerously braided without any consideration for security" (ABC Color, December 26, 2011).

Figure 17. The Mona Lisa shopping gallery behind vending stalls



Source: Photo by author, 2013

Figure 18. Shopping galleries in Ciudad del Este⁷⁷



Transit infrastructures are also crucial material instantiations of the border trade, especially bridges, ports and airports. In 2013 news reports described cargo planes from Hong Kong arriving twice weekly to the Guaraní International Airport, in nearby Minga Guazú, each with more than 100 tons of goods, like knock-off cellphones. In the heyday of the border trade, 40,000 to 60,000 buyers crossed the International Friendship Bridge each day (Lynn, 2008, p. 62), mostly *sacoleiros*, arriving well before sunrise to return the same day with bags full of purchases. In the 1990s, Brazil established a quota of the value of goods shopping tourists could bring across without paying customs duties, which oscillates between \$150 USD—\$500 USD. Thus bridge-crossers are a mix of buyers who declare their purchases as they arrive in Brazil to pay the corresponding taxes and those who find a workaround. The quota spawned a new labor niche for Brazilians—called *laranjas*—willing to ferry purchases across the bridge for someone else, a workaround of the Brazilian quota system.

Increased Brazilian border security beginning in the late 2000s has pushed some of the trade off the bridge and onto the river.⁷⁸ Dotted both sides of the Paraná river, clandestine ports are crucial nodes in these networks of extralegal trade (Figure 19). Clandestine ports operate largely in three poor neighborhoods—Remansito, San Rafael and San Miguel—which occupy

⁷⁷ <http://first2board.com/pointssummary/files/2015/05/ciudaddelestebfoot19-640x437.jpeg>

⁷⁸ There are also reports of clandestine airstrips in the Eastern Region to facilitate contraband (Lynn, 2008, p. 64).

the steep slopes just north and south of a zoned customs area at the foot of the International Friendship Bridge. In 2010, a national newspaper reported 100 ports along the Paraná and an additional 20 ports on the banks of the upstream Itaipú Lake, which operate “with total impunity” (Ultima Hora, 2010).⁷⁹ Indeed, large-scale contraband operations do not rely on *sacoleiros* and *laranjas*, but rather this network of ports. For instance, the contraband cigarettes flooding the Brazilian market—produced at President Cartes’ factories—pass through these ports (El Tiempo, 2014).⁸⁰ Rumors told of established businesses offering full service transportation logistics, arranging for merchandise to travel via taxi to the ports, across the river in rowboats arriving the next morning at the hotel rooms of buyers in Foz do Iguaçu.

Figure 19. Clandestine port



Note: Photo published in a national newspaper with the tag line, “This is how contraband works in Ciudad del Este. A complex network protects the system, involving national authorities.”

Source: (ABC Color, March 2, 2013)

⁷⁹ Since 2008, the national media regularly reported on the activities of clandestine ports. The press reports are also picked up and translated by the global intelligence firm STRAFOR, made available and searchable by Wikileaks.

⁸⁰ Tabacalera del Este S.A, one of Cartes’ frontier cigarette factories, has been the subject of multiple investigations as the main source of the continent’s contraband cigarette flows (ABC Color, June 13, 2016).

Spaces of smuggling, like clandestine ports, are regulated through social norms of access, in effect zoned as off limits. I found two key practices of differential visibility effected spatial closure: narratives of spatial danger and practices termed by locals as *blindaje*.

Clandestine ports, crucial spaces of contraband, were shadowy presences throughout my fieldwork; topics of casual conversation, a part of frontier life, yet off limits. Regimes of differential visibility rendered clandestine ports hazy, at least from my position as a foreign researcher. Yet, at the same time, clandestine ports were open secrets. Often, when I pressed street vendors and taxi drivers how they knew what went on at the ports, they would respond simply saying that port activity is “known by all” (*todos se saben*). This shared understanding of contraband logistics also extended to unofficial zoning that effectively prohibited public access to clandestine ports. Indeed, the social networks which enabled me to make connections within the street market stopped at the territorial boundary of the poor riverfront neighborhoods which host the ports. Even when I secured introductions facilitated by a key community leader to a port worker and a lawyer for *paseiros*, I could not transform the community leader’s stamp of approval into visits to the ports. Once, I chatted with a moto-taxi driver about my project. When the conversation turned to the riverfront neighborhood San Rafael, he commented casually, “oh you can’t go there” (*vos no podes ir*) describing the neighborhood as under control of powerful contraband ringleaders authorized to prohibit access to public riverbanks. One vendor with close connections to the municipality took me on a tour of her riverfront neighborhood, San Rafael, and off handedly pointed to the road that led to the clandestine ports. Yet, this casual reference to illegal ports co-existed with other mechanisms that effectively zoned the ports as no-go zones.

One mechanism cloaking the clandestine ports was a popular notion of spatialized danger, which conceived of certain spaces as threatening. These notions saw certain dangerous spaces—like poor riverfront *barrios*—as produced by and productive of criminal poverty. Early in my fieldwork, my Guaraní language teacher Ignacio and I walked through Remansito, past men playing no-hands volley ball on a patch of red earth amid an incoherent slapdash of houses: shacks set alongside mini-mansions hidden behind fifteen foot walls where, rumor had it, traffickers lived. Ignacio recruited a resident to show us the river, a means to gain access to a space otherwise effectively off limits to non-residents. Our impromptu guide led us along a dirt path snaking downward between close-set shacks, asking permission to pass from a skeptical woman sweeping leaves and trash from her yard. The path turned into stone stairs with a line of light bulbs running downhill from a single wire leading back to the house. Our guide led us to a small strip of shore, a few meters of exposed earth amid a dense tangle of bushes. Our guide commented that children did not fish for fear of being shot by the border patrol. After our guide left, Ignacio speculated the small skiff we saw crossing the river carried contraband. Unremarkable landings like these make up the physical spaces of contraband routes.

As we left the neighborhood, Ignacio cast broad brushstrokes of criminality across the neighborhood. On our way out, we chatted with the young woman. The dirt floor of her small home and the broom made of a bunch of leaves signaled poverty. Her responses to Ignacio’s questions were short, foreclosing conversation. When Ignacio asked if she worked, she replied brusquely that she studied. Ignacio, however, did not believe her; he commented to me as we walked away, “she doesn’t have the look of a student; a prostitute is more likely.” Remansito makes a brief appearance in Caroline Schuster’s fine grained ethnography of gender and microcredit in Ciudad del Este (Schuster, 2015). Against the Development industry common

sense that women, as mothers, are reliably good investments, a women's lending collective in Remansito refused to repay their loan. The NGO microcredit counselor in charge of the Remansito woman's group suggested that space and economy shape women in Remansito, commenting: "The neighborhood made the women hard" (Schuster, 2015, p. 141). Schuster interprets this commentary on "very hard women" (*mujeres muy duras*) as a window into a gendered economy, where defying certain norms of economic practice challenged notions of Paraguayan womanliness. The Remansito women's group refused to be bound by the NGO's notions of obligation and debt, norms that Schuster demonstrates produce gendered, economic bodies. Thus the microcredit counselor interpreted the members of the Remanstio collective as a particular kind of woman, a dangerous and hard kind. Ignacio's casual relegation of the Remansito woman to the realm of prostitution enacts a similar bounding in which proximity to the spaces of smuggling tainted the neighborhood woman as embodying transgression.

Clandestine ports operate through a regime of differential visibility, hard to see, yet, at the same time, as open secrets. It is not surprising that the extralegal activities of *esquemas*—and the spaces through which they operate—make them difficult to access. Yet, glimpses of their operations surface in newspaper stories that report on periodic enforcement actions. These stories tend to find evidence of *esquemas* in the absence of effective enforcement, that is, in absences rather than presences. One article described the aftereffects of a state enforcement action:

More than a month after the mega-operation that "discovered" four clandestine ports stocked with merchandise ready to be brought into Brazilian territory, the prosecutors in charge, Marca and Erario, have been unable to charge even a single person. They have not even determined the names of the homeowners, which held the ferries that bring the merchandise into the neighboring country in an illegal manner (ABC Color, March 23, 2013).

On the one hand, the unnamed journalist described what he or she could see: the prosecution efforts were observably lackadaisical; no charges were brought forward. On the other, the journalist cannot see the actors and relationships populating the *esquema* because the prosecutors do not seek or make public the names of the homeowners storing contraband. The scare quotes around "discovered" suggest the author does not stand behind the verb as accurately describing the relationship between enforcement officials and the find. Rather, the journalist suggests, officials already had knowledge of the ports.

In this article, the journalist points to the dual effects of *blindaje*, a local term used to describe agreements between courts and *esquema* leadership. *Blindaje* is the Spanish corollary of blindage, a military term for a protective screen used to impede visibility. The double sense of *blindaje* connotes both protection or armor *and* an impediment to seeing. *Blindaje* is a temporary status granted by allied judges in national or regional court circuits, a promise to shield the illegalities of those involved in *esquemas* from prosecution in exchange for kickbacks. Regional newspapers often speculate about how the *Tribunal de Cuentas* provides *blindaje* for the McLeod-Zacarias administration. In June 2016, McLeod publicly denied that her administration "'is protected' (*está blindada*) by the judiciary and prosecutors in the department of Alto Paraná (La Nación, June 22, 2016). Yet, in denying her connections to *blindaje*, while using the language of blindage, McLeod points to the social force of these practices of differential

visibility. Standards of journalistic sourcing are rooted in notions of individual culpability that require specific kinds of evidencing in order to link particular individuals to specific acts. *Esquemas* and *blindaje* work precisely because they confound seeing these linkages. I want to argue here for analyzing *blindaje* as a spatial practice, an extension of how the term is used in Ciudad del Este where it focuses on networked relationships between individuals. However, *blindaje* zones clandestine ports as off limits from certain kinds of publics—including journalists and foreign researchers. The difficulties faced by journalists in covering *esquemas* also suggests that notions of individual culpability need to be jettisoned for modes of seeing which can attend to the patterning and structuration of protection—immunity—promoted by *blindaje*.

Riverfront Development and Spatial Illegibility

A thirty-year battle over riverfront development condenses political struggles over extralegal livelihood, accumulation and city-building. The contested spatio-juridical history of two land parcels in particular—called the nine hectares—refracts competing visions of *reconversión*, re-converting the city. After decades of legal battles, bridge blockades, and street vendor occupations, in 2006, a coalition of frontier business interests and municipal planners abruptly moved forward with shopping mall development on the nine hectares. In so doing, the municipality abandoned plans to relocate street vendors to the nine hectares. Since, in 1990, the state expropriated the nine hectares expressly to relocate street vendors and provide more “dignified” vending infrastructure, today some vendors describe shopping mall construction as the ultimate betrayal of municipal promises that poor Paraguayans had an official place in the city’s border trade.⁸¹ My own foray into the complex legal history of the nine hectares began as I tried to make sense of the legal standing of a sleek shopping mall, Shopping del Este, a formal-looking construction plagued by rumors that legal trickery enabled the municipality to build on the nine hectares, land with a legal mandate restricting development to the social interest (Figure 20). I soon discovered I had to navigate mutually exclusive interpretations of the nine hectares. Disagreements swirled over how the land should be used to foster urban development. Scholarship on land politics teaches us that such contestations over land—its best uses and its meanings—are to be expected. However, I was surprised that disagreements extended to the spatial location and boundary demarcations of the nine hectares. Reading the nine hectares’ unstable spatio-juridical status and contradictory visionary projects offer a window into the stakes of contraband urbanism.

Under the long democratic transition, I argue, state practice has moved onto the terrain of legal obfuscation and the production of what I call spatial illegibility to obscure extralegal practice by state-sponsored *esquemas*. These mutations of local repertoires of governance can be read through an analysis of the nine hectares. A brief history of the nine hectares will help explicate this argument. General Alfredo Stroessner often “gifted” land in order to cement alliances and neutralize potential political rivals through generating investments in his version of the Colorado Party.

⁸¹ The municipality built a large *tinglado*, or shed, for about 200 street vendors on the nine hectares. The municipality has, however, officially abandoned plans to clear the streets and sidewalks of the city center by relocating vendors.

Figure 20. Shopping del Este

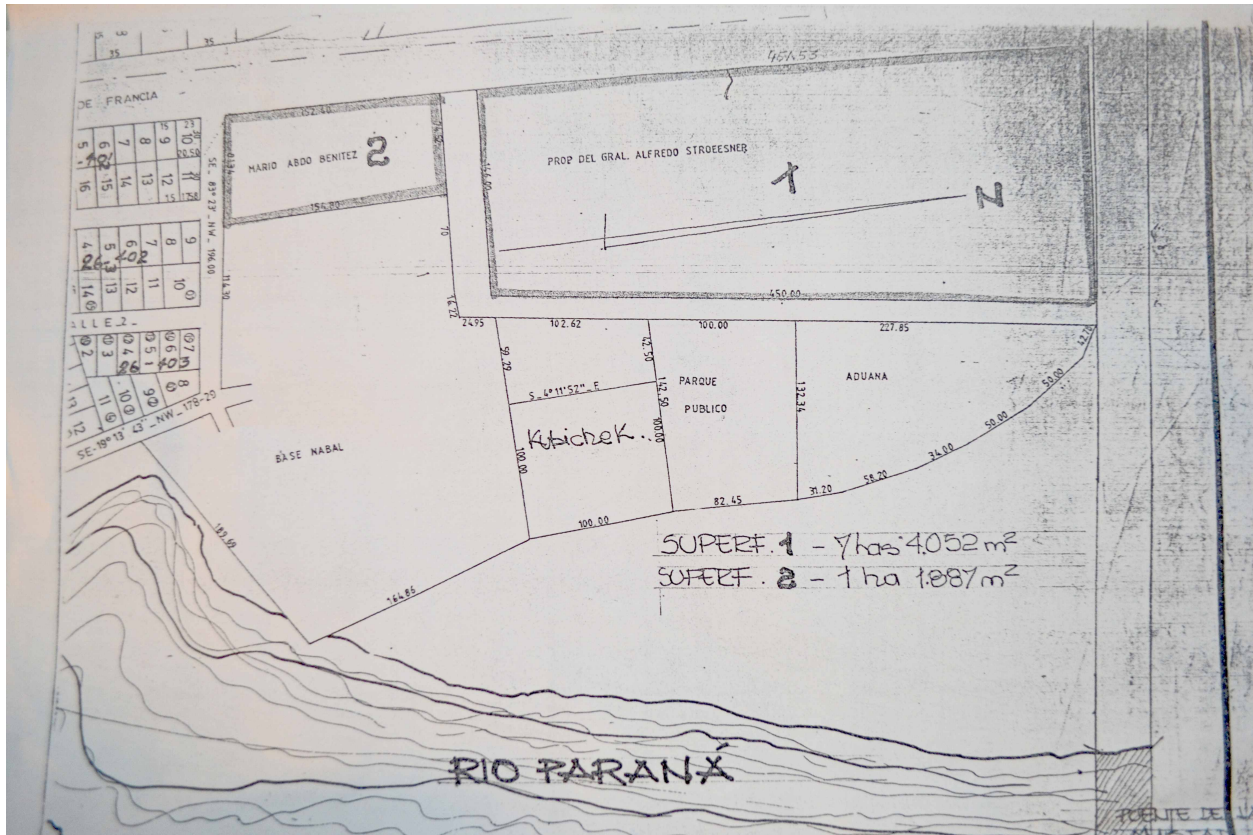


Source: Rehotels.com⁸²

Popular vernacular referred to such land gift-thefts as “ill-gotten land” (*tierra malhabida*). *Tierra malhabida* figures prominently in Paraguayan history as a twinned strategy of elite accumulation and the political stability of the Colorado party (Setrini, 2010), as well as in struggles over the boundaries of national belonging after Stroessner’s fall (Hetherington, 2011). Early acts of city founding involved a series of rural land-gifts to military Generals in the outskirts of the port town as well as three key giveaways of land parcels on choice riverfront property, at the foot of the International Friendship Bridge. Stroessner gifted one parcel to Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira, the ex-president of Brazil (1956–1961), another to his loyal personal secretary, Mario Abdo Benetiz, and Stroessner also transferred a third parcel to himself. The gift/thefts of these parcels of *tierra malhabida* worked through a particular imagination of land as a promise of future wealth, through a speculative orientation that imagined land values would increase as the city grew. These gifts also worked through the logics of the gentlemanly transfer, signified by the accretion of land titles, in which commoditized land, as it exchanged hands, gained a relational value of obligation between the two parties involved in the transfer. Figure 21 maps one reading of the location of these land gifts. The largest rectangle represents Stroessner’s seven-hectare gift-theft to himself, and the adjacent two-hectare parcel was Abdo Benetiz’s land. The parcel closer to the riverfront was, in this reading, Kubitschek’s land. Together, the seven hectares claims by Stroessner and the two claimed by Abdo Benetiz’s form the nine hectares.

⁸² Shopping del Este, Retrieved from <http://guia.rehoteles.com/tiendas-y-shoppings-en-ciudad-del-este/>

Figure 21. Map of the contested nine hectares



Source: Personal Archives

After Stroessner's fall in 1989, struggles over the use and meaning of the nine hectares proliferated. In the 1990s, waves of protests rolled through the street market, organized by vendors associations. These associations pressured the national legislature to expropriate the nine hectares with the vision that it would be the site of a shopping complex for the relocation of vendors. The successful expropriation of the nine hectares, through law 12/90, was a major victory for vendors and their advocates, marking a moment of popular hope in the street market. On the one hand, the nine hectares expropriation instantiated the political authority of the state, reiterating early rounds of urban development founded on spectacular displays of state power to decisively intervene, like taking land to push toward particular kinds of economic possibilities. Yet perhaps, vendors recalled to me, it signaled the potential of the democratic transition to reorganize spatio-economic projects away from organized land-theft and graft by state actors towards economic projects in which ordinary Paraguayans would have a place. The express purpose of law 12/90 was the relocation of street vendors currently occupying streets and other public spaces to a shared, municipal commercial space. In the Paraguayan constitution, private property is considered "inviolable" and so expropriation is only allowable in exceptional cases of the social or public interest. Local officials at the time articulated the social interest in terms of recuperating public space occupied by vendors, thereby moving toward what they saw as spatial

order and a more modern urban aesthetics. In contrast, vendors argued for their right to occupy city space to earn their “daily bread” (“*el pan de cada día*”).

The successful expropriation unleashed an entangled and hotly contested urban development trajectory. Factions within street vendors, consolidating during these heady times, would also shape urban trajectories for decades to come. The major street vendors organization, The Federation of the Workers of the Public Thoroughfare (*La Federación de las Trabajadores de la Vía Pública*, hereafter: The Federation) fought hard for the expropriation, but decades hence would abandon claims on the nine hectares through deals cut between Federation leadership and the administration of Javier Zacarías Irun. In exchange for abandoning claims, some Federation members would be eligible for vending upgrades in the semi-formalized zone of the Pilot Plan. Another organization, the Council of Vendors, took a more militant stance in relationship to the Municipality. After expropriation, the Municipality leased the land to a Brazilian development firm to build a retail complex, “Shopping Aspen.” A significant minority of vendors opposed the terms of their inclusion in the proposed development. Fearful that only a minority of vendors would be allocated space in the new development, several hundred organized an extended occupation of the nine hectares, led by the Council of Vendors. These aggressive protest tactics, paired with lobbying, secured another major victory for vendors in law 533/95, an amplification of law 12/90, which specified that the totality of the expropriated properties must be used to relocate vendors.⁸³

Whereas under Stroessner, state officials wielded expansive discretionary authority to take and distribute lands, the political panorama after Stroessner’s fall was quite different. During this extended moment of transition, I argue, local state actors cast about for new modalities through which to continue old political-economic projects of elite accumulation through frontier rent seeking. State actors had less room to use the overt land theft and political violence—torture and disappearances—that characterized the Stroessner regime. An interview with a municipal architect from that era clarified these dynamics, as he recounted a hinge moment when the powerful General Lino Oviedo sought under-the-table permission from municipal officials to build a commercial center on public space near the International Friendship Bridge.⁸⁴ Stroessner’s mistress, Nata Legal, had facilitated similar land-deals with a Lebanese investor on the ‘public’ space of the broad San Blas median, paving the way for the city’s first shopping galleries (Figure 22). But in the tense period just after Stroessner fall, the interviewee said, municipal officials recognized that the public “wouldn’t put up with” (*no iban a aguantar*) such blatant gift/thefts. It was in this moment that municipal officials turned to the realm of law to pursue building commercial platforms to connect to the border trade. This is the city as “a milieu of experimentation,” “a field of intervention” for solving elite problems (Ong, 2011, p. 23).

⁸³ Article 3 of Law 533/90 states that “the purpose of the expropriation is the relocation of vendors of the public thoroughfare and occupants of green spaces in the municipal public domain of Ciudad del Este, to the effect that the same establish their businesses in the expropriated properties, the totality of which will be used for this purpose.”

⁸⁴ Personal communication with member of Puerto Presidente Stroessner’s municipality, September, 2013

Figure 22. Shopping gallery Futuro Uno (Future One)



Las galerías Futuro I y II ubicadas en el paseo central de la Ruta VII y la avenida San Blas. La Municipalidad de Ciudad del Este tomó posesión de la administración en tres oportuni-

Note: Nata Legal facilitated the land deals for these shopping galleries.

Source: Vanguardia, November 16, 1999

Experiments in political-economic governance were importantly worked through the nine hectares. The lands, after expropriation, were classified as “*bienes municipales privados*,” or private municipal assets, a legal figure that contains elements of both public-ness and private-ness. In 1995, the mayor attacked amplification 533/95, arguing that it unconstitutionally limited the municipality’s prerogative to administer municipal lands. In attacking the amplification law 533/95, municipal lawyers did not specify an alternate interpretation of “the social interest.” Rather, they argued for an expansive interpretation of the legal figure of municipal autonomy, in which the municipal prerogative to steer local urban development supersedes the national prerogative to determine land uses in the social interest through Congressional authority to delineate the content of the social interest. The court broadly ruled that 533/95 was too burdensome a restriction on municipal autonomy and that it unlawfully favored one group—vendors—above other social groups, an affront to equality before the law.

Following work on the social uses of law, my analysis centers less on the validity of the Court’s ruling, rather focusing on the ways in which different social groups put the Court’s ruling to work (S. F. Moore, 1978). Municipal autonomy has been the key legal justification used by the Zacarías-McLeod administrations to successfully assert local political authority vis-a-vis the national state. It is municipal autonomy that undergirds the armature for the *Tribunal de Cuentas*. Yet, the original law 12/90 remains on the books, as does the constitutional requirement

that the land development promote the social interest. A broad coalition of vendors and anti-corruption activists today cite the public interest stipulation to condemn current elite shopping mall development on the nine hectares. They argue the shopping mall is indisputably a private venture, and therefore violates the terms of the appropriation. Municipal officials do not engage the debate about urban development within the terms of the public interest. Rather, the mayor and her administration defended instead a particularly expansive reading of the boundaries of municipal authority. This rejection of the terms of the public interest as grounds for debate is an important feature of contraband urbanism.

Through staking claims to the nine hectares, street vendors organizations continued to fight for political voice and recognition as urban-economic actors. Yet, different vendor organizations had competing views over what purpose the nine hectares land should serve. A study of vending upgrades in Bogotá finds a tradeoff between reduced vending incomes for better working conditions, when the upgrades move vendors out of commercial zones, corroborating the fears of vendors opposing the relocation project (Donovan, 2008). One line of contestation fractured around the terms of the Shopping Aspen contract. One group, the Council of Vendors, argued the land should, in its entirety, benefit street vendors through subsidized rents. The Federation, in contrast, negotiated for vendors to be considered as independent entrepreneurs able of shouldering business risks. The Council opposed the secretive contract negotiated between the Municipality and the Federation, and in response organized an occupation against the project, reportedly involving two thousand vendors over six months.⁸⁵ Federation members protested the occupation. Eventually, the construction company slated to build Shopping Aspen withdrew from the project, and the nine hectares would lie fallow for another decade. In 1995, the Federation signed a deal with municipal officials that laid the groundwork for the Pilot Plan, today's terrain of contestation. In return, the municipality would provide temporary, upgraded infrastructure—the Pilot Plan upgrades—until a suitable developer could be recruited. Thus, in this moment of dealmaking, members of the Federation retained hope that development on the nine hectares one day would benefit affiliated street vendors. When I arrived in 2011, this hope had largely dissipated. In this vein, a friend and established street vendor commented to me, “They would never allow such good land to go to us poor Paraguayans.”

The launch of Pilot Plan construction in the early 2000s shifted the locus of contestation and organizing, now centered on fierce opposition to the plan from some quarters in the street market. Gaining a vending space in the Pilot Plan is a messy process of sorting out competing claims, running through existing power relationships, which I describe in detail in the next chapter. Municipal planners emphasized the Pilot Plan as conquering the disorderly spatial habits of the poor through the rational application of universal rules to regulate space, a narrative aligned with dominant understandings of formalization. In contrast, vendors were split about the Pilot Plan. Some feared it laid the groundwork for evictions. The Pilot Plan redrew the boundaries of inclusion within the street market, unsettling the old equilibrium of toleration and

⁸⁵ A leader with the Council of Vendors explained his perspective, “The Federation of the Workers of the Public Thoroughfare...negotiated the construction of the shopping center behind closed doors [and we] didn't know anything, like how or where they struck the deal; this put us on alert and we asked for the proceedings, but they never gave them to us, so this is why we decided to occupy the nine hectares.... We occupied to pressure [the Municipality] to give us information about the construction. Through this, we found out the concession was for 30 years... and we were opposed to this. In addition, [the contract] didn't specify if we were to pay 100 or 200 dollars [for a vending space]; they hid this information from us and for this reason we sought to nullify the contract (personal communication, October 17, 2013).

forbearance. Indeed, the Pilot Plan continues to unsettle lines of inclusion to this day, as the project remains unfinished.

In 2006, vendors' organizations were surprised by the sudden construction of the sleek mall, Shopping del Este, on what some claim to be the edge of the nine hectares.⁸⁶ As such, a coalition emerged to promote a different vision for the nine hectares; the Cross-sector Coordinator for the Defense and Reclamation of the 9 Hectares (*Coordinadora Multisectorial por la Defensa y la Recuperación de las 9 Hectáreas*) arguing Shopping del Este is built on land with the extant social interest clause of law 12/90. In contrast, municipal officials argued Shopping del Este did not encroach on the nine hectares.

Shopping del Este is the spatial form of elite desires for an aesthetically modern commercial hub-city. In Ciudad del Este, the shopping mall and other new construction on the nine hectares are cornerstones in a project of urban branding and city-building, a bid to rehabilitate Ciudad del Este's image. Municipal planners hope to revamp the city, catering to legitimate tourists, sometimes called "*turistas turistas*," to contrast them to the much more numerous shopping tourists, *compristas* and *sacoleiros*, who purchase consumer goods for resale in Brazilian cities. Redevelopment proceeds through the official public-private partnership, *Association Plan de Desarrollo del Este*, and through unofficial but powerful alliances between municipal officials and Lebanese, Korean, and Chinese speculators. *Plan Desarrollo* aims to reposition Ciudad del Este in a field of inter-urban competition, promoting private sector financing for urban infrastructure upgrades and encouraging tourism while still maintaining the city's competitiveness as a commercial center characterized by cheap prices on consumer goods.

Following the construction of Shopping del Este, new legal struggles bloomed over the precise boundaries of the nine hectares. One conversation with the Colorado party organizer Raul Muñoz helped clarify both the legal battles over the nine hectares and the lived experience of negotiating with municipal power brokers who govern through regulation by ambiguity. Sitting at a grocery store cafeteria table in the heart of the city, Muñoz inveighed against the legal maneuvers and shady land deals underwriting the construction of Shopping del Este. Furthermore, Muñoz told of a suspicious intermediary involved in a court case disputing the boundaries of the nine hectares. The claimant, a cleaning lady (*lipiadora*) of modest means,

⁸⁶ A policy brief written a lawyer with the Cross-sector Coordinator (*Coordinadora Multisectorial por la Defensa y la Recuperación de las 9 Hectáreas*) offers a brief history of the confusing projects and shifting alliances associated with development on the nine hectares. "When the business abandoned the construction, the construction of Shopping Aspen stalled, abdicating on the promises of relocation, and workers remained in the streets. In the month of November of 2003, after new workers' mobilizations, reclaiming their rights, the Mayor Javier Zacarías, in a multitudinous event in the presence of the President of the Republic, Parliamentarians, Cabinet Ministers, regional and local authorities, and diplomats from neighboring countries, and workers of the public thoroughfare, businessmen, and other civil society sectors, SIGNED A PUBLIC COMMITMENT to construct a Shopping Center for the relocation of vendors of the public thoroughfare in the properties expropriated by law number 12/90, 533/95 and City Council Resolution 315/95. This PLEDGE also promised improvements in the vendors' workplaces via of project called THE PILOT PLAN (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Stages) of provisional character until THE SHOPPING CENTER WAS TO BE BUILT IN THE EXPROPRIATED PROPERTIES. This deal was also homologated by the City Council, ratifying FOR THE THRID TIME the obligation of the MUNICIPALITY TO ALLOCATE THE PREMISES OF THE 9 HECTARES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SHOPPING CENTER FOR THE WORKERS OF THE PUBLIC THOROUGHFARE (2011, emphasis in original).

produced documentation stating ownership of Kubitschek's property, that parcel of frontier land gifted from Alfredo Stroessner to Kubitschek. In the *lipiadora*'s documents Kubitschek's land, surprisingly, overlay the nine hectares leading to jokes and newspaper coverage about "land with wheels (*tierra con ruedas*).” The Municipality, as the steward of the land parcel after the expropriation, did not present a defense against the nine hectares' shrinking boundaries and the courts found in favor of the *lipiadora*. Kubitschek's parcel of land seemed to "walk" to a new set of spatial coordinates. Muñoz joked that a "violent storm" (*tormenta violenta*) picked up Kubitschek's land, dropping it on top of the nine hectares. "Only in Paraguay are there storms as strong as this!" he exclaimed. Thus, state planners produced spatial illegibility over the boundaries of the nine hectares by producing mis-matches between official state documentation and the physical geographies they purported to represent. With new papers, the same plot of land avoided the development restrictions associated with the nine hectares. The resulting illegible space enabled extralegal shopping mall development.

I interpret Muñoz's storm as a commentary on municipal practices of power in the transition to democracy. The judge adjudicating the case has been criticized as being part of the ex-Mayor Zacarías' *esquema* and therefore participant in practices of *blindaje*, more invested in advancing the Municipality's agenda than in impartially applying the law equally to all. In another register, equating municipal strategies of governing with a storm sheds light on the lived experience of being governed by regulation by ambiguity. The municipal *tormenta* is a violent, unpredictable, external force, capable of wreaking havoc on urban space. Further, the storm can also be interpreted as a strategy of governance. The storm creates spatial disorder and illegibility. Competing claims on the nine hectares can be adjudicated and temporarily stabilized, but they cannot be clarified or definitely untangled. The relationship between land documents and the physical geographies they purport to represent is indeterminate, yet the indeterminacy is itself productive of specific regimes of governing. Muñoz's story-telling critique of the storm can also be read as an analytic of power (Tucker, 2015). Through this lens, I was able to see how municipal actors actively produce spatial illegibility as a strategy of governance.

3.3 Spatial Imaginaries

On a flight to Asunción in 2015, I sat next to an American woman, a naturalized Paraguayan after her marriage to a successful Paraguayan businessman. Elisa commented on her strong connection to Paraguay, rooted in her extended family and a comfort with a laid-back style of life available to elites in the capital city. When I shared my own research in Ciudad del Este, a slight frown flashed across her face and her chattiness faded. Her husband commented that the city ran on contraband and pirated CDs. Elisa commented, "I always tell people that Ciudad del Este *isn't* Paraguay," emphasizing the "isn't" and abruptly shifting the conversation.

Elisa sought to excise Ciudad del Este from the national boundaries of Paraguay. By positing Ciudad del Este's social reality as incommensurate with 'real' Paraguayan society, Elisa sought to insert a divider between 'authentic' Paraguay and the reputation of Ciudad del Este as unruly and lawless. Elisa's spatial imaginary sought to bound and erase the extralegal from the true Paraguayan nation, a spatial imagination that draws the national boundaries in ways that mismatch the territorial border of the Paraguayan nation-state. In contrast, I argue that extralegality is constitutive of both Paraguayan state formation and capital writ large.

Sofia Espíndola Oviedo, a Paraguayan researcher and native of another border town, offered a different analysis of the discursive bounding of the nation in ways that exclude the Paraguayan frontier. Espíndola argued that commentaries like Elisa's were linked to a brand of "yellow journalism," which profited from scandalous stories of drug running and contraband through frontier cities. These narratives spatialize dysfunction and illicit trade into border cities and then sever those spaces from a socially constructed understanding of what counts as real Paraguay. These narratives explicitly elide the material political and economic connections that link frontier wealth with political elites in the capital. Further, these "stigmatizing narratives" (*narrativas estigmatizantes*), Espíndola argues, deny the everyday lived experience of hardship of those that work in the lower echelons of contraband economies. Thus these stigmatizing narratives contribute to a collective denial of the structural production of inequality, made and remade through the political decisions that originate in the capital city, which pushes frontier residents into extralegal economies.

Structures that reproduce inequality are discursive and spatial as well as political and economic. As such, in this section, I want to extend Espíndola's analysis of the functionality of these frontier imaginaries, and link them with a repertoire of spatial practices. I analyze two different imaginaries of Ciudad del Este's spatiality: as a space of lawlessness and as a future global city. These spatial imaginaries differ in their assessment of the source of Ciudad del Este's challenges; however, each posits a problematic dichotomy between extralegality and the proper workings of capitalism. I aim to write a narrative of the city which avoids the trap of stigmatization described by Espíndola and postcolonial scholars alike. To do this, I pay attention to the public production of space, involving the apparatus of the state, and, in later chapters, the lived experience of negotiating extralegalities as a source of livelihood.

Lawless Space

One spatial imaginary portrays Ciudad del Este as a space of lawlessness, outside of state control. The stigmatizing perspective of the frontier, as viewed from the capital city, is on display in the novel *The Last Flight of the Bellbird*, by Paraguayan journalist Andres Colmán Gutierrez (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995).⁸⁷ A productive spatial imagination is at work in Gutierrez's commentary on development in Paraguay, and it can thus be interpreted to analyze the role of this spatial imaginary in discursively constructing contraband economies as outside the nation and as a distortion of capitalism.

The Last Flight of the Bellbird is an allegory of lost national innocence, a lament captured in the first line of the book: "What the fuck has happened to my country?." The bellbird, the national bird of Paraguay, stands in for a purity of national spirit which the novel described caged and abused through a mix of rapacious external forces and internal pathologies. Indeed, the culminating scene depicts the protagonist freeing a bellbird named Innocence, a flight captured in the title of the book. The reader joins our hero, the private detective Martín Olmedo, on his adventures to save the country from the rumored return of Alfredo Stroessner, nicknamed "the

⁸⁷ To my knowledge, the *Last Flight of the Bellbird* is the only contemporary novel about the Paraguayan frontier written by a Paraguayan. Andres Colmán Gutiérrez is a respected journalist, and has been described by the anthropologist Gregg Hetherington as exemplar "new democrat" (Gregg Hetherington, 2011). For these reasons, I argue this novel is a useful window into a collective spatial imaginary that exceeds the singular imagination of one individual.

Tyrannosaurus.” Martín, struggling to mend his soul after serving in the military under Stroessner, guides the pretty, blond reporter Claudia Villasanti on assignment to investigate rumors of a coup plot orchestrated by a rouge military force on a mega-ranch in eastern Paraguay. Investigating the plot, Martín and Claudia form an alliance with a group of the indigenous Mbya Guaraní, leveraging ancient indigenous knowledge in their quest to defend democracy. The duo discovers a 21st century iteration of organized plunder; the powers pushing Stroessner’s return are a military-drug trafficking nexus, with support from CIA intelligence and weaponry.

Several key themes illuminate the book’s animating spatial imaginary. As Martín and Claudia travel together east from Asunción, they leave behind order and rationality to face lawlessness, disorder, and a lingering patronage logic that impedes the transition to democracy. Martín comments to Claudia as they leave the outer ring of Asunción, “here the world ends” (*aquí se termina el mundo*) (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 13). Invoking stereotypical tropes of the apolitical rural poor, the pair encounters *campesinos* that love the disposed Dictator like a father and seek only a bit of recognition in crumb-shaped state handouts. Furthermore, the spatial boundaries of democratic potential are coterminous with the limits of Asunción.⁸⁸ Indeed, Martín can be interpreted as a spoke-person of the urban intelligentsia which Gregg Hetherington calls the new democrats, a motley agglomeration of urban intellectuals, neoliberal transparency activists, student activists, NGO workers and development professionals who designate themselves as the proper agents of democratization. If, for new democrats, the habits of the rural poor prevent the country’s full transition to democracy, Gutiérrez’s indigenous characters are an exotic relic of a bygone time, close to the natural, animal and spirit world, who must be protected.⁸⁹ The violence of these tropes, which exclude peasants and indigenous peoples as outside modernity, have been deconstructed elsewhere (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995).

Another key component in this operative spatial imaginary relates to the territoriality of illicit networks. These spaces are conjured as in, but not of, the nation. Gutiérrez locates the spaces of transnational criminality in the countryside, on the ranch of a powerful *Brasiguayo*, a term used to describe Brazilians who retain strong cultural ties to their homeland despite sporting status as nationalized Paraguayans. Martín’s indigenous interlocutor goes by Willy, though his native name, Guyrá Kaigue, translates as Lazy Bird, illustrating the retrograde racial politics of indigeneity that runs throughout the novel. Willy explains the spatial arrangement of the *fazenda*, a Portuguese term for ranch or plantation.

[This is] the “*fazenda*” or ranch Ipanema, of Don Pablo Ferreria, Willie explained. It has more than 300,000 hectares. Half is in Brazil and half in Paraguay. *It’s like a separate country*. His people can cross the border, bringing across anything they feel like. The

⁸⁸ Gregg Hetherington analyzed a related discursive closure that constructs the *campesinos*—poor rural farmers—as unmodern and their habits read as constitutively ill-suited for a 21st-century democracy (Hetherington, 2011). The spatiality of this imaginary is marked by *Calle Ultima*, or the Last Street, while correlates the edges of modern Paraguay with the spatial limits of the capital city. Hetherington analyzes how this spatial imaginary of modernity produces *campesinos* as democracy’s other.

⁸⁹ Claudia is the mythical heroine for whom the Mbya Guaraní wait, endowed with the supernatural capacities necessary to face the dark powers of the Tyrannosaurus’ magician, a familiar, paternalist trope in which indigenous communities require protection or saving from external forces.

ranch has several airports hidden in the woods. Huge warehouses where merchandise arrives directly from Miami, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 151 emphasis added).

Willy's commentary "It's like a separate country," echoes Elisa's desire to distinguish the real Paraguay from these spaces of illicit economic practice, where transnational *esquemas* link up military generals and contraband economies in parastatal territories. By locating the political authority of *esquemas* in the countryside, rather than in a frontier city, Gutiérrez marks these configurations of spatialized power as remnants of prior eras, rather than as constitutive of modernities, dovetailing on the imaginative linking of the rural with the past. The logics and practices of authoritarian rule are similarly marked as unmodern, embodied by Stroessner and flagged as a relic, if a threatening one, through referencing him as "the Tyrannosaurus."

Ciudad del Este appears as the backdrop of just one chase scene in which Claudia outruns Don Pablo Ferreria's henchmen. As Claudia dodges chaotic traffic and crowded sidewalks, the reader catches the only glimpse of actors in contraband economies other than unscrupulous elites. Here street vendors appear as "a human wall" (*una muralla humana*), quite literally a backdrop to struggles over the future of Paraguayan democracy (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 142). A fat Paraguayan vendor selling cheap lingerie inadvertently blocks Claudia's escape route. Bras flying, the vendor falls over as Claudia pushes through. The scene echoes the ironic detachment that Hetherington notes new democrats hold toward *campesinos*, now directed toward a street vendor. This portrayal of street vendors disparages informal workers as actors without agency, as impediments to the forces of democratization, forces that originate in Asunción. The frontier city, while urban, is also constructed as a site of the backward and illicit, rather than of modern urbanity.

Gutiérrez also evokes the theme of Brazilian encroachment. The "foreignization" of national space (Fogel & Riquelme, 2005) is a deeply felt social reality in Paraguay's eastern region. Gutiérrez analyzes these new territorialities through a lens that evokes Latin American dependency theorists. In *The Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano describes Paraguay as suffering under the "double burden" of imperialism and sub-imperialism (Galeano, 1975, p. 193). Galeano argues that Paraguay's 18th century model of autarkic, debt-free development represented a threat to British imperialism through the power of example. Thus Galeano interpreted Paraguay as "Latin America's most progressive country" (Galeano, 1975, p. 190). This position, a popular view of nationalists on the Paraguayan right and left, views the early dictatorial period as a noble anti-imperialist stance against the coercive extension of British trading relationships and capital markets. In the War of the Triple Alliance, regional sub-imperialists—Brazil and Argentina—sought Paraguayan land, wealth and subordination.

Gutiérrez updates this version of the Paraguayan double burden, replacing Galeano's British imperialism with an alliance of the CIA and transnational corporations. In the culminating scene, Martín confronts the rogue Colonel on Don Pablo Ferreria ranch, which also serves as a contraband and drug trafficking logistical center. The Colonel's coup will fail, Martín says, because the imperial configuration of interests has shifted, and military governments have fallen from favor in the international community. Referring to the CIA/transnational corporation nexus, Martín says, "Today the Mister wants yuppies with collared shirts and ties, because they project a better image and they are easier to manage" (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 226). A CIA agent agrees but clarifies that the center of gravity has shifted away from the nation-state, "...

today it's not governments who rule, but rather the large corporations" (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 226). Updating Galeano's double burden and echoing Elisa, Gutiérrez describes this space of lawlessness as outside the Paraguayan nation.

Dreaming the Global City

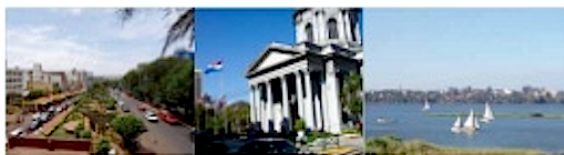
In *The Last Flight of the Bellbird*, new democrats in the capital city seek to cordon off the unruliness of the frontier from the space of the nation. In contrast, local efforts to address the city's reputation as a site of lawlessness take a different form, promoting a different understanding of the relationship between extralegality and the state.

Part of this local spatial imaginary is captured in widespread language describing Ciudad del Este as the "lungs of Paraguay" (*los pulmones del Paraguay*). In this metaphor, the city draws in the life force of the country—money—from the outside to then circulate it throughout the country. This metaphor, against the stigmatizing narratives of spatialized lawlessness, described Ciudad del Este as central to Paraguayan development. Both elites and the urban poor speak of the city as lungs, although in different ways. Elites tended to quantify the benefit of the city's circulatory capacity in tax revenue, in spite of a range of practices of tax evasion. A promotional flyer for CITI, a local chamber of commerce, boasts that Ciudad del Este is responsible for 29% of the country's import tax revenue (Wei, 2009). In contrast, the president of a vendors association argued that it is street vendors living in the peripheral neighborhoods of the city that do the circulatory labor of transmitting frontier money to the lower classes. While many of the elite businessmen associated with CITI live across the bridge in Foz do Iguaçu, street vendors nationalize global capital flows, buying goods from neighborhood shops and sending money back to family members living in the countryside.

What sort of centrality is being invoked in these discourses of Ciudad del Este as lungs? Recall the planning commission meeting discussed in the Introduction. At this meeting, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce sought to maintain the profitability of re-exportation and the border trade, while addressing the city's international reputation as a site of lawlessness. As the assembled group of business leaders and local officials spoke about *reconversión*, reconverting the city, as the substrate of economic and political projects, they engaged in imaginative practices. Those present referenced the hegemonic collection of ideas and practices about urban development that travel under the sign of global urbanism. Global urbanism evinces confidence in market solutions to social problems, adherence to a model of good governance rooted in World Bank ideologies, and faith that best practice solutions are replicable across a wide variety of contexts. Of course, this flexible collection of ideas articulates with locally produced understandings of progress and the material histories of placed processes of urbanization. A growing movement of critical scholars argues that the urban interventions gathered under the banner of global urbanism "persistently fails to deliver on its promise of prosperity for all" (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 895). Despite this incisive critique, the flexibility of global urbanism may be under appreciated by critical academics, as a source of traction for elite projects of contraband capitalism, as well as the more familiar projects of world-class city-making. Indeed, contraband urbanism invokes the referents of global urbanism, while smuggling in old governance practices of authoritarianism and the economic practices that are supposedly banished by the formalized city.

Notions of global urbanism had purchase in the grounded debates about urban developmental paths in Ciudad del Este. The imagined future city, as described by planning commission participants, contained both a break from, and a continuity with, the present day city. The governor of Alto Paraná, Lucho Zacarías, opened saying, “we want a new Ciudad del Este” (*queremos una nueva Ciudad del Este*), invoking a break with the city of today. Yet, Lucho Zacarías also emphasized the importance of protecting the border trade saying, “the calling of Ciudad del Este is commercial” (*la vocación del Ciudad del Este es comerial*). This vision imagines the city as an economic unit, competing against other urban units. Thus a power point slide of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce representative Nomei Haudenschild highlighted the city’s comparative advantages (*ventajas comparativas*), a list which included physical centrality in continental flows of commodities (Figure 23). Ciudad del Este’s comparative advantages also included the “know how” of local frontier businessmen, a framing which valorizes the knowledge gained through contraband as legitimate economic knowledge.

Figure 23. Ciudad del Este as locationally central to continental commodity flows



PARAGUAY CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU | 18

Source: Paraguay Convention and Visitors Bureau⁹⁰

The axis of continuity, in this vision, is the border trade. The axis of differentiation is the space of the city. Lucho Zacarías continued, emphasizing the importance of cultivating certain sorts of spatial experiences of consumption.

I'm not going to forget what President Cartes said, 'even though things are cheaper in Mercado 4 [a bazar in Asunción] the people want to go to the Shopping Mall of the Sun or Shopping Mall Mariscal Lopez, because they are more pleasant and welcoming.'

The shopping malls referenced by the President, and by Lucho Zacarías, share a familiar aesthetics, homogenizing spaces of consumption that repeat across a wide range of urban contexts. Malls are a key spatial form of post-modernity, "fantasy machines" which collapse and confuse space and time (Crawford, 1992, p. 4). The repetition of the form—the enclosed shopping mall—blurs place-specific signifiers. Paraguayan malls look like Los Angeles malls look like Singaporean malls. Further, through consumption, shoppers can access the signs of global citizenship: iPhones or Hello Kitty themed camping gear. In Cartes' comment, "pleasant and welcoming" becomes a code for spaces absent of the economic practices of street vendors. As the main space for street vendors in the capital city, Mercado 4 shares aesthetic and economic dynamics with Ciudad del Este's street market. Thus invoking a shift from Mercado 4 to the Shopping Mall of the Sun represents a transition away from the street livelihoods of the urban poor to a space of consumption associated with global urbanism. President Cartes describes this transformation of urban form as a function of the people's choice (*la gente quiere ir*), rather than as the result of state projects, a statement that elides the role of political authority in making space for particular economic trajectories.

While the trading circuits themselves remain marked by moments of illegality and rule-breaking, the shopping mall—the signifying space of modern consumption—projects an aesthetic of world-class orderliness. In this way, the nine-hectares became a proxy for competing ideas of urban development futures, which pits vendors' visions of economic inclusion against planners' notions of orderly spaces of modern consumption. Indeed, a common thread of conversation during the planning commission meeting was the spatial practices of vendors, with several participants calling for evictions to "clean the streets" (*limpiar las calles*). I was reminded of an interview with a municipal architect, who proudly showed me the current iteration of the city's plans for urban development, produced by a private sector association of construction companies: pedestrian overpasses, riverfront development, new shopping malls and road expansion. In the oversized pages of Autocad images there were no traces of street vendors, their bodies or their infrastructure.

In a close ethnography of Delhi, Asher Ghertner argues that an aesthetics of the world-class city works as a modality of rule through, in part, the seductiveness associated with the attractiveness of the forms of global urbanism, and the aspirational sentiments that inhere in them (Ghertner, 2015). With shopping mall construction on the nine hectares, a staple of global urbanism, urban planners promote a particular solution to the city's image problems, promoting

⁹⁰ Ciudad del Este as locationally central, Retrieved from <http://es.slideshare.net/Paraguayconvention/paraguay-travel-planner-2012>

urban forms which index an aesthetics of world-class consumption. Crucially, Ghertner argues that rule by aesthetics overlays and even displaces rule by bureaucratic procedure and rule following, such that state representatives sidestep legality as an axis to orient their planning practice. Urban development on the nine hectares, as in Delhi, intertwines projections of world-class orderliness with practices of illegality. Further, reconfigured trading relationships still enable elites to retain their connections to illicit trading circuits by producing city space amenable to these forms of accumulation. Thus there is no sharp distinction between the aesthetics of order and a realm of extralegality; these two realms are intimately intertwined.

For decades, only the Mona Lisa Shopping Gallery successfully invoked a global aesthetics of modern consumption. Most shopping galleries used direct references to the global with the place-names of elsewhere—Shopping China, Shopping Mina India, Auto-service Santo Domingo—while the forms themselves failed to invoke the mall aesthetic (Figure 24). Today however, construction on the nine hectares is ratcheting up the trend of global mall referencing. Shopping del Este, constructed in 2006, Shopping Box in 2013 and Shopping Paris in 2015 more closely resemble the look of the anywhere-mall. It is these urban forms that the *Asociación Plan de Desarrollo del Este* and the participants in the planning commission meeting promoted.

Figure 24. Shopping China



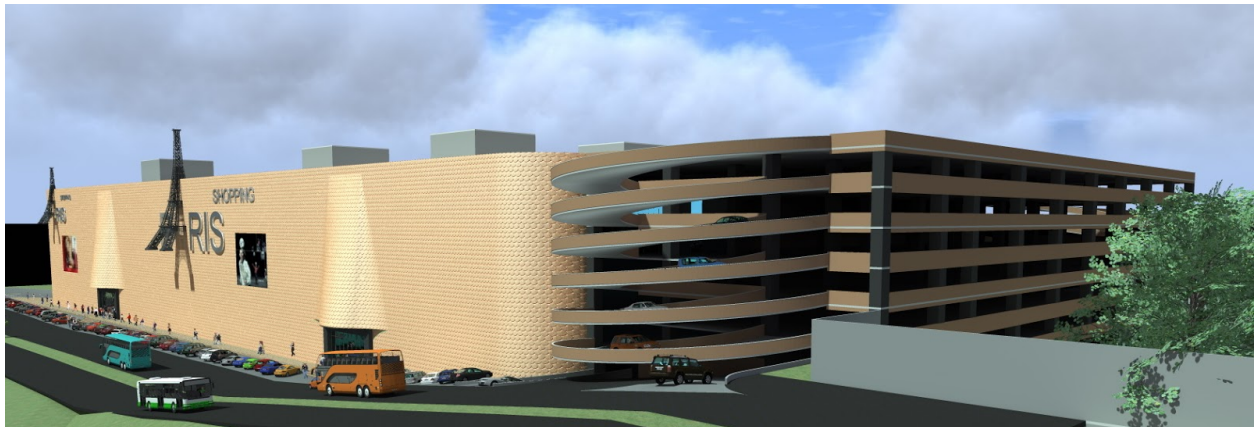
Source: Wikimedia Commons⁹¹

⁹¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ciudad_del_Este_1.jpg#/media/File:Ciudad_del_Este_1.jpg

These new frontier malls can be thought in terms of Henri Lefebvre’s notion of abstract space, the sort of space necessary for the reproduction of the logics of capital. Abstract space links state projects to projects of capital, “which includes the ‘world of commodities’, its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies as well as the power of money and that of the political state...[realized through a] vast networks of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 53). Against conceptualizations of globalization that portend cultural homogenization, abstract space works through differentiation. Homogeneity is always incomplete, more an “orientation” of abstract space than an attainable end state (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 304). I want to argue for extending Lefebvre’s notion of differentiation as a critical dynamic of abstract space to circuits of contraband capital, and the urban forms that support them.

If the urban forms promoted by the Development Plan invoke these world-class aesthetics as the primary signifier of formalization, the distance between the city’s urban infrastructure and the elsewhere referenced in the planning commission meeting invoked a certain amount of anxiety. This elite anxiety is on display in the architecture of Shopping Paris, which sports two half Eiffel Towers, awkwardly protruding from the front face of the mall. While an Internet commentator described the design as “a monument to kitsch,” planners produce these ostentatious references to European modernity without irony (Figures 25 and 26).⁹²

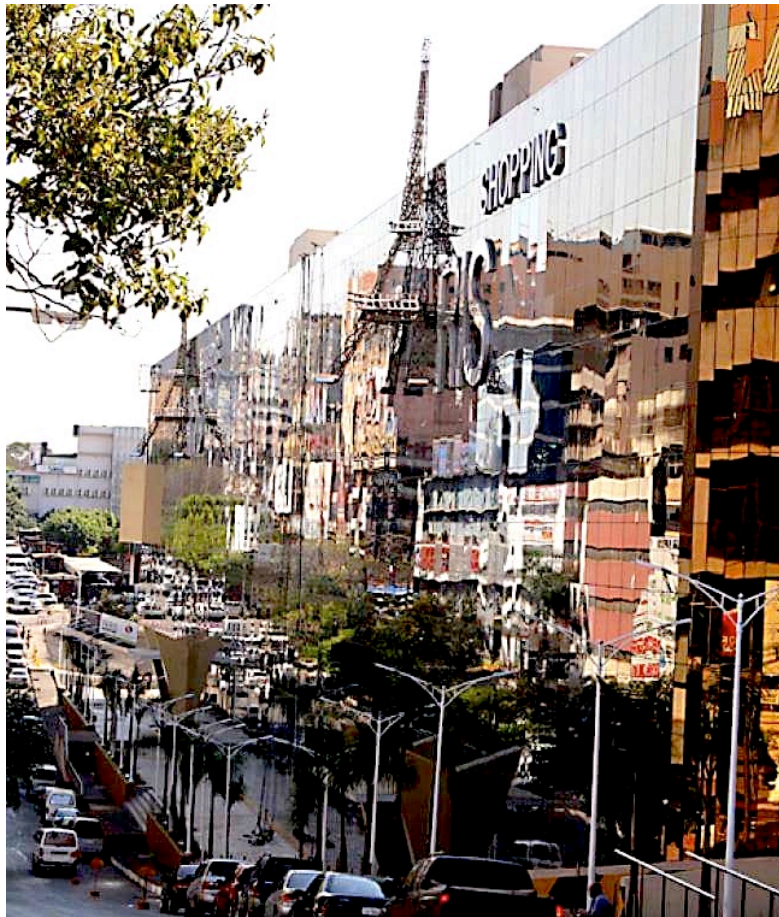
Figure 25. Mock up of Shopping Paris



Source: shoppingparispy.blogspot.com

⁹² <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1850147>

Figure 26. Shopping Paris, completed in 2015



Source: skyscrapercity.com⁹³

The planning commission participants emphasized the spatiality of *reconversión* with talk of upgrading the city's image. Nomei Haudenschild referenced this image problem, saying there was "a small bit of bad" in the city, "but a lot of good" (*Hay un pequeño mal, pero hay mucho bueno*). The governor described the "small bit of bad" as an image problem that hurt the city's commerce. Referring to a recent scandal involving extortion by the local transit police, the participants both openly acknowledged *esquemas* while seeking strategies to maintain the border trade. Lucho Zacarías said that the Municipality had addressed the extortion problem, painting a rosy picture of the city's commercial future. The governor said:

We live off of our neighbors, our friends, the shopping tourists. [This is why we need to] make Ciudad del Este more calm. I've spoken with the Transit Police about the issue of extortion and they are not going to do illegal things.... We need to leave off this. We want a healthy, comfortable city, with running water and amenities.... We need to do 'marketing,' pro-Ciudad del Este propaganda and then we have to offer what we promise.

⁹³ Shopping Paris, Retrieved from <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1850147>

Right now the police are bad for our marketing campaign.... one month without breaking the balls of the tourists [demanding bribes], and the Brazilians will come back.”

Reconversión, in this perspective, is a face-lift of urban form while addressing *esquemas* as a minor problem that can be addressed in a conversation. The healthy, comfortable city invoked by Lucho Zacarías reins in some of the more aggressive practices of forced bribery (“breaking the balls of the tourists”), like the Transit Police scandal involving intricate extortion *esquemas*. The problem with the Transit Police *esquema*, in the Governor’s perspective, is that it deterred shopping tourists from visiting the city, thereby hurting the border trade. The city’s woes can be fixed with pro-Ciudad del Este marketing, suggested the Governor.

The meeting also highlighted a key a tension for those at the helm of urban reforms rooted in a global mall aesthetics, as vendors are a crucial constituency for the Zacarías family’s continued hold on the mayorship and the governorship. Calls for cleaning the streets of vendors, and the architect’s Autocad images of a vendor-free city, co-exist with municipal promises that vendors will remain part of the city. In the planning commission meeting, Lucho Zacarías responded to calls to evict vendors saying that he supported “solutions for everyone” including vendors (*una solución para todos*). Street vendors are too important as electoral constituents to disregard with open statements of eviction. Thus more than a future city stripped ‘clean’ of the poor, the digital Autocad images and calls for “clean streets,” represent elite urban longings for the unattainable elsewhere, which planners can print on paper, but never enact in space. Rather than evictions there is, instead, an uneasy accommodation. While these dreams of the global city are unlikely to materialize, they are still productive in contraband urbanism’s constitutive contestations. Like global urbanism, contraband urbanism promises prosperity for all, while deploying an urban epistemology that imagines the livelihood practices of the poor as subsidiary to the making of Ciudad del Este as a global city.

3.4 A Lived City

Contraband urbanism articulates with a placed politics of redistribution. In this section, I address the lived experience of accessing global commodity flows through claiming a space in the city, spatial practices which require engaging with municipal practices of governing.

Since the city’s founding, the street and sidewalk occupations of vendors contravened various laws and municipal ordinances, including constitutional restrictions on using public space for commerce introduced in the 1992 constitution. Across Latin America such legal transgressions are common. The Latin Americanist Alicia Holland argues that selective non-enforcement of the infractions of the poor can redistribute wealth when the welfare state is weak (Holland, 2015). Against perspectives that restrict politics to voting or policy-making, anthropological research has long demonstrated that enforcement is political (Scott, 1969).

Vendors outside the Pilot Plan sometimes describe the process of finding space in the street market with the verb *mbohenda*, a Guaraní term meaning *both* to make a place for and to find a solution. *Mbohenda* is a resourceful search for an angle in on a difficult problem. As a metaphor for the strategizing required by the hardships of poverty, *mbohenda* could mean working a political connection or appropriating an available space. I consider *mbohenda* as a cultural

practice, ambiguously situated in relationship to the logics of capital.⁹⁴ In the first section, I show how the practice of *mbohenda* contributes to building the *microcentro*, a cultural practice that materializes into the urban form of incrementally built vendors stalls. In the second section, I juxtapose two modes of masculinist politics with different takes on street vendor politics.

Making Do

Mbohenda is key a cultural practice that has built the distinctive form of Ciudad del Este's *microcentro*. Since the founding of Puerto Presidente Stroessner, there were two pathways to occupation for Paraguayans who lacked the capital to build or rent storefront space: authorization through Colorado party channels or build first and seek permission later. With or without explicit prior authorization to occupy public space for commercial purposes, most vendors self-built their own commercial infrastructure. Occupation of the city center proceeded incrementally, radiating outward from San Blas Avenue, the central thoroughfare. Concentrated in the eight square blocks of the *microcentro*, the self-built infrastructure of vendors occupied most sidewalks, and the edges of streets.

Through the mid-2000 nearly all vendors' stalls were self-built, a key characteristic of *mbohenda* as spatio-cultural practice. Vendors' incremental, self-built upgrades to vending infrastructure mix with a patchwork of municipal interventions. Municipal programs to "formalize" the use of space focuses on street vendors, most notably through the drawn out Pilot Plan that extends infrastructure upgrades to vendors along the central artery of the city. Infrastructure within the semi-formalized Pilot Plan zones of the market is more uniform than the haphazard aesthetics of self-built stalls in other areas. Today, the city is characterized by a differentiated landscape of semi-formalized, state-owned vending stalls mixed with self-built vending infrastructure.

In self-built housing settlements in the peripheries, the state sometimes offers pathways for residents to regularize their property claims after occupation and incremental construction. The built form of vendor's commercial infrastructure shares this incremental spatiality of the housing settlements. Yet, claiming urban space to work, rather than for housing, unleashes a different set of dynamics, in no small part because vendors cannot activate a discourse of propertied citizenship. Since the late 1980s, several local proposals in Ciudad del Este contemplated regularization after occupation. Local ordinances outlined authorization procedures and spatial requirements, like dimensions of vending infrastructure and distance from shopfronts. Any vendor can solicit regularized status, which requires a vending license and payment of a small "precarious use tax," levied to align occupations with public space law. Yet, regularization is a long, unpredictable process. Further, widespread forbearance, or non-enforcement of the law has been the norm.

As a practice, *mbohenda* stands in ambiguous relationship to the logics of capital. Certainly, street vendors occupy urban space to connect to an instantiation of global capitalism, to siphon off some benefit from commodity flows. Vendors pursued family livelihood through integration into capitalist relationships of exchange. One vendor commented to me, "I live to work" (*vivo para trabajar*), signaling both the many hours he spent on the street as well as his

⁹⁴ Following Raymond Williams, I view culture as lived, a way of everyday life mediated by circulating modes of signification (Williams, 1958).

strong identification as a vendor. Yet my assessment diverges from the theorists of globalization from below analysis of these practices as part of a “non-hegemonic world system,” even as I laud their project of recuperating the everyday practices of negotiating specific, placed forms of global capitalism (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 223). In their perspective, globalization from below is a “more human form of neoliberalism,” offering crucial livelihood possibilities yet without disembedding economic practice from social relationships (Mathews & Ribeiro, 2012, p. 18). Indeed, vendors most often articulated a commitment to family wellbeing, rather than profit maximization, in spite of their classification by some as self-employed entrepreneurs (Neuwirth, 2011). However, honing on the production of particular global places demonstrates a more ambiguous verdict on the political possibilities of such trans-local economies.

Of course, street space is the substrate of the border trade. However, through the pragmatic orientation of *mbohenda*, street space could be a useful resource with multiple valences, gaining value through other avenues. Indeed, I discovered there is a brisk off-the-books market for street space as vendors sometimes rented out their vending space to family or friends when income generating needs shifted or new opportunities arose. A respected community leader explained the legal tricks that circumvent official rules designating public space as non-transferable, transactions that run through ad hoc agreements and semi-legal contracts facilitated by state-licensed notary publics. This leader, once a candidate for mayor, quoted the price for which he would sell his *de facto* use rights to his *casilla*. Vendors often quoted the going rate of street space. These remarkably consistent prices put the exchange value of a square meter of street space in the *microcentro* on par with property values in Tokyo and Tel Aviv.⁹⁵ These relational networks produce street and sidewalk space in Ciudad del Este, officially classified as public space, as a contingently exchangeable commodity. The effectivity of this unofficial quasi-market occasionally flashed into my lines of sight. Municipal officials referenced these practices by pointing to the spatial fluidity of claims within the street market. Once the director in charge of managing street vendors, Santiago Torres, referenced this mobility, as he explained why he would not provide me with the census of registered vendors. The vendors, Torres said “change daily” (*cambian diariamente*), producing a mismatch between the names recorded in the census and the occupants of street space. As poor households rely on multiple, shifting sources of income, vending was one strategy among many to meet family livelihood needs.

Yet these practices of contingent commodification existed alongside myriad practices of solidarity. These solidaristic practices also flashed into my sight, as when a vendor displayed and sold the goods of her colleague who had fallen into hard times and could not afford the bus ride into the city center. Another time, a taxi driver offered up his trunk as a mobile storage space to an ambulatory vendor so that she could increase the merchandise she offered her clients. The logic of *mbohenda* is present here too, in a resourceful giving of what is available through knowing the difficulties of earning one's daily bread in the street market. Thus the contingent commodification of street space indicates a willingness to commodify public space, at the same time that relationships of solidarity exist between some vendors. Of course, street vendors in

⁹⁵ Vendors consistently reported they would sell their *de facto* use rights to their *puesto*, or vending space, of about a square meter, for nothing less than \$10,000 USD. According to Global Property Guide, property in Tokyo, at the eleventh most expensive worldwide, is \$10,784 per square meter, followed by Tel Aviv (\$10,166 per square meter).

<http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/most-expensive-cities>

Ciudad del Este simultaneously economic, political and social actors with complex desires and repertoires of political action, as they are elsewhere (Duneier, 2000). The lived experience of street vending in Ciudad del Este cannot be reduced to solidaristic support, or to the commodification of everything, even street space. Rather, *mbohenda* is an admixture, a resourcefulness and a casting about for a way forward in a difficulty city.

Contraband urbanism is more than a distinctive built form of ad hoc vending infrastructure lining streets and sidewalks for eight square blocks, produced through the practices of *mbohenda*. The felt experience of navigating working life in Ciudad del Este is also marked by inadequate urban infrastructure. A series of satire YouTube videos went viral during the summer of 2015, featuring Kelembu, the persona of a self-made frontier salesman (Figure 27). Kelembu—the Guaraní word for ugly or low quality—had upgraded his platforms for mocking Paraguayan electoral politics from joke mayoral campaigns to DIY YouTube videos. Speaking in Guaraní and playing the role of a credulous *campesino*, Kelembu critiqued local corruption by making fun of its material consequences. In one video, Kelembu and his sidekick enjoyed an afternoon swim in a water-filled pothole in the city center. During an interview with Kelembu, he suggested we take a tour of the city so that I could document these physical instantiations of what he called the local state’s incapacity (*mal desempeño*). The failing infrastructure tour included shoddy street paving, a dangerous, unsecured construction site in the Pilot Plan zone, and an overpriced walkway around the Lake of the Republic. At each stop Kelembu would quantify the gap between the Municipality’s reported expenditure on these public works projects and his own cost estimate. The difference between these two figures, Kelembu argued, represented the precise amount of over-invoicing (*sobrefacturación*), a stream of revenue that lined the pockets of the Zacarías administration and their allies.

Figure 27. Kelembu



Source: Twitter⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Kelembu, Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/kelembu1>

Contraband urbanism produces these landscapes of failing urban infrastructure. Kelembu and other critics of the Zacarías administration sought to draw direct lines of culpability between low quality urban infrastructure and specific individuals. Such relationships of responsibility and blame are outside my own lines of sight. However, Kelembu’s ironic interventions do signal something about the lived experience of working in Ciudad del Este where basic services—potable water, reliable bus service or paved roads—are insufficient. Indeed, Kelembu won a city council seat in the 2015 election, suggesting his indictment of status quo municipal politics resonated with many residents. In the failing infrastructure tour, Kelembu sought evidence in the built environment of what has been hidden by the Municipality’s successful evasion of national audits of its budgets. Further, the indictment highlights this disjuncture between the volume of money circulating through the city—physically present in squads of armor vehicles transporting cash—and the experience of working and living in the city.

Caudillo Politics or Electoral Manhood

Contraband urbanism is also stitched together by a particular brand of redistributive politics, with attendant practices of valorizing particular political and economic practices over others. Here, a look toward the rural subsistence economy is useful. Histories of Paraguayan land politics are crucial because they shape contemporary imaginations of the political proclivities of poor Paraguayans, including street vendors. Historical and sociological accounts of the country’s faltering path toward democratization tend to locate blame in the clientelistic tendencies of poor Paraguayans. The Paraguayan political scientist José Nicolás Morínigo exemplifies this perspective (Morínigo, 2008). Morínigo argues the hardships of rural life combined with a rural linguistic commitment to Guaraní circumscribe the capacities of the Paraguayan popular classes to think universally. For Morínigo, rural hardship elevates the import of relational networks in isolated *campesino* communities. Community dependence and distance from state support foster a particularistic politics of familial or community well-being.

This ethics of rural solidarity is deepened, Morínigo argues, by the Guaraní language that linguistically differentiates the pronoun “we” into an inclusive and exclusive form, the latter excluding the person with whom one is speaking (*ñande* and *ore*). Further, the argument goes, the linguistic practices crystalize out into patterns of action in which loyalties are limited to an exclusive group of known community members of the same social status. Thus, for Morínigo, language has produced a culture of contingent solidarity, yielding reciprocity-based networks which circulate state benefits based on relational instead of ‘rational’ criteria. *Ore* ethics emerge from “traditional-affective criteria” and “a community vision that is restricted to the family, friendships, neighbors and based in kinship, friendship, and daily life” (Morínigo, 2008, p. 12). Thus the defective aspects of this ethical system, for Morínigo, are precisely their intimate connection to daily life and embodiment. Like the important Paraguayan historian Milda Rivarola, Morínigo opposed relational, *ore* politics to a more mature, rational politics in which a liberal democratic ethos would distribute universal public goods (Rivarola, 2007). In Paraguay, these networks of contingent reciprocity, which some call clientelism, also distribute material benefits (Setrini, 2010), like street space to vendors.

However, the law-breaking livelihood strategies of *mbohenda* are not viewed kindly in the discourse of new democrats. Like many liberals, new democrats focus on the procedural and legal violations of corruption while lamenting the willingness of the poor, urban and rural alike, to continually cast their lot with the Colorado party. An anti-corruption lawyer affiliated with the

Coordinadora Multisectorial por la Defensa y la Recuperación de las 9 Hectáreas, Valeria Ortiz, articulated this view by juxtaposing two different kinds of local politics: populist and objective. To explain the difference, she described a public meeting convened by a special national commission to investigate a series of allegations brought by the *Multisectorial* and others against the Municipality. The suite of allegations included illegal land deals involving the nine hectares, a case which Valeria Ortiz had litigated. Considering herself the expert, Ortiz had prepared a PowerPoint to describe the complicated dealings. Yet a prominent Colorado party organizer and long-time opponent of the Zacarías administration, Pablo Aguirre, insisted on speaking on behalf of the *Multisectorial* on the case. Ortiz critiqued the caudillo style which differed from what she described as her own, “objective” politics. She commented her politics valued “speaking with [legal] foundation and details, while he only speaks generically.”⁹⁷ Ortiz locates the injustice of the nine hectare land deals in their legal violations. As the transgression lies in law, so too does the solution. This position of new democrats like Ortiz insists that reformers seek change inside the law, despite the flagrant flexibility of legal practice in Paraguay that resists attempts to hold individuals to account for past or present *esquemas*.

In contrast, the “generic” oratory style of Aguirre indexes popular outrage by invoking the embodied needs and daily hardships of the poor. This populist vernacular is decidedly less concerned with legalities, instead invoking a felt sense of injustice at stark inequalities. Aguirre’s confrontational political style included organizing a short-lived occupation of the nine hectares in 2013, demonstrating a willingness to transgress the law, rather than confine struggle to courtrooms and legal briefs. This campaign included forceful claims to space on behalf of street vendors and the urban poor, premised on the position that the law, as a tool shaped by the powerful, would be an unreliable avenue through which to seek justice for the marginalized. The tension between objective and populist politics eventually fractured the *Multisectorial*, and Ortiz reflected that leaders like Aguirre “are just as dictatorial as the ones who came before.”⁹⁸

Hetherington’s analysis of Paraguay’s long transition to democracy describes a similar dynamic to Ortiz’s division between objective and populist politics, what he describes as *el publico* versus *el pueblo* (Hetherington, 2012). *El pueblo* is a populist space of claims-making, which bonds state and subject through contingent gifts of paternal care. New democrats and liberal urban reformers, in contrast, understand progress through the existence of a rational voting public, that is, of *el publico*, disparaging the populist politics of the *campesino* movement, in spite of the concrete benefits and nationalistic promises effected through the politics of *el pueblo*. Liberal reformers hope for a different sort of state-subject suture under a politics of *el publico*. Rationalized state programs, it is hoped, would be delivered based on transparent criteria, rather than political loyalties, personal relationships and a certain unpredictable alignment of circumstance, the mystifying calibration of a combination of elements. To the distress of liberal reformers like Ortiz, *el publico* resists coalescing.

The question that new democrats and “objective politics” often refused to ask is voiced by Martín in *The Last Flight of the Bellbird*. Posing the question of democratization and Development, Martín asks “how does democracy matter to the poor if they can’t eat” (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 72). This question precedes a scene in which Martín and Claudia drive through eastern Paraguay, witnessing mass deforestation and soy monocultures. Claudia

⁹⁷ (Valeria Ortiz, personal communication, March 23, 2015).

⁹⁸ (Valeria Ortiz, personal communication, March 23, 2015).

comments: “This looks like scenes from the film *Apocalypse Now*.” Taking a pedagogical tone, Martín responds,

This is not the work of Ford-Coppola, but rather of multinational corporations. This isn't a film. These are the forests of Canindeyú in their final stages of agony. This is the real image of a country devoured by its own illusion of development (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 81).

The provocative image of a country being “devoured by its own illusion of development” juxtaposes awkwardly against the prior question of the co-existence of democracy and dire poverty. Street vendors' tactics of *mbohenda* and claims to spatialized rights that emerge from livelihood need, as discussed in the next chapter, are one set of responses to this question. New democrats have a different response, doubling down on a procedural vision of representative democracy and the necessity of finding justice inside the law.

In a jocular final battle, Martín confronts the Colonel behind the coup plot on Ranch Ipanema of Don Pablo Ferreria, the transnational space of lawlessness discussed in the last section. Each character metonymically represents a position in this battle imagined in the terms of new democrats. Martín stands-in for the new democrats while the Colonel represents the authoritarian wing of the Colorado party; objective versus populist politics, *el publico* versus *el pueblo*. In this verbal battle, the Colonel cites widespread disillusionment with the lack of material gains for the common people in order to argue that the country needs “real men” to govern. His coup, the Colonel says, will remove the current elected president and his men, “the clowns, fags, and jackasses that in reality un-govern (*des-gobiernan*)... who confuse liberty with libertinism” (Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 223). Martín defends the sanctity of the vote, representative democracy's seminal act of political engagement, even if it elects unscrupulous politicians. Reflecting on the first free vote after Stroessner's fall, Martín says,

“...[the vote] might not fill stomachs, but, you know what Colonel, the day that I deposited that little slip of paper in the urn, I felt really good. It was a sensation like the first time I made love to a woman” (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 223) .

In this exchange, Colman equates the first free vote with the loss of his protagonist's virginity, a gendered metaphor invoking a particular masculinist imaginary of the protagonists of progress. Quite transparently, the act of voting makes Martín a man. If sexual initiation inaugurates manhood, the installation of representative democracy signals Paraguay's maturation along a pre-given path of Development.

Importantly, both the Colonel and Martín agree the terms of Paraguayan national development are gendered male, even if they disagree over the content: strongman politics or electoral manhood. Martín raises, but then curtly dismisses the co-evolution of electoral democracy and material deprivation as reasonable grounding to question the mandates of Paraguayan representative democracy. This dismissal signals a willing disavowal of the everyday hardships of poverty, a politics of disavowal that articulates with a limited imagination of the

subject of democracy and a spatial imaginary which carves out spaces of lawless from the space of the Paraguayan nation.

As the confrontation continues, Martín bifurcates the Paraguayan populace into two camps, one “backward and ignorant” and another “that has acquired a critical consciousness” (Colmán Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 232). The mechanism of this consciousness raising – according to Martín and echoing Gutiérrez’s position as journalist – is a free press. This framing excises political struggle over the nature of democratic practice, and its empowered agents. Rather than contend with the extralegal livelihoods that feed many Paraguayan families, Colman’s protagonist seeks to excise the unruly frontier, and its extralegalities from the Paraguayan nation in order to reclaim a lost, abused ‘innocence’ of the nation, represented by the Bellbird named Innocence (*Inocencia*). The gendered and class dynamics of this reclamation signal an exclusionary politics that limits the agents and potentials of national rehabilitation.

Both the Colonel and Martín dismiss distributional justice, although through different registers. The populist politics of the Colonel, and Pablo Aguirre speak in the vernacular of the poor to name the lived experience of hardship, even if they also partake of the spoils of extralegal *esquemas*. Martín, on the other hand, describes vendors as a “human wall,” a background to contestations over the future of Paraguayan democracy, source material for ironic jokes, against which the urban journalist can enact his own status as modern.

3.5 Conclusion

In his work on the urban revolution, Henri Lefebvre argues that the crucial, world-wide post-war transformation is the expansion of capital to the field of urbanization, that is, the production of space, for capital (Lefebvre, 2003). Because the urban takes center stage in new forms of global capitalism, Lefebvre sees urban society as *the* central contemporary problematic. Struggle over the urban itself, both its form and purpose, becomes ever more crucial for projects of democracy and emancipation. Paraguay’s frontier economy lies outside the field of vision of critical urbanists and geographers studying the situated relationship between urbanization and capital. Yet the city is a key relay in South-South circuits of outlaw capital, circulating a volume of commodities and cash that cannot be quantifiable but lies somewhere in the low billions of USD. Thus this chapter sought to provincialize urban theory, by theorizing the urban from Ciudad del Este. I analyzed Ciudad del Este’s particular form of city-ness as source material for theory building, rather than simply colorful ethnographic empirics. In this chapter, I have thus argued that a distinctive spatio-economic form is at work in Ciudad del Este, what I am calling contraband urbanism. Through public interventions into the built environment, state actors promote the extralegal economy, even as official discourse promises to legalize the border trade. Contraband urbanism works by making urban spaces through state-sponsored transgressions of the law. I treat outlaw capital, and the state projects that enable its movement, as social processes with city-making force. With an expansive understanding of urban planning as the “public production of space,” I argue that the planning apparatus produces space for the frontier economy, in both its legal and transgressive moments.

Rather than an aberrant or lawless space, contraband urbanism is an expression of geohistory 2, that is “differentiated places interpenetrated by uneven, emergent connectivities” (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 896). Contraband urbanism diverges from orthodox understanding of capitalism, as it works instead through logics of arbitrage, graft and trickery. Competing spatial

imaginaries construct Ciudad del Este, alternately, as a space of lawlessness or as a future global city. While these spatial imaginaries offer quite different assessments of the originary force of the city's disorder, they both imagine that licit, regulated economies can be spilt apart from their shadow counterparts, outlaw economies. Yet, contraband urbanism produces Ciudad del Este as a hub in global networks of extralegal trade. Situating the economy of circulation as constitutive of globalized capital is a key contribution of this dissertation, addressing a gap in debates within urban studies and geography about the urban forms and political implications of outlaw capital.

In Ciudad del Este the physical spaces of contraband, like clandestine ports, are regulated through social norms of zoning, which effected spatial closure: narratives of spatialized danger and practices of differential visibility promoted by *esquemas* and *blindaje*. While urban planners present shopping mall development on the nine hectares as a solution to the city's image problems, these spaces of consumerism are linked to the contraband trade routes they supposedly vanquish. The nine hectares are symbolically charged land parcels, condensing both the footloose thefts of the Stroessner era and a popular success in the early years of the democratic transition, a moment of hope that the state would recuperate *tierra malhabida* for economic projects from which Paraguayan street vendors would benefit. Today, the nine hectares are the site of high-end shopping mall development; an elite-driven, last ditch effort to retain the competitiveness of the border trade. They also break a suite of laws, crystalizing into high-end informality (Roy 2005, p.149). In this chapter, I have analyzed frontier malls and clandestine ports as linked spaces, rather than separate or bounded places.

Contraband urbanism is implicated in a particular, exclusionary politics of wealth creation and redistribution. From Ciudad del Este, 20,000 small-scale vendors, traders and taxi drivers make do, casting their daily economic activities as nets to capture a bit of the profits that circulate in reworked geographies of extralegal trade. The lived practices of navigating life in the city requires constant negotiations and contestation over claiming space, the spatial substrate and urban foundation which allows economic actors to connect to the border trade. Vendors claim spatial rights, through the popular vernacular of *derechos adquiridos*. These rights are rooted in embodied need and the vulnerabilities of poverty, rather than in citizen-rights of equality before the law. This section focused on the lived experiences of globalization primarily as a way to see the 'how' of the production of particular global places. The lived experience of globalization, especially from the perspective of the global poor, can be quite bleak. Indeed, much of the critical globalization literature rests on an imagination of inexorable global processes bearing down to mold or annihilate the local from above. Localist narratives often report the receiving end of these top-down forces through the metaphor of resistance, overlooking the co-constitutive role of non-global forces. In contrast, a view to the production of place highlights the myriad contingent trajectories that made possible today's territories of poverty and landscapes of exclusion. Decoding these spatial contingencies is a key part of constructing more politically enabling concepts, a key commitment of normative scholarship that aims not just to interpret the world, but also to transform it.

Chapter 4:

The Street: Regulation by Ambiguity

4.1 Introduction: A Provisional City

A long time street vendor and association president, Marcelo Sosa described Ciudad del Este as “a provisional city” (*una ciudad provisoria*). With this elegant phrase, Sosa captured a key spatial logic of the city, which he situated in a retrospective analysis of urban development in the two and a half decades since the fall of Alfredo Stroessner. Rather than the absence or failure of urban planning, he described the political productivity of the provisional character of municipal projects to regularize street vendors. In particular, he criticized a key formalization project, the Pilot Plan, as producing a highly differentiated micro-geography of stability and risk, with the logics of provisionality concentrated in zones where more precarious vendors were located. Sosa described two vectors of this spatial differentiation. In the first, the Pilot Plan offers a zone of relative tenure security compared to the approximately 2,500 vendors working in the surrounding side streets outside of the Pilot Plan. Sosa highlighted another register of differentiation, arguing that development on the nine hectares was producing a “dual city.” High-end urban development on the nine hectares, Sosa argued, concentrated commercial activity in this small, elite zone of the *microcentro* to the detriment of most street vendors.

In this chapter, I turn to the street, the site of livelihood for 5,000 street vendors. Street vendors are key political actors in Ciudad del Este as well as a forceful presence on the streets of the city center. The politics of street vendors figure centrally in this dissertation for two reasons. First, street vendors pose key challenges to contraband urbanism, crystallizing the question: who gains access to the urban space needed to connect to the border trade and on what terms? Secondly, I argue the street is a key scale through which to study the organization of global networks of commodity circuits. For security reasons, I rarely directly observed the everyday governance practices enabling large-scale contraband. Yet, the streets of Ciudad del Este are spaces where everyday practices of governance between street vendors and municipal officials are accessible for observation and analysis. On the streets, governance practices that often unfolded out of view become more visible. Thus, streets are key sites from which to understand everyday practices of governance. There are, of course, key differences between the street economy and the large-scale economy of circulation, including vastly different opportunities for profit. Many street vendors earn each day the money to buy the evening meal, while successful frontier businessmen accrue wealth on another scale entirely. Yet the politics of regulating the street, I argue, can also help us understand the governance of the economy of circulation.

The politics of the urban poor in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay are often described as clientelism. Contrary to the predictions of many social scientists, clientelism did not fade along with Latin America’s move towards democratization in the 1980s and 1990s after decades of authoritarian rule. From some perspectives, clientelism is “flourishing or reviving” (Brun & Diamond, 2014, p. 1). The sociologist Javier Auyero argues that the imaginary of clientelism can act as a conceptual prison, a recurrent, but limiting, means of thinking about the politics of the Latin American poor. Auyero borrows the phrase “metonymic prison” from Arjun Appadurai, who asks why certain ideas “become hegemonic in, and confined to, certain places” (Appadurai,

1988, p. 45). Appaduari analyzed the anthropological discourse of hierarchy in India, which Auyero then extends to the concept of clientelism and Latin America. Auyero's argument exceeds the observation that the poor use the infrastructures of clientelism as problem solving strategies in contexts of considerable economic constraint. Rather, the concept of clientelism can make it hard to see the complexity of actually existing governance practices and misrepresent clientelistic exchange as the defining characteristic of the political behavior of the urban poor. As Auyero notes, we actually know very little about the experiences, motivations, and daily practices of poor "clients."

In this chapter, I argue that municipal officials manage urban space through legal contingency and negotiability in uses of urban space, what I call regulation by ambiguity. Through a process of formalization under the Pilot Plan, the municipality retains the authority to extend, or revoke, authorization to occupy. The perpetual contingency of claims makes vendors dependent on municipal recognition. Tolerating non-compliant occupation *does* redistribute some of the material benefits of the border economy. But vendors must negotiate with the local state through hierarchal relationships that mix contingent care with the threat of dispossession. Thus regulation by ambiguity produces state-citizen relationships that reproduce inequality. I argue that the category of clientelism obscures and reduces the complexity of everyday working life on Ciudad del Este's streets. Street vendor politics cannot be reduced to a clientelistic exchange of street space for votes or political loyalty. I offer my concept of regulation by ambiguity as a counterpart to theories of clientelism which focus on instrumental exchange relationships, thereby overlooking an accompanying set of governance practices. I describe this complex of governance practices that articulate discursive, spatial, legal and epistemological practices, which come together to order the border economy.

This chapter begins by describing the discursive battles over the boundaries of urban belonging. Vendors claim spatial rights to the city, rooted in embodied need. But municipal officials describe vendors as a source of disorder, which they link to the rural habits of street vendors. In the next section, I describe the contingent ways in which municipal officials deploy law that renders all vendors' tenure status as uncertain, even those with legally backed and documented claims to space. I also describe how vendors resignify illegality and theft as *within* the domain of the state, rather than outside it. In the final section, I show how municipal officials—under the guise of formalization—constantly reorganize street vendors' spatial claims within the market; another mode of producing regulatory uncertainty. These explicitly spatial strategies of governance are undergirded by particular ways of knowing urban space in which a key municipal official claims exceptional, embodied capacities of seeing street vendors, even as the main technical instrument to regularize vendors, the census, works in unexpected ways.

4.2 Bounding Urban Belonging

The authorization of vending in Ciudad del Este is governed by considerable local bureaucratic discretion and regulatory uncertainty. Tenure laws that provide security for some vendors are contingently and unpredictably applied. In the only other ethnography of Ciudad del Este's street market, Fernando Rabossi describes what he calls the "production of legal precarity," in which incongruence between practical economic activities and the associated socio-legal categories creates persistent insecurity of tenure for vendors (Rabossi, 2011, p. 84).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ In Portuguese, Rabossi's term is "produção legal da precariedade."

Thus, vendors must engage in ongoing defense to maintain their claims. Vendors deploy diverse tactics to stabilize their claims to space: mobilizing collectively against eviction; documenting payment of the precarious use tax, paying off municipal officials, affiliating with vendors' associations, leveraging political connections to municipal bureaucrats, or engaging in what Asef Bayat calls "the quiet encroachment of the ordinary," in which the small, largely individual transgressions of the poor scale up into a political challenge to the urban order (Bayat, 1997).

The discretionary enforcement of public space law increases the stakes of debates over the boundaries of urban belonging. Poor Paraguayans and upwardly mobile street vendors participate in these debates by appropriating city space to connect to the border trade. As they claim space, they also justify the legitimacy of their occupations with arguments about their right to be present in the city as a means to grab ahold of some of the profits of the border trade. The vernacular of acquired rights (*derechos adquiridos*) coalesces competing registers of authorized use of urban space for economic projects. Discursive disagreements over what kinds of economic practice belong in the city interact with and condition conflicts at multiple scales and in battles over the city's urban future. Thus debates over authorized uses and social sanctioned users are animating forces in the governance strategies I outline in the remainder of the chapter.

Conflicts among vendors also shape who, under what circumstances, is able to maintain claims to space for livelihood. Street vendor solidarity—via collective action to defend street vending as a legitimate urban activity—can be at odds with the competitive logics in a trade-based economy, a dynamic noted in studies of street vendors elsewhere (Lazar, 2007). On the one hand, vendors describe Ciudad del Este as an "*olla popular*," a collective soup pot into which the Paraguayan popular classes can dip and gather sustenance. On the other hand, vendors and municipal officials alike call some peddlers (*ambulantes*) swallows (*golendrin*as), to disparage those who arrive in the city on the weekends, temporarily swooping in with no fixed claims to urban space and competing with more established vendors. The dividing line between legitimate occupant and encroachers is hotly contested. And so, vendors with more secure claims to space also police the boundary between *verdaderos mesiteros* "true vendors" and encroachers.

In this section, I discuss these competing registers of authorized use, collected under the banner of *derechos adquiridos*, as strategies that trace shifting and contested boundaries of urban belonging. I start with the contestation over the boundaries of "legitimate vendors" (*verdaderos mesiteros*). One view equates legitimacy with respectability while another roots the rights of the urban poor of occupy city space as rooted in tenure duration and embodied need. This lack of fixity that characterizes multiple registers of urban belonging is simultaneously a form of rule and a means through which the urban poor are able to make claims to street space, and access the livelihood opportunities it offers.

Respectability and the Disorderly Poor

A common narrative circulating in Ciudad del Este blames the poor for urban disorder. This discursive frame, also at work elsewhere (Bhowmik, 2005; Crossa, 2009; Watson, 2009), construes the urban poor and rural migrants as culturally disposed to create spatial disorder and uncleanliness. Drawing on these notions of cultural predisposition, local state actors in Ciudad del Este imagine rural migrants as cultural vectors bringing un-modern habits from "the interior" (*el interior*) to urban centers. One municipal director described an internal contradiction of progress as this inevitable contamination of rural culture in urban settings.

Because when it all began with the first vending stalls ... 25 or 30 years ago, right... there were just a few. And then... who would have thought that it would have resulted in all this, right? And then it grew like this, so quickly, and then suddenly it became uncontrollable, right, with the economic boom. *Progress brings advantages and it brings disadvantages, like disorder. People come here with another culture, from the countryside (el interior)*.... Without the principals of education, it's like "right here I'm going to cook and throw all of my garbage," and there are all these social problems ... because there isn't any guarantee, there isn't any control over these people (Municipal director, personal communication, June 2013, emphasis added).

The director displays anxiety about street vendors' disorderly space-making habits, imagining poor migrants as an embodied spatial link between *el interior* and the city. Street vendors are thus coded as semi-rural, a social group I designate as "urban peasants," present in cities but hanging onto the disorderly habits of the countryside. This discursive frame "codes structural inequalities as a question of culture," as part of a spatial strategy of governance (Hunt, 2009).

Likewise, another municipal director identified street traders as the primary agents responsible for disorder. Referencing vendors, she said,

Who makes this disorder? They do. The city didn't grow because of them, there was no urbanistic relationship (*relación urbanística*) because of them. They carried on, taking over the city center. There isn't respect. There isn't education. Unfortunately Paraguayans take over things (*invadir*) that belong to others, like in [informal] settlements (*asentamientos*) (Municipal director, personal communication, June 2013).

In this spatial imaginary, the urban and the rural are linked, and both require interventions in order to be shepherded into modernity. The bureaucrat links street vendors and dispossessed rural squatters by referencing informal settlements (*asentamientos*) and using the language of 'invasion,' a common descriptor to disparage the land claims of the rural poor. These stories imagine the rural as an un-modern space, as part of the country's hard but noble past, now requiring rationalization for competition within the global economy. During the rein of Stroessner, the agrarian-nationalist Colorado party heralded the gritty and indomitable determination of poor *campesinos*, settlers and pioneers as embodying a distinct national spirit. Yet today, modernizing Paraguay's countryside is well documented as an devastating, ongoing process of accumulation by dispossession which has displaced hundreds of thousands of smallholders over the last several decades, transforming three million hectares into "green deserts" of soy, wheat and sunflowers. In this imaginary, the rural poor that remain are marked as un-modern and their habits read as constitutively ill-suited for a 21st century democracy (Hetherington, 2011). When dispossessed migrants arrive in the city—fleeing the slow collapse of the smallholder economy—they remain socially coded as rural, as urban peasants.

Many municipal officials linked street vendors to disorder; yet at the same time they participated in discourses of *derechos adquiridos* (acquired rights), a vernacular of rights that carried considerable social weight. It took me some time to understand that *derechos adquiridos*

were an extralegal category of claims-making unrecognized within the legal framework. An interview with Hugo Domínguez, a key municipal director, accentuated my confusion over the legal standing of acquired rights. In our interview I sought an explanation for the legal backing to acquired rights, thinking there might be an urban counterpart to *derecheras*, a semi-legal status within a national process of land reform through which peasants gained recognition to the lands they occupied and cultivated. Domínguez explained acquired rights as a legitimate realm of claims-making, although his explanation differed from that of street vendors. According to Domínguez, acquired rights operated as a discretionary criterion for authorizing some vendors' claims. Referencing *derechos adquiridos*, Domínguez said,

“These people have been educated, they own a house now and live with dignity. For these reasons they [their claims] are respected” (Hugo Domínguez, personal communication, June 2013).

Domínguez invoked respectability, not legal compliance, as a method to authorize some vendors' claims. Here Domínguez locates rights to city space in the attainment of the outward signs of upward social mobility, like homeownership, lending legitimation to those vendors able to cast off the stigma of the urban peasant. Respectability, the municipal director says, is earned through time, the vector of modernization, and the medium through which migrants cast off the bonds of their disorderly, rural spatial habits through education and homeownership. Municipal validation of acquired rights—as a contingently recognized category of claims—underscores how processes of negotiability and indeterminacy are key dynamics of maintaining authorization for street vending. Another municipal official stressed that acquired rights were a figment of the collective imagination, stressing that they existed nowhere in the legal code. However, it is telling that Domínguez—a municipal bureaucrat charged with organizing the street market through face-to-face regulatory encounters with street vendors—did not dismiss acquired rights as a legal figment.

Through Domínguez's criteria, my first initial contacts, Lina and Ingrid, would qualify as respectable vendors, having bought land, built homes, and financed private school educations for their children through their earnings as street vendors. Lina and Ingrid sold from state-owned vending stalls in a semi-formalized zone of the street market, a desirable location along San Blas Avenue, the central artery of the street market slopping gently downhill to the International Friendship Bridge. Commanding large *casillas*, set in a large patio, both women were relatively well off. Lina and Ingrid's stories of upward mobility invoked the hardships of working in the street market, rising before four am to work long days exposed to the elements. Yet their stories also captured the possibilities of catching ahold of circulating money, a palpable presence in the city.

In social processes of staking claims, internal differentiations within street vendors matter a great deal. The means of differentiating legitimate vendors from encroachers is contested and only partially mediated by the municipal process of regularization. The imaginaries locating disorder as emanating from the cultural habits of the poor contribute to stabilizing a hierarchy of urban belonging. By associating some street vendors with the perceived traits of the rural poor, the social category of the urban peasant contributes to excluding the most precarious vendors from the dominant imaginary of who belongs in the city.

Spatial Rights through Embodied Need

In contrast to Domínguez's assessment of acquired rights as a subjective index of respectability, vendors use *derechos adquiridos* to underscore their right to work to feed children and families. The qualifier "acquired" suggests a right gained over time, and indeed, some rights do accrue over time. In rural Paraguay *derecheras* provide a pathway to tenure recognition for *campesinos* who work the land and manage to acquire the right land reform paperwork (Hetherington, 2009). Informal housing settlements across Latin America are often legalized after irregular occupation such that residents claim occupancy rights through tenure duration. Vendors often legitimated their claims through enumerating the specific number of years worked from a single spot in the street market.

Derechos adquiridos are linked to a history of rural land claims and peasant struggles. After the fall of Stroessner, briefly, there was political hope that the rural poor could reclaim some of the vast tracks of farmland allocated as political favors by Stroessner to military men and other loyal party members. These ill-gotten lands (*tierra malhabida*) forcefully figure into the country's nationalisms, and Colorado party political leaders often leveraged populist discourses of rural hardship and paternal care connected to the country's specific history of land reform. The state sanctioned process of gaining recognition for rural land claims involved occupying and working fallow land, which, under some circumstances, could be transformed into legally recognized land rights. In land reform *colonias*, or colonies, poor families worked the land of absent landlords in order to stake claim to it, a Lockean proposition in which the forerunner to the rights of property ownership requires imbuing land with labor. A similar register of rights was at work in Ciudad del Este, in which physical presence and livelihood need justified a process where legalization followed occupation.

However, the material content of acquired rights is more complex and flexible than a straightforward acquisition of rights through the passage of time. In addition to tenure duration, vendors locate their right to work in embodied need and the vulnerabilities of poverty. Vendors often referenced street space as the means to their "daily bread," *el pan de cada día*. Through stories of hardship, sacrifice, and struggle, vendors underscored the embodied vulnerabilities of poverty and the dignity of working to sustain the family. These are moral claims, grounded in socially accepted discourses, like the right to "dignified work" (*trabajo digno*), maternal responsibility or a Catholic notion of sacred life. This mix—of embodied need, sacred family responsibility, and established physical presence working from a space in the street market—captures the register of acquired rights as deployed by street vendors. *Derechos adquiridos* are also a way to make claims to livelihood outside the law and to push back against municipal practices of unchecked discretionary authority.

Implicitly, *derechos adquiridos* are spatial rights, as vending requires a space and the ability to be physically present in the city. The spatial rights claimed by vendors are different than Henri Lefebvre's right to the city, which calls for the radical democratic distribution of the power to produce city space, a capacity now largely ceded to capital (D. Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996). In contrast, vendors claim the right to livelihood, to participate in markets and to inhabit city space to work. Initially, I conceptualized these claims to spatial rights as linking a particular vendor to a fixed space in the street market. The frequent statements of vendors justifying their occupation by citing the duration of their tenure fueled this perception. For instance Nã Lucia narrated her strategies to resist eviction, exclaiming, "I've been here for 22 years!" gesturing to a

two meter stretch of sidewalk in front of a low, crumbling brick wall on a busy avenue.¹⁰⁰ Yet while vendors' claims to spatial rights are placed, they are not fixed. As Ña Lucia talked more about her history as a vendor, I learned that the physical location of *che puesto*, or "my vending space," had changed several times over the years. Indeed, between 2011 and 2015 Ña Lucia sold from three different spaces in the market. In addition to the spot she referenced as "*che puesto*," Ña Lucia sold from a spot temporarily authorized by the municipality alongside a grocery store. When business was slow in her relocation spot, Ña Lucia occupied a street corner a block down from her first *puesto*, after striking a deal with the shop front owner. While the spatial location of Ña Lucia's claim shifted, her livelihood need remained consistent. When we met in 2013, she was the primary caretaker of one grandchild and paid her son's alimony to the mother of another grandchild. Thus Ña Lucia's mobility within the market coexisted with her claims to spatial rights.

Indeed, shifting urban priorities, captured in Sosa's analysis of Ciudad del Este as a provisional city, necessitates flexible strategies of claims-making. Thus, the rights at play in *derechos adquiridos* are neither the right to the city, as imagined by Lefebvre, nor are they necessarily claims to specific places (*puestos*), even as discourses of tenure duration may hold political purchase in a given moment. In contrast to the rights claimed by squatters in slums and informal settlements, vendors cannot claim property or home ownership through their occupations. The notion of property ownership lurks within the idea of liberal citizenship, which slum residents are able mobilize to their advantage. However, the built form of vendors' occupation does not carry the same signifiers of upward mobility as a home, with a title or bill of sale. Yet, I argue, *derechos adquiridos* are still spatial rights. The spatial practice of acquired rights is *mbohenda*, an incremental space-making revolving around livelihood need and family wellbeing. *Mbohenda* welcomes state support, when it is forthcoming, and cultivates useful connections to the state apparatus, but *mbohenda* does not seek its legitimation in law.

I learned how vendors used discourses of rights by accompanying evicted vendors seeking authorization to relocate. For instance, Magdalena and her associates sold *tereré*, a popular cold tea infused with medicinal herbs, key to social life throughout Paraguay. These women did not have documentation of their claims, strips of street between parked taxis and vendor's stalls. However, during the eviction, a municipal official promised a relocation. But how to get the municipality to make good on its promise? Magdalena staged a campaign, visiting the municipality each morning at seven, hoping to catch a municipal official disposed to honor the promise. Magdalena called her insistent waiting being "*hovyhata*" or hardheaded, so persistent the municipality would grant her relocation. Magdalena also invoked her urban rights. Once Magdalena and I waited together for meetings with Santiago Torres. A municipal employee advised Magdalena, saying she should pray, asking God to put care in the heart of Santiago Torres so he would authorize relocation. Magdalena retorted, "We have rights!," naming the promise, accusing municipal officials of lying and of treating her like a fool.

There are several ways to interpret Magdalena's invocation of her urban rights. Did she use the language of rights as a rhetorical device to wear down municipal officials with her hardheaded persistence? Or did she imagine the extralegal promise extended rights? Or, perhaps, she imagined her right to the city came from somewhere else, not backed by law but rather in her need to feed her seven children? I do not claim a definitive interpretation of how Magdalena interpreted her rights to city space. However, I do argue that thinking through *derechos*

¹⁰⁰ Ña is an honorific similar to Doña.

adquiridos as spatial rights can help us rethink the meaning and purpose of cities and public space.

Months after Magdalena's confrontation with the municipal bureaucrat over her rights to street space, Magdalena had still not extracted definitive permission to relocate to another spot in the street market. Yet neither had municipal officials revoked their promise. Inhabiting a space between toleration and condemnation, Magdalena took out a loan to rent a small *casilla* in a low traffic zone of the street market. When I returned in 2015, livelihood need had compelled her to reoccupy her old vending space without municipal permission. Magdalena's story demonstrates how it is one thing to claim a right, another to inscribe it in law and yet another to make it meaningful, by transforming a formal right into a substantive one. Economic geographers have convincingly argued that global capitalism tends to elevate property rights and the right to profit, priorities that get written into the very space of the city. Rights collide and compete. David Harvey notes these rights of property and profit are often treated as fundamental rights, while reducing other rights to a secondary status (Harvey, 2008). These derivative rights might include the right to dignified work or the right to freedom from poverty and its consequences, including early death. *Derechos adquiridos* emerge from the everyday experiences of marginalized urban residents as they make claims for a space in the city as a necessary substrate of livelihood. Thus they are engaged rights, rather than abstract ones, as those that claim *derechos adquiridos* insist that there should be a place for them, too, in the city. *Derechos adquiridos* do not offer a comprehensive solution when multiple claimants seek to participate in a trade economy that cannot meet everybody's needs. Yet, as an ethical orientation, *derechos adquiridos* and vendors' claims of the right to work in the city are useful challenges for planners' imaginations, pushing the discipline to consider urban space as a site of work and livelihood.

4.3 The Contingency of Legality

The last section examined the popular vernacular of acquired rights as a means to justify extralegal occupation of street space by vendors. The import of discursive struggles over the boundaries of urban belonging is accentuated in Ciudad del Este because of the flexibility and contingency through which municipal officials use law. In this section I describe the contingency of legality, one dimension of regulation by ambiguity.

The Precarious Use Tax

In the early days after the founding of Puerto Presidente Stroessner, representatives of the authoritarian state held significant authority to extend or deny privileges to occupy space in the street market. Many vendors gained authorization to occupy through political connections to the Colorado Party. Early vendors' associations formed, gaining authorization for commercial activities in public space from the appointed Administrative Commission. These associations attempted to limit access to commercial possibilities to the original 108 vendors of the first two vendors' associations.¹⁰¹ Other vendors, without backing from a local patron, simply built

¹⁰¹ The first two vendors associations were the United Association of Sunglasses-Sellers (Asociación de Lenteros Unidos) and the Association of Vendors of Artisanal Goods (Asociación de Vendedores de Artículos Típicos).

vending stalls on the sly. The first census from 1987 mapped these pathways of occupation (Figure 28).

Figure 28. The first census of street vendors, conducted in 1987

PROPIETARIOS	m ²	CONTRATO Nº	INQUILINOS	PAGO	OBSERVACIONES
41- Francisco Sanchez		si	Autoriz. por el Intendente		
42- Mayor, Alfonso		no	sin autorización		
43- Sr. Martinez		si	Autoriz. por el Inten.		
44- Patrona de Martinez		si	" " "		
45- Andres Samaniego		si	" " "		
46- Rene E. Saldívar		si	" " "		
47- Agueda de Barrios		si	" " "		
48- Genaro Retamozo		si	" " "		
49- Jorge Maidena		si	" " "		
50- Higinio Benitez		si	" " "		Reubicado por el Dcto.
51- " "		no	Adm. anterior		
52- Cesario Alemeda		no	" "		
53- Nazzer Yome		no	Sin autorización		
54- Julio C. Perodi		si	Adm. anterior		
55- Hernan Estobar		si	" "		
56- Guillermo Portillo		"	" "		
57- Pascual Arenda		"	" "		
58- Nicenor Peredeas		"	" "		
59- Ruben Rojas y otro		"	" "		
60- Ramon Gonzalez y otro		"	" "		
61- Tomas Martinez		"	" "		

Source: (Cardenas, 2007, p. 163)

The designation “authorized” here indicates a Colorado Party member extended his personal approval to occupy, a status that does not equate with legality or a spatial occupation aligned with a clear legal code.

Since the late 1980s, several local proposals contemplated regularization after occupation, although toleration and forbearance of vending was the norm through the mid-2000s. Local ordinances outlined authorization procedures and spatial requirements, like dimensions of vending infrastructure and distance from shop fronts. Any vendor can solicit regularized status, which requires a vending license and payment of a small “precarious use tax” (*el canon del uso precario*), a token monthly fee levied to align occupations with public space law. A municipal ordinance in 1986 established the precarious use tax to bring occupations in line with constitutional restrictions on the use of public space that forbids sale or appropriation for private gain. Officially, the precarious use tax opened up a pathway towards regularization of existing occupations, although through the 1980s and 1990s few used it. Regularization is a long, unpredictable process and forbearance—non-enforcement of public space law—had long been the norm.

The precarious use tax reentered the scene with municipal plans to “formalize” the street market, a cornerstone of Javier Zacarías’ urban policy. With “formalization” on the agenda,

municipal administrators found new uses for the precarious use tax. The 1990s has been a contentious decade of challenges for Ciudad del Este. Street vendors had successfully lobbied for the expropriation of the nine hectares, a major win for vendors associations affirming that ordinary Paraguayans had an official place in the economy of circulation. Vendors had also been major players in frontier uprisings in 2001 to defend against evictions, including a multi-day bridge blockade that paralyzed the country. Into this post-authoritarian conjunctural moment, old, overt strategies of patronage and violence no longer could be deployed. It is in this moment that the precarious use tax as a flexible technology of government was pulled from the vault.

On paper, the precarious use tax offers a pathway towards legalization of irregular claims. In interviews, municipal officials often presented the precarious use tax as a straightforward process of extending the power of the local state to order urban space. In this perspective, the goal is to align the actions and occupations of vendors with the law. In this context, I was surprised when some of the vendors evicted during the Thirty Day Plan—a municipal campaign to enforce use of space ordinances during June of 2013—could demonstrate proof of up-to-date payment of the precarious use tax. Seeking to understand this contradiction, I interviewed Mauricio, the President of a vendors association affiliated with the Federation and known for supporting the municipal plan to ‘clean up’ city streets. I questioned him about the abrupt, unexplained evictions of officially formalized vendors and he explained the constitutive temporariness of all vendors’ claims. Mauricio said,

"...the right to the fee—or to pay the sidewalk tax—is autonomous to the municipality. Autonomous means that the municipality can decide right now to kick you out of your vending space, to speak directly. [The municipality] is autonomous. Because the question of sidewalk ... is like this: 1.60 meters from each building or the boundary of each property... this means there must remain 1.60 meters where four people can circulate. 1.60 meters. On the other side of the 1.60 meters it is the property of the municipality. And it's here that we [street vendors] use, outside of the 1.60 meters. While they do accept tax payment, you are legal, but when he doesn't accept payment the next month, then you are *immediately illegal*" (Personal communication, July 2013 [emphasis added]).

As expressed by Mauricio, legality is produced via municipal discretion. Even with the proper documentation of regularized status, Mauricio says, municipal officials can unilaterally decide to stop accepting payment of the precarious use tax, a move that then produces the vendor as “immediately illegal.” This practical contingency of legality is one feature of local practices of governance. In addition, Mauricio invokes municipal autonomy, that slippery legal figure the municipality uses to evade nationally mandated audits of its budgets and refuse compliance with several court orders, as previously discussed. Yet as the municipality devised new political technologies to order urban space after the fall of Stroessner in 1989, authoritarian logics of discretionary authority remain, articulating with the next generation of governing practices. Indeed, vendors who choose not pay the precarious use tax told me it was not worth the effort since payment did not, in practice, guarantee tenure security. Furthermore, the solicitation process could take years. The logic of “immediately illegal” illustrates how local administrators govern through regulation by ambiguity.

The ethnographer Fernando Rabossi captures the moment just before a shift in municipal strategies, when the caudillo Javier Zacarías Irun turned to more aggressive urban development plans, including the formalization project known as the Pilot Plan. Rabossi quoted a local *fiscal*, a municipal bureaucrat charged with maintaining order in the street market. The *fiscal* described street vendors as working in a “permanent irregular situation.”

“There are few who have done the petition [for the precarious use tax]. In truth, the majority live in a *permanent irregular situation*. We [*fiscales*], what we do is monitor that they don’t transgress, we intervene if they step on the rights of others. The biggest part of our work has to do with this, to work towards establishing an equilibrium and harmony among them. We, from the Municipality, we encourage them to regularize their situation, but they don’t do it” (cited in Rabossi, 2010, p. 117, emphasis added).

The fiscal described his job as “working towards establishing an equilibrium” (*lograr establecer un equilibrio*). This phrasing evokes the constancy of labor required to push back on encroachments, mediate conflicts, and adjudicate the tenuous line between legitimate vendors and interlopers, *verdaderos mesiteros* and *golendrinas*. This equilibrium is a social accomplishment, the attainment of a minimum of spatial harmony or agreement over who sells from where, rather than a project of aligning the spatial practices of street vendors with the law. The import and practical power of the precarious use tax is as a contingent political technology that helps to shepherd in new practices of establishing an equilibrium, under increasing pressures for formalization.

I initially saw the June evictions as events occurring *in spite of* the partial formalization process underway in Ciudad del Este. However, I now argue that dispossession runs *through* processes of formalization, what might be called dispossession by formalization. By pulling the precarious use tax out of the vault in conjunction with the introduction of the Pilot Plan, a new set of governance practice mediated street vendors’ claims. Yet the street market in Ciudad del Este is still characterized by multiple competing interpretations of vendor claims, each ambiguously backed by law. Legality and formality are not about regulatory adherence, but rather the capacity to stabilize one interpretation or set of claims against competing claims. Legality and formality, then, are best thought of as a temporarily stabilized status negotiated through situated and contested social relations. In short, the municipality actively maintains vendor claims as contingent, always requiring ongoing defense.

Resignifying Theft

The boundaries over urban belonging are also enforced through force. National political leaders in the capital city referred to the “social problem” of street vendors in Ciudad del Este, a euphemism for the protests, blockades and land occupations that sporadically broke out in Ciudad del Este, especially during the tumultuous years after Stroessner’s fall and before Javier Zacarías took control of the municipality. Several weeks into the Thirty Day Plan, the tense environment of uncertainty, anger, and distrust boiled over. Vendors told me stories of an altercation between Director Hugo Domínguez and an evicted vendor. Domínguez provided a spark, kicking over the humble vending table of an elderly woman after she refused to abide by

the eviction order. Another vendor rose to her defense, punching and knocking over Domínguez. I joined the crowd a few minutes after the igniting spark, at the urging of a street vendor who received word of the action on his cell phone. A throng of several hundred vendors marched through the streets, chanting *Mondaha! Mondaha!*, Guaraní for thieves. A small group of municipal officials ran ahead, followed by a line of Special Operations police officers (*Grupo Especial de Operaciones*) brought in to protect municipal officials from the crowd. Excitement flashed in the eyes of onlookers as the crowd ran the *fiscales* out of the market.

In a city where multiple registers of the practices of power articulate, Domínguez embodied a masculinist authority which sought legitimization not in law but in might. Domínguez was a controversial figure known for violent outbursts and rumored to have spent time in prison as a result of his involvement in the failed 1996 military coup spearheaded by General Lino Oviedo, a controversial caudillo whose populist rhetoric mixed with authoritarian tendencies. As an Oviedista, Domínguez was connected to the military wing of the Colorado party. During our interviews, his bearing was rigid and he expressed views I found shocking, including advocating mass sterilization as a solution to extreme poverty amongst local indigenous groups. His treatment of vendors during the Thirty Day Plan was derisive, and I saw him throw an eviction notice at the feet of a food vendor without looking her in the eyes when she refused to accept the piece of paper that stripped her of her livelihood. Yet this logic of power also could extend protection, and I also witnessed him extend provisional authorization to occupy street space to an elderly woman, slated for eviction.

A group of recently evicted vendors marched with raised fists at the front of the crowd, chasing out municipal *fiscales*. One of them, Ña Gabriela, had spoken a few days before to another group of evicted vendors, arguing the street rebellions against municipal practices of governance indexed a new moment in municipal-vendor relations, saying, “We were ignorant, but now we are awake... we have lost our patience, now we have all risen up!” She also shared the story of her stand off with Director Domínguez, and her own confrontational stance as she rejected the municipal relocation spots offered to her group after their eviction, tiny slivers of sidewalk in an already crowded part of the market. Ña Gabriela described Domínguez’ response to her challenge: “if you behave like this, I am not going to give you a vending space” (“*si comportes asi, no te voy a dar un puesto*”). In this exchange, Domínguez demanded submission to his authority as a condition of granting relocations to Ña Gabriela and her colleagues after their eviction. Ña Gabriela warned the other vendors that the municipality planned to strip the sidewalks of vendors, wanting them bare (“*nandi*”). The crowd of vendors chasing *fiscales* out of the market marched against the threat of bare sidewalks and mistreatment by officials like Domínguez.

By chasing out the *fiscals*, the crowd challenged Domínguez’ masculine assertion of control over urban space. When the crowd reached the end of the central market, the police turned toward the crowd and formed an undisciplined line, protecting the *fiscales* as they went back to work, ordering the owners of small storefronts to remove mannequins displaying flashy blue jeans from the sidewalk. Director Domínguez began pacing in the middle of the street. Several police officers trailed him, jogging to keep pace. His nonsensical route wove loopy figure eights through the middle of the street, chest puffed out, his determined strutting communicating his re-claimed capacity to move through city space as he saw fit; a capacity he put on display for the crowd. Eyes bulging, Domínguez pointed angrily at two young men, the president and vice president of an association of fruit vendors, *ambulantes*. The police officers

immediately arrested the young men, arrests that recalled the detentions of dissidents under Stroessner, justified by political affiliation rather than legal transgression. I stood with the crowd, downhill from the police line with a group of young men, our view partially blocked by half clad mannequins set on the sidewalk. A photographer held his camera high, photographing the thinning crowd; still several hundred strong. Suddenly shots rang out and confusion ensued, most of the crowd fled downhill back towards the city center, away from the undisciplined line of police officers. The *fiscales* abandoned their project of enforcing codes regulating sidewalk use and beat a hasty retreat under police cover. A young man removed his shirt, displaying fifteen bloody welts from the rubber bullets just fired. The crowd that remained followed the retreating *fiscales* around the corner, coalescing on a corner within view of the pedestrian bridge at the entrance to the street market.

As street vendors shouted ‘*Mondaha! Mondaha!*,’ Guaraní for thieves, they expressly recognized the contingency of legality. In one register, the shouts of *mondaha* can be read as outrage at rumors that municipal employees illegally confiscated merchandise from vendors, later reselling the goods. Yet, in another, vendors did more than voice suspicion of individual acts of municipal corruption. In resignifying theft as a commonplace practice of state actors, these vendors redrew the boundaries of the illegal such that it included “state spaces” (N. Brenner, Jessop, Jones, & Macleod, 2008, p. 1), exposing legality and formality as contingent attributes, never more than temporarily stabilized in ongoing contestations over the boundaries of the legal and the formal themselves.

The ambiguous, permanently temporary status of street vendors is often read as signaling an incomplete or incompetent planning process. In contrast, I argue it is the directed management of urban space to forge political dependencies between street vendors and elected municipal regimes. By maintaining vendors’ claims as tenuous, municipal actors generate political support through extending, or threatening to revoke, provisional authorization to street space. The perpetual contingency of claims renders vendors dependent on fickle municipal recognition. Some vendors temporarily stabilize their claims by enrolling in relationships of contingent reciprocity with municipal officials. This flexibility is a Janus-faced political resource, simultaneously offering vendors a means to make claims and municipal officials justifications for evictions.¹⁰² The frame of incompetent planning obscures the governance possibilities opened up through processes of ambiguity, uncertainty, and contingent enforcement.

4.4 Spatial Strategies of Governance

Since the 2000s, several state projects sought to maintain the profitability of the border trade while re-habilitating the image of Ciudad del Este as a competitive global city. One key municipal project, the Pilot Plan, promised to formalize the street market by extending standardized, state-owned vending stalls along the market’s central corridor. In this section—under the broader frame of regulation by ambiguity—I discuss the spatial dimensions of technologies of governing made visible through contestations over the rollout of the Pilot Plan. Recall, regulation by ambiguity is a repertoire of governance practices that operate through

¹⁰² In a similar vein, the sporadic community aid programs organized by Ciudad del Este’s municipal administration in the poor neighborhoods on the peri-urban fringe are “solidarity without obligation...forms of obligation recognized by the municipal government [that] never quite become entitlements” (Schuster, 2012, p. 128).

contingent enforcement of the law and negotiability over the use of urban space. I show how the ongoing reorganizing of vendors within the street market attendant to the Pilot Plan—municipal orchestrations of space—contribute to the ongoing maintenance of vendors’ claims as tenuous, a spatial strategy of governance that reworks authoritarian practices of power under a new banner of formalization and the globally competitive city. I also investigate the knowledge practices that accompany regulation by ambiguity, including a census that municipal planners promise will produce fairness in the redistribution of coveted vending spaces within the Pilot Plan. Yet, I argue, the power of the census as a spatial technology of knowing, lies more in its ability to obscure, rather than clarify, the relationship between individual vendors and particular spaces in the street market.

Ongoing Spatial Reorganization

In November of 2003, then mayor Javier Zacarías Irun proposed the Pilot Plan as a way out of the stalemate over development on the nine hectares. Reaffirming the commitment to relocate street vendors to the nine hectares, Zacarías proposed the Pilot Plan as temporary infrastructure upgrades—to be built in four stages (*etapas*)—in order to improve the working conditions of street vendors while the municipality sought a business partner to build a future shopping center on the nine hectares. Occupying two streets paralleling the main thoroughfare, Ruta 7, the Pilot Plan creates a corridor of semi-regularized space cutting through the informalized space of the street market. Figure 29 shows the city’s *microcentro* with the Pilot Plan area along the central corridor. Today, vendors in the first three stages of the Pilot Plan occupy state owned, upgraded infrastructure with electricity and numbered stalls (Figures 30 and 31). An aerial view in Figure 32 shows the completed upgrades on the left, and the patchwork of self-built stalls on the right. Construction proceeds incrementally. The first three stages of infrastructure upgrades, designed by the municipal planning division, were completed before my fieldwork began in 2011. As of this writing, the final, fourth stage (*cuarta etapa*) remains unfinished.

Figure 29. Map of the *microcentro*



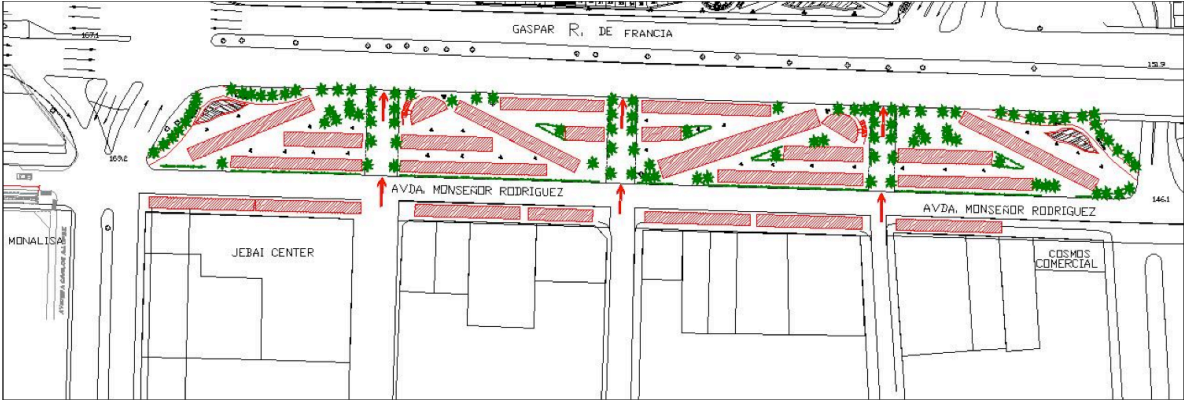
Source: Municipality of Ciudad del Este

Figure 30. Upgraded vending stalls in the Third Stage



Source: Municipality of Ciudad del Este

Figure 31. Municipal plans for the upgraded vending infrastructure



Note: Upgraded stalls are in red. *Source:* Municipality of Ciudad del Este

Figure 32. Aerial map of the upgraded vending infrastructure



Note: Upgraded vending infrastructure is on the left, extralegal construction on the right.

Source: Google Earth

Fifteen years into the Pilot Plan, municipal strategies of governing maintain the tenure of all vendors as tenuous. The official legal status of vendors in the Pilot Plan is unchanged. Officially, any vendor can solicit and attain regularized status through the payment of the precarious use tax. However, capricious bureaucratic practice means that the Municipality may, without explanation, stop accepting the tax payment thus rendering the vendor “immediately illegal.” However, in practice, vendors’ claims within the Pilot Plan zone are more stable. However, this increased stability is not due to alignment between spatial practice and the law. Rather, the increased stability of claims within the Pilot Plan results from political deals struck between the Federation (*La Federación de los Trabajadores de la Vía Pública*) and the Municipality. Federation leadership supports the Municipality and its urban development plans, stepping in during moments of conflict to offer vocal support, which we will see in the next chapter. In addition, vendors inside the Pilot Plan gain *de facto* tenure security by *looking legal*,

that is, in more closely approximating circulating aesthetic norms of what the global city should look like (Ghertner, 2015). The Federation, claiming to represent about half the vendors in the street market, supports the Pilot Plan as a way to keep out ‘illegitimate vendors’ like *golendrin*s, clarifying the boundaries of inclusion by drawing spatial boundaries between the authorized and unauthorized.

Some vendors, like Lina and Ingrid, appreciate the improved working conditions of the infrastructure upgrades. Others, however, object to the provisional character of the upgrades. Indeed, the architectural design and building materials of the upgrades are relatively insubstantial: lattices of metal scaffolding, a table atop small storage boxes and corrugated tin roofs. Indeed, the Pilot Plan upgrades look as if they were built in order to be torn down. One ex-Federation leader explained why he refused to sign the key *acuerdo* (agreement) with the Municipality, a key document in which the Federation withdrew support for protesters occupying the nine hectares in exchange for promises of formalization and upgrades. This leader argued that the *acuerdo* enabled the *down*-grading of vendors’ infrastructure, in which brick and mortar buildings were replaced with wall-less vending stalls with tin roofs (Figure 33). Another vendor pointed to the screws used to bolt stalls to concrete, commenting that as they were erected, they could be torn down. It would only require a bit of un-screwing.

Figure 33. Demolition of a Futuro gallery for the Pilot Plan upgrades



Source: Municipality of Ciudad del Este

Indeed, fierce battles have preceded each segment of the Pilot Plan’s construction and the anticipatory demolitions of vendors’ ad hoc infrastructure. Battles over the initial launch of the Pilot Plan construction were especially tense, as many vendors feared it paved the way for their eviction. Established vendors in Futuro 1, Futuro 2 and Futuro 3—those extralegal constructions facilitated by the deal-making skills of Stroessner’s mistress Nata Legal—stood to lose their large *casillas* and opposed the Pilot Plan on those grounds. Indeed, charged

negotiations over the boundaries of inclusion accompanied the allocation of upgraded vending spaces at each stage of the Pilot Plan's extended roll out. The extended time horizon of the Pilot Plan extends the timeframe of contestation over the boundaries of inclusion.

Occupations and forced evictions occurred again in 2014, preceding the fourth and final phase of the Pilot Plan, the *cuarta etapa*. Negotiations over which vendors would be included in the *cuarta etapa* continued throughout the four years of my study. The municipality organized at least three different censuses, each census producing a list of "legitimate" vendors authorized to claim space in the *cuarta etapa*. Contestation over inclusion on these lists was fierce. Political fixers known as *operadores* acted as go-betweens, mediating between municipal bureaucrats and street vendors. As the Pilot Plan approaches completion of the *cuarta etapa*, vendors in multiple "informalized" zones of the street market hope for inclusion. Through conversations with dozens of vendors and several association presidents, I finally grasped the political pivot: the number of municipal promises for relocation into the final stage of the Pilot Plan significantly exceeds the actual number of vending stalls available for distribution.

The Municipality cited lack of national funds to explain project delays. In contrast, outspoken opponents of the current authorities describe the Pilot Plan as series of clientelistic bribes in a cynical plan to generate votes for Sandra McLeod, the current mayor and wife of Javier Zacarías. While I cannot verify claims of corrupt vote-bank politics, I can specify the *effects* of particular practices of governing. The constant redrawing of the boundaries of inclusion is a political resource for municipal authorities, producing the raw material for municipal promises. Ongoing spatial re-organization of the street market is thus politically useful. Further, the Pilot Plan contributes to producing a highly differentiated micro-geography of stability and risk in the street market, differentiating the *de facto* tenure security of vendors within the Pilot Plan zone from those who work outside it. By constantly reorganizing the street market, the municipality keeps vendors in a state of persistent negotiation to defend their claims to urban space. The spatial and legal realms come together, maintaining the tenure of all vendors as tenuous, a condition Oren Yiftachel calls 'permanent temporariness' (Yiftachel, 2009, p. 244).

Studies of formalization tend to assume clarifying the rules that organize space and acceptable economic practice will increase certainty (Mel, McKenzie, & Woodruff, 2012). In a similar vein, municipal bureaucrats speaking of the Pilot Plan emphasized conquering the disorderly spatial practices of the urban poor through the rationalized extension of universal rules to regulate the use of space, a narrative that aligns with dominant understandings of formalization. However, my ethnography of the everyday practices of regulation reveals a different set of stakes. Rather than aligning spatial practice with the law, formalization articulates new practices of dealmaking. The Pilot Plan redraws the boundaries of inclusion, unsettling the old equilibrium of toleration and forbearance. It is a messy process of sorting out competing claims, necessarily running through existing social structures of power. Upgrading and formalization projects are a current best practice trend in planning and development. Understanding the social complexities of these projects, including how they can buttress exclusionary processes of urban development operating at other scales, is crucial for planners concerned with justice.

Street vendor politics are often glossed as clientelism. The broad literature on clientelism spans disciplines from economics to anthropology. Historically, this literature has stressed these relationships as hierarchal and reciprocal political relationships, facilitated by face-to-face interactions, and an obstacle to effective democracy. Generally, there is a presupposed

opposition between hierarchical clientelism and horizontal grassroots activism, with a loud choir of scholars arguing the clientelism “frustrates collect claims making, and isolates and atomizes citizens” (Auyero, 2014, p. 120). More recent research emphasizes the centrality of prior social ties and the ongoing work of brokers in activating and maintaining clientelistic networks. In contrast to the bulk of the literature which focuses on the macro-social dynamics, elections outcomes and impacts on resource distribution, political anthropological approaches attend to the creative agency of clients as well as the repetitive daily interactions which structure these networks. In particular, political anthropologies of clientelism argue that long-standing, everyday relations between brokers and residents are just as central as the short-term material exchanges which buttresses the livelihood strategies of the poor in conditions of economic distress (Alvarez Rivadulla, 2012; Auyero, 2000; Hilgers, 2009, 2012). Auyero focuses on “habituation” to networked relationships of the urban poor and political leaders (Auyero, 2014, p. 118). Habituation is a useful frame in that it decenters macro social processes like electoral trends, scaling down the lens of analysis to subjectivity formation and ongoing performances of political connectedness. It is in this register that affective dimensions of regulatory uncertainties gain the power to stabilize hierarchal networks of contingent reciprocity, reproducing inequality.

Appadurai’s frame of the metonymic prison, discussed in chapter two, reveals how ideas have spatialized political imaginaries. As such the concept of clientelism may carry along with it notions of modernity. The metonymic prison of clientelism rests on an ideal-type imaginary of liberal, representative democracy. Within such a worldview, liberty-seeking, autonomous individuals demonstrate the habits of democratic modernity through the rituals of electoral democracy, in particular the self-interested vote. In liberal democratic theory, as instantiated today through worldwide projects of structural reform, the moment of casting the vote should be a rational, rather than emotional act. The vote should represent one’s interests, an act of affiliation with a party whose promised policy changes will benefit the voting individual. Seeking responsiveness at the moment of enforcement, rather than the moment of policy-making, is also viewed as a distortion. Clientelistic exchange violates these notions of modern democratic engagement and is thus lamented as an un-modern act. Yet, politics bleed outside the time-bound event of voting and electoral campaigning. Decades ago James Scott described how politics infused relationships of enforcement, a post-electoral site of contestation (Scott, 1969). The Latin Americanist Alicia Holland argues that selective non-enforcement of the infractions of the poor can redistribute wealth when the welfare state is weak (Holland, 2015). Across Latin America such legal transgressions are common. Against perspectives that restrict politics to voting or policy-making, here enforcement is political.

Some versions of clientelism at work in Paraguay presume this spatialized notion of modernity, in which clientelism will be supplanted by more liberal democratic practices as the country climbs up the “ladder of development,” that is, more closely approximating the institutional ideal-type forms given by Western liberal nation-states. The Paraguayan historian Milda Rivarola, identifies a major transformation during the long transition to democracy as the decentralization of entrenched patronage relations, expanding from a centrally-managed hierarchy with Stroessner as the hub to a more expansive network where specialized political operatives and local bureaucrats manage diffuse webs of obligation (Rivarola, 2007). Calling this the “decentralization of corruption,” Rivarola locates the emergence of “direct clientelism” during the post-authoritarian period (personal communication, October 2013). Direct clientelism relies on political intermediates to organize networks of contingent reciprocity through which vote bank politics are organized. Indeed, “*punteros*” (leaders, fixers) or “*operadores*,”

(operatives) are crucial for voter mobilization networks for both major political parties. The relational-affective networks *operadores* mobilize require constant maintenance, for instance through house visits, paying small late utility or phone bills, or organizing transportation to the polls. Rivarola cites an interview with a *puntero*, who describes how she sees her role as providing social assistance in the face of state absence:

“...due to the weakness of the State, we take on the role of social assistance; we have to act as social assistance for economic issues, health issues, education issues; with judicial problems in criminal, civil and children’s rights issues; but mostly with economic and health problems” (Rivarola, 2007).

The distribution of state benefits, including access to urban space to the poor for vending, is accompanied by a charged threat, sometimes direct and other times subtle and submerged, that these benefits might be withdrawn. Thus brokers and mediators are key means by which the distribution of care and exploitation is carried through the long strands of a complicated web of relations.

The *puntero* quoted above fits into Morínigo’s schema of *ore* politics, of circulating state benefits within relational networks of a Colorado party in-group. My point is not to contest the observation that *ore* politics exclude. Certainly many gendered and raced exclusions do exist as part of street vendor politics. I saw such exclusions at work during a 2013 occupation of the nine hectares. Some vocal *casilleros* housed in a municipal vending warehouse on a small corner of the nine hectares supported the forcible eviction of the occupation. The ragtag group of occupiers was composed of ambulatory vendors and poor residents of the city’s peripheries, that is, Paraguayans who had not yet attained the outward signs of upward mobility required to be considered “respectable” by the standards of the municipal official described in this chapter. The police forcibly and rapidly evicted the group with questionable procedural adherences to the rights of public speech and assembly. As the group dispersed, the *casilleros* taunted then, shouting “*campesino!*” “thieves!” (*mondaha*) thereby participating the practices of bounding urban belonging along the same lines as municipal logics of respectability. My point is that *ore* exclusions are real and pathologized while liberalism’s exclusions are real and erased via the move to universalize its values.

Populist Epistemologies: I Have Photographic Vision

Municipal officials in Ciudad del Este require specific, enabling practices of knowing both space and urban subjects. In this section, I describe how regulation by ambiguity is undergirded by epistemological practices that proceed through illegibility and opacity. These practices are not an abstract sovereign capacity to activate a state of exception (Agamben, 2005), nor are they the practices of calculation, measurement and mapping, often described as enabling state power (Mitchell, 1999; Scott, 1998). I discuss a form of relational knowing that enables state action, but without relying on the ways of “seeing” often attributed to states that depend on rendering space and subjects knowable through measurement. Rather, these populist epistemologies are forms of governance characterized by arbitrary decision, legal opacity, and spatial illegibility. Thus populist epistemologies are not a developmental stage to be overcome;

these are historically specific modes of governance enabling the economy of circulation and state formation through a project of frontier city-building.

In this section, I describe my encounters with municipal officials as I sought information about how the local state managed urban space for the border trade. As conflicts unfolded over the boundaries of inclusion in the *cuarta etapa*, many vendors expressed confusion about the actual procedures the Municipality would employ to distribute upgraded vending space. The extent of vendors' confusion became apparent as they turned to me as a potential source of information, asking questions about municipal plans for the *cuarta etapa*. A municipal census was a critical technology the Municipality used to claim fairness in distributing Pilot Plan upgrades. Each segment of the Pilot Plan required removing the ad hoc infrastructure of hundreds of vendors during the construction of standardized vending stalls. Before each round of demolitions, municipal authorities recorded the claims of vendors in *el censo* (the census), purporting to distribute space in the vending upgrades based on claims documented therein. In my conversations with municipal officials, they often invoked *el censo* as a technical document cataloging an external object: the spatial distribution of vendors within the street market. Indeed, the urban planning team reported presenting the formalization project as a success at an international conference.¹⁰³

I was surprised that the census seemed to confuse, rather than clarify. One source of distrust arose because the number of municipal promises for relocation into the *cuarta etapa* seemed to exceed the actual number of vending stalls available for distribution. Further, rumors also circulated about the back room price of securing a space on the *cuarta etapa* census. Without fully trusting the census, many street vendors in the zone around the *cuarta etapa* sought to get their names on the census nonetheless. Further, the possibility that the census might yield results, that is, a space in the vending upgrades, enrolled street vendors in negotiations with municipal officials. Adding to the confusion, counter-lists were circulating, produced by vendors associations and rumored to play into the distribution process.¹⁰⁴ An umbrella association, organizing vendors outside the Pilot Plan, began to conduct their own self-census as a defense against the possibility of evictions.

Initially, I thought if I could see the municipal census, I would better understand the criteria for inclusion. Ultimately, the municipality refused to make their census public, to me and to other government agencies.¹⁰⁵ However, my four-year struggle to access *el censo* offers a window into the inner workings of a labyrinthine local state and the felt experience of negotiating with various municipal authorities. It offered the opportunity to experience “walking behind” (*andando detras*) paperwork, a particular set of rituals required to push paperwork along sticky municipal channels in the hopes of compelling bureaucratic action. Consonant with the requirements of *andando detras*, I presented an official letter requesting *el censo* and began staging regular visits to different municipal offices, receiving conflicting accounts of who might be empowered to grant access to the mysterious census. When I told street vendors of my attempts to gain access to *el censo*, they tended to laugh wryly, and comment, “*no'mee ndeve mbae'veite*” (they won't give you *nothing*). Some would share their own difficulties as they tried

¹⁰³ (Municipal architects, personal communication, September 2013).

¹⁰⁴ These counter-lists served different purposes. Rumors circulated that the Federation, a vendors association affiliated with the Municipality, was selling spots on their counter-lists.

¹⁰⁵ The municipality also refused to provide officials from the nearby mega-dam Itaipú with a census of vendors, when the agency sought to charge registered vendors for their electricity use.

to move their *kuatia*, or papers, requesting regularized status through slow and sticky bureaucratic channels.

While municipal officials usually spoke of the census as a technical instrument of fairness, in other moments, the same officials hinted at a mismatch between claims registered in the census and the actual occupations of vendors. Recall the municipal director in charge of managing street vendors, Santiago Torres, who we met in the last chapter, and his comment that vendors “*cambian diariamente*” (change daily), which produced a mismatch between the census and occupants of street space. Instead of focusing on the census as a *failure*, unable to track the fluidity of vendors’ claim, a more ethnographic approach asks how the census works, if it doesn’t objectively catalogue a stable distribution of vendors. Indeed, I argue that the unstable correspondence between the claims registered in *el censo* and the actual occupations in space by vendors is part of how *el censo* works as a forceful political technology.

Usually, municipal officials would defer my request to access the census, suggesting I only needed to ask the right official. Only once did a municipal official directly deny my request, rather than offer a polite deferral. In an interview, Santiago Torres attempted to dissuade me from pursuing the census. In a disorienting conversation, the census appeared as a shadowy figment, something floating just beyond full comprehension. In different points in the interview Torres described the census as belonging to the municipality and therefore not available to the public; as in the care of vendors’ associations rather than the municipality; as unnecessary for my own research purposes, and as superfluous to his program of organizing claims within the street market.

When I pressed Torres on the census in this interview, he ditched the official explanations of a technical census objectively cataloguing external claims. Rather, the director posited the power to see the veracity of competing claims resided in his own bodily capacities. Torres described the politically charged process of conducting the census for the *cuarta etapa*.

“... When the *cuarta etapa* begins, many will be left out because they will not have their documents. And many will say: “But I’ve been here for 16 years!” “for 15 years!” and “Thanks to God, I’ve been here for 22 years!” I know each and every one of them, I know them. *I have photographic vision, I do.* I see them, and I already know where they are from [in the market] and how long they have been there, because I have already done an X-ray (*radiografía*) of all the streets and each one in their vending space” (Santiago Torres, personal communication, June 2013, emphasis added).

I interpret Torres’ claims to photographic vision as referencing how he attempts to order claims to city space through specific knowledge practices. Deploying language of photographic vision and his comprehensive X-ray, Torres claimed exceptional bodily capacities, rooted in his relational knowledge of each vendor and their history. Torres posited his body, not *el censo*, as the appropriate instrument to assess the veracity of vendors’ claims and identify the interlopers, to sort out the ‘legitimate vendors’ (*verdaderos mesiteros*) from encroachers. The primacy of one man’s ‘photographic vision’ as the logic through which vendors are authorized or evicted, is counterposed to *el censo* as a transparent, technical instrument to map objective claims to space.

The flexibility of *el censo* became even clearer during an interview with a famously surly municipal lawyer as I pressed the issue of the census. In contrast with Torres' recent denial, the lawyer assured me access to *el censo*. The lawyer called Torres on his cell phone, asking that I be provided access, perhaps performing his part of the *andando detras* rituals by offering a demonstrable commitment to keeping the documents moving. Privy to the lawyer's half of the conversation, I heard the lawyer ask questions about the status and location of the census. The lawyer repeated Torres explaining why I did not yet have a census. As Torres explained the mismatch between the names recorded in the census and the occupants of street space, twice the lawyer repeated Torres saying, "with names, impossible" (*con nombres, imposible*). It was in this moment that Torres' explained that the vendors "change daily." Learning that a census with names could not be provided, the lawyer asked Torres to supply a report similar to the census prepared for a Japanese-Brazilian urban planning consultant. That report specified the number of vendors in each zone, without recording the relationship between particular individuals and specific spaces within the market. Turning back to me, the lawyer huffily reported Torres had already promised me *el censo*, although he did not clarify which sort of census had been promised.

In this exchange, there are at least two vectors of uncertainty. On the one hand, both Torres and the lawyer engaged in promise-making without consummation. Yet I am more interested in the second vector of uncertainty: the status of the census. What exactly does *el censo* record and enable? Through the theories of good governance and liberal state theory, the instability of *el censo* and the claims to embodied authority through Torres' photographic vision might be interpreted as a lack of institutional capacity or as a weakness of the Paraguayan state. My assessment differs. Rather than evaluate the distance between an ideal-type state and its capacities to render intelligible or calculable space and population, I argue for grounded assessments of the effects of various modes of regulation, including those that operate through flexibility, ambiguity and uncertainty. Even assuming good faith efforts by municipal officials to record vendors' claims, the fluidity of vendors' occupations quickly rendered any census on file as hopelessly outdated, full of mismatches between the recorded claims and the current occupants. Thus the claims mapped by *el censo* did not correspond to the current occupations of space in the street market. While *el censo* is not a technical instrument mapping objective claims to space, it retains the power to condition the livelihoods of vendors. The instability of the census is useful for municipal managers. On the one hand municipal officials use *el censo* as a tool to claim fair allocation of vending upgrades. On the other, the instability of *el censo* is raw material for municipal promises, enabling ongoing, affective performances of populist care giving. Thus, the productivity of *el censo* lies, in part, in its flexibility, the capacity of the census to mean different things in different circumstances. Just as municipal orchestrations of space through the Pilot Plan engage vendors in ongoing negotiations, the census too enrolls vendors as dependent on municipal goodwill.

States have long used censuses as a means to produce knowledge about national populations. But technologies of knowing, like the census, are made possible by practices of power. In Ciudad del Este, the census works through authoritarian logics of secret state documents and discretionary authority. The municipality denies access to information that could be used to hold municipal officials accountable. But more than just a lack of transparency, the census and the Pilot Plan keep vendors suspended in a state of simultaneous toleration and condemnation. Municipal actors thus manage urban space through keeping the legal status of vendors' tenuous and generating ambiguity in the processes of inclusion.

I argue this ethnographic approach helps us see how the census *enacts* the state. By this I mean the census spells out the terms of inclusion for vendors, through confusing negotiations in hierarchal relationships. It conjures a particular relationship between state and citizen and the terms on which the local state will respond to their needs. Crucially, these terms reproduce inequality, enrolling vendors as dependent on the fickle whims of local municipal bureaucrats. In contrast to revealing a lack of state capacity, I argue that these processes of ambiguity, uncertainty, and contingent enforcement are the directed management of urban space. These practices of regulation by ambiguity keep vendors enrolled in negotiations on the terms set forth by the local state. While the extent of discretionary authority claimed by the municipality in this case is extreme, I argue that the concept of regulation by ambiguity can be applied to other urban spaces of extralegal livelihood.

4.5 Conclusion

In the last chapter I described contraband urbanism as a surprising and contingent historical product of Latin American democratization. The end of Cold War authoritarianism impelled innovations in governmental technologies, and the production of frontier space was taken up in new ways. The persistence of authoritarian practices alongside a suite of global ideas of the urban, I argue, does not indicate an incomplete transition to a pre-given, more modern arrangement between state and society. Rather, in this chapter, I argue that regulation by ambiguity and the perpetually uncertain status of street vendors are the directed management of urban space, not an incomplete planning process. Thus, in this chapter, I have discussed how new modes of frontier governance, operative today, work throughout an intense flexibility of legal interpretation and enforcement.

Municipal officials manage the street market by keeping the legal status of many vendors uncertain. Persistent legal uncertainty increases the stakes of discursive debates over the boundaries of urban belonging and legitimate economic practice, fought on the terrain of who counts as a “true vendor” and who is considered to be an encroacher or a swallow (*golendrina*). Recognizing the contingency of law, street vendors occasionally challenge the legitimacy of municipal authority, running them out of the street market and drawing lines around illegality in ways that include state spaces. Formalization articulates with regulation by ambiguity as a spatial strategy of governance. Rather than a project of aligning spatial practice with use of space law, the Pilot Plan redraws the boundaries of inclusion, unsettling the old equilibrium of toleration and forbearance, wrenching open another round of contestation over the boundaries of inclusion. The Pilot Plan also produced new divisions within street vendors, between those inside and outside the Pilot Plan. Most street vendor politics in Ciudad del Este operate on the terms set forth by the Municipality, negotiations over who is included in the category of legitimate vendor. Thus, on balance, regulation by ambiguity reproduces the terms of inequality. However, at the same time, negotiability creates small openings for street vendors. Street vendors push back, promoting the notion of a right to work in the city. *Derechos adquiridos* and the spatial practice of *mbohenda* claim the right to urban livelihood, rooted in embodied need rather than legality or the equal rights of citizens before the law.

Regulation by ambiguity generates inscriptions and opacities, both key to conjuring something understood as the Paraguayan state. The regulatory uncertainty associated with regulation by ambiguity is a crucial part of the state-subject suture. Arbitrariness characterized

authoritarian rule. So too, Santiago Torres' exceptional claims to an embodied knowing of vendors and streets evokes what Augusto Roa Bastos calls "the monothesis of power," whereby singular men seek absolute control. However, today, regulation by ambiguity, as a set of spatialized strategies of governance, articulates with new visions and capacities of the local state to act as an agent of frontier urbanization, through the discourses of formalization and the globally competitive city. I do not take these practices as signs of incomplete transitions to an ideal-type, implicitly North-Atlantic democracy. Rather I follow Teresa Caldeira's and James Holston's work on "disjunctive democracies" in which they argue that the historically-specific contingencies of actually-existing democracies are always a "mix of progressive and regressive elements, uneven, unbalanced and heterogeneous" (Caldeira & Holston, 1999, p. 692). As such, the task for critical scholars is to uncover precisely how contingent assemblages of governance practices, livelihood strategies and insurgent action hang together in particular placed ways.

I offer regulation by ambiguity as a counterpoint to dominant notions of clientelism. Frames of clientelism which envision an instrumental trade of state benefits for electoral votes or favors miss the wide array of regulatory practices—and the ongoing relational work—required of the local administrative state in order to render these governing relationships effective. My account of the management of the street also differs from assessments which see informality as an economic or spatial domain of the marginalized as they respond to the top-down imposition of notions of legality from the state, often out of economic need (Bayat, 1997; Tripp, 1997). More is at stake than a distinction between the legalities of the state and socially constructed notions of licitness originating from the people (e.g. K. Hansen & Vaa, 2004). Rather state practices are fully embroiled in producing domains of informality and extralegality, and governing through them.

These findings contribute to scholarship on state practices under democratization in Latin America, detailing how old authoritarian state practices articulate with new urban priorities of formalization and competitive global cities. I suggest the concept of regulation by ambiguity as directed spatial management can be generalized to other settings where informal and extralegal work is the norm. In the final two chapters, I return to the question of the durability of these networks of continent reciprocity which suture together state and subject, adding an analysis of how these networks are made and remade through everyday, emotionally charged regulatory engagements between the urban poor and municipal state actors. I hone in on the "ordinary space of negotiation" as both the terrain from which claims to urban belonging are imagined and launched (Anjaria, 2011) and also the relational site that materializes something understood as the state.

Part 2: Rethinking Everyday Urban Politics

CHAPTER 5

Uncertainty: An Effect of the State

5.1 Introduction: The Politics of Affect and Emotions

The spatialized technologies of governing discussed in the last chapter produce regulatory uncertainty for street vendors, a condition which generates predictable affective states of worry and uncertainty for vendors. These everyday governance relationships instantiate vendors as subjects of a fickle state that rarely bends in their favor but which maintains the possibility that it might. This possibility is the ground for what vendors name as hope, another affective state. I argue vendors' hope is not naiveté, but an open stance toward future possibilities rooted in the position that hope itself, like other emotions, has the capacity to impact other elements in the social field. In this chapter, I investigate the effects of this uncertainty, both as an embodied experience and as a collective experiential field.

I felt compelled to understand the affective politics of precarity by my experiences spending time with street vendors in Ciudad del Este. In 2013, a particularly entrepreneurial street vendor, Eugenia, described to me the “psychological weight” (*carga psicológica*) she experienced in a series of regulatory encounters with local municipal officials. Income volatility and the everyday difficulties of earning her family’s “daily bread” (*el pan de cada día*) caused anxiety, certainly, but Eugenia also analyzed what she called a “strategy” (*estrategia*) of the Municipality to create interior states of uncertainty and worry. Eugenia’s provocation mixed with my desire to take seriously street vendors’ repertoires of political action, including those that targeted an emotional field present in everyday regulatory encounters between municipal officials and marginalized street vendors.

Since Raymond Williams’ influential work on “structures of feeling,” the Anglophone social sciences have studied the role of emotion in the constant re-making of social relations (Williams, 1978). Structures of feeling can scale up to produce a diverse range of social phenomena, from xenophobic movements to freedom struggles. Williams seeks to connect felt experience, operating at the scale of the individual, with collective, historical processes. Its animating ontology is of constant change and the ongoing co-constitution of social experience and sedimentations of social structures as “forming and formative processes” (Williams, 1978, p. 128). The geographer Liz Bondi argues emotion is necessarily both social and placed, “a relational between-ness” rather than merely individual subjective experience (Bondi, 2005, p. 443). I contribute to these debates by analyzing how governance works through a collective experience of emotional uncertainty.

In this chapter, I show how uncertainty works on multiple scales. In the first section, I consider the scale of the individual, looking at how regulatory relations produce predictable patterns of interior states – emotions, affects, feelings, aspirations—within street vendors. Tracing the experience of one vendor seeking relocation after an eviction, Magdalena, I show how tenure uncertainty necessitates a series of negotiations and interactions with municipal officials over an extended time frame, an experience-saturated string of events that amplifies Magdalena’s felt sense of uncertainty. The result is a process of subjectivity formation for street vendors, what I call a biopolitics of uncertainty. Further, at points of contact between street

vendors and political intermediaries known as *punteros*, emotionally charged negotiations determine the livelihood options of many of the urban poor. Established vendors in the Pilot Plan are also subject to the vicissitudes of regulation by ambiguity, but these affective politics of precarity are especially potent in the informalized zones of the street market where claims to space are more contingent and tenuous.

Emotive topographies of enforcement and the affective dimensions of uncertainty, I argue, act through the collective as well as the individual scale, that is, through structures of feeling. Thus, in the second section of this chapter, I scale up from the individual to the street market in order to describe how municipal managers cultivate, rather than tame, a collective felt sense of uncertainty. I argue that affective uncertainty in Ciudad del Este is best thought of as an effect of the state. Further, uncertainty—as a generalized, collective emotive experience—is available for the political projects of municipal managers, useful in the nebulous, ongoing processes of drawing boundaries between legitimate vendors and encroachers, and indeed, a key political technology enabling an exclusionary development path in which the place of most vendors is tenuous. In the final section, I describe the political difficulties faced by a vendors association, which sought to shape a different state-citizen relationship to counter the biopolitics of uncertainty.

The affective politics of uncertainty matter. The uncertainties of regulation by ambiguity that produce a collective felt sense of uncertainty are key to modes of governing in Ciudad del Este. Yet forbearance and regulatory flexibility are the very ground from which street vendors are able to make extralegal claims to the city. Understanding the contradictory dialectic of affective uncertainties is a better lens through which to analyze relations of rule in Ciudad del Este than transactional models of clientelism, which undervalue the agency of street vendors. Further, understanding the nature of the state-subject suture as an affective tie helps explain the durability of hierarchical relationships of contingent reciprocity that construct vendors as subjects of needs, rather than citizens with rights. While affect is part of the spatialized apparatus of governing, emotion cannot be fully programed or contained. Local governing projects are constitutively unstable, leaving small openings for novel forms of claims-making, and so, in the final chapter, I describe how street vendors in Ciudad del Este deploy emotion to their own ends.

The “affective turn” with the humanities and social sciences sought to bring bodily life and felt experience more fully into analytic consideration as drivers of social action, as a response to perceptions that political theory—still under the influence of Enlightenment thinkers—overvalued reason and rationality. The sprawling trans-disciplinary literature on affect does not coalesce around a single definition of the term. Affect is alternately theorized as felt experience (Redding, 1999), a lived intensity (Massumi, 2002), an unstructured potentiality (Clough, 2007), or a Spinozan bodily capacity underwriting action (Bennett, 2009). While many scholars argue affect emerges from a psychic realm beneath or prior to cognition, this sharp delineation between affect and intentionality is contested (Leys, 2011) and, in practice, many theorists use the term to connote the emotional realm of lived experience that may or may not be available for cognitive processing.¹⁰⁶ I am critical of assuming affect as precognitive excess

¹⁰⁶ A common, though not uncontested, approach within affect theory is to differentiate emotions from affect by defining affect as pre-cognitive and assuming that emotions are available for cognitive processing. Scholars concerned with the ontological grounds of the political, in particular, consider affect to be non-cognitive, inter-personal, and non-representational. For instance, the affect theory pioneer Brian Massumi defines affect as “irreducibly bodily and automatic” (Massumi, 2002, p. 28) while Eric Shouse

located outside ideology or structuring, because, as Claire Hemmings argues, this requires a decisive split between epistemology and ontology (Hemmings, 2005), rather than situated engagements with the relationship between these two key dimension of political lifeworlds (Hemmings, 2012). Thus, I follow feminist approaches that consider affect, felt experience and embodied performance as political, without assigning a particular ontological priority to affect (Ahmed, 2004; Berlant, 2006; Hemmings, 2005, 2012; Leys, 2011) .

Geographers have been instrumental in demonstrating the varied, situated and placed workings—and political stakes—of different affects. A comprehensive review is not possible here, but I highlight the diversity of affective effects considered, as geographers argue affect contributes to producing “thick” places charged by relations of belonging (Duff, 2010), generating passionate attachments to precarious startup labor thereby stabilizing neoliberal economic forms (Cockayne, 2016), or enabling positive “reinscriptions of place” by homeless urban residents (Cloke, May, & Johnsen, 2008, p. 241). Likewise, Vincanne Adams analyzes the post-Katrina “affect economy” in which disaster capitalists and the non-profit sector capture an affective surplus of compassion, channeling an unpaid volunteer labor force into reconstruction (Adams, 2013). I contribute to these debates by demonstrating how uncertainty, and its corollary hope, are simultaneously embodied affects, a collective atmosphere, and a emotive field through which municipal officials govern. To demonstrate this, I draw from Ben Anderson’s work tracing the multivalent capacities of affects (Anderson stresses the plural) (B. Anderson, 2006, 2012, 2014). Anderson differentiates between a collective affective state akin to Raymond William’s structures of feeling, a Spinozan bodily capacity,¹⁰⁷ and a Foucauldian “object-target,” that is, a population level phenomenon through which state actors attempt to govern (B. Anderson, 2014, p. 17).¹⁰⁸

5.2 Hopeful Subjects of Uncertainty

Vendors negotiate with the local state through indeterminate waiting, a relational field of felt experience. Waiting through extended negotiation is a collective and individual experience. Collectively, vendors have been waiting since 1994 for the Municipality to build permanent relocation facilities for street vendors on the nine hectares, land expropriated expressly for that purpose. Others wait for promised spaces in the Pilot Plan upgrades, a drawn out fifteen-year

argues affect is a “non-conscious experience of intensity...a moment of unformed and unstructured potential” (Shouse, 2005). However, another group of scholars critique the ontological approach on the grounds they flatten the rich body of feminist and postcolonial scholarship on the varied capacities of the body (Hemmings, 2005); smuggle in a pernicious binary between biology and culture or rationality and emotion (Leys, 2011); or over-extend their anti-rationalism, thereby eliding the necessary project of “giving reasons” for promoting select affective states over others (Barnett, 2008). Further, Hemmings worries these ontological approaches underemphasize how emotion can also be “a central mechanism of social reproduction” (Hemmings, 2005, p. 551). Even Ben Anderson, a strong advocate for analytic precision in differentiating emotion from affect, argues that much affect theory out of cultural studies tends to celebrate the contingency, openness, and vitality of affect, precisely because of this association between affect as pre-cognitive realm of unrepresentable excess. I count myself among the skeptics of the anti-intentionalist position, and thus read affect through feminist theory.

¹⁰⁷ Many affect theorists, especial in the humanities, trace a theoretical lineage back to Spinoza, including Jane Bennett’s definition of affect as “the capacity to affect and to be affected” (Bennett, 2009, p. 101).

¹⁰⁸ I use this heuristic as a useful tool rather than as an assertion as to the ontological truth of affect.

process. Still others wait for the Municipality to make good on promises of relocation after an eviction. The possibility a vendor may stabilize a current claim or secure relocation after eviction is a key condition rendering the city governable, keeping many vendors in a state of permanent mobilization. In this section, I investigate the embodied experience of uncertainty and its corollary: hope. While the experiential field of uncertainty habituates street vendors to hierarchical patronage relationships, small political openings remain, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

To theorize how the embodied experience of waiting produces a felt sense of uncertainty, I return to Magdalena's negotiations with municipal authorities as she tried to secure relocation after eviction from her small strip of pavement between parked taxis and vendors' stalls. Through Magdalena's story, we can sense the outlines of a common felt experience among street vendors: embodied uncertainty about future municipal actions to regulate the street market, and unintelligibility as a key register of the materialization of the state. Regulatory engagements produce persistent worry, with no clear best moves available to protect claims to vending space.

Waiting contributes to producing governable subjects. Rather than clientelism, I have come to think of the effects of waiting and interminable negotiations as the biopolitics of uncertainty, by which I mean to point to the subjectivity-producing effects of waiting and regulation by ambiguity. Recent ethnographies of the state demonstrate that the quotidian experience of negotiating bureaucracy can produce subordinated subjectivities, especially in the overwhelmed and under-resourced departments that distribute state benefits to the poor. Studying state practice in India, Akhil Gupta finds "bureaucratic action repeatedly and systematically produces arbitrary outcomes in its provision of care," a form of structural violence (Gupta, 2012, p. 6). Javier Auyero argues that the Argentine poor come to know themselves as subordinated subjects through the embodied experience of waiting for state benefits (Auyero, 2011). Feminist geographers juxtapose waiting against its perceived opposite: action-oriented movement, arguing waiting is feminized as passive, as are those who wait (Conlon, 2011).

We met Magdalena in the last chapter, during her campaign of waiting for the Municipality to take action on the promise to find her a relocation spot in the street market. In contrast to stereotypes about waiting as passive, Magdalena's waiting was active, involving repeated visits to different municipal offices, constant calculations of how she might manufacture an encounter with the right municipal official, of strategizing the right combination of words and emotion to elicit the desired response. Most often municipal officials deferred, rather than denied, her requests, with suggestions she return another day, or visit a different municipal office. Such deferrals are so common that street vendors jokingly refer to these municipal tactics of deferral as "the famous 'come back Monday' strategy (*el famoso ejupue lunes*). For Magdalena, the uncertainty stretched over months. Magdalena said,

I've been waiting for three months and there still isn't a solution, there is nothing for me. Nothing. They [the municipality] tricked me, treated me like a fool (*chemo tavypa*), I've lost all faith and I don't know what will happen to me but I will keep on struggling, knocking on doors until they pay attention to me because there is no other way... (Magdalena, personal communication, August, 2013).

As her debts mounted, Magdalena took out another loan to rent space in an undesirable, low traffic zone of the street market. During this time, Magdalena spoke to me often of her worry; without income from the street market she would not be able to send her children to school. Another vendor, Eugenia, described the psychological burden she experienced after her own eviction. Despite her best efforts to regularize and protect her claim to a square meter of space, one month the municipality stopped accepting her payment of the precarious use tax, rendering her “immediately illegal,” as described in the last chapter. While Eugenia described the stressors of economic precarity, she also emphasized how regulatory encounters with municipal officials – marked by dependence on seemingly arbitrary, unintelligible authority – itself impacted her psyche.

Waiting is a common experience of street vendors as they seek action from municipal employees. One morning during Magdalena’s campaign, we waited together, both seeking to speak with Santiago Torres, the municipal director in charge of managing the street market. Magdalena had already spent many hours leaning against a wall of the municipal office of enforcement or standing in the narrow, rickety hallway outside the office of Director Torres. My presence, she would later reflect, helped her secure a brief meeting with Torres as well as the chair reluctantly offered by municipal staff after I arrived: Magdalena usually waiting standing. As we sat together, Magdalena sought information from a stout municipal employee who wore a red suit jacket announcing her affiliation with the ruling Colorado party. Magdalena recounted the financial hardship engendered by the eviction, crying as she invoked her responsibilities as a Catholic, God-fearing mother. The employee counseled prayers beseeching God to put care in the heart of Director Torres. Magdalena retorted “We have rights!,” naming the promise, accusing municipal officials of lying and of treating her like a fool. The employee retorted Magdalena was wrong to invoke rights, but then seemed to think better of it as she glanced at me. The official said, “We all have rights, but they take time.” As the employee hedged about rights, she invoked a specific temporality, one marked by deferment. During my own meeting with Santiago Torres, I asked about the process for someone like Magdalena to secure actionable permission to relocate somewhere in the street market. Torres replied, “They must wait.”

Deferral requires a multitude of negotiations, as Magdalena too well knows. These regulatory relationships instantiate vendors like Magdalena as subjects of a fickle state that rarely bends in their favor but which maintains the possibility that it might. After a month of waiting in municipal lobbies, Magdalena recounted to me how she sought out Javier Zacarías, the powerful ex-mayor, just the man to help her transform her waiting into actionable permission to re-occupy her vending space. To orchestrate her negotiations, Magdalena cornered Zacarías at a ribbon-cutting event. As she recounted her encounter to me, she described Zacarías as someone who really listened, with kind eyes. With hope, she described to me how Zacarías made a phone call to Director Torres in front of her. Zacarías shouted, angrily demanding that Torres resolve Magdalena’s problem. Performing the promise of responsiveness is part of suturing together temporally extended political relationships between municipal officials and street vendors. Yet, Magdalena suspected the call was a performance, a cheap way for Zacarías to demonstrate his populist chops. After six more weeks of waiting, the Municipality neither fulfilled nor revoked the promise of relocation. When I visited her eighteen months later, she had reoccupied her old vending space, aware another eviction could come at any time.

Deferral is a key relational connection between municipal officials and street vendors, as Torres made clear with his phrase “they must wait.” Such deferment is constitutive of temporally

extended relationships of obligations between constituents and elected politicians in Paraguay, and of forms of populist patronage that continue to inflect governance practice since the fall of the dictatorship in 1989. Yet, municipal officials must constantly reenroll vendors in regulatory relationships characterized by waiting. Such relationships require constant maintenance across time, intersubjective performances in which the urban poor retain limited opportunities for maneuver. In a similar vein, the anthropologist Caroline Schuster analyzed the sporadic community aid programs organized by Ciudad del Este's municipality as "solidarity without obligation," political relationships which unpredictably and contingently circulate favors and public services to poor urban neighborhoods (Schuster, 2012, p. 128). Thus a municipal truck rolling into a riverfront neighborhood after a flood with a list of residents slated to receive blankets and foodstuffs is a key part of these performances of solidarity, a form of connection in which municipal officials dictate the terms of the relationships with residents.

Zacarias' phone call was a gesture to generate hopefulness, thereby keeping Magdalena enrolled in her campaign of waiting. Without an incentive to remain engaged, street vendors seek out other avenues of action through resourcefulness and making do, that is, practices of *mbohenda* like Magdalena's reoccupation of her old vending space without municipal permission. Another evicted vendor, Ricardo, described hope as a necessary political resource. As he carefully arranged rows of prescription eyeglasses on his small vending stall, he explained the status of his legal case against the Municipality, seeking restitution for an illegal eviction. Ricardo used the imperative form to say, "one must never lose hope" (*siempre hay que tener esperanza*). In 2011, the courts found the municipality illegally evicted Ricardo's group of vendors and ordered restitution, which included allowing the vendors to return and payment for lost income. Yet in 2015 the Municipality still refused to comply with the court order, a common strategy of a bold municipal administration, which had successfully carved out a wide space of unmonitored action through the legal figure of municipal autonomy.¹⁰⁹ When we spoke, Ricardo and his associates provisionally occupied undesirable sidewalk space in another market zone.

Others also expressed the political utility of hope in the face of difficulty. Fabiana, a street vendor in the *curata etapa* zone explained her disillusionment after a representative of the Federation asked for \$200 USD to include her name on a list of authorized vendors, those controversial, shifting lists, inputs into unstable processes of mediation which influence the future distribution of upgraded vending stalls. We spoke in March 2015, amidst rubble and sewage fumes, nine months after the Municipality demolished her self-built stall and well into interminable negotiations over a municipal census and other lists that named the vendors to be authorized for inclusion. When Fabiana could not pay the \$200, in addition to her monthly dues, her association president vigorously struck her name from the registry of associated vendors, saying, "you are not approved!," a threat to her livelihood. Angry and unsure of the actual power of the counter-lists, Fabiana joined with ATRACI, a vendors association that sought to maintain a more distant relationship with the Municipality. "But one must have hope" (*Pero hay que tener esperanza*) she commented, after speculating that the honesty and dexterity of ATRACI's president with bureaucracy and documents could counter the back room politics of the Federation. When I asked where she got her hope, she said, "From God and the Virgin Mary, only from Him, although everyone has their own form, their way of sustaining hope."

¹⁰⁹ This assertion is based on an interview with the litigating attorney, who chose only to represent vendors who could claim regularized status through payment of the precarious use tax.

I do not read Ricardo's and Fabiana's hope as naiveté or a mere survival strategy. Rather, Ricardo spoke of his hope as cautious openness to the possibility that contingency might align in his favor. Hope, for Ricardo, existed as part of an unstable constellation of elements constantly mixing and re-organizing in the social field. In this reading, the affective orientation of hope was more than a survival strategy amidst clientelistic relationships but itself held the power to affect the relationship among elements in the social field. In the flux of uncertainty, with shifting municipal plans and alliances, the crucial thing, Ricardo said, was to stay engaged and connected, poised for the opening when and if it arose.

Of course, hope has many valences. As quoted at the opening of this section, Magdalena invoked hope as she explained why she rented a vending stall in an undesirable section of the street market as she waited for relocation authorization. Despite poor sales, she said "I keep this spot just to have a small hope that I will make a little something from this place." Her hopeful disposition enables action in the face of severe economic hardship. When vendors lose hope they disappear from the market. I witnessed one vendor become engulfed by hopelessness, evicted despite her up to date payment of the precarious use tax. After months of endless negotiation, exhaustion and despair saturated her voice as she explained to me she had given up. While unsure how to meet her family obligations, she could no longer face the endless work of waiting, nor bear the expense of the daily trips into the city center.

Ricardo's political strategy of tenacious hope aligns with geographers of hope who describe its politically open stance towards future outcomes, able to foment new bodily capacities (B. Anderson, 2006). Hope keeps open lines of connection to municipal officials and other power brokers, crucial resources that may become useful if the political landscape shifts. Such relationships can be re-activated during elections or other moments of conflict. The spatial strategies of governance described thus far keep vendors in a state of constant mobilization, uncertain of the security of their claims to urban space. Zacarías' call on Magdalena's behalf was a performative crafting of hopefulness, keeping Magdalena engaged in drawn out negotiations with municipal officials. Without it, the street market threatens to explode into blockades, occupations, protests, and riots, as it has sporadically over the decades. Thus the ambiguity of hope: individual hopefulness may yield results within the current social order of entrenched power inequities, yet hope enrolls vendors in relationships of contingent obligation that may defer social protest.

Street vendors are accused of trading away their votes for promises of provisional tenure security. Vendors often commented to me that they voted for Sandra McLeod, describing how the mayor visited them personally, promising to respect their claims to space. As the street market is a grey space of pervasive rule-breaking across social class, such political promises are for forbearance, the deferral or non-enforcement of parts of the law. Paraguay has a long history of distributing state benefits, from rural homesteading land to breakfasts for elementary school students to public sector jobs, through political relationships of what I am calling contingent reciprocity and what others call clientelism (Borda, 1989; Nickson & Lambert, 2002; Roett & Sacks, 1991).

Punteros or *operadores* are key intermediaries in political networks of contingent reciprocity. One *puntero*, Benita, wanted to help me understand "the good things that Sandra does." When I met Benita in 2013, she was confronting a municipal official during the Thirty Day Plan, a municipal project to enforce some zoning codes, angry and yelling about the forced removal of a self-installed tin roof that made selling all day in the squelching Paraguayan sun

moderately more bearable. Given her vocal tirade against the Thirty Day Plan, I was surprised that two years later, in 2015, Benita was, indeed, a *puntero*, calling herself a *Sandrista*, a Sandra-supporter, and organizing voter turnout campaigns in her riverfront neighborhood.

One afternoon Benita brought me along to a municipal road inauguration where neighborhood residents lined up to ask for work and favors from Sandra McLeod. Unapologetically, Benita explained affiliation with the Colorado party was a necessary precursor to getting state help, “*ayuda*.” Benita explained the political exchange of favors for loyalty with unflinching directness, asking me rhetorically, why would Colorado politicians provide help to their opponents, “the other team,” (*el otro equipo*) once they were in office? However, Benita’s loyalty required cultivation; maintenance through contact and reciprocity. When two of her sons suffered terrible injuries in moped accidents, she was able to gain access to hospital beds for her sons “through politics,” (*a traves de la politica*). She organized fundraisers, sought loans from neighbors and called in favors to pay mounting hospital bills, including two *pedidos* (requests for favors) to the municipality. As Benita recounted the multiple strategies to get the hospital bills paid, she emphasized the close, personal, affective connections with municipal officials. As evidence of these connections, she showed me the text messages sent by a municipal administrator promising to pay part of her hospital bills, concrete proof of a connection between state and subject. Benita also recalled Sandra’s interpersonal warmth when she arrived at Benita’s home for a campaign event. The personal care that Sandra showed Benita conveyed a relational connection that could, hopefully, be counted on in times of need. After recounting her intense efforts and strategies on behalf of her sons, Benita emphasized the centrality of hope, in addition to personal connections, in securing care for one’s family. She said, “I have strength and hope, one must never lose hope.” Benita’s hope was part of the assemblage of elements that made possible getting hospital bills paid and securing medical care for her family.

The affective tie between party and constituent is strong, resilient but not unbreakable. Indeed, the breaking of these political promises sparked intense feeling of anger and betrayal, even as it was understood as the expected behavior of the political class. Celia, an evicted ambulatory vender discussed in detail in the next chapter, displayed her anger at a community meeting, invoking her party affiliation as a Colorado, lamenting that Colorados, *her* political party, the party of her family, had degenerated into shameful acts of abandonment. She said,

Are we the rats, Ña Sandra? Not too long ago you asked us to vote for you. Governor Lucho Zacarías knows me. I am a voter! I have the documents right here: voter and registered member of the Colorado party! A few days ago I saw you on the news Ña Sandra and you said we are not a recognized vendors association.... Truly, I am proud of being a Colorado, but now I don’t want to say that I am one of you all, I am ashamed of my party! I am a Colorado, I always say this, but this time I ask, “Will I have to renounce my party?” I am a Paraguayan, a voter. Here are my documents! Ña Sandra, we want to have a conversation with you, and what does your secretary say? “We will be in touch.” And meanwhile? What are we to do?! What are we to do?! What will we do?! (May 30, 2013).

Like Celia, other street traders told me of their felt sense of betrayal when the mayor reneged on her promise to respect their claims to vending space, despite their votes. Celia and

others located shamefulness in the betrayal of a political obligation, not in their own use of votes to activate relationships of dependence. Celia delineated the acts of state abandonment: refusing to recognize her vendors association or to respond to requests for a meeting. Further, Celia described how severing the tie binding party and loyal party member would mark a definite, terrible loss. Losing affiliation as a proud Colorado marks cutting a connection to the possibility of state support, as described by Benita, the possibility of responsiveness in times of need.

James Ferguson argues the “emancipatory liberal mind”—animated by ideals of autonomy, liberty, freedom, and independent will—stumbles into discomfort and misapprehension when it comes across “pursuits of subordination,” like trading votes for promises (Ferguson, 2013, p. 223). Ferguson shows how the non-liberal “relational person” is constituted as a dense knot of relations of dependence. Against the presuppositions of the emancipatory liberal mind, these dependencies enable personhood, rather than undermine or degrade it.¹¹⁰ Radical independence, increasing in tandem with increases in surplus labor, severs the ties that make up the relational person and cuts the connections needed to sustain self and family. Indeed, street vendors in Ciudad del Este invest significant energy and work in activating useful ties of dependence, including seeking to turn their votes into a political resource. Benita and Celia violate norms of the liberal individual, seeking connection through political relationships responsive enough to be useful in times of crisis. Both women seek to activate relationships of dependency, a theme taken up more fully in the next chapter. Furthermore, in Paraguay, the long transition to democracy is marked by the reconfiguration of old patronage networks without their replacement by a functioning state safety net or meaningful employment opportunities for most poor Paraguayans. Liberal approaches seek a mythical state where the individual is “free” because they exist outside relationships of dependence. Of course, the notion of an independent individual is a myth (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Macpherson, 1962). The task is rather to work towards less exploitative, exclusionary forms of collective dependence.

Regulation by ambiguity, deferral and waiting all contribute to the biopolitics of uncertainty, the subject-making force of everyday spaces of negotiation that enroll street vendors as subject to the whims of local state actors. This is a fickle state, which vendors critique as unfair; a state that rarely bends in their favor but which maintains the possibility that it might. The state takes shape in the experiences of vendors through these innumerable interactions with municipal officials. The possibility of a favorable outcome, constitutive of regulation by ambiguity, keeps vendors enrolled in political relationships in which they have limited room to maneuver. Uncertainty, fear and worry color the affective content of these regulatory relationships, conditioning the repertoire of political action deployed by vendors. Further, the biopolitics of uncertainty contributes to a process of subjectivity formation of vendors, where they are subjects of need, rather than citizens with rights. Thus far, I have considered how the affective dimensions of uncertainty act on the inner life worlds of individual vendors. In the next section, I shift the scale of analysis from the individual to the market, analyzing how uncertainty becomes of collective emotive field through which municipal managers can govern.

¹¹⁰ James Ferguson says, “[The Ngoni society] was not founded on relations of exchange between liberal, transacting individuals, but on relations of dependence and respect among relational persons. Relations of hierarchy and obligation here did not diminish or fetter the attainment of full personhood, but rather constituted and enabled it” (Ferguson, 2013, p. 226).

5.3 Uncertainty as a Regulatory Field

In this section, I argue that worry, uncertainty and hope discussed in the last section coalesce into a collective structure of feeling. Uncertainty is thus both a de facto legal status of tenuousness of tenure and a shared affective condition produced by regulation by ambiguity. Street vendors offered their own analysis of how municipal managers cultivated uncertainty and fear as tactics of governance. One long-time vendor, Ña Lucia, described this as “creating a state of permanent fright” (*ne’ē la chake*). I extend this idea of cultivating uncertainty as a strategy of governing by connecting to debates about precarity.

A key concern for those studying the cultures of millennial capitalism is the sense that the reproduction of life itself is uniquely precarious. The analytic precarity gestures toward an increasingly common experience of economic insecurity (Standing, 2011), no longer limited to the Global South or marginalized spaces in the Global North (Bremen & van der Linden, 2014), as Fordism is framed as exception rather than the norm (Neilson & Rossiter, 2008). Signaling the range of situated violences producing culturally mediated experiences of precarity, Muehlebach calls it “shorthand for ... the multiple forms of nightmarish dispossession and injury that our age entails” (Muehlebach, 2013, p. 298). Linked to—but distinct from the economic register—Judith Butler describes precariousness as the ontological condition of vulnerability coextensive with life itself (Butler, 2004). While the “precariousness of life” is a shared, existential state, the term precarity describes the uneven social distribution of vulnerability (Lorey, 2015). Most useful for my purposes are the connections feminist scholars like Lauren Berlant make between these different registers of precarity, what she calls “the relation between [precarity’s] materiality in class and political terms, its appearances as an affect, and as an emotionally invested slogan that circulates in and beyond specific circumstances” (Berlant et al., 2012).

I add to these discussions on the affective politics of precarity, arguing that local political technologies intensify the lived economic insecurity of street vendors through a suite of governing strategies. I also describe a different sort of politics of affect than the situated solidarities of recognition that interest Berlant and Butler. Street vendors themselves engage in “affective orchestration” (Berlant, Vishmidt, & Helms, 2010)— a capacity usually attributed to capital or states—as they aim to sidestep eviction by generating favorable, emotional states in municipal officials, a dynamic I describe more fully in the final chapter.

Chake: A State of Permanent Fright

I observed the collective aspects of affective uncertainties as moods in the street market swelled from hesitant worry to rebellious anger as the Thirty Day Plan progressed. The mayor argued that improving the aesthetics of the street market would draw more buyers and jump-start the slumping border trade. Teams of municipal employees swept through the market with the aim of pushing back on the encroachment of public space by vendors and taxi drivers. The municipality promised there would be no evictions, and vendors in informalized zones relied on the mayor’s campaign promise to respect the claims of street vendors. Yet municipal promises clashed with the actuality of the everyday regulatory engagements that followed. Local radio stations began to cover the spot evictions, broadcasting the emotional testimony of vendors newly stripped of their livelihood. Municipal employees confiscated the merchandise of precarious hawkers for being insufficiently ambulatory, an act considered by many akin to theft. A group of vendors arrived early one morning to find their valuable metal roofs gone, rumored to

have been stripped and sold by municipal employees. Ominous yellow spray-paint squares appeared on the street; presumably marking re-ordered vending spaces, much smaller than what most currently commanded (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Spray paint appeared on the streets



Note: Vendors feared the spray paint marked downsized vending spaces.

Source: Photo by author, 2013

As the Thirty Day Plan progressed, the experiential field of uncertainty heightened, mixing with outrage and resignation. The first week of the enforcement campaign coincided with a time in my fieldwork when I was a more familiar presence in certain sections of the street market. I attended street vendors' association meetings and regularly visited vendors in what I thought of as rounds. Aiming to be transparent about my research process, I often fielded questions about my attempts to meet with the mayor, a slim thread of connection, as many vendors also sought meetings with Sandra McLeod de Zacarías to make requests or seek permission to pay the precarious use tax. During the enforcement campaign, the tenor of these visits changed. With old practices of forbearance thrown into question by new municipal actions, vendors began to see me as a potential source of information as they sought to make sense of sporadic evictions, and other augers, like the appearance of mysterious yellow lines on the street.

That street vendors turned to me as a source of information, signals the extent of uncertainty. However, I too had been unable to discern the municipality's plans for the street market, despite interviews with municipal officials and observations of their daily engagements with street vendors. Indeed, I experienced a sense of disorientation as I tried to reconcile statements of municipal intent during interviews with local officials and my observations of seemingly arbitrary evictions, vague promises of relocation for evicted vendors, and no public articulation by municipal officials of a plan, either of sites to be reclaimed from street vendors or plans for relocation of authorized, but dispossessed vendors.

Several community organizations organized against the Thirty Day Plan, decrying a lack of transparency in municipal affairs. In contrast, the Federation, the largest association representing vendors in the formalized zones of the market, supported the Thirty Day Plan, stringing up banners throughout the market announcing their support (Figure 35).

Figure 35. The Federation proclaims support for the Thirty Day Plan



Source: Photo by author, 2013

As resistance to the enforcement campaign swelled, a series of small street rebellions erupted, angry confrontations of groups of vendors shouted down municipal officials as they attempted to deliver warnings or eviction notices. These moments of rupture when uncertainty and fear turned into something else help emphasize that affective uncertainty is a generalized condition. I could sense the collective nature of uncertainty during the Thirty Day Plan, but I could not quite see it. However, at several points worry spilled over into something else, and it took an observable, collective shape. Hopeful subjects of uncertainty are continually enrolled in negotiations with

municipal officials. As such they are less likely to engage in collective, confrontational action. Yet at these moments of rupture collective worry turned to collective anger. Crowds suddenly took to the streets. I described one of these moments in the last chapter, when a crowd of a few hundred ran municipal *fiscales* out of the street market. As they shouted “*fuera*” and “*mondaha*,” municipal officials retreated from the market under the armed escort of Special Operations officers, and the street vendors momentarily reclaimed the streets as theirs. Several other times these crowds spontaneously coalesced during the Thirty Day Plan, moments when collective worry transmuted into outrage. Local organizers sought to capture the momentum, but the emotion of outrage seemed to quickly dissipate back into uncertainty and worry.

During this difficult month, municipal officials evicted Eugenia and other vendors along a section of her block, Avenida Centenario, spurring Eugenia to theorize that part of municipal strategies of governing sought to generate fear and worry as useful emotional states for their urban projects. Eugenia’s bloodshot eye twitched as she recounted the extended series of events culminating in her eviction and the subsequent struggles of the newly-formed block association to advance negotiations with the Municipality under direction of a president whose loyalties were questionable. While the term eviction connotes a singular event, eviction unfolded as an extended process for Eugenia and her colleagues, beginning with rumors that their street was slated for clearing, followed by news that the Municipality, without explanation, stopped accepting payment of the precarious use tax by the few vendors on that block that had regularized their claims. On eviction day, Eugenia resisted, and municipal officials forcibly confiscated her small vending cart in a scuffle that injured Eugenia. The aftermath prolonged the uncertainty, as the block association launched a short-lived protest, which they abandoned after word from the Municipality made clear that a coveted meeting with the Mayor was conditional on disbanding protest tactics for a non-confrontational politics of negotiation.

Other vendors also alluded to the production of uncertainty as a strategy of governance. In the months following the Avenida Centenario evictions, I sat on an overturned wood crate next to Ña Lucia as she sold plastic bags of raw peanuts, medicinal herbs for cold tea and soda bottles refilled with honey the hue of gold. Ña Lucia told stories of the city’s early days, before paved roads and just after the inauguration of the International Friendship Bridge. Speaking with authority, confident her actions aligned with God’s will, Ña Lucia explained the circumstances leading to her eviction, along with forty others in her zone of the street market. Most of the Avenida Centenario association had lost faith their new association president—a man I perceived as dodgy—would be able to cut a deal for relocation with the Municipality and so sold on the sly in less desirable market zones or on a nearby side street in a zone designated by the Municipality. In contrast, Ña Lucia had reoccupied her old vending space along a central artery of the city. On the brick wall behind us, Ña Lucia posted protest signs next to a Paraguayan flag. She explained she had overcome the fear of municipal officials that had driven her colleagues away, laughing as she recounted her turn to confrontations with municipal *fiscales*, gendered displays, turning her body aggressive, challenging their manhood and threatening to expose her elderly body. Ña Lucia explained why she chose confrontation instead of negotiations with municipal officials orchestrated through the president of the association.

“I turned myself into a lion, I became a street tiger for my vending space.... They can no longer keep tricking us, *keeping us on alert, in a state of permanent fright, (nderembotavyveima ha ne’ëveima la jchake!)*.... hiding in the side streets where

supposedly no one can see us. Isn't this true? Tell me if I am not speaking the truth" (Ña Lucia, personal communication, August 2015, emphasis added).

In Guaraní the exclamation ¡*chake!* indicates a warning of impending danger or future harm, and is thus a call for alert caution. One translator suggested the phrasing “a state of permanent fright” to capture the figurative and contextual meaning of the Guaraní. The base verb of the construction *ne'êveima*, to speak or create, attributes the force of conjuring ¡*chake!* to “they,” the Municipality. Doña Lucia curtailed that force, declaring it over through conjugating “*ne'ê*” in the negative and past tense, the rough equivalent of inserting “not anymore” into the root verb (“*veima*”). Doña Lucia thus explicitly linked the generalized condition of ¡*chake!* to municipal strategies of governing, which I interpret as a generalized, affective condition of uncertainty. By invoking lyrical metaphors of her lion-like strength, she asserted her own distance from this state of permanent fright. A respected Paraguayan economist in the capital city described his own experience with ¡*chake!*. The president Horacio Cartes, the economist explained, had brought a trumped up legal case against a group of consultants on contract with the Lugo administration, charging them with over-billing the government. The economist explained that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce was undeniably at fault, having failed to maintain the required documentation, an absence that created the possibility for the false charges. It is a way of frightening people, the economist explained, of keeping them uncertain and on edge, “keeping us in a state of fright” (*tenernos en chake*). The economist provided a similar analysis to Ña Lucia's, although adding a conjunctural element by saying these are “the same techniques [as the Stroessner government], but with new instruments.”

Like Ña Lucia's “state of permanent fright,” another vendor stressed the relationship between municipal actions and interior experience. I often visited Obdulio, a long time street vendor and vocal critical of the municipal administration's current development plans. Once a key leader in the movement to reclaim the nine hectares, when I met Obdulio in 2013, he had largely abandoned organizing as a sisyphian task, he said, in the face of impunity, congealed *equemas* between the Federation and the municipality, and a class of vendors so poor they were too easily bought off for “crumbs” (*migajas*). These days, Obdulio's political interventions orbited around forceful condemnations of the Municipality on the radio, what he called “cursing out good” the local political elite (*aputeaporã hikuai*). Mixing florid cursing with political critique, Obdulio reliably produced soundbites suited to the medium of radio. The sensibility of speaking truth to power extended to our relationship, which Obdulio treated as one of skeptical tutelage. Despite my Americanness, grounds for suspicion, he sought to bring me around to his view of things. In the lone interview I taped with Obdulio, he launched into what he called “the real history of the workers of the public thoroughfare.” By qualifying his history as real, Obdulio indexed the existence of competing histories. It was these less-real histories that Obdulio saw himself in battle against, histories that had force in the world despite their falsity.

In this interview, I asked Obdulio to compare his experience of labor organizing under Stroessner to today, two and half long decades into the transition to democracy.

The difference? For me the difference is that then there was a lot of physical brutality, right, and *now there isn't overt brutality but rather disguised brutality*, today it's turned around. Physically, right, looking physically there isn't brutality, but if we look inwardly

we see it's calamitous, it's even worse [than under Stroessner] because physical wounds are temporary ... now we are worse off, ok; our interior experience makes up our reality (Obdulio, personal communication, October 17, 2013).

Obdulio stressed current municipal management of the street market as a kind of “disguised brutality” operating on the interior spaces of the self. Obdulio thus marked a shift from the authoritarian tactics of physical violence under Stroessner to a new era of covert governance strategies, what he calls “disguised brutality.” For Obdulio, the transition to democracy is not the extension of the rule of law and rational governmental administration to replace the arbitrariness of dictatorship. State practice does take on new forms, new articulations of enforcement and law, which are largely unconcerned with instituting a culture of rule-following. The regulatory practices of municipal actors aim also at interior experience, producing, as Obdulio says, interior emotional realities and “calamitous” harms.

Affective Uncertainty: An Effect of the State

Obdulio told his “real history of the workers of public thoroughfare” through the frame of lost collective power, a transition paralleled by a shift from the physical violence of the Stroessner era to the “disguised brutality” of current municipal practices of managing the street market. His history is one where formalization is a means of selective dispossession, stretched out over many years. As the Municipality lacked the capacity for mass evictions, he often emphasized, it instead staged a drawn out process of dispossession by formalization. When the border trade boomed in the 1990s, Obdulio recounted, vendors defended their informal claims aggressively, through collective action. Reflecting on their lost collective power, one respected leader once associated with the Federation said, “they couldn’t touch even one of us” (*ndopokokuai ni petei*). But with the election of the self-styled urban reformer Javier Zacarias in 2001, municipal strategies of governance shifted and formalization projects slowly individualized street vendors’ claims. Hitherto, all street vendors claims had been more or less non-compliant and thus necessitated the collective defensive capacity of street vendors. Thus, in Obdulio’s perspective, contemporary municipal management of the street market is driven by a relentless, and largely successful, campaign to break up the collective power of street vendors. In this perspective, the collective power lost is that of *el pueblo*, the populist space of claims-making, which bonds state and subject through contingent gifts of paternal care. Of course, Obdulio is a complex social actor, telling his story through the needs of his present situation marked by tenure insecurity and economic precarity. In contrast to what Obdulio suggests, the fear of authoritarian state violence also worked on the interior spaces of Paraguayan selves, in addition to physically marking the mutilated bodies of tortured and disappeared dissidents. Yet, we do not need to accept Obdulio’s suggestion of an epochal shift from physical violence to disguised brutality to take seriously his analysis of the impacts of municipal practices of managing the street market which target, as he says, “interior experience.”

I argue the emotional registers of uncertainty produced by regulation by ambiguity are an effect of the state. Further, affective uncertainties are useful to local projects of government in Ciudad del Este. Classical philosophers—Bacon, Spinoza, Locke—considered the liberal state’s central role in the containment of the unruly desires and dispositions of the masses. But in contrast to taming and tamping, Ann Stoler has argued that colonial states were invested in the

production and the “distribution of sentiment” as integral to the project of governing (Stoler, 2004, p. 7). In this perspective the state, not just the nation (e.g. B. R. Anderson, 1983) should be seen as committed to the cultivation of useful emotions. As Foucault notes in a different context, feelings, attachments, sensibilities, aspirations, dispositions, and senses of belonging must be seen as “dense transfer points of power” (Foucault, 1978, p. 103). I argue that uncertainty is a key emotion, and a crucial input into municipal projects of managing the street market.

If positivist approaches view uncertainty as future probabilities that can be known, managed, and quantified, then poststructuralists attend to how uncertainty, by way of practices and rationalities, links power and knowledge. In these approaches, uncertainty signifies a range of processes and experiences: a constitutive condition of the contemporary mega-city (Simone, 2013), a new epochal phase marked by the constant, hyper-fast re-organization of social structures (Bauman, 2013), or the Left’s final loss of faith in history’s arrow as capacities to imagine alternatives to capitalism falter (Coronil, 2011). As a contemporary “anthropological problem,” uncertainty is a concept, rather than an object, enabling new domains of knowledge, modes of striving to govern future probabilities (Rabinow & Samimian-Darash, 2015). In spaces of poverty, the urban poor capitalize on uncertainties, forming temporary alliances, connecting to unstable economic flows, or harnessing relational potentialities “between” elements in the urban milieu (Simone, 2013, p. 243). Ethnographers of uncertainty argue it is a field of intervention acted on by state actors that also produces a relational geography concentrating risks in marginalized spaces (Zeiderman, 2015). Drawing from this observation that states “govern through uncertainty” (Zeiderman, Kaker, Silver, & Wood, 2015, p. 299), I flesh out how the affective dimensions of uncertainty are part and parcel of spatialized strategies of governing. This goes beyond the important observation that state practice—as well as placed practices of capitalism—concentrate uncertainty and risk in geographically marginalized areas to argue that the emotional field of fear and worry is part of the governing apparatus, in a Foucauldian sense.¹¹¹

The field of affective uncertainty is constitutive of local projects of governing, whether or not it is intentionally—and therefore, it should be said, cynically—cultivated by individual municipal officials. By looking to the effects of regulation by ambiguity, I argue that affective uncertainty emerges as a predictable effect of local practices of governing. Many intersubjective regulatory engagements in Ciudad del Este take place behind closed doors, individual meetings between empowered municipal actors and street vendors or their association presidents. Alternately, they happen in unpredictable flashes, a confiscation in one corner, a few evictions in another, in sporadic rhythms; a persistent latent possibility, a threat, which flares. During the Thirty Day Plan, however, the municipality moved to enforce zoning ordinances regulating the use of space by street vendors in a sustained month-long campaign. The back room conversations and sporadic encounters momentarily took on a more visible form. Regulation

¹¹¹ Foucault’s concept of the apparatus (*dispositif*) usefully draws attention to how dissimilar social forces hang together in tenuous, contingent alignment, making possible and rendering thinkable certain relations between ‘forms and norms’ (Rabinow, 1995). Foucault says the apparatus is: “...a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of apparatus [*dispositif*]. The apparatus itself is a system of relations that can be established between these elements...[and] has a dominant strategic function” (Foucault, 1980, pp. 194–195).

took to the streets, as did the emotional field of uncertainty associated with everyday regulatory relations, thereby revealing its productive power.

I suggest the stakes of regulation by ambiguity exceed potential municipal mismanagement, pointing to a specific strategy of governing whose effects merit analysis. The selective enforcement of regulatory codes in a space of widespread non-compliance is a mode of governance and a charged act of power, constitutive of regulation by ambiguity. Further, it produces a widely shared felt sense of precarity, transforming uncertainty into a constitutive element of social life in the street market. Thus regulation by ambiguity has an attendant structure of feeling. Exceeding the “personal,” structures of feeling are a shared emotional quality of lived experience tending towards historically specific patterning, at once structured and contingent, conditioned and open (Williams, 1978, p. 128). Of course, economic precariousness articulates with governmental practices that produce the experience of *chake*. However, the point here is to emphasize how regulation by ambiguity, as a spatial strategy of governance, comes into being with affective uncertainties, both of which condition subjectivities and politics in Ciudad del Este.

Street vendors’ critiques of “a state of permanent fright” prompt an important question: What sort of state-subject suture is being crafting through the affective field of regulatory uncertainty? The felt experience of uncertainty, widely shared, is a tie that binds *el pueblo* and the state. On the one hand, enforcement is politicized; contingent and at times unreadable, generating a collective felt sense of uncertainty. Yet, on the other hand, within the uncertainty there lies a kernel of wary hope, a hope which is crafted by municipal officials, as when Zacarías made a call on Magdalena’s behalf or when an official texted promises of municipal *ayuda* (help) to Benita. Intersubjective regulatory relationships that produce this felt sense of embodied uncertainty, paradoxically make it possible for vendors to imagine the possibility that discretionary authority carried out in situated interactions between bureaucrats and vendors will fall in their favor. Thus hope, rooted in uncertainty, is also a condition of possibility for vendor’s claims on the state. *El pueblo* can make claims even though it is not a rights-bearing public. This ephemeral sense of possibility is not naïveté: vendors often see and name the abuses of municipal forms of governance. Yet the uncertain possibility of stabilizing their claims keeps vendors enrolled in these deal-making relationships. Thus, I argue, the generation of a collective field of affective uncertainty for street vendors is a practice of power and an effect of the state.

5.4 Responding to Uncertainty

In this section, I examine a collective political strategy that sought rework the state-subject suture deployed by one federation of vendors association, ATRASI, which sought to provide a space of political action outside the dominant Federation of the Workers of the Public Thoroughfare (the Federation). Conceptually, both the Federation and ATRASI functioned as coalitions of small, block-based vendors associations banding together to amplify their political voice. The Federation claimed membership in low 2000s while ATRASI peaked at half that, although membership numbers for both organizations are fluid and difficult to verify with certainty. Although both organizations are hierarchically structured, ATRASI’s political practices diverged from the political practices of the Federation that operated largely through cutting deals with the Municipality, thereby gaining small benefits for its members in exchange for political loyalty.

ATRASI's alternative political strategies focused on working the grey space between two different registers of political practice, the politics of *el pueblo* and an imagined modern public. To do this, a key ATRASI leader Emilio Sosa, proposed a self-census to counteract the operative biopolitics of uncertainty. I have discussed how Paraguay's long transition to democracy is marked by tensions between the populist politics of *el pueblo* and urban liberal reformers who understand progress through the existence of a rational voting public. In contrast to the affective uncertainties that bind *el pueblo* to the state, Valeria Ortiz's "objective politics" desired different sorts of constituencies. Uncertainty, liberal reformers believe, will operate differently than through the state-subject suture under a politics of *el publico*. Rationalized state programs, it is hoped, would be delivered based on transparent criteria, rather than political loyalties, personal relationships and a certain unpredictable alignment of circumstance, the mystifying calibration of a combination of elements. Of course governmental programmers (Li, 2007) cannot eliminate uncertainty, but the theoretical aim of state practice is to reduce some sorts of uncertainty for constituencies.

Emilio Sosa self-consciously aimed to engage in a different sort of politics in his organization ATRACI, which operated at an oblique angle to populist logics. While the Federation drew power from aligning with the municipal administration, referred to by some as Team Zacarías, groups of marginalized ambulatory vendors sought to gain concessions through demonstrating strength of numbers and then negotiating with the Municipality to call off the protests. Both sought to direct local state benefits to their constituencies. In contrast, Sosa called his project a "third front" (*la tercera frente*). Sosa articulated this as a pedagogical project aimed at his association members and the local state alike. By educating his members to advocate for their right to work and of free association, Sosa wagered local state actors would need to respond with a different set of bureaucratic and political practices.

During one ATRACI meeting, Sosa brought three proposals to his members, including one for a state subsidy to support street vendors through the economic downturn. A group of thirty or so vendors crowded into a stuffy back room on the periphery of the market, bright blue paint peeling from the walls contrasting with a colorful picture of the Virgin Mary with a faint glitter, hanging slightly askew. Elderly and pregnant women were offered seats in white, stackable chairs, in short supply after one association had left for the Federation, taking their chairs with them. After explaining the political backstory to the chair deficit, Sosa proposed they produce a "*planilla*," a list of confirmed vendors in their zone of the market to facilitate the accurate distribution of a proposed subsidy. The economic decline had hit vendors hard; indeed I began to hear jokes about hunger during 2015. Need demanded a governmental response, Sosa argued. He held up a legal size forest green folder, containing a sample *planilla* with a dozen names, listing each member of the Association by zone.

Sosa's self-census aimed to conjure a different sort of political relationship between the municipality and vendors. The self-census sought to constitute the vendors of ATRACI as a population and to make claims from that position. The self-census identified the boundaries of a group of state subjects on the basis of their need. As a project of self-enumeration, it works through the logics of population needs rather than citizen rights (Chatterjee, 2006). Yet it eschews political loyalty as the fount of its legitimacy. Unlike Benita's *ayuda*, Sosa's subsidy was not to be a clientelistic favor, negotiated by *operadores* with municipal staff distributed to those on handwritten lists. Sosa underscored this differentiation, saying "I am not a freeloader" (*no soy recibista*), the short phrase carrying a reference to Benita's politics of *ayuda* and the

practices of contingent, asymmetrical reciprocity that some call clientelism. Further, Sosa's proposal would be public and follow official municipal procedures. Sosa invoked national rights and state obligations: "as Paraguayans we have a right to work and it is the state's responsibility to provide it." Yet he also pursued this new politics of the population, constituting his vendors as a category of subjects in need of state help. Thus Sosa sought to operate in this grey space between the politics of *el pueblo* and *el publico*.

In part, the justification for the subsidy was acute need, a logic of *el pueblo*, and of a population, enumerating itself, seeking pastoral governance from the state. Yet, at the same time, Sosa also legitimated the subsidy in the economic productivity of vendors as an economic class of state constituents. Invoking a common phrase, Sosa said to those assembled "we are the lungs of Paraguay.... [Ciudad del Este] generates half of the national budget... the state has an obligation to us." Further articulating the economic utility of street vendors, Sosa described how it is street vendors and taxi drivers who make the frontier economy useful for Paraguayans, spending their earnings into poor neighborhoods, rather than taking their money across the bridge to Brazil like most of the Lebanese and Korean gallery owners.

Sosa self-consciously sought to cultivate new kinds of political relationships. Fundamentally, he aimed to interrupt the pragmatic realpolitik of factional power struggles over municipal resources, including street space. Quite cognizant of the vector of political strategies that ran through ambiguity and negotiability, Sosa's self-census was also a bid to counteract the production of uncertainty. This self-census, Sosa said, would generate certainty ("*es para la certeza*"), and in so doing, it would provide protection against municipal attempts to evict their members. Further, if the municipality tried to relocate any new vendors in their midsts, they would have a way to show that person did not belong. Sosa's *planilla* proposed a role reversal between subject and state. The theories of good governance propose that the state should act in predictable ways as it applies laws and rules equally to all. In his *planilla*, Sosa names predictability as a desirable but absent quality of municipal planning practice, and then develops a proposal to call it forth, to nudge state practice away from negotiability toward predictability. Likewise, another proposal aimed toward pushing state practice away from capricious practices of regulation by ambiguity. The assembled vendors also voted to approve an official request to the municipality seeking official notification before relocations or temporary evictions as construction moved forward on the *cuarta etapa*. Sosa said, "we deserve official notice and the Municipality, as a public institution, has an obligation to give us this respect."

Sosa's political practice also sought to cultivate new sorts of political subjects, conscious of their rights and ready to interact with representatives of the state with new repertoires of actions. Part of this, argued Sosa, required abandoning old practices of negotiability as a means to gain access to state benefits. Sosa was explicit, denouncing two key practices by which the Paraguayan poor gained access to state benefits. First, Sosa said, vendors must not "sneak" (*meter*) their family members onto lists like the *planilla*. Here Sosa referred to the negotiability of these shifting, changeable lists. These lists are key political technologies of affective uncertainty, always dangling tenuous possibilities for inclusion even as tenure status is never secured in any final way. Unstable resources, surely, but these lists still provided a possible way into the street market. Secondly, association members should not pay the municipality for a spot in the *cuarta etapa*, Sosa argued. As Sosa named this strategy of vendors and association presidents he referenced its common vernacular, mimicking the language a vendor association president might use with his members: "let's just pay \$2000 USD and secure our spot." Sosa

located the source of this impulse to engage on the municipal terms of negotiability and bribery in uncertainty and fear that resulted from local practices of governing. As Sosa named fear as a motivator of action, the assembled vendors cried out in agreement; the woman next to me repeated to herself, “yes, fear and anxiety.”

In 2015, Sosa’s project of forging new political relationships with the Municipality stumbled. In 2013, ATRACI had claimed about 1000 members in the informalized zones of the street market. When I returned in 2015, several affiliate organizations had peeled away, casting their lots with the Federation. On different occasions, three association presidents recounted to me their decisions to join the Federation. Two presidents made the decision after meetings with Santiago Torres in which he laid out the stakes plainly: you are either with us or against us. I chatted with one of Sosa’s former associates, Samuel, in front of his small vending stall stacked high with fake leather jackets. Samuel recounted his decision to leave ATRACI regretfully, and somewhat warily; the friendliness that had characterized our earlier conversations had been replaced with unease. Samuel had no complaints about Sosa or ATRASI saying, “it’s a pleasure to work with Emilio, he knows how to manage documents, how to develop a project proposal; he knows how to work.” Despite this, Samuel chose to disaffiliate from ATRACI, leaving Sosa’s organization for the Federation. While he expressed regret over leaving ATRACI, he felt there was no choice. Equating membership with the Federation as an expression of support for Team Zacarías, the reverse also held: affiliating with ATRACI was casting one’s lot in with the Municipality’s opposition. Inclusion in the *cuarta etapa* hung in the balance, and Samuel assessed that distribution of upgrading vending stalls would flow toward those with demonstrable political loyalties to the Zacarías administration. Samuel commented, “It’s truly impressive how Zacarías organizes his structure [of power]; it’s impossible to go against him.” Sosa sought to counter this political vision of friends and enemies, saying “We aren’t opposed to them [the Municipality] we just want them to do their job well” (*que hagan bien su trabajo*). We aren’t going to let them evict our people as if we are nothing.” Yet, in the end, the uncertainty infiltrating the distribution of stalls in the *cuarta etapa* spurred Samuel’s decision to abandon ATRACI and Sosa’s third front political strategies. Samuel’s vending association was organized hierarchically, and so the decision to leave ATRACI was his, he said, even though some of his members disagreed.

Sosa shared Samuel’s assessment of the capacities of the local state as an extension of a powerful structure, *estructura* or *esquema*. As he argued against “sneaking” family members and friends onto the *planilla* lists, Sosa said that the Municipality had surveillance cameras, “they have us all registered” (*nos tienen todo registrados*). In that moment, Sosa sought to persuade his association members against trying to sneak family members onto the *planilla*, a pedagogical moment about the habits of modern citizenship. Yet it also reveals Sosa’s sense of the capacities of the local state. Against commonplace assessments of local mismanagement and a lack of municipal ability to order urban space, Sosa invested planners with substantial capacities to know urban space and subjects.

Yet, Sosa and Samuel differ in their assessments of the durability of *esquemas* as alliances of frontier power, differences that spring from competing assessments of how power works. For Samuel, power resides in the bodies of men, aligning with a structuralist view of power or a Weberian view of charismatic leadership (Weber, 1946). In contrast, Sosa is more attentive to the ongoing construction of the spectacle of state power. Part of the “trick” Sosa said, is getting people to believe in the power of the *esquema*. After the ATRACI meeting, Sosa, several other

vendors and I stood in the hot afternoon sun chatting about an audio recording of Javier Zacarías Irun that was making a splash in the national news. In the recording, Zacarías aggressively threatened to fire a municipal official and revoke the taxi stand licenses of drivers in an association that had just broken a political pact with the Municipality. During the diatribe, Zacarías invoked a famous phrase of Stroessner's, saying, "for friends, anything; for enemies, the law" (*para los amigos todo, para los enemigos la ley*). Sosa critiqued the audio recording from two perspectives. Like many others, Sosa raised concerns over the claims to political power wielded by a private citizen. However, Sosa went further, making an argument about the performance of state power as a necessary part of tricking people to believe ("*les hacen creer*") in the hardened durability of the power of *esquemas*. Thus, Sosa said, the recording, as a performance of power, helped to create the political authority that it claimed.

5.5 Conclusion

Forbearance, contingent enforcement and the wide range of discretion claimed by municipal actors in enforcing zoning rules produces uncertainty as a central emotional experience for those working in the street market. In this chapter, I explored the effects of this uncertainty, which is cultivated by regulation by ambiguity. I argue uncertainty is an embodied experience on the individual and collective level, what I called affective uncertainties. Further, I argue that uncertainty is best thought of as an effect of the state. By this I mean that affective uncertainties are a predictable outcome of municipal practices of regulation by ambiguity.

I argue there are two key components of municipal projects that govern through uncertainty. Understanding the contradictory dialectic of these affective politics provides a lens through which to understand how power works in this frontier city. First, the uncertainties produced through regulation by ambiguity are the very ground from which street vendors are able to make claims to the city. The street market is organized through practices of dealmaking, thereby offering small openings for street vendors to negotiate for forbearance outside the law. These hierarchical negotiations tend to unfold on the terms set by municipal officials and thus they reproduce inequality. Furthermore, these regulatory relationships instantiate vendors as subjects of a fickle state that rarely bends in their favor but which maintains the possibility that it might. This possibility is the ground for what vendors name as hope. I argue vendors' hope is not naiveté, but an open stance toward future possibilities rooted in the position that hope itself, like other emotions, has the capacity to impact other elements in the social field. Uncertainty and hope are placed and relational social experiences, not just an individual subjective experience. Thus this section demonstrated how an emotional between-ness of affective uncertainties is a relational bond that materializes the state, a theme I develop further in the next chapter.

I argue that affective uncertainties are an effect of the state for two reasons. First, vendors name it as such. Vendors pointed to *chake*—a state of permanent fright—as a condition cultivated by municipal officials. Obdulio described the "disguised brutality" of post-authoritarian practices of governing which target the interior spaces of the self. Unlike vendors, I do not make claims as to the intentions of municipal officials. However, and secondly, I do argue that I can study the effects of municipal practices of governing through regulation by ambiguity. Here I triangulate several different municipal projects and practices to argue that affective uncertainty is a mode of governance. The Pilot Plan increases differentiation among vendors, creating a micro-geography of stability and risk within the street market. Further, the

Pilot Plan compels vendors to negotiate with the municipality rather than engage in collective defense, rooted in a shared condition of non-compliance and precarity, even as the Pilot Plan produced dispossession by formalization. The fifteen-year time horizon for the Pilot Plan project keeps vendors enrolled in negotiations for inclusion. During the Thirty Day Plan, municipal actions seemed designed to cultivate uncertainty, as when painted yellow lines mysteriously appeared on the streets, which vendors worried marked off downsized vending spaces. Fear and uncertainty are predictable effects of this range of municipal practices, at both the individual and collective level.

During 2013, Emilio Sosa's federation of vendors' associations, ATRACI, sought to inculcate new political relationships between vendors and municipal officials. ATRACI's strategies mediated between two different registers of political practice, the politics of *el pueblo* and an imagined modern public of rights-bearing citizens. Sosa's project of self-enumeration through an ATRACI census sought to generate certainty in the midst of the Pilot Plan's affective uncertainties. By documenting links between particular vendors and specific street spaces, Sosa sought to destabilize the power of municipal tactics of regulation by ambiguity. Further, the ATRACI self-census sought to constitute the vendors of ATRACI as a population and to make claims from that position. If regulation by ambiguity instantiates a biopolitics of uncertainty, then the self-census is a biopolitical tool that sought to craft different kinds of frontier subjects. As a project of self-enumeration, it works through the logics of population needs rather than citizen rights. Yet it eschews political loyalty as the fount of its legitimacy.

ATRACI's future as a force in the street market is tenuous, and three vendors' association presidents told me they left ATRACI for the Federation, under direct and explicit pressure from municipal officials. In the long lead up to the distribution of *cuarta etapa* vending stalls, ATRACI's ranks of afflicted vendors had shrunk due to these defections. Yet the McLeod administration is under increasing challenge, as are forms of governing through regulation by ambiguity. At the time of this writing, the McLeod-Zacarias faction just lost their majority in the city council and a new transparency alliance is pushing, again, for intervention into municipal budgets. My point here is to underscore that regulation by ambiguity is the product of a particular set of circumstances, which are also contingent and can be transformed. While vendors often used language to describe the power of the McLeod-Zacarias alliance as unassailable, I was continually surprised by the amount of work required by a range of municipal actors, across scales, to keep their *esquema* operative. In the next chapter, I discuss how individual vendors deploy the between-ness of emotion to their own ends.

CHAPTER 6

The Body: A Politics of Vulnerability

6.1 Introduction: Approaching the Body

In this chapter, I analyze women's body politics, wagering that an ethnographic focus on the politics of the body will shed light on the practices that materialize the state. As Lila Abu-Lughod insisted decades ago now, "...we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about complex inter-workings of historically changing structures of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 53). Chapter Three described several spatial and temporal strategies of governing: individual and collective waiting, ongoing spatial reorganization running through relationships of dealmaking, and regulation by ambiguity. I interpreted Magdalena's waiting as a predictable effect of state practice, and as a temporal strategy of governing. The contingency of such relationships yielded wary hope, and hopefulness keeps vendors enrolled in negotiations and political relationships with the municipal administration. Constant dealmaking and negotiation foster a felt sense of uncertainty as constitutive of the governing apparatus. Local state actors govern through uncertainty, yet uncertainty is also a condition of possibility enabling street vendors' extralegal claims to city space.

I pick up this thread again by asking what women's body politics tell us of the workings of power and the subject of politics. What sorts of bodies and political subjectivities are made in this frontiers zone in which the state is described as absent? Through a close interrogation of Celia's displays of bodily vulnerability, what I call testifying, I explain how women use their bodies to deploy a counter-politics by targeting the affective field as a malleable "between-ness" (Bondi, 2005, p. 443). These women announce the legitimacy of their work, as it is rooted in maternal responsibility and embodied family need. Testifying women invoke their vulnerabilities in order to re-activate dependencies with local state actors, not to stake claims as rights-bearing individuals. This is a different sort of subject of urban politics, one that makes claims on the state through frames of need and dependency.¹¹² These body politics are highly gendered, and women do not seek to overturn the gendered social order. The political challenge of these practices lies in the ways in which vendors mobilize bodily vulnerability as a shared, human condition, as they also name the social structures which unevenly distribute these vulnerabilities.

In the final section, I analyze the gendered tenor of governance relationships between street vendors and municipal officials. Vendors extrapolate an entity called the state out of these regulatory relationships, lending an imaginative coherence to the dispersed social field often called the state. I explore two experiences of street vendors: a felt sense of abandonment by the state and the materialization of the state as a forceful, masculine presence, practices which resonate with what the anthropologist Penelope Harvey has called the "dynamic relationship

¹¹² In this chapter, I clarify how a dispersed, contradictory social field can coalesce into something widely understood to be the state. I use the term "the state" not to suggest that a coherent state exists, but to acknowledge that claims-making practices do indeed target something called the state. I discuss the literature on the everyday practices of rule that materialize the misperception of the state, as an agentic entity, in the third section of this chapter.

between presence and absence” (P. Harvey, 2005, p. 127). While there is a tendency among many vendors to gender legitimate political authority as male, Ña Lucia turns this gendered imaginary to her advantage. When faced with eviction, Ña Lucia defends her claims to her *puesto* by questioning the masculinity of municipal officials, and, by extension, the legitimacy of municipal plans to enforce zoning law. Opposition to the current municipal administration also takes the form of highly gendered discourse, challenges to the masculinity of Javier Zacarías. The overzealous response of Zacarías to these challenges reveals his capacities as a *caudillo* while also demonstrating the demands for an ongoing performance of manliness required by norms of legitimate political authority. Further, I analyze how the state is imaginatively conjured out of these everyday regulatory relationships.

6.2 A Politics of the Body

Testifying: Displaying the Vulnerable Body

Celia and a group of peddlers sold from sidewalk space in one of the semi-formalized zones of the street market. Some had municipal authorization to sell as *ambulantes*, ambulatory peddlers with no fixed claims to space, required by law to sell on the move. In practice, however, *ambulantes* claimed small squares of sidewalk against the backdrop of standardized vending stalls, marking their claims with hip-high plastic bags of merchandise. For long periods, the municipality would tolerate these encroachments and forbearance had long been a cornerstone of municipal practice, especially when the market was booming. During the Thirty Day Plan in 2013, however, the market was under stress and the municipality took action, enforcing long-dormant ordinances and uprooting *ambulantes* from their settled, albeit small, claims.

I met Celia at a community assembly when a controversial community leader aimed to gather those affected by the recent evictions. Representatives of an anti-corruption lawyer’s guild, the president of a new vendors’ association, and the president of an embattled public employees union joined a hundred or so recently evicted vendors. The guests of honor, myself included, sat at a long white plastic table with bottles of water marking each seat. After the official speeches by the invited guests, mostly men with degrees and salaries, Celia insisted on speaking. She turned toward the news camera, directing both her words and emotions to the present audience as well as a hoped for virtual one.

I am a jacket-vendor, a very honest Paraguayan woman. I’ve never had to rob anyone, not even an egg... And we each buy [our jackets for sale] through hard work and sweat. And I’m totally exhausted. What am I to do? Must I rob? Will I have to go to jail in order to feed my family? The other day I went with some other vendors and I said to Eugenio [a municipal official], ¿Eugenio, what is to happen to us?” I asked him, “Will we put the jackets on our backs and sell them that way?” “No, no [he said] you can’t walk, you can’t run, with your jackets; we are going to clean up the city.” And me, what will I give to my son? My son is five months old, I have him on my breast; I am breast-feeding him. I have to put diapers on him. And what am I going to say to my son? No, I can’t change my son’s diaper because Ña Sandra [the mayor] is going to clean up the city (Celia, June 2013).

Celia called those present into her emotional field, a mix of intense worry about her children's wellbeing and outrage at the damage to her livelihood wrought by the eviction. In a conversation after the community meeting, Celia drew my hand to her breast, heavy with milk, to insist I confirm she was a breastfeeding mother. Celia's dependencies marked her body, providing proof she was a woman with crucial care-taking responsibilities. I term Celia's performance "testifying" because she is engaged in providing evidence as to her embodied need and justifying her claim to street space. Against the image of a dispassionate witness in a courtroom, Celia's performance was charged with affective intensity and with moral justifications for her street appropriations.

The transcription of Celia's testifying reveals several key discursive mechanisms through which she grounded her claims to city space. Celia named the needs of her infant son, thereby locating embodied need as the legitimating source of her street appropriation: "what will I give to my son? My son is five months old, I have him on my breast; I am breast-feeding him. I have to put diapers on him." In this monologue, she identified two livelihood strategies: vending and theft. Into this dichotomy, Celia positioned herself as earning an honest living through her own "hard work and sweat." Evicted vendors often stress they worked to "bring home the daily bread" (*el pan de cada día*), a refrain which conveys the dignity of working as a vendor to feed one's family. Celia poses her moral questions dramatically, if imaginatively, directed toward the representatives of the state, rather than the present audience. Although *mesiteros* competed against each other for customers, many expressed acute recognition of legitimacy of need as justifying appropriations. Referring to evicted vendors, Lina, a friend and relatively well-off vendor said to me, "the municipality must find a solution for them... because [vending] is their daily bread." Further, Celia juxtaposes her family's need for sustenance and basic necessities to the mayoral Thirty Day Plan: "No, I can't change my son's diaper because Ña Sandra is going to clean up the city." Other evicted *ambulantes* and *mesiteros* rallied against their evictions through shouts of "we are not trash!" (*no somos basura*).

State campaigns to remove the poor from cities in the North and South are common, from slum removal in Delhi (Bhan, 2009) to bulldozing informal markets in Accra (Gillespie, 2016). Those concerned with such urban exclusionary tendencies have described demolitions and evictions as revanchism, military terminology for the violent retaking of territory by states. The application to domestic urban policy, with no foreign enemies in sight, thus highlights the construction of the poor as group from which the city must be reclaimed. By deploying war terminology, scholars of urban revanchism highlight the processes by which the poor are constructed as outside society, a discursive means to justify their removal. Some analyses, like "postliberal revanchism," assume a singular driving logic of capital requiring new spaces for accumulation (N. Smith, 2001; Whitehead & More, 2007). In contrast, other scholars question the move to totalize the power of capital, and demonstrate other exclusionary forces, like discourses of national unity (Gwen Van Eijk, 2010), desires for racial "whitening" (Swanson, 2007), or notions of the beautiful city (Crossa, 2009). Others note more ambivalent state strategies that attempt to manage the poor (DeVerteuil, 2006) or accommodate livelihood strategies of the poor alongside ambitions for hygienic cleansing (Huang, Xue, & Li, 2014).

Certainly, one could analyze the long campaign in Ciudad del Este, what I have called here dispossession by formalization, in the frame of revanchism. However, I want to move beyond these familiar debates to describe the role of emotion as constituent of the intersubjective everyday relationships that suture together state and urban entrepreneur. Rather, my account of

women's defensive tactics requires what Foucault calls a "history of bodies," that is, bodies understood as historical products, rather than natural essences pre-given prior to cultural imprinting through processes of socialization. A Foucauldian position on power and the body offers two crucial perspectives. Power, as conceived of by Foucault, is circulatory, diffuse, molecular, and productive. Rather than acting by prohibition or settling in the bodies of the powerful, power is a constitutive and dynamic presence in all social relationships. Further, individuals are enrolled in projects of self-discipline, internalizing social norms and aligning their behaviors and subjectivities through constant self-modifications and "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1988). Thus, on the one hand, the body becomes central to state and governmental practice (Rose, 1996). On the other hand, new state practices take on the wellbeing of the population as a whole, what Foucault calls biopolitics. These two dimensions, biopolitical interventions stewarding the life of populations and disciplinary technologies of power targeting the body, form contemporary practices of power.

By posing the co-constitution of discursive/historical process and bodies, Foucault retains the sensuous materiality of the body while still refusing biological essentialism.

'The purpose of the present study is in fact to show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body; to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another ... but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective. Hence I do not envisage a "history of mentalities" that would take account of bodies only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value; but a "history of bodies" and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested' (Foucault, 1978, pp. 151–152).

Feminists, too, contend the body is "politically inscribed" (Bordo, 1999, p. 251) and ethnographers find charged engagements with embodied politics. Daniella Gandolfo describes the ambivalent political efficacy of an evicted, elderly woman in Lima stripping to the waist to protest a municipal privatization project which stripped her of her livelihood (Gandolfo, 2009). Like Celia's testifying, Erica James finds that victims of human rights violations in post-hurricane Haiti perform their suffering in order to gain political recognition and redress. Yes as "trauma portfolios" emerge as a sort of currency in the political economy of humanitarianism, these performances reenact trauma while unevenly delivering Development industry responsiveness (James, 2010). Yet, the role of affect within urban governance regimes has not been systematically studied.

To address this gap, I look again at Celia's testifying. Text cannot represent Celia's performance, which demanded an emotional response; her body shook, her voice quivered, tears fell. Celia brought her emotional field into the community meeting by displaying her distress as proof and enrolling onlookers in her affective world. As Celia testified, assembly participants shouted affirmations: "*cierto!*," "true!" or "that's right!," as Celia's intervention sparked a collective emotional wave that rippled through those assembled. Charged shouts of "*cierto*" circled back to Celia, encouraging her to continue, to speak more, and more forcefully of her

troubles. “*Cierto*” also indexed a collective agreement as to the truth of the situation, resonances between Celia’s hardships, her moral critique and the life experiences of those assembled.

Celia’s performance was unique only in that it was recorded and thus available to me for review and analyze after the event was over. However, iterations of testifying took place across the street market during the Thirty Day Plan. I happened to be present for several charged confrontations, moments when municipal bureaucrats served eviction orders to long time vendors. Like Celia, these women also invoked their responsibilities as mothers and the vulnerability of their dependent children, displaying the stresses of poverty and the vulnerability of the body. I saw municipal authorities abandon evictions when confronted by the tactic of testifying. During one charged encounter, an elderly woman food vendor confronted the police commissioner charged with enforcing zoning ordinances in the market. As the woman testified, she invoked her decades-long history selling cheap lunches from the same spot in the street market. Desperation cracked her voice; a crowd gathered; she wrung her hands and narrated her need and the vulnerability of her grandchildren, dependent on her small income. A young woman came to her aid, confronting the municipal official, attesting to the longevity of the older woman’s tenure, corroborating her frail health. And suddenly, the police commissioner called off the eviction. Further, Marcelo Sosa, an important vending association president, lectured his associates about the perils of testifying, thereby signaling the prevalence of testifying. Sosa argued that testifying’s emotive displays of vulnerability stymied his third front project of cultivating new political relationships with the Municipality, based in citizen rights rather hierarchies of need.

Seeking to understand the contradictory narratives about legality and municipal intent, I asked Santiago Torres, the municipal director in charge of the street market, about the evictions. Why did some vendors receive promises of relocation after eviction but not others, I asked. Torres responded, saying sometimes a vendor “touches your heart,” (*te toca el corazon*). In these cases, Torres explained he responded by extra-legally extending provisional vending authorization. Torres emphasized the provisional and extralegal nature of these exceptions, extracted through affect, saying, “Institutionally, there are no more relocations” however sometimes he acted “personally.” In a similar vein, I often sensed Celia and other vendors sussing out how they might engage me in ways useful to their cause. Perhaps, they would suggest, I could secure a meeting with the mayor so that a vendor could make her case? While much less dramatic than testifying, these encounters too involved activating the emotional between-ness that surged, certainly not in programmable ways, but yet still available for activation in unpredictable ways.

Thus, I argue, testifying sometimes works. The contingency within governance practice affords the urban poor small windows of opportunity to extract concessions from a fickle local state. Vendors’ recourse to emotion as a means to negotiate regulatory encounters underscores the extent to which ambiguity, contingency, and uncertainty underlie municipal management of the street market. Further, testifying reveals how affect is woven into the governmental field, clarifying how women vendors deploy a counter-politics of affect, targeting the affective field as a malleable between-ness. It is precisely the municipality’s selective authorization of such claims that produces the possibility of recognition. Experiencing desperation as an embodied emotional state, Celia used her body as a resource to defend here claims to space. Testifying women announce the legitimacy of their work – rooted in maternal responsibility and embodied family need – without seeking to overturn the gendered social order. Women testify so as to affect the

emotional field of municipal enforcers, deploying the body's capacity to affect the relational between-ness that is, I argue, part of the apparatus of governing. Testifying, as a contingently successful tactic, brings into view the structuring capacities of regulation by ambiguity.

The Paraguayan Woman

Testifying works through, not against, gendered notions of women's social role, maternal altruism, and imaginaries of political subordination. In order to testify, Celia claimed space to speak, breaking social rank of gender and class. The speaking order of the assembly followed lines of social hierarchy. The labor organizer in charge spoke first, then invited others to speak by "*pasando la palabra*," or passing the word to activist lawyers and presidents of association presidents, all men. Celia intervened, stepping in front of the labor organizer and facing the crowd. Her first words, however, "I am a jacket vendor, a very honest Paraguayan woman," indexed both gender and nation as positions that legitimated her speaking to those assembled. As Celia testified, she rooted the dignity of her work in the morality of motherhood, underscoring her imbrication in relationships of familial dependence. To see how testifying reinscribes dominant notions of femininity, I now turn to a powerful trope of "The Paraguayan Woman," which ascribes women traits of heroic self-sacrifice for the continuation of the Paraguayan family and nation.

Pope Francis created a social media buzz in early 2014 with a campaign promoting The Paraguayan Woman for the Nobel Peace Prize, homage to the sacrifices of Paraguayan women in service of the communal requirements of social reproduction after the deaths of nearly all adult Paraguayan males during the terrible Paraguayan War (1864-1870).

"In my judgment, the Paraguayan woman is the most heroic woman in the Americas. After the war there were eight woman for each man and they made this honorable choice to have children, right, to save country, language, culture and faith" (Ultima Hora, February 14, 2014).

Nationalist discourse often metaphorically links notions of the nation to woman and body (Kaplan, Alarcon, & Moallem, 1999). In these nationalist discourses, patriotic mothers, with a biologically determined social role, bear and socialize future generations of citizens and soldiers, reproducing national and ethnic group boundaries (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Further, the imaginary of the nation itself is gendered female, and colonization becomes imagined as (male) culture penetrating (female) nature through civilizational reason (McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 2002).

Paraguay's distinct colonial history inflects the figure of the Paraguayan Woman. Paraguay is unique in Latin America, mixing popular identification with the Guaraní language and mythology throughout a population that identifies as mestizo rather than indigenous. Nationalist mythology erases the violence of the colonial encounter, emphasizing the strategic packs made by the Guaraní with early colonizers as processes of peaceful transculturation, beautiful Guaraní women consensually submitting sexually to virile Spaniards. The progeny of these unions, "the Paraguayan race," mix the civilizational glory of Europe with indigenous culture, representing "nature" bringing courage and feminine beauty. The Paraguayan poet

Ignacio Pane distills the colonial encounter to a sexual liaison in the dense forests, in which indigenous submission bring civilizational history to the country.

For her, finally, in the dense forest, the Paraguayan pride of history
Guarana blood gave him courage,
the blood of Pelayo gave glory (Pane, 1900)

The progeny of this union gained courage from Guaraní (Guarana) blood and historical agency and glory from the Spanish lineage of Pelayo.

In addition to claiming this blood line, colonial Paraguayans imported the Guaraní sexual division of labor, with women responsible for household administration and farming in addition to social reproduction of new nationalist values (Melià, 1990). One Paraguayan historian locates the process of molding Paraguayan-mestizo souls in the “sweet maternal empire” of the home where mestizo mothers “educate, govern and mold the souls of her offspring” (González, 1948, p. 297 cited in Makaran, 2013, p. 57). If women dutifully sacrificed their sons to the war effort, after the war, Paraguay became a nation of women. Facing the loss of 75% of the male Paraguayan population, Paraguayan women reproduced the nation, re-populating the country as well as, to use the words of Pope Francis, saving Paraguayan “language, culture and faith” from assimilation or erasure. Gaya Makaran calls post-war women “reconstructors without power,” noting the discursive link between the gendered imaginary of womanhood necessitating submission to both man and nation as well as a lack of representation in formal institutions (Makaran, 2013).

Today, the popular phrase “kuña guapa” connotes similar gendered notions of household responsibilities and maternal sacrifice. Kuña, Guaraní for woman, is modified by a Spanish term used in Paraguay to denote hardworking. Work itself, thoroughly gendered, connotes kuña guapa as a self-sacrificing mother, dedicated to her household. A national newspaper recently captures this expectation of a “superhuman heroine” primed in care-taking and self-negation, and an embodied link to collective history and national suffering.

The Paraguayan woman, this beautiful dark-skinned brunette of our folklore, bound to the history of our country, and its sons. This valiant woman, nowadays, is much more in multiple spheres: she is mother, wife, friend and worker, but more than anything she is like a superhuman heroine, loving, service-oriented, and valued in her work through the last drop of effort, deserving of being appreciated until the end of her days (ABC Color, February 12, 2012).

The footholds for feminist critique are easy to find. In this perspective, women gain value and historical agency through beauty, producing sons, and selfless labor. Indeed, Makaran calls the current scenario, male entitlement to female household labor, especially under conditions of a thin sense of paternal responsibility as “feminism’s worst nightmare made reality” (Makaran, 2013, p. 57). The language of the “last drop of effort” evokes the critiques of the economist Diane Elson who demonstrated econometric models effectively assume the supply of women’s

labor is infinite. Silvia Chant reframes the literature on the feminization of poverty — which stresses higher incidence of poverty among women — to the “feminization of responsibility and obligation” (Chant, 2008). Chant’s reframing insists the gendered nature of poverty cannot be reduced to lower income or household wealth among women or female-headed households. Rather, she argues, changes in household income structures mean that poor women often bear a double burden of breadwinning, on the one hand, and care taking and social reproduction, on the other.

Celia evoked this legacy of imagery and meaning when she grounded her testifying in the embodied experience of being a Paraguayan woman who prioritizes her mothering responsibilities. Yet Celia, and many other poor Paraguayan women, expressed great pride in familial labor. Rather than a feminist upheaval of gender norms, Celia and other women seek improved conditions for themselves and their families, like women elsewhere who lament the “failures of patriarchy” to adequately provision their families, but without challenging gendered hierarchies (Ray & Qayum, 2009). In other cases as well, marginalized women make claims that their work and bodies should be valued in ways that reinscribe a gendered division of reproductive labor (Molyneux, 2002).

Testifying sparks the question: which desires can be described as authentic? Is Celia’s self-identification as a mother and Paraguayan Woman “strategic essentialism,” the intentional deployment of identities—like motherhood—as a means to make claims (Spivak, 1985)? In a subsequent community meeting Celia pressed her hand to her gut as she recalled how the speech for the assembly “*salío de mí*,” just flew out of her body, in defense of her children. Celia herself inscribes motherhood into her body, not just in womb and breast, but in the sources of meaning and morality she ascribes to herself as she reflects on the import of her testifying. The *salío de mí* phrasing suggests a sort of internal authenticity for her words, as if they emerged from a pre-cognitive site. But rather than posit a definitively relationship between authenticity, affect and cognition, I want to suggest a complicated relationship between the emotional charge of Celia’s testifying and the extent of Celia’s calculation as she sought to stabilize her claims to street space. As she testified, Celia directed her words to the news camera, suggesting a performative element in her emotive actions. Further, I often sensed Celia evaluating if and how she might engage me in ways useful to her cause. In our encounter after the community meeting, I felt her desire to draw me into her emotional field as she drew my hand to her breast demonstrating she was a woman with crucial care-taking responsibilities, dependencies evident in her body. I perceived strategic calculation and a sussing out of potential lines of support in conditions of extreme duress. Rather than follow to false trails towards a non-existent authenticity, I suggest turning instead to subaltern meaning-making practices and ethics, which I do in the follow sections.

The Aggressive Body

A few weeks later, I caught up with Celia in the street and she recounted her skirmishes with municipal officials since the community assembly. Most of her associates had capitulated to the municipal clearance order and now occupied the two-meter wide median that split San Blas Avenue several blocks uphill from the International Friendship Bridge. Celia, however, had reclaimed a square meter of sidewalk from which to sell her jackets, her hip-high plastic bag filled with thick zipped sweatshirts. A friendly taxi driver let her store another bag in his trunk. Daily, she arrived at four in the morning and sold unmolested until the municipal enforcers

began to make their rounds around eight. Celia then turned to confrontation. She and I laughed loudly as she recounted how she scared away municipal officials by threatening to disrobe, beginning to unbutton her pants and yelling at municipal officials that they were “on her” so much they must want her body. Celia had to translate her curses for me, the vulgar Guaraní vocabulary of intimate body parts and fluids was unfamiliar, not words that Paraguayans used around a North American woman, like myself.

Likewise, when a local storeowner threatened to report Celia’s sidewalk occupation to the Municipality, she recounted how she responded with a trenchant critique of the uses of women’s bodies in the street market. Gesturing to her own compact, brown body she compared it to the taller, lighter bodies of the young women employed in sales in local shopping galleries, their bodies clad in revealing uniforms, feet perched in wobbly high heels. Then, Celia shouted speculations about the bodies of the storeowner’s three mistresses, measuring “36-24-36,” breasts-waist-hips. Celia offered an explicit critique. Of the labor options available to women in her class — sales girl, mistress, street vendor — racialized standards of beauty foreclosed the first her moral compass disallowed the second, leaving her with the third. Framed thusly, Celia positioned her work as dignified and ethical, itself a political position within the discursive framing of the Thirty Day Plan that depicted street vendors as an unclean public nuisance. Celia’s boldness won her a few more weeks in her vending space before the Municipality succeeded in pushing her out.

I heard more stories of aggressive bodily confrontations between women vendors and municipal officials. Ña Lucia, discussed in Chapter Four, faced eviction from the sidewalk space she had sold from for twenty-seven years. In response, she threatened to expose her body to municipal officials. Ña Lucia told me this joyfully, laughing at her boldness and transgression. It was in this gendered context that she said, “I turned myself into a lion, I became a street tiger for my vending space.... They can no longer keep us in a state of permanent fright...hiding in the side streets where supposedly no one can see us.” Ña Lucia thus positioned her own deployment of the aggressive body as a response to the emotional field of “permanent fright” cultivated by municipal regulatory engagements. Ña Lucia and others in her small association managed to extract a concession from the Municipality, provisional authorization to sell from less desirable spaces in the street market. Eighteen months later, Ña Lucia refused the relocation and reoccupied a more central space, while her colleagues hoped to secure spots in the *cuarta etapa*. Celia, a more marginal ambulatory vendor, did not succeed in securing such a concession. A few months later Celia was strategizing her next move, occasionally selling on the sly in the street market but tired of the skirmishes with municipal officials.

When invoking the moral grounding of her work failed to produce the desired regulatory response, Celia turned to provoking discomfort and shame as she revealed and trespassed boundaries of acceptable gendered bodily dispositions, deploying what I call “the aggressive body.” The power of these gendered trespasses lies in the specificity of gender norms in Paraguay and the expectations they exact on gendered bodies. As a strategy, then, women who deploy their aggressive body tap into these notions of gendered bodies to provoke useful emotional responses during governance encounters. Delaying eviction or securing forbearance by trespassing acceptable feminine bodily dispositions through deploying the aggressive body works precisely because of the power of the norm. In these gendered performances, Celia’s and Ña Lucia’s trespasses reaffirm the norm of maternal altruism rather than destabilizing it. Theories of performativity posit gendered regulatory norms gain power through repetitive bodily actions

that cite it (Butler, 1993). As the discursive gendered matrix produces gendered subjects and the materiality of sexed bodies, agency appears in the “constrained appropriation of the regulatory law” (Butler, 1993, p. 12). Yet rather than troubling gender norms, as Butler finds in performances of drag, Celia’s and Ña Lucia’s trespass reinforce the gender norm. Agency is constrained by the conditions out of which it emerges. The ethnographic task is to be open to the ways that various forms of agency affect the social field, rather than assuming, a priori, that particular forms of agentic acts—like self-interested voting or collective action—are superior.

Poststructural understandings of subjectivities and the operations of power refuse old notions of resistance as occurring from a site or through logics which reside outside of power, models which imagine opposing forces where bottom up popular pressure contest top down state projects. In Ciudad del Este, women street vendors both seek inclusion in economic relationships of globalized commodity circulation while refusing a few of its central tenants: profit optimization and the autonomous self. Further, these women insist on the right to belong to a nation which acknowledges their humanity by providing key social supports, while refusing the liberal strictures of modern selfhood, characterized by actions oriented toward economic optimization and autonomous self seeking liberty.

Street vending and hawking are forms of resourcefulness, livelihood practices that unavoidably engage with illegalities. Everyday practices of making-do are not pre-ordained to reinscribe dominant ideologies, even if, in particular situated circumstances, they do (Shakya & Rankin, 2008).¹¹³ Indeed, I argue there is an element of subversive agency in Celia’s testifying. Celia’s small occupation of sidewalk space contravenes municipal zoning ordinances and a constitutional clause that restricts the use of public space for commercial purposes. In this, Celia joins with most vendors and many elite businessmen in a field of extralegal occupation and construction that built the city and subsidized the consumption of the Brazilian middle class.

Part of this modality of subversion is how marginalized subjects rework dominant frames of meaning. More than just resourcefulness, testifying is also a practice of refusing the categories of meaning set upon them by the municipality. The municipality works through shifting categories of legitimacy, which divided authorized vendors from those to be cleared away. State practices of regulation by ambiguity works to retain significant discretionary authority in moments of enforcement as to the boundaries of these categories. Celia and other testifying

¹¹³ In an analysis of the cultural politics of ideology, Shakya and Rankin bring together the seemingly opposed perspectives of James Scott and Michel De Certeau who, they argue, both read beneath the outward appearance of marginalized social actions to find subversive practices. James Scott identifies “infra politics” as atomized and disguised acts of resistance in conditions where public acts face violent repression (Scott, 1985). De Certeau sees subversion in the defensive, opportunistic everyday tactics of ordinary people as they maneuver through their daily lives, engaging a range of spatial tactics with a collective character of subversion, even if individuals do not possess an oppositional consciousness (Certeau, 1984). From Scott, Shakya and Rankin take a political economic critique of structures of exploitation, but they decenter class, trouble the assumption of intentionality on the part of the poor, thereby seeing the poor as complex social subjects with no pre-given moral standing arising out of their social position. From De Certeau they take the ambiguous status of politics and the refusal of a teleological path towards revolution driven by class-based collective consciousness. Rather, individuals respond to dominant forms of culture by engaging small-scale everyday tactics of living to make their own way, even if subversive intent is lacking. Shakya and Rankin thus propose a typology of resistance, subversion or resourcefulness, aiming to retain a normative commitment justice, always requiring justifications through practices of making arguments and giving reasons.

vendors forge their own terms of legitimacy for urban belonging, drawing on registers of embodied need, nationalist sentiment and party obligation. Vendors make their own meanings out of the relational encounters with representatives of the state. Further, these women delighted in the power of their aggressive bodies, speaking with pride and laughter at their small successes gained through trespassing gendered norms of acceptable bodily dispositions. Their embodied acts of defiance produce registers of meaning that stand in defiance of hegemonic truth regimes, about what sorts of bodies and work belong in the street market.

Saba Mahmood insists, “the sense and meaning of agency cannot be fixed in advance” (Mahmood, 2011, p. 14). Instead of starting from (authentic or deluded) expressions of individual will and desire, Mahmood starts from the bodily forms of action to then turn to the kind of subjects those actions produce. Mahmood’s project centers on how Islamic women use the body as a “developable means” (Mahmood, 2011, p. 166) in projects to cultivate the pious self. I do not claim that street vendors are engaged in similar acts of conscious self-cultivation, what Foucault might call “experiments in living” (Foucault, 2009). Rather I suggest that starting from bodily practice offers an important vantage from which to view the intersubjective relations performing, reiterating, and contesting governance and rule. Thus, while testifying is an individualized act, it is also relational and ethical. It is an act of constrained agency, drawing on available discursive and affective resources in order to effect changes in the relationships between elements in the social field. Studies of urban politics that focus on collective action as the litmus test for legitimate agency miss the import of these tactics. Networks of affectively charged relations are the unseen background, or infrastructure, of governance relations in Ciudad del Este.

6.3 Activating Dependence

By turning to the discursive context in which street vendors testify and deploy the aggressive body, I argue we can read a situated ethical imperative in their defensive tactics. I develop this argument in two parts. First, I examine the ethical discourses accompanying testifying and the aggressive body. Then, in the chapter’s final section, I turn to how these vendors’ tactics scale back up to materialize something that is understood as the state.

Following Butler, bodies are materialized through the reiterative citation of regimes of gendered regulatory norms (Butler, 1993). As constrained appropriations of such regulatory norms, the gendered politics of the vulnerable and aggressive body reify notions of the Paraguayan Woman as maternal altruism and embodied sacrifice. However, at the same time, street vendors’ claims to urban space for livelihood have a discursive politics. The body politics of street vendors aims to activate affective states in city officials in order to increase the likelihood that their vulnerability will be seen, their humanity recognized, and their demands met. I analyze the ethical rationality of marginalized street vendors through two different symbolic frames: *el pan de cada día* and *juru hai’mbe*. I argue these registers of meaning invoke an alternative imagination of state responsibility and the goals of economic life.

In Ciudad del Este, the refrain *el pan de cada día*, or daily bread, is widely invoked to convey the dignity of working as a vendor to feed one’s family. I heard the phrase used repeatedly by very different social groups: vendors trying to stave off eviction underscoring the material necessity of their claims to city space in regulatory engagements with city officials; mid-level traders with relatively secure claims to vending space expressing sympathy for evicted

vendors; and local politicians aiming to portray themselves as empathic to the daily hardships of working in the street market. Vendors use *el pan de cada día* to ascribe dignity to their work and justify transgressions of law that their work might necessitate. Thus working to bring home the daily bread is understood as a moral imperative that trumps allegiance to official rules about the use of urban space for trading or bringing goods across the border. By referencing the centrality of family and the basic needs of the body, *el pan de cada día* draws power from a relational ethic of care and obligation that values the sustenance of body and family. The bodily practices of the vulnerable and aggressive body are connected to this ethic of care.

The Guaraní phrase *juru hai'mbe* is an analog to the refrain *el pan de cada día*. Literally translated, *juru hai'mbe* is a mouth full of razor-sharp teeth, but it might also be translated as ravenous. I first heard *juru hai'mbe* in the florid tirade of a long time street vendor and community organizer, Ña Sara, known for her unrelenting defiance in the face of controversial municipal plans in the early 2000s to evict some vendors to make way for Javier Zacarías' planned partial formalization in the Pilot Plan. As she described her organizing history to me, Ña Sara recounted she only scaled back her organizing after she suffered through a bogus but exhausting legal case brought against her by the Municipality.

Ña Sara described Javier Zacarías and his associates as *juru hai'mbe* as an ethical denunciation of unrestrained bribe-taking. A forcefully emotive curse, *juru hai'mbe* expands on the common assessment that politicians “eat money.” Eating money refers to taking bribes or of other particularistic appropriations of state resources, the sorts of practices enabled by dealmaking *esquemas* and *blindaje*, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. By using the metaphor of eating, a universal necessity of life itself, this discourse of eating money suggests it is a widespread social practice across Paraguay. Indeed, vendors and taxi drivers reported paying off officials to maintain their claims to city space while large-scale importer-exporters argued that illegal negotiations with customs officials was just the cost of doing business.

However, *juru hai'mbe* goes further than the discourse of eating money by alluding to the complete lack of a moral compass or to an all-consuming greed that shreds the social fabric, surely to be judged in the next life, if not in this one. The political graffiti in Figure 36 denouncing the 2013 parliamentary coup shares the ethical critique of *juru hai'mbe*, depicting politicians drunk with greed and feeding off the bodies of the Paraguayan popular classes. In a city marked by widespread non-compliance with trade law and zoning ordinances by the poor and elites alike, *juru hai'mbe* is also a moral analysis of the context in which an individual engages in rule-breaking. Law-breaking by street vendors to provide the daily bread, through this discursive lens, is ethically justified, while elite transgressions motivated by greed are morally questionable. Thus *el pan de cada día* references an affective relational ethics of care that is not negated by rule-breaking. In contrast, *juru hai'bme* signal the unrestrained greed of an elite few as the source of social disintegration.

I read the tactics of testifying and deploying the aggressive body through Judith Butler's notion of the “apprehension of the precariousness of life” (Butler, 2004, p. xvii). She takes the inherent vulnerability of human life as grounds for an expansive politics of recognition. Rather than conditioning inclusion in the polis on nationality, race or a sufficiently liberal desire for freedom, ties of obligation are made through apprehending our shared susceptibility to violence and the ultimate, unavoidable fragility of the body.

Figure 36. Politicians depicted as *juru hai'mbe*, or ravenous



Note: The mural condemned the 2013 parliamentary coup. *Source:* Photo by author, 2013

The precariousness of life stands in contrast to inclusion under liberalism that poses as universal but in practice is predicated on historically specific boundaries that exclude some groups as unfit for full participation. Such exclusions are historically and geographically specific but have included slaves, racial minorities or indigenous peoples imagined as savages (Losurdo, 2011). In Paraguay, peasants are discursively constructed as unfit for full citizenship while marginalized street vendors are considered “urban peasants,” and similarly dismissed. Given liberalism’s constitutive exclusions, grounding inclusion and care in shared bodily vulnerability offers a more radically inclusive ethos. The ethics of the precariousness of life avoids the violence of asserting a universal, liberty-seeking human nature. The shared experience of the vulnerability of life itself is a point of connection, without being an assertion of the liberal, emancipatory self as the only sort of legitimately modern subject.

Of course, susceptibility to violence, suffering and death are shared, but unevenly and unjustly distributed. By mapping the “geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability,” the precariousness of life acknowledges this uneven distribution of violence and dehumanization (Butler, 2004, p. 29). In a similar vein, the ethical discourse of *el pan de cada día* and *juru hai'mbe* invokes a similar mapping of the uneven distribution of vulnerability and wealth. One common way that street vendors mapped the unjust distribution of bodily vulnerability was through their assessments of who benefited from *esquemas* and who was punished by enforcement campaigns. Vendors used the language of “*los grandes y los chicos*” (the big ones and the little ones) in these mappings of whose illegalities were given a pass by state officials. *Los grandes* indexed large-scale *contrabandistas* enabled by *esquemas*. These are the sorts of men protected by *blindaje* and agreements with politicians. *Los chicos*, small-scale vendors and traders, on the other hand, did not benefit from these political relationships of protection. As urban development proceeded through the Pilot Plan and shopping mall development, it was the livelihoods of *los grandes* that state projects sought to protect, leaving *los chicos* exposed.

The tactic of testifying aims to reactivate relationships of dependence between street vendors and municipal officials. James Ferguson calls such expressed desires for dependence “pursuits of subordination” (Ferguson, 2013, p. 224). Indeed, I saw testifying turn to supplication when the latter emotive position seemed more likely to elicit the desired responsiveness.

Ferguson notes that pursuits of subordination pose problems for deeply held, foundational assumptions of liberalism. Ontologies of liberalism rely on conceptions of agency predicated on an unquestionable desire for liberty and expressions of individual, autonomously formed desire, often conceived of as a natural outgrowth of objectify-identifiable interests. Such notions are tied together in the “emancipatory liberal mind,” foundational ideals of autonomy, liberty, freedom, and independent will (Ferguson, 2013, p. 224). Further, liberalism is grounded in a universalist trick, philosophically presenting itself as the “neutral tradition-independent ground from which a verdict may be passed upon the rival claims of conflicting traditions . . .” (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 346 cited in Watson, 2006). Indeed, testifying exemplifies the sort of politics that Morínigo objects to when he derides the everyday affective life of rural ascriptive groups. Morínigo seeks instead to cultivate liberal citizen-selves whose identity emerges “as an autonomous attribute of individuals separate unto themselves” (Morínigo, 2008, p. 6).

Against the liberal individual, the non-liberal “relational person” is constituted as a dense knot of relations of dependence (J. L. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001). Some dependencies, even if wrought through asymmetrical power relations, enable personhood, rather than undermine or degrade it. Indeed, feminist scholarship unveils the independence so lauded in liberalism as a myth, relying on erasing some forms of dependence, like male dependence on women’s household labor (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Radical independence, increasing in tandem with increases in surplus labor, severs the ties that make up the relational person and cuts the connections needed to sustain self and family. For these reasons, street vendors in Ciudad del Este invest significant energy and work in activating useful ties of dependence, including seeking to turn their votes into a political resource.

Testifying women invoke their vulnerabilities in order to re-activate dependencies with local state actors, not to stake claims as rights-bearing individuals. The self these street vendors cite is not the liberty-seeking subject posited by political liberalism. Rather, street vendors use emotion and bodily vulnerability to index a relational and politically-charged affective person. Testifying targets the emotional states of others, suggesting the possibility of affective interconnection, the inherent between-ness of emotion as constitutive of radical interdependencies. The proposition that affect can be “transmitted” undoes the binary opposition structuring liberal political theory, between “the biological and the social” (Brennan, 2004, p. 7). Thus the bodily politics of street vendors decenter the notion of an autonomous, utility maximizing, emotionally-contained individual.

Even as vendors seek to re-activate ties of dependency with municipal officials, the ethical rationalities of street vendors critique the maldistribution of wealth. While operating through an illiberal notion of the subject, testifying’s political imaginary still insists the state has obligations to the poor, even if they are to respond to an embodied subject of needs rather than empower a subject of rights. In this sense, these tactics contain challenges to the hegemonic order. Further, these two modalities of politics—rights bearing subjects and affectively interconnected persons—are not mutually exclusive. Magdalena invoked her rights with one municipal official as she also tried to “touch the heart” of the caudillo Zacarías. Further, the challenge is not to free the individual from relationships of dependence—which are constitutive of life—but rather to work towards less exploitative, exclusionary forms of collective dependence.

Testifying’s affective body politics confronts the politics of social abandonment. Indeed, the ethical element present in “*el pan de cada dia*” is a major absence in the discourse of liberal

reformers who call for transparency, good governance, and the rule of law but elide the vast inequality in the distribution of social wealth and life opportunities, as well as the histories of elite appropriation and political violence conditioning the current social order. The calamitous failure of the long transition to democracy is this entrenched unevenness in wellbeing and life-possibilities, which cannot be reduced to the inability to institute a culture of rule-following within Paraguayan society.

6.4 Conjuring the State

In this section, I explore the state as an affective object of aspirational desires, both individual and collective. Affective investments inhere in the promise of care-taking amid the hardships of poverty, emotions that crystalize through contact with something or someone understood to represent the state. These emotional investments are cultivated through the relationships of contingent reciprocity discussed this far. Lauren Berlant defines an object of desire as “a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make ... possible for us,” showing how we can become attached to “compromised conditions of possibility” (Berlant, 2006, pp. 23–24). I analyze two affective domains that contribute to everyday practices of conjuring the state: the experience of abandonment and of a masculinist presence, which can flip between care-taking and coercion. I argue that a range of everyday, affective conjurings contribute to materializing the state.

Christopher Krupa and David Nugent argue for studying the “affective life of the state” as a range of meanings, affects, and promises that “seem to inhere in the state” thereby offering key perspectives on the emotive dimensions of everyday practices of rule which materialize the misperception of the state as an agentic entity (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, pp. 14–15). Krupa and Nugent identify two key activities of imaginative conjuring, which contribute to the conjuring of the state: aggregation and projection. In the first, a diverse range of unconnected experiences are bound together and attributed to the state. Like Marx’s commodity fetish which transmutes use value into exchange value, aggregation renders commensurate a range of experiences, actors, activities, places and affects that are quite distinctive. The other key imaginative act is projection, “the process by which we seize on what is immediately available to us in any given encounter, and on the basis of what this encounter suggests (rather than shows) to us we project into being an entire domain of power, morality, organization, order and discipline (or lack thereof) that lies somewhere *beyond* that encounter” (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, p. 17). The domain of power conjured exhibits patterning, and Krupa and Nugent offer a listing of common powers attributed to the state.

As a first approximation, we note that among the most common of these folk models attributed to the modern state are (1) a *coercive* character, based on its monopoly on the use of force; (2) an *emancipatory* character, based on its ability (and duty) to enforce the citizenship rights associated with popular sovereignty; (3) an *exploitative* character, based on its role in reproducing class inequality; and (4) a *mystifying* or naturalizing character, based on its ability to define appropriate forms of social activity and individual and collective identity” (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, p. 17).

Krupa and Nugent's state theory draws from non-realist understandings of the state which contest the notion that something understood as the state can be located or identified as empirically distinct from other fields of social life like economy or society. A long lineage of critical state theory has argued the state is a productive, socially-produced misapprehension (Abrams, 1988) or an "effect" produced through a wide array of social practices which produce an illusion of a boundary between state and economy (Mitchell, 2002), or state and society (Mitchell, 1999). Yet, as Krupa and Nugent argue, little empirical work demonstrates the everyday workings of power described by critical state theory. Anthropologists of the state considering the illicit and extralegal, tend to focus on the magical, rather than the everyday. For instance, Poole says the mode of regulation commonly understood as the state "oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being," transmutations that contribute to the unintelligibility of state authority (Das & Poole, 2004). Similarly, both Taussig (Taussig, 1997) and Mbembe (Mbembe, 2001) locate the effectivity of state power in the ways magic, display, spectacle, the divine and the extraordinary inhabit everyday epistemologies of authority and power. Thus, in this section, I analyze two affective domains that contribute to everyday practices of conjuring the state. Through experiences of felt abandonment and masculine presencing, street vendors conjure a state-domain that is contradictory and hard to pin down, simultaneously coercive, care-taking, exploitative and mystifying. Indeed the conflicting registers of objective versus populist politics pivot here, in the space between demands for fulfilled promises of care or for the transformation of the Paraguayan state into a liberal democracy of rights-bearing subjects.

Felt Abandonment

The material deprivation that condition daily life for many Paraguayans is often explained in terms of "state absence." In rural communities, peasants often describe a felt sense of abandonment. Schoolteachers taught outdoors and without textbooks, a palpable experience of state absence. Indeed, in one rural community I visited, the state appeared primarily in the coercive form of seventeen police trucks accompanying a court-mandated land measurement, a small bureaucratic hurdle in a long struggle of local landless peasants to claim ill-gotten land (*tierra malhabida*). In Ciudad del Este, state absence was also a theme. One vendor explained her disinterest in electoral politics saying "the state doesn't help us put food on the table." Another vendor disparaged the insufficient salaries of state jobs saying, "the state is a nothing, a nothing; you will die of the state." The success of Kelembu, discussed in Chapter Three, lie precisely in this felt experience of abandonment. Kelembu's failed infrastructure tour aimed at making visible the failures of the Municipality to build basic urban infrastructure, the needed foundation for the care-taking domain of the state.

Ña Lucia, who we also met in Chapter Three, emphasized that she would disobey the municipal eviction order unless the local state provided her with an alternate source of livelihood, what she called *indemnización* (indemnization). She described her decision to ignore the eviction order.

But I am resolved in my decision, I will not leave here, while they haven't paid my compensation salary (*indemnización*) or at the very least got me another spot from which to sell on *this* street (Ña Lucia, personal communication, August 2015).

In claiming rights to compensation, Ña Lucia often referred to indemnization or compensation for loss and damages. Ña Lucia made these claims with frequency and force, to anyone who would listen. Ña Lucia's argument that the state should pay her an indemnization, or a compensation salary, for abandoning her vending space was on shaky legal grounds. The legal basis for indemnization applies to regularized vendors with up-to-date payments of the precarious use tax. Most of the vendors in Ña Lucia's section of the market were never regularized, and Ña Lucia did not pay the precarious use tax. However, in her view, the legitimacy of her claim lay in her acquired rights and her embodied need, not municipal authorization. Yet, in claiming an *indemnización*, Ña Lucia also argued that the state has a care-taking function. Further, she argued that the regulatory legitimacy of municipal officials was contingent on its capacity to provide care. In ordering eviction without offering her an alternate source of livelihood, the state demonstrated its own incapacities. Therefore, she argued, she need not respect the eviction order.

In a similar vein another evicted vendor in the same zone as Ña Lucia, Marcelo, told me, "We just want the state to do *nothing!*" A series of affective relays lie behind this statement, which was delivered forcefully, angrily, and with an undertow of desperation. We spoke on a side street, around the corner from the spot where Marcelo had sold for twelve years, he told me. Life selling from his old *puesto* was difficult but maintaining a claim to space in the street market provided a concrete basis for hope, the hope that he would be able to save enough money to purchase land and start a family. After the surprise eviction, Marcelo's hope was torn asunder. Both the short-term crisis of earning his daily bread, and the long-term project of forming a family became a struggle. For a short time, Marcelo organized with other vendors to reclaim their vending spots. Marcelo served as president of an impromptu association of vendors, but stepped down, he said, after a municipal official showed him a preemptive arrest warrant with his name on it, already signed by a judge and ready to be served at the next protest. The eviction and the illegal, preemptive arrest warrant were two regulatory encounters with the municipal power structure that enabled Marcelo to project a particular, coherent domain called the state. Marcelo both described and conveyed the affective charge of these regulatory encounters. With few concrete experiences that allowed Marcelo to project a caring state, it is these coercive encounters that enable him to imaginatively conjure the state "behind" the encounters. Therefore, when the state appeared in a regulatory form that stripped him of the spatial basis for street vending, he viewed the state as illegitimate. By saying, "We just want the state to do nothing" Marcelo indexed a prior experience of state abandonment and his own lack of care-giving encounters with state officials. Thus, after the coercive encounters, Marcelo argued he would be better off if there were no entity called to state to meddle in his economic affairs.

Analyzing the felt absence of the state is a different approach than that taken by the scholars of clientelism or new democrats in Asunción. Concerns over the distortionary effects of clientelism on electoral politics and democratic consolidation assume that an external entity, the state, can be pushed to behave more rationally and equitably, if voters elect responsive politicians out of their own self-interest. Thus clientelism frames poverty and corruption as a result of the distance between poor voters and the imaginary of the modern, liberty-seeking individual. Theorists of clientelism thus pose rule of law and transparency in municipal affairs as solutions to social problems.

In this vein, Milda Rivarola proposed a self-perpetuating spiral in the “decentralization of corruption” (Rivarola, personal communication, October 2013). As discussed in Chapter Two, the decentralization of corruption involves the post-democratization devolution of political authority. Newly empowered mayors and local power brokers claim more power in state projects and local development. New state revenues managed at the local level, especially royalties paid to Municipalities from the mega-dam Itaipú, created new pools of money to be redistributed through intricate party networks, running parallel to official municipal budgetary accounts. Colorado party machines, these critics presume, diverted significant pools of public money into electoral campaigning. The diversion renders impossible meaningful investment in public works or safety net programs. Poor Paraguayans remain dependent on contingent, small-scale handouts during moments of electoral organizing, diversions from Itaipú royalties. With no material evidence of investments in public works or social support, “*el pueblo*” loses faith in the possibility that state programs might run on universal rational criteria, rather than ascriptive-affective party connections.

These approaches assume the state. Further, it locates the distortions of clientelism in the field of affect and the everyday. The proposition is that expunging politics of the affective everyday is a necessary precursor to bringing forth the emancipatory dimensions of the state. It is in this vein that the Morínigo names the ascriptive-affective tendencies of *el pueblo* as the problem (Morínigo, 2008). Morínigo defines this as a “small societies” problem where “traditional-affective criteria” inhibits individuals from sufficient autonomy (Morínigo, 2008, p. 12). The Paraguayan campesino, he argues, is too relational and insufficiently individualist.

In contrast, looking to the affective investments of practices of rule look to the “privatized, localized and internalized” (Krupa & Nugent, 2015, p. 4) as part of the practices of aggregation and projection that conjure the state. The felt experience of state inadequacies in care and urban infrastructure also coalesce into a projection, the assumption of a state-thing behind the everyday regulatory relationships. The state that is imaginatively conjured, in part through the affective experiences of material deprivation and the felt sense of abandonment is an incapable state. This conjured incapable state fails to deliver care and flares up in moments as a coercive presence, as when vendors are stripped of their claims to urban space.

Conjuring a Masculine State

In Ciudad del Este, negotiation, evasion and capitulation with municipal regulators are constants of daily life. I often heard street vendors reference political authority in gendered ways. I argue here that the imaginative conjuring of a state-domain, imagined to be behind or above the regulatory interactions between state official and street vendors are gendered practices. Thus, I also show how challenges to the masculinity of two key municipal officials points to a gendered imagination of legitimate political authority.

Ña Lucia linked her rhetorical call for state indemnization to her imaginary of gendered political authority. This interview segment is a continuation of our conversation about the state of permanent fright, discussed in Chapter Five, in which Ña Lucia recounted her experience with Santiago Torres, the municipal director in charge of managing street vendors. Through questioning the masculinity of Torres, Ña Lucia made a definitive statement about her urban rights of occupancy and work. Further, she asserted a gendered understanding of political

authority, which she turned to her advantage when male municipal officials acted in unmanly ways.

When [did you speak to Mayor Sandra Zacarías], in 2011?

Yes, around then. In this sense, because it was the national day of friendship and I sent her my most sincere message, that from my heart I considered her my friend. Then, I asked her not to consider me as an enemy, because she wanted to throw me out, off the sidewalk, like a bag of trash. And the sidewalk is of the people [*del pueblo*], it belongs to everyone. Freely. We don't bother anyone with our work. We are here, on the side of this wall belonging to someone else and we work quietly selling our small things. And, just who are we bothering that they will kick us out from this sidewalk? This can't be, they can't treat us like this, Paraguayan men and Paraguayan women. This is what I have to say.

You spoke with Torres?

He comes here. *But I don't consider him a real man*; [this is] because I wanted to speak with him here in the street and he shoved me in the chest and shoulder. He is like a child playing with other children... and he does not have the right to act like that with me, as I am an elderly woman. Right? He should use his education, his education.

You spoke with Torres?

Yes, with Torres. I wanted to speak with Torres but he said to me, “no, no, no, no, don't worry Ña Lucia, you go on and work.” That is how he is with me. What I want to know is why he is scared of me. (*Che aikua'asẽ mba'èrepa la okyhyje chehegui*)

He is scared of you?

Yes, that's what I say.

But why?

Well, here, when he comes, I make fun of him. I grab my ground coconut, my ground cilantro, and I say to him, “take this, boil it, and drink it; it should give your cheeks a lovely blush.”

(She laughs)

And then?

And then he hides from me! (*Ha okañy kañy chehegui*)

He hides from you?!

And he is rude. How can he shove an old woman, an elderly person like me, in the chest or in the shoulder? NO.

And what did you say to him?

Nothing. I don't get upset with anyone. But I am resolved in my decision, I will not leave here, while they haven't paid my compensation salary (*indemnización*) or at the very least got me another spot from which to sell on *this* street.

Ña Lucia questioned the legitimacy of Torres' authority, as an embodied materialization of the state in two registers. First, she challenges his masculinity, saying, “I don't consider him a real man” an assertion she justified by citing Torres' transgression of expectations of gendered interactions. A man shoving an old woman is an effacement of the respect necessitated through the register of the Paraguayan Woman. Thus, Ña Lucia says, “Torres is not a real man... but rather more like a child.”

The effacement of Torres' masculinity is further underscored as Ña Lucia explained the source of Torres' fear. Working the relational between-ness of emotion, Ña Lucia reported creating fear in Torres, enough fear so that he "hides" from her, or abandoned his eviction efforts. This fear is the result of a gendered challenge. In mocking Torres with a parody of makeup, to blush his cheeks, Ña Lucia created a gendered anxiety that effected her protection, at least for the time being, from eviction. Indeed, it is this lack of perceived manliness that generates grounds for Ña Lucia's resistance to his authority. Thus as Ña Lucia conjured a state, projecting a state-domain "behind" or "above" the actions of Santiago Torres, this is a gendered field of political authority. This position echoes the position taken by the protagonists in *The Last Flight of the Bellbird*, where both Martín and the rogue Coronel gender legitimate political authority as male, what I described as caudillo politics or electoral manhood.

The gendering of political authority is particularly felt in the challenges brought by mayor Sandra McLeod de Zacarías, as a woman holding a key political official in regional electoral politics. One of the most common responses I encountered in response to McLeod was an insistence that she held the post as a front. Referring to McLeod, vendors would often comment to me, "she's not the one in charge" (*ndaha'e la omandava*), positing instead that Javier Zacarías ran the show. This view was also reported in the local press, which said there were "grave questions about the authority held by Javier Zacarías in the Municipality." These critics argued that McLeod—appointed by the city council when Javier Zacarías stepped down to run for president—occupied the position of Mayor in name only.

As the authority of Sandra McLeod was challenged on gendered grounds, so too did critics contest Javier Zacarías with gendered narratives. I often heard rumors that Zacarías was gay. One key local politician and key opponent of Zacarías described a network of high powered gay men, part of Zacarías' team, and at the helm of *esquemas*, organized into a ring of what he described as "gay power" (he used the English words). These rumors must be put into the context of Paraguay's conservatism and church-sanctioned homophobia. As political authority is still rooted in particular masculinist notions of strength and certitude, challenging the masculinity of Zacarías is a means of questioning his power. The accusation of homosexuality as a derogatory, homophobic slur was a means to question Zacarías' capacities to wield power. These rumors spiked during my return visit in 2015, and became central in the local municipal Colorado Party primary elections. Opposition against the McLeod administration had heightened, and transparency activists succeeded in pressing forward a national commission to investigate municipal budgets. Into this milieu, a popular tabloid printed a front-page photo of a sexual encounter between two men, and the claim that Zacarías was one of the men. The taxi driver responsible for photos, Yoni Castillo, became an overnight folk hero of the factional opposition inside the Colorado party, sitting on stage at a primary election rally.

The conflation of homosexuality with abuse of power as a charge against Zacarías signals the gendered nature of political imaginaries and the sort of state-domain conjured through acts of projection. Zacarías brought a civil case of slander against Castillo, and, in seeking evidence, forty police officers stormed Castillo's house to confiscate his computer. The city council revoked Yony Castillo's taxi stand license, thereby temporarily depriving him of his livelihood. The outsized reaction of Zacarías to the tabloid photos also signals the sorts of everyday practices of rule which presence a masculine state. Zacarías described the accusations as an offense meriting prison time, signaling the extent of the personal affront and political harm the photos might cause him:

In honor of my family, and my friends, I will take judicial action in the penal arena against the person responsible for divulging these absurd and wrongful publications; I am asking for justice, not in economic redress, but rather in the deprivation of liberty of whomever could be responsible for this contemptible action, made through a lying, crass frame-up (Diario Popular, March 7, 2015).

The response to the photos reveals two important features of gendered practices of political authority. On the one hand, it reveals the fragility of Zacarías' masculinity, which must be shored up with the coercive presenting of the state through police actions and aggressive threats of litigation against Castillo. I am reminded of the municipal Director Domínguez during the brief uprising in the street market, described in Chapter Three, when street vendors ran municipal *fiscales* out of the street market with backup from Special Operations forces. As if to reestablish his manliness after fleeing the market, Director Domínguez strode about in loopy figure eights, chest puffed out and eyes bulging. In response to affronts to their manly capacity, both men needed to reestablish their masculinities. The manliness of both men—as the font of a particular kind of authority—required citation and reiteration, especially in the face of challenge. In both cases, these men called forward the coercive arm of the state in police presence, thus advertising their capacities to call forth violence.

The second important feature of the Yoni Castillo incident is to reveal the extent to which Zacarías, as a private citizen officially holding no post in any level of government, is able to draw on the apparatus of the state in a civil slander suit between two individuals. Revoking Castillo's taxi license, reveals how the city council viewed these licenses in the terms of Mbembe's analysis of the salary, that is, as a gift extended which creates debts and obligations which must be paid with appropriate forms of loyalty and further, which can be revoked. The city council was forced to re-issue Castillo's taxi stand license, after a "citizen's earthquake"—as one politician said at a Colorado party rally—objected to the city council's interventions into the private lawsuit of Zacarías.

6.5 Conclusion

Gender norms in Paraguay have been forged through the country's specific history of post-war reconstruction and a nationalist imaginary of the heroic mother, the Paraguayan Woman. The force of this gendered trope extends into the present, and Pope Francis indexed this legacy when he suggested that the Paraguayan Woman receive the Noble Peace Prize. In this chapter, I have argued that women vendors use their bodies as part of a repertoire of gendered defensive tactics to defend their claims to street space. Testifying and deploying the aggressive body draw on notions of womanliness forged through the figure of the Paraguayan Woman. When women testify, they invoke and perform their vulnerabilities, emphasizing their care-taking responsibilities as mothers. Given the constitutive contingency of enforcement actions, vendors seek to activate an affective response from municipal officials in order to re-activate dependencies with local state actors. The outcomes of testifying are unpredictable and a last ditch tactic of the most marginalized. However, sometimes testifying works to temporally defer eviction. Vendors also deploy their aggressive body, trespassing accepted gendered bodily dispositions with sexualized language and crude gestures. The occasional success of these body

politics reveals the extent of contingency within enforcement practice. Further these body politics works through, not against, gendered notions of women's social role, maternal altruism, and imaginaries of political subordination. Thus it reinscribes dominant notions of femininity and the Paraguayan Woman, which constrain and regulate women.

Women deploy these body politics to activate dependencies in relationship to municipal practices of contingent reciprocity, not to stake claims as rights-bearing individuals. As such this subject of urban politics makes claims on the state through frames of need and dependency. Yet vendors' body politics refuse the categories of meaning enacted through municipal development projects, which divided authorized vendors—so-called “real vendors”—from those to be cleared away. Further, vendors mobilize bodily vulnerability as a shared, human condition. The ethical grounding of these body politics is evident in the twin discourses of *el pan de cada día* and *juru hai'bme*. *El pan de cada día* references an affective relational ethics of care that is not negated by rule-breaking. In contrast, *juru hai'bme* signals the unrestrained greed of an elite few as the source of social disintegration. These body politics are illiberal, in that they refuse the practices of liberty-seeking individualism that serves as a foundational assumption of liberalism. Yet, vendors' body politics also name the social structures that unevenly distribute the vulnerabilities of poverty. Street vendors use emotion and bodily vulnerability to index a relational and politically-charged affective person whose personhood is enabled by dependencies. The useful argument at the core of these body politics reframes the central political challenges away from the misleading frame of independence, which seeks to extract the individual from a web of dependencies. Instead, the embedded political argument is quite different: relationships of dependence are constitutive of life. As such, the challenge is to work towards less exploitative, exclusionary forms of collective dependence.

These arguments about collective dependence lay the groundwork for a different approach to thinking the state. At least two key felt experiences emerge from street vendors' everyday regulatory relationships with state actors, which enables vendors to aggregate and project a diverse set of interactions into a coherent state-thing which exists somewhere behind or above the actual encounters with state officials. On the one hand, many vendors expressed a felt sense of abandonment as they engage in a range of practices of making do, scraping together livelihood in a difficult city. On the other hand, the state also appears as a coercive force, enforcing evictions or revoking taxi-stand licenses. These moments of coercion materialize the state as a forceful, masculine presence. Indeed, for many vendors, a particular form of manhood is a precondition for the legitimate exercise of political authority. This form of masculinity draws from repertoires of action that valorize masculinist notions of strength and certitude, rooted in the capacity to enact violence. Thus Zacarías and Domínguez both call on police power to back up their masculinity when the legitimacy of their power is challenged. The state, understood as Lauren Berlant's object of desire or cluster or promises, is more commonly imagined as a care-taking state, rather than an emancipatory one. As Berlant finds in her research on cruel optimism in a very different context, the affective investments that inhere in and animate the state-domain, bind vendors to political cultures that do not support their flourishing.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed to put Ciudad del Este on the scholarly map, not as a site of lawlessness or dysfunction, but as a crucial city from which to understand the politics of globalization at multiple scales. Doreen Massey has argued that all places are “criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries which constitute both themselves and ‘the global’” (Massey, 2004, p. 11). This dissertation contributes to a lineage of scholarship inspired by this relational conception of space by expanding the sites from which the global is theorized. By way of summary and to highlight the contributions of this dissertation, I return to the series of USAID-funded reports on the city’s electronics trade, which promoted a particular brand of frontier formalization concerned with transparency and compliance with the rule of law. The reports’ framing devices and blind spots highlight the stakes of rethinking how Ciudad del Este fits into a world of cities and the relationship between everyday urban life and practices of power at multiple scales. The reports’ policy solutions sought to bring hitherto transgressive economic practice inside the law by slashing taxes and tariffs on electronics and creating exceptional zones of commerce. Under these proposed regimes, moving certain commodities in, through and out of Paraguayan territory would continue without requiring frontier entrepreneurs to pay much in the way of taxes or tariffs, in effect legalizing contraband.

These policy solutions required a series of imaginative arguments about the nature of globalized capital and its relationships to state power. Crucially, the report authors—like policy makers, economists and many social scientists more broadly—imagine that the global economy in its legal moments can be spilt apart from illicit or extralegal economies, which are understood as corrupt violations. Throughout this dissertation I have contested this imaginative bounding of extralegality, demonstrating that Ciudad del Este’s extralegal border trade, like outlaw economies more generally, are internal to globalized capitalism. To underscore this point, I have offered the concept of contraband urbanism, which describes how local state actors promote the extralegal economy by making urban spaces for the frontier economy through state-sponsored transgressions of the law. Indeed, the USAID reports provided surprising detail about the everyday practices of contraband and networked relationships running through state spaces that turned a sleepy frontier outpost into a humming hub of globalized commerce. Contraband urbanism inscribes the extralegal economy into the built environment and generates uncertainty over tenure rights for street vendors, even as official discourse promises to formalize the border trade. Further, my dissertation demonstrates how municipal practices of spatial management in the street market work by generating tenure uncertainty for street vendors, what I call regulation by ambiguity. Through regulation by ambiguity, municipal officials introduce radical instability in practical definitions of legitimate economic activity and spatial practice, laying the groundwork for considerable local bureaucratic discretion in enforcement actions. My findings contribute to longstanding debates about informal economies by adding a spatial account of governance practice and also by zooming in on the regulatory interface between municipal officials and urban entrepreneurs.

My argument is rooted in a historical and ethnographic account of the co-constitution of Paraguayan state-formation, urban planning practice and the extralegal border trade.

Understanding how illicit and extralegal economies intertwine with everyday governance practices is a key challenge for scholars, planners and activists concerned with justice in Latin American cities, as the region continues to grapple with the varied ways in which outlaw capital inhibits progressive change. My analysis of the spatial forms and political practices that produce contraband urbanism are key contributions to debates in critical urban studies about the relationships between urbanization and global capital, which hitherto have overlooked the city-making force of contraband trade economies.

The USAID reports also reveal the dangers of relying on notions of a world ecology of cities that compete against each other as bounded units. The authors illustrated their perspective on increased competitive pressures wrought by regional economic integration using a long excerpt from Edgar Allen Poe's short story, *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In it, a prisoner of the Inquisition is locked in a cell, awaiting execution. A swinging blade slowly descends from above, the rate of its downward movement perceptibly increasing, threatening to shred the prisoner. Applying the metaphor to Ciudad del Este, the pendulum, for the authors, represents competition as an external force, which the city must respond to or perish. Certainly, the violence represented by Poe's pendulum is an apt metaphor for the vulnerabilities produced by many capitalist social relations. Yet, as deployed by the authors, the image of the menacing pendulum reduces the range of urban trajectories available to city planners to those that will increase the competitiveness of the city, understood to be separate from, and in competition with, other cities. With a normative commitment to globalize the periphery, this dissertation works against these reductive spatial imaginaries, drawing instead from a reservoir of critical theories of the relational production of space. I have demonstrated that contraband urbanism is an imaginative project, as well as a political and economic one, showing local state actors harness circulating referents of the competitive global city, while smuggling in the very economic practices which are supposedly banished by the formalized city. By adding new spatial analyses to debates on informal economies, I demonstrate how the embeddedness of the transborder economy in the built environment circumscribes available pathways of economic transformation.

In the frame of the USAID reports, the role of the border trade as a livelihood strategy for thousands of poor Paraguayans barely registers comment. The report proposed formalization policies without analyzing their distributional impacts on street vendors and other small-scale economic actors like Brazilian *sacoleiros*. Studying how street vendors are key actors shaping urban development and participating in globalized flows of commodities is therefore an important intervention into policy and planning debates. Yet, the move to globalize the periphery enacts a different sort of scholarly politics than projects seeking to recuperate and valorize marginalized actors as resisting top-down projects of globalization. Street vendors seek inclusion in urban-economic circuits, even as their political practices challenge key assumptions of the autonomous, emotionally contained subject inherent in much political theory. Indeed, local state actors govern through a collective, emotional field of uncertainty that accompanies regulation by ambiguity. Yet, the most vulnerable street vendors, Guaraní-speaking Paraguayan women, exploit regulatory uncertainty by strategically engaging an emotional between-ness with municipal bureaucrats to defend their claims to space. I argue these affective politics of the body point to an imaginary of urban belonging based in the needs of interdependent urban residents rather than in the equal rights of citizens before the law. The affective dimensions of governance contribute to the durability of these networks of contingent reciprocity and reproduce understandings of urban belonging that exclude many street vendors. Thus, my work on the affective politics of precarity intervenes in debates within geography and planning about the

governance of urban work, by insisting that emotion is political. To underscore this point, I demonstrate how a gendered imaginary of the state as outside or above everyday practice is produced through affective encounters with representative of the state, thereby bringing affect and the body to theories of state formation. Ultimately, at stake in this work are the rights of the urban poor to work and occupy the city.

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