Chapter 5: Indigenous Perspectives on Sustainability: The 1990 Indigenous Peoples' March for Territory and Dignity and the Origins of the Bolivian National Forestry Law

Introduction

In 1996, the Bolivian government enacted a new national forestry law that established the Forestry Superintendence (Superintendencia Forestal), a national forestry institution, and required that Bolivian forestry meet certain tenets of ecologically sustainable professional forest management. The law required the development of forest management plans, the completion of forest inventories, the retention of seed trees, and the incorporation of harvesting limits. By mandating that harvest activities follow scientific forestry principles and establishing an institution that could enforce regulations, the Bolivian government intended to ensure that the forest would be available for future harvesting. In addition, the 1996 law allowed community and indigenous forestry operations to manage their own forested territories, while continuing to recognize private industrial concessions.¹

In this chapter, I explore the conflicting ideas of sustainability at the heart of the 1996 Forestry Law to provide a deeper understanding of the complex cultural, historical, and environmental influences affecting forest management, planning, and perceptions of sustainability among indigenous communities in lowland Bolivia. Professional foresters derive their ideas about sustainability from forest science, while indigenous communities throughout Bolivia hold ideas of forest sustainability that have their origins in traditional understandings of territory; beliefs about the relationships between community and forest; and a dedication to maintaining relationships among past, present, and future generations. I analyze the social, environmental, and historical context surrounding the drafting of the 1996 forestry law and
explore the ways in which indigenous communities in lowland Bolivia were involved in the broad social changes that occurred in the 1990s. I examine the understanding of sustainability among the lowland indigenous people and the ways in which this understanding was linked to communities’ own concepts of territory, forest management, and indigenous identity.

The Complex Historical and Environmental Landscape

Ecological Complexity and Forestry in Bolivia

Bolivia is one of the most ecologically and biologically diverse countries in the world; it is a landlocked country located in the center of South America and almost half of its national territory is covered by forest. Bolivia ranges in elevation from 100-200 meters above sea level in some areas of the lowland Amazonian tropics to 6,542 meters above sea level at the peak of Sajama Mountain. Scientists have classified the ecological zones of Bolivia using a number of different categories. Two scientists working with the Bolivian Simon Patiño Foundation, Gonzalo Navarro and Mabel Maldonado, classified Bolivia into four major bio-geographic regions: Andean, Grand Chaco, Brazilian-Parana, and Amazonian (see Map 1).

Bolivian forests are also extremely diverse. Scientists estimate that the forests include 18,000–20,000 species of vascular plants. In addition, scientists have classified more than 2,700 species of trees in the country. Of these species, forestry products scientists have estimated that over 200 could be managed for forest products. Bolivia’s forests are also home to 319 species of mammals, over a quarter of the 1,100 mammal species found in South America. There are over 1,000 species of birds, and hundreds of species of fish and reptiles. Bolivia is also a center for geophysical diversity, domesticated plant diversity, and cultural diversity. Local indigenous communities in Bolivia have their own cultural and ecological classifications and understandings of this natural
diversity, but only in the past two decades have scientific studies begun to explore the ways in which indigenous knowledge can inform natural resource management.  

Studies have revealed that indigenous populations in Bolivia have managed and altered forest soils, hydrologic systems, and vegetation. Before the Spanish conquest, large indigenous populations created vast earthen walls that altered the hydrology to create savannah and forest islands in an area called Llanos de Moxos. Adjacent to Moxos, in an area within Guarayos indigenous territory in the department of Santa Cruz, scientists have found anthropogenic dark soil formations composed of charcoal and pottery shards—often called by their Brazilian name, terra preta. Researchers from Bolivia and the United States have theorized that long-lived vegetation in this area of Guarayos is the result of past human land use and subsequent abandonment. The Bolivian tropical rainforest is, in part, a cultural landscape resulting from past indigenous land use practices and subsequent historical abandonment.

**Tropical Forest Diversity and Timber Harvesting**

Despite the diversity of tree species in tropical forests, timber brokers and loggers have only considered a few species valuable. This has led to widespread selective harvesting for only a few species. From the 1500s to the 1900s, forest management throughout South America consisted of selective logging—high-grading—of a few valuable species. In the 1500s, Portuguese loggers selectively logged Brazilwood (Caesalpinia sp.) and exported it to Europe for use in red dye. The use of selective logging expanded over the next several centuries, and eventually included species such as mahogany (Swietenia macrophylla) and Spanish cedar (Cedrela fissilis), which were used to make ships and fine furniture in Europe and the United States. Loggers and timber brokers favored selective harvesting over clearcutting entire forests.
for economic, ecological, logistical, and geographical reasons. Economically, only certain tree species could be sold in the export market; ecologically, the exportable species grew at low densities within the forest; and geographically, accessibility was limited mainly to river systems. While selective harvesting did not remove the entire forest cover, the commercial value of accessible forests often decreased dramatically after selective harvesting because of the subsequent scarcity of commercial species.

Lowland Bolivia, in contrast to other parts of South America, was extremely inaccessible until the mid-twentieth century because of limited infrastructure. Therefore, the lowlands forests of Bolivia were not harvested for timber until the 1960s. Loggers began to selectively high-grade much of the forest in Guarayos, Bolivia for valuable species—mahogany and Spanish cedar—in the 1960s, and intensified the use of this practice throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s.

Scientific forest management—management designed to ensure consistent yields and the regeneration of commercially important species—began in South America and the tropics in the early 1900s, but did not reach lowland Bolivia until much later. In 1911, the recently created US Forest Service began a systematic study of sustained yield tropical forestry in both the New and Old World Tropics. Under the instruction of Gifford Pinchot, George Ahern developed methods and institutions to foster scientific forestry in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1911 the US Forest Service established the US Tropical Forest Experimental Station in Puerto Rico. Despite these efforts to study and promote tropical forest management, by the 1950s, there was still relatively little scientific management and regeneration of forests in Latin America. The sheer diversity and ecological complexity of tropical forests, a lack of professional
foresters in Latin America, and weak institutional structures for the management and enforcement of forestry laws hindered scientific forest management in the region.\textsuperscript{20}

**Timber Harvesting in Bolivia**

The history of forest harvesting in Bolivia is directly related to the accessibility of forests. Before the 1950s, timber harvesting was limited to forests close to either the larger population centers such as Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Trinidad, both departmental capitals, or the shores of navigable rivers. Poor transportation networks limited the scale and intensity of timber harvesting in this era. During the 1960s and 1970s, improvements to the overland transportation infrastructure in Bolivia increased accessibility to interior forests, and harvesting in Bolivia expanded dramatically.

The increase in harvesting was particularly acute in the Northern parts of the department of Santa Cruz—an area that includes the traditional forests of the Guarayos people. Some foresters have described the increase in Santa Cruz as the “most important expansion of timber harvesting” in the Bolivian lowlands.\textsuperscript{21} Because of the extreme diversity of forests and the lack of a market for the majority of tree species found in Bolivian forests, timber harvesting consisted of the high-grade selective logging of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), Spanish cedar (*Cedrela fissilis*), and Spanish oak (*Amburana cearensis*)—the three most commercially valuable species.\textsuperscript{22} This type of logging did not remove the entire forest, but did degrade the quality and economic potential of future harvests.

Timber harvesting pressure on indigenous communities in the Beni and Santa Cruz Departments increased when the construction of a modern highway in the 1980s connected the departmental capitals of Trinidad and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Because it passed through
As censión de Guarayos, the capital of the Guarayos communities, the highway increased the accessibility of the forests of the indigenous Guarayos people. The highway intensified the pressure to log the adjacent forests and led to increased demand for timber and land for other intensive uses such as cattle ranching among non-indigenous people. Lowland indigenous communities in the area rarely received the economic benefits of these new activities.

The effects of road construction on deforestation and land tenure pressures affecting indigenous people is not limited to lowland Bolivia. A large body of literature has documented a processes in which roads increase access to forests, forests are high-graded, and landless communities colonize the area and begin slash and burn farming, which eventually leads to the replacement of forest with farmland. Deforestation is also associated with weak land tenure regimes. However, the causes of deforestation are neither simple nor linear; rather, deforestation occurs because of a complex interplay between institutional, social, economic, and household factors. Within this complexity, a common theme is that deforestation often displaces the local indigenous people who lived and worked within the forest before land use changes. This is precisely the scenario that transpired for the Guarayos communities in Bolivia: the construction of the interdepartmental highway in the 1980s facilitated increased deforestation and raised issues of forest management and land tenure.

Improved overland transportation networks (i.e., roads) also increased interaction between highland people, political elites, and lowland indigenous people. The road infrastructure was minimal to non-existent in the Bolivian lowlands until the 1960s, at which time the Bolivian government expanded the road network into the lowlands and enacted policies to encourage internal migration from the highlands to the lowlands. Gudrun Birk, writing for the Indigenous
Central of the Original Communities of Lomerio, described the aftermath of the road network penetrating into the lowland forests: “it became clear that not only were there more people living [in the lowlands] than previously thought but also that the laws regulating land tenure were insufficient and badly managed.” Because Guarayos’ land tenure was not secured by government title, government road-building projects in the indigenous communities opened access to Guarayos land, which in turn created opportunities for interactions between people with different cultural backgrounds.

**The 1974 Forestry Law**

While road construction and increased access began to raise land tenure issues in indigenous communities, the Bolivian government, in accordance with recently passed national regulations and laws, implemented a new forestry regime that changed indigenous communities’ relationships with forest ownership and control. Indigenous communities in Bolivia had no rights to manage their forests until the 1990s. Before 1996, Bolivia’s first national forestry law, which was enacted in 1974, dictated forest management. Under the 1974 law, the Bolivian state owned the trees and all forest resources. In addition, the Bolivian state controlled harvesting and access to all Bolivian forestlands—public and private—by only granting harvest permits to entities that could demonstrate their ability to manage and process the timber. Indigenous communities did not have the resources to demonstrate an ability to manage and process timber. Thus, after the passage of the 1974 forestry law, indigenous communities who had lived in and managed forestlands in their communities for hundreds of years were not legally considered the owners of their forest resources.
As the economist Pablo Pacheco and his colleagues argued, the 1974 forestry regulations essentially excluded small, midsize, and indigenous landholders from forest management in favor of companies with extensive capital and large sawmills. \(^{31}\) Because private landholders, colonists, and indigenous communities did not qualify for legal permits, they were left to either employ black market middle-men to harvest and sell their timber or directly participate in small-scale illegal harvesting for sale on the black market. \(^{32}\) In addition, the 1974 law placed a state forestry agency that, according to several studies, was notoriously inefficient, corrupt, and marred by political favoritism, in charge of regulating large-scale timber harvesting. \(^{33}\)

Indigenous communities and foresters believed that several factors made forestry practices in Bolivia under the 1974 law unsustainable. First, logging consisted of high-grading selective species, which depleted the forest both economically and ecologically. Timber harvesting was not planned according to management plans or professional forestry tenants, and did not include provisions for regeneration or sustainable harvest yields. Second, lowland indigenous communities were not integrated into the legal structures governing forest management, and had limited political and economic resources to devote to forest management activities. Finally, state institutions were unable and unwilling to enforce sustainable forestry practices, and access to lowland forests continued to increase because of better transportation networks. By 1990, indigenous communities in lowland Bolivia began to believe that local forestry practices were damaging their territories and causing them to lose control of the ways their territories were used. \(^{34}\)

Tensions began to build in indigenous communities across the Bolivian lowlands as roads and forest harvesting began to open forestlands to new uses. At the same time, the forestry
regime was changing—the Bolivian government began to enforce management regulations that excluded indigenous communities from the Isiboro-Sécure National Park, which had been established in the 1960s.35 In 1988, the Mojos, Sirinó, and Chimanes indigenous communities, which were directly impacted by the national park, began to organize to regain territorial control of the park and stop timber harvesting that the communities believed was unsustainable. In 1990, these indigenous communities formed the nucleus of a broad indigenous protest movement organized around the goals of regaining control of their forests and territories and gaining wider recognition of their rights and cultures from the larger Bolivian society.

The March for Territory and Dignity: The Fight for Territorial Control

Facing new pressures from road-building, highland migration, and logging, indigenous lowland communities began to organize to regain control of their territories in the 1980s as conflicts over land tenure and land use began to increase in the Bolivian lowlands. The struggle for land tenure and control of territory was not new to the lowland indigenous people of Bolivia. These groups had actively fought for control of their territories since the Spanish incursion in the seventeenth century.36 However, the movement that began in 1988 differed from earlier struggles because the land use changes occurred in response to increased access to traditional territories.

Although the indigenous movement that began in 1988 initially represented the interests of the lowland communities who considered their territory to be part of the Isiboro-Sécure National Park, it soon expanded to include indigenous communities from other lowland areas in Bolivia and came to be represented by the pan-Indigenous organization the Indigenous Confederation of the Bolivian Orient (CIDOB).
I explore several questions in this section: How did the 1990 indigenous protest march transpire? Who were the participants and what were their demands? What effect did the march have on the larger Bolivian society? Did the protest march influence the Bolivian government and legislation? Did the protest march affect indigenous perceptions? Finally, did the march have lasting effects on Bolivian forestry and the involvement of indigenous communities? I address these questions by using data from a set of primary sources, including interviews compiled in 1991 during a seminar convened by the Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales to discuss the 1990 march. I also use a first-hand account of the march written by Arnaldo Lijerón Casanovas, a Bolivian educator, historian, academic, and indigenous cultural expert. The major secondary source for this section is an analysis conducted by a Bolivian sociologist, Zulema Lehm, in 1999. These works have not been translated into English and thus scholars in the United States have rarely used this data.

Improved transportation networks, increased access to forests, the establishment of national parks, and forest harvesting in lowland Bolivia between the 1950s and the 1990s degraded the commercial value of forests and, in the view of the indigenous people, decreased community control of their territories. To highlight these problems, a group of lowland Bolivian indigenous people gathered for a protest march on August 15, 1990. The march became a platform from which indigenous communities presented their demands to the larger Bolivian society. The marchers traveled 650 kilometers—from the Beni Department in the Amazonian Tropics up through the Andean mountains, over high Andean passes, to La Paz, the highest national capital in the world at 14,000 feet above sea level. Approximately 300 indigenous leaders, elders, children, men, and women set out into what they described as “the unknown” as
they began their march toward the capital city of La Paz. The participants called the protest the March for Territory and Dignity (Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad); their main goals were to raise awareness of and respect for lowland indigenous people among the broader Bolivian society and to demand access to their traditional territories and natural resources.

Initially, the Mojos, Sirinó, and Chimanes indigenous communities organized the march when the Bolivian national government established the Isiboro-Sécure National Park on land that the communities considered part of their traditional territory. The indigenous communities in the vicinity of the park complained that the management regulations excluded indigenous communities and did not allow indigenous uses. The communities also objected to not being involved in decisions about the park. These communities believed that the government did not have the right to exclude them from their territory. For these communities, being excluded from the national park was a direct affront to their indigenous cultures because their concept of territory was broader than a geographic location; territory also included their indigenous cultures. These indigenous communities also wanted the ability to harvest timber in the area, something that was not allowed in a national park. Their exclusion from the protected area prompted the communities to form several indigenous community organizations and organizing workshops through which they discussed their issues with the Bolivian national government.

At the same time that the Mojos, Sirinó, and Chimanes communities were expressing concerns about being marginalized in the protected area, other lowland indigenous communities began to argue that they were losing control of their own territories as outside interests took advantage of improved access to forest resources. For example, the Indigenous Confederation of the Bolivian Orient (CIDOB) was founded in 1982 with the goal of organizing the indigenous
communities of Chiquitanos, Ayoreos, Guarayos, and Guaraníes. CIDOB’s mission was to “support and contribute to the consolidation of property rights of the indigenous communities and [to work toward] a legal framework that guarantees the management and utilization of their natural resources. [CIDOB] focuses its efforts on community health, opportunities for indigenous youth education and professionalization, and equity.”

CIDOB, like the communities in the vicinity of the national park, organized a group of indigenous communities to fight for territorial control and the right to use their indigenous natural resources. CIDOB members were a critical component of the 1990 march. Thus, indigenous communities from Santa Cruz—including the Guarayos communities who were a part of CIDOB—and eventually the highland indigenous communities joined the cause and supported the March for Territory and Dignity. The seemingly isolated issue of the exclusion of indigenous communities from a national protected area became a unifying theme that many indigenous communities understood. These communities believed that if one community could be excluded from their lands, all communities were vulnerable.

The marchers’ ranks grew to 800 strong as they passed through numerous pueblos, cities, and indigenous communities, including Trinidad, Puerto Almacén, Fatima, Bermeo, San Ignacio, San Francisco, San Lorenzo, the multi-ethnic communities of the Chimanes forest, El Campanario, El Villar, San Borja, Embocada, Yucmo, Coroico, Inicua, Cumbre de Marimonos, Sapeco, Alto Beni, Bella Vista, Carrasco, Caranavi, Chojña, Choro, Challá, Yolosa, Sacramento Alto, Chusipata, Pongo Alto, Unduavi, Pongo Bajo, Chuquiaguillo (the gateway to La Paz), and finally, La Paz. The sheer number of communities that welcomed and joined the protesters illustrated that the fledgling indigenous movement was, at its core, community based. A wide
variety of indigenous communities expressed a desire for greater control of their resources and greater respect from powerful segments of Bolivian society.

According to Lijerón Casanovas, not only did the march grow in size as it progressed, but the level solidarity among other indigenous communities also increased. As evidence of the growing solidarity, the marchers described being welcomed into most communities with traditional songs, music, food, water, and shelter. The marchers themselves promoted solidarity by sharing their own music and dances with many communities along the route. To the marchers, this sharing of food, shelter, music, dance, and even sports solidified the bond among indigenous communities.

According to Lijerón Casanovas’ first-hand account of the march, many of the marchers later recounted the event in epic terms, stressing the hardships they endured to emphasize the significance of their journey. Participants described roads of thick mud, torrential downpours, blistering heat, sun, freezing rain, rocky ground, and high altitude, as they marched closer and closer to La Paz. The marchers recounted battling fierce tropical insects along the sandy riverbanks. Some members told of fellow participants becoming deathly ill along the route, while others spoke of their bare feet and bodies reverberating with pain caused by gravel, stones, and high altitude—things not found on the sandy roads of their lowland communities—when they reached the foothills of the Andes. Marchers later recounted that these hardships only strengthened their resolve and they began to repeat the unofficial slogan “Only God will stop the march.”
Indigenous Demands for Territory and Dignity

The 1990 marchers had specific demands concerning territory and dignity, but what did those two terms mean to the marchers? How did they define territory? How did they define dignity? How did the Bolivian government respond to their demands and definitions? Finally, did the protest experience change the indigenous marchers and their communities?

One of the major demands of the indigenous marchers was territory. Territory can hold different meanings for different people and cultural groups. The Concise Oxford Spanish Dictionary defines *territorio* as, “Compra a superficie) territory; (división administrativa) region, territory.”47 The Oxford English Dictionary defines territory as “the land or district lying round a city or town and under its jurisdiction” and “the land or country belonging to or under the dominion of a ruler or state. Often applied contextually to the land or country itself of a state…..”48 Both the Spanish and English definitions focus on the land itself, ownership of that land, and by extension, jurisdiction of that land. However, the indigenous marchers in lowland Bolivia defined territory differently.

As documented in the primary source material describing the 1990 march, for indigenous marchers the concept of territory went beyond land, ownership, and jurisdiction, to include animals, plants, rivers, lakes, soil, rocks, human communities, and the spiritual and cultural relationships among these components. According to the marchers, territory connected indigenous communities to the past and the future, forging a link between their ancestors who were buried in the area and the generations yet to be born. Territory also included cultural recognition and indigenous communities’ rights to use their resources. The marchers’ definition of territory incorporated human society, ecology, economics, and relationships between the past
and present. Thus, for the indigenous marchers territory was intimately intertwined with sustainability.

The marchers’ concept of territory—which was related to their understandings of sustainability—presumed that human beings are a part of the natural world rather than separate from it. Jorge Añez, a Chimane indigenous council representative and march participant, described this concept during the 1991 workshop when he stated, “The government has given us a territory and we are thankful for that. We, the Chimanes, and I believe that the other indigenous people too, need territory. We do not want to destroy the forest because… the forest has been ours, our home, our house, where our ancestors have lived for many years, where we have always lived and where we will always live.” Añez’s comment illustrates that under the indigenous definition of territory, human communities, indigenous community rights, and forests are all connected.

The lowland indigenous marchers described territory in terms that included both Western and indigenous definitions. As Evelio Aranzibida, a Guaraní indigenous leader and CIDOB’s economic secretary, stated during the 1991 workshop, “In CIDOB we try to demonstrate that territory is the integral concept that approximates the true concept [relationship] that we have with respect to natural resources, the soil, the subsoil; but, in judicial terms, in legal terms, the concept of territory is not compatible with the current legislation.” At the same workshop, Brazilian indigenous leader Jorge Terena described the situation: “The governments and the Indians are always clashing, fighting one with the other for territory, the land. For history, we Indians are owners of the land, for the law, the government is the owner of the land. Who is the one that has the right?” Finally José Urañawi, an indigenous leader and CIDOB representative
at the workshop, stated simply, “Our land is our home in that we live and die [there] and our future generations will continue living [there].”\textsuperscript{52} These protesters were demanding that the Bolivian government accept a definition of territory that integrated both legal status and cultural concepts.

The other major demand of the indigenous marchers was \textit{dignidad} (dignity). The original demands made by the communities near the Isiboro-Sécure National Park and the Santa Cruz-Trinidad highway were, at the core, demands for dignity. These communities sought dignity by demanding the legal recognition of indigenous organizations and traditional authorities; improved economic, health, and educational conditions in communities; and the respect for and the recuperation of indigenous cultures.\textsuperscript{53} The 1990 marchers embraced these embodiments of dignity and made them the central focus of their protest.

Thus, among the marchers dignity included respect and cultural recognition from the larger Bolivian society. The lowland marchers believed that the majority of people in Bolivia neither recognized nor respected their cultures and communities. Protesters noted that their indigenous cultures had been denigrated since the arrival of the Spaniards in South America and were still denigrated by the more powerful segments of Bolivian society. The marchers also equated territory with culture and community survival. Because they considered their cultures a part of their territory, they believed that an affront to their territories was an affront to their cultures. In other words, because the indigenous people believed that both their communities and their cultures defined their territory, territorial exclusion and unsustainable forestry practices were direct assaults on their dignity.\textsuperscript{54}
By demanding both territory and dignity, lowland indigenous communities in Bolivia were demanding the legal right to use their territories—they were demanding an end to both policies that opened their lands to forest harvesting by outside interests and policies that excluded indigenous use in protected areas. The indigenous communities demanded the right to control their territories and use them in traditional ways; however, they also demanded the ability to use their territories for modern forest management. Under the 1974 forestry law, indigenous communities were not legally eligible to bid on the concessions or harvest the timber in their communities because they did not have the economic resources to both harvest and process timber as legally required. Further, these communities lacked the political power and infrastructure needed to secure government contracts. While the 1974 law was in effect, the only way for indigenous communities to harvest forests was to do so illegally. Many indigenous communities recognized the potential to harvest forests in a sustainable manner, but because there was no legal mechanism to do so, sustainable forest management seemed illusory. The 1990 marchers wanted to change this situation. One marcher, Jorge Añez, stated this goal clearly during the 1991 workshop designed for participants to reflect on the march: "We do not want to harvest the forest illegally, we want to harvest it under a sustainable management [system], rational forest management; but, for this we need to harvest the forest in a legal way." In other words, the marchers were demanding a legal recognition of indigenous territories and the right to legally harvest the forest in a sustainable manner.55

Implications for the March and Forestry

The march lasted more than 30 days and raised the profile of indigenous rights, territory, and dignity throughout Bolivia and the rest of the world. The widespread support from myriad
Bolivian indigenous communities meant that when the marchers arrived in La Paz, the Bolivian national government could not ignore their demands without risking their ability to maintain their hold on power. Because indigenous people comprise the majority of Bolivia’s population, the government feared that an indigenous populous unified against the regime could quickly bring about the collapse of the government.

The indigenous communities ended their march in La Paz on September 17, 1990. A year later Mauro Bertero Gutiérrez, a Bolivian government minister and observer of the march stated,

> In great measure, and in an environment of frank and sincere dialogue, their [the indigenous peoples’] approaches were responded to by our government.… [The march] constitutes a milestone in our country, because it is not just the State, but the people, civil society as a whole, that takes the responsibility for dimensions of their neglect [asumen la dimensión de su olvido]. This is what I reiterate, more than the decrees, more than the written pages, what Bolivians took on with this march was the recognition of the indigenous peoples as a renewed social actor that is able to establish a new social-cultural scene and qualitatively support the development of our society.\(^56\)

Thus, Bertero Gutiérrez—a government official—understood the 1990 march as a historic social change in which Bolivian society began to recognize the culturally diverse indigenous peoples.

The indigenous communities themselves also viewed the march as a turning point that united disparate cultures and communities and engendered solidarity among both the lowland and highland people. By the end of the march, the indigenous people of Bolivia recognized their cultural differences and shared problems; they began to understand that most of their problems were either directly or indirectly related to land.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity, the Bolivian government and lowland indigenous leaders began to discuss an agreement to recognize two million hectares of land as indigenous territories. The Bolivian president codified this agreement
on September 24, 1990 through several supreme decrees (22609, 22610, 22611, and 22614) that established indigenous territories and changed the Isiboro-Sécure National Park to the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (the Spanish acronym is TIPNIS). While these supreme decrees represented a shift toward the recognition of indigenous peoples in lowland Bolivia, they were not national laws and therefore legally enforceable. Any Bolivian president can issue or change supreme decrees, but laws require legislative approval—a process that often takes more time than a simple presidential decree. Full legal recognition and enforceability would come only after continued protests and pressure from lowland indigenous people and two subsequent marches.

The Bolivian government eventually reformed its constitution in 1994 and again in 1995. One important concept that the government incorporated into the revised constitution was the idea that Bolivia was a “multiethnic and pluricultural” nation. Another important change was the creation of Indigenous Communal Territories (Tierras Comunitarias de Origen or TCOs). The Bolivian government intended for TCOs to become the center of lowland peoples’ cultures and livelihoods. The Bolivian Government and the indigenous communities viewed the TCOs as places where indigenous people could develop their own resources and communities according to their own cultures and values.

Additionally, the constitutional revisions stated that the Bolivian state was to respect the social, economic, and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, particularly in regard to indigenous territories. This was a clear response by the Bolivian government to the lowland indigenous communities’ demands for territory and dignity, because the previous constitution, enacted in 1952, recognized only two major highland indigenous groups, the Quechua and Aymara, both
from the Andean highlands. Additionally, the previous constitution did not designate anything similar to Indigenous Community Territories.\textsuperscript{59}

After yet another march on the capital, two more important laws were passed in 1996: the Agrarian Reform Law (INRA) and the 1996 Forestry Law (La Ley Forestal or Ley N° 1700). These laws expanded the legal sphere in which indigenous peoples operated by recognizing indigenous communities, or people, and their right to communally controlled territories.\textsuperscript{60} INRA provided the legal framework to implement and designate the Indigenous Community Territories that were outlined in the reformed constitution.

The 1996 Forestry Law was part of larger political changes transpiring in Bolivia in the 1990s; the law represented a significant change in national governance but it was not the only change.\textsuperscript{61} The 1996 Forestry Law expanded the new rights in the reformed constitution and the Agrarian Reform Law by allowing indigenous communities to use their territories for forest management. The 1996 law provided the legal framework for indigenous people to use forest management as a tool for controlling their territories. The 1996 Forestry Law also led to the rise of scientific forest management in Bolivia on indigenous, state, and private forest lands. Thus, the new constitution established Indigenous Communal Territories, INRA provided a way to specify and create these territories, and the 1996 Forestry Law provided the means for indigenous communities to manage their forest resources within these territories.
Scientific Forest Management

Forest management in Bolivia changed significantly with the passage of the 1996 Forestry Law. The Bolivian government passed the new law with the intention of providing an institutional and technical framework for the sustainable management of Bolivia’s forestlands. The 1996 law gave indigenous communities the right to harvest timber within the Indigenous Community Territories that were outlined in the reformed constitution and delineated through the Agrarian Reform Law. The 1996 Forestry Law gave indigenous communities the opportunity to exercise their land tenure rights and provided a legal mechanism for them to harvest their forests.

The 1996 Forestry Law is predicated on the idea that sustainable forest management is only possible through the implementation of appropriate and regulated management practices. The law implemented these practices via specific regulations and requirements. The law required the development of a General Forest Management Plan (PGMF), which required a forest inventory, an operational harvest schedule, and an annual harvest plan that specified a minimum cutting cycle of 20 years, minimum diameters of harvested trees, and the identification of seed trees and land characteristics. The management plan required the creation of maps for different management areas in the unit. These maps outlined the division of forest management areas into logging compartments, annual harvest areas, designated areas protected from harvest, and transportation routes. The 1996 Forestry Law also required a plan for obtaining and processing wood, and the establishment of permanent monitoring plots to evaluate the impact of timber harvesting in the forest. Foresters were to leave small trees for future harvests and leave 20% of
harvestable trees to serve as seed trees. Thus, the law required sustainable planning and harvesting, forest regeneration, timber processing, transportation, monitoring, and evaluation.\textsuperscript{63}

The 1996 Forestry Law guaranteed indigenous communities the exclusive rights to harvest timber within the Indigenous Community Territories. The law would regulate commercial forest harvesting activities in the Indigenous Community Territories, but did not require permits for traditional and domestic use. This limited government intervention both provided indigenous communities wide latitude for cultural and traditional activities and ensured their access to timber for sustainable harvest. In short, the 1996 Forestry Law incorporated the core demands of the 1990 March for Dignity and Territory.\textsuperscript{64}

In the eyes of both the indigenous community and professional foresters, the requirements of the 1996 law transformed the practice of forestry in Bolivia from an unsustainable, unregulated, and unplanned system into a more sustainable, ordered, and planned system. Miguel Angel Ramírez Aldaya, a professional forester working with the Guarayos community, described the impacts of the 1996 forestry law in a 2008 interview:

Before Law 1700, the forestry law, the indigenous communities [participated in] forest management of sorts but not with an entrepreneurial vision, that [forestry] could produce money, but more… in the sense of subsistence [\textit{supervivencia}], to cut timber to make their houses, to make things in their communities, and a few engaged in illegal logging [\textit{piratería}], illegal commercialization of these forests; but with Law 1700 and their previous demand from the national government for their TCO, Indigenous Community Territory, they have been able to rely on a geographic space where they can work legally within a legal framework.\textsuperscript{65}

As Ramírez Aldaya’s comments suggest, the law was transformative for indigenous communities because forestry became a legal option communities could use to produce revenue while protecting their territories.
Oscar Yamba Añeoinda, an indigenous leader from the Guarayos community of Cururú, reiterated these points when he explained that without the 1996 Forestry Law his community would still sell timber, “but they would sell timber illegally as pirated [wood]…. Pirating… is not applying the forestry law… for them [the illegal loggers] there are no seed trees… from end to end they harvest [everything].” During a group interview, a Guarayos community leader from San Juan described the time before his community held the title to their TCO—before the forestry law. He stated, “In those times, truthfully, the businessmen were given our natural resources…. but not a cent returned [to us]; it did not even generate work [for us]…. The law itself, the forestry law supports us to work in a sustainable manner.”

According to interview participants, forest inventories required under the law have produced significant economic returns in indigenous communities by: 1) increasing forest productivity via the identification of commercial species and their incorporation into management and marketing plans, 2) providing better maps and planning and therefore decreasing harvest operational costs, and 3) increasing the cost effectiveness of road construction. While the 1996 Forestry Law did not eliminate illegal logging in lowland Bolivia, both professional foresters and community members believe that the law greatly improved the situation by allowing indigenous communities to consolidate their land tenure rights and use natural resources in a legal manner.

Despite these improvements, local communities considered some aspects of the 1996 law problematic. Forest management in complex tropical ecosystems such as those found in Bolivia requires specific scientific expertise and knowledge, which is often lacking in indigenous communities. Guarayos has the lowest rates of secondary and postsecondary educational
attainment in Santa Cruz. In Bolivia, forestry professionals, scientists, and local communities have only recently acquired this knowledge.

During the 1990s, the Bolivian government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international governments began to implement managed forestry activities as well as scientific forestry research and extension to support that management. Indigenous communities were involved in some of the early voluntary certification programs in Bolivia; however, these communities had to rely on outside expertise and funding for management, because they lacked the educational capacity to train their members in forest management. While the professional foresters and NGOs hired by the indigenous communities agreed that sustainable forest management was the goal, understandings of sustainability differed between these managers and indigenous communities; I explore these differences in the next chapter.

The 1996 Forestry Law clarified some aspects of forest management, but land tenure remains unclear in certain areas. This lack of clarity has at times caused conflicts between indigenous communities, non-indigenous communities, municipal governments, and NGOs. Some of these conflicts have developed because non-indigenous peoples do not thoroughly understand the history and culture of indigenous peoples. Land tenure disputes have occurred in Guarayos, and some indigenous leaders have even attempted to illegally sell communal property without the consent of their people. A forest management law was not sufficient to ensure land tenure security.

In the past few years the Bolivian government has also changed its implementation of the 1996 Forestry Law; new regulations abolished the Forestry Superintendence and established the Authority for Land and Forests (Autoridad de Tierra y Bosques or ATB). The ATB combines
land and agricultural management with forestry management. Because this transition is so recent, researchers have not yet examined its effects. Farming, land use, and forestry are related, and thus there are many positive aspects to combining these governmental functions; however, the effects of implementation remain unclear. During my field visit to Guarayos in 2009, the ATB was not enforcing the new laws efficiently. For example, the Guarayos community apprehended a load of illegal wood, but waited more than four days for an ATB official to arrive and enforce the law. Further, the ATB staff in Guarayos I interviewed informally during a seminar on Latin American Forestry Management and Policy (which I organized with the US Forest Service and the University of Florida) did not have a clear understanding of the forestry law, their positions, their legal responsibilities, ATB’s institutional goals, or how they planned to proceed with their responsibilities.

**Conclusion**

The Bolivian indigenous movement that emerged on the national and international stage in August and September of 1990 was a reaction to the historical realities of Bolivia. Indigenous people began to openly reject hundreds of years of social, political, and cultural exclusion. Bolivia’s lowland indigenous movement can also be seen as part of a larger indigenous movement throughout the world. Since the 1960s, indigenous groups have organized around issues of culture, territory, respect, and environmental protection. In the 1980s and 1990s, Bolivia’s fledgling indigenous organizations interacted with other indigenous organizations in the Americas. In 1990, Bolivia’s indigenous communities banded together to explicitly demand the recognition of their own concepts of territory, dignity, and equality.
Despite the gains achieved by Bolivian indigenous communities in the wake of the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity, these communities continue to face many challenges including a lack of economic resources, internal disputes, paternalism from outside entities, a lack of political influence, insufficient infrastructures, and, in some cases, the realities of remote locations. In 2011, indigenous communities organized another march to protest a road that the Bolivian government had proposed, which would bisect the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS). The march, known as the VIII Indigenous March, received immense press coverage in Bolivia and internationally. The “eighth marchers” argued that the road proposal violated their constitutional right to prior consultation on any project within their territory. After violent confrontations and outrage from many sectors of the indigenous population, the Bolivian government canceled their plan for the road. This situation was ironic in many ways, most of all because the Bolivian president came into power based on widespread support from the indigenous population. The VIII Indigenous March illustrates the power of the lowland indigenous population, their political savvy, and their continued efforts to control their territory.

In spite of the challenges they’ve faced, indigenous leaders and the people they represent have made great strides to protect their territorial rights and cultures, and improve their livelihoods. The suite of laws passed in the 1990s in the wake of the March for Territory and Dignity has increased the political, economic, environmental, and cultural opportunities for indigenous people in Bolivia. Indigenous leaders and community members have improved their communities by clearly articulating their demands, forming practical alliances with national politicians, and soliciting international support. The March for Territory and Dignity initiated
the political representation and inclusion of the lowland Bolivian peoples in Bolivian
government and society. In addition, the march led to the codification of indigenous populations’
rights to maintain and use their territory. For indigenous communities in lowland Bolivia,
territory and culture are inextricable.⁷⁵ In the next chapter, I explore the ways in which
indigenous communities have used forestry to maintain the connections between territory and
culture and exercise their territorial rights.
Endnotes – Chapter 5


4 Navarro, G. and M. Maldonado (2002). Geografia ecológica de Bolivia: Vegetación y ambientes acuáticos. Cochabamba, Bolivia, Centro de Ecología Simón I. Patiño. Based on my personal observations from working in Bolivia since 1997, Bolivian people themselves generally describe the country using three broad geographical terms: the highland Altiplano, the inter-mountain Andean valleys, and tropical lowlands.


10 Ibid.


These areas of Bolivia—Llanos de Moxos and Guarayos—will form a central part of this section of the dissertation. People from Llanos de Moxos and Guarayos have managed these forests for centuries and Moxos were one of the first groups to organize the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity.


Klein, H. S. (1992). Bolivia: the evolution of a multi-ethnic society. New York, Oxford University Press. According to Klein, however, the Bolivian government first began to look to the lowlands to develop riparian trading routes to the Atlantic Ocean between 1841 and 1880; despite this early development, broader infrastructure did not materialize until the 1940s and 1950s. p.121.


The British established a tropical research institute in Trinidad in 1920.

Ibid.


All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise noted; they are based on my understanding of Bolivian Spanish and the context of the interview. I place translations in the main text of the paper and original Spanish language quotations in footnotes. Quote from Birk, G. (2000). *Dueños del bosque : manejo de los recursos naturales por indígenas chiquitanos de Bolivia /c texto, Gudrun Birk = Owners of the forest : natural resource management by the Bolivian Chiquitano indigenous people.* Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, Apoyo para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano.p. 149.


This is similar to the way natural resources were historically managed under Spanish rule—natural resources were the property of the Crown.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


The Isiboro-Sécure National Park was essentially a “paper” park until the government began to enforce the regulations in the 1980s.


41. Ibid. “...apoyar en la consolidación del derecho propietario de los pueblos indígenas sobre las TCOs y cuentan con un marco legal que garantiza la administración y el aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales. La estructura orgánica fortalecida, con participación plena de las organizaciones (regionales, centrales intercomunales, etc.)), una adecuada atención de salud, jóvenes indígenas con oportunidad suficientes de educación y profesionalización con enfoque de equidad.”

42. Lijerón Casanovas, A. (1991). De la resistencia pacífica a la interpelación histórica: (crónica preliminar de la Marcha Indígena por el Territorio y la Dignidad). Publicación #26 CIDDEBENI. Trinidad, Beni, Bolivia, Centro de Investigación u Documentación para el Desarrollo del Beni. 26: 1-26. Lijerón Casanovas noted that CIDOB’s role in the march began with full support. During the middle of the march they declared that the objectives had been met and they pulled out. Finally, when the march ended and negotiations were underway in La Paz, CIDOB once again declared their support of the movement. Marchers viewed this oscillation of support as politically motivated.

43. Añeoinda Yamba, O. (8/22/2008). Personal Interview by Michael J Dockry. Urubichá, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Yamba Añeoinda reported that the marchers believed the people and communities that CIDOB represented supported the cause even if the CIDOB leadership did not. p.2 Yamba Añeoinda also indicated in his interview that the Guaraní leadership was involved with the 1990 march.

44. The marchers were also supported by the Catholic Church. Priests said mass during several stops along the route and a mass was held in La Paz when the marchers arrived.


46. Ibid.


50 Evelio Aranzibida for the Confederación Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB) quoted in Libermann C, K. and A. Godínez G (1992). Territorio y dignidad: pueblos indígenas y medio ambiente en Bolivia. Bolivia; Caracas, Venezuela, Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales; Editorial Nueva Sociedad. p. 30. “…tratamos de demostrar que el territorio es el concepto integral que se aproxima a la verdadera concepción que nosotros tenemos respecto a los recursos naturales, al suelo y al subsuelo; pero en términos jurídicos, en términos legales, el concepto de territorio no es compatible con la legislación actual”;

51 Jorge Terena quoted in ibid. p. 130. “Los gobiernos y los indios están siempre luchando, peleando uno con otro por el territorio, la tierra. Por la historia, los indios somos dueños de la tierra, por la ley, el gobierno es dueño de la tierra. Quien es el que tiene derecho?”

52 José Urañawi quoted in ibid. p. 34. “Nuestra tierra es nuestra casa en la cual sobreviviremos y moriremos y nuestra futuras generaciones seguirán viviendo”.


56 Mauro Bertero Gutiérrez quoted in ibid. p. 59. “En gran medida, y en un ambiente de diálogo franco y sincero, sus planteamientos fueron respondidos por nuestro gobierno. Se emitieron decretos y resoluciones importante. Sin embargo, tan importante como el logro de sus reivindicaciones es el sentido histórico de esta marcha. Constituye un hito en nuestro país, por el que no solamente el Estado, sino el pueblo, la sociedad civil en su conjunto, asumen la dimensión de su olvido. Es por esto que reitero, más allá de los decretos, más allá de los papeles escritos, que lo que los bolivianos asumimos con esta marcha fue el reconocer a los pueblos indígenas como un renovado actor social
capaz de establecer un nuevo escenario sociocultural y aportar de manera cualitativa en el desarrollo de nuestra sociedad. 

[Los pueblos amazónicos] lucharán pero quieren hacerlo con singularidad, manteniendo su identidad, su lengua, sus costumbres, ejerciendo sus derechos a la tierra y sus recursos... quieren... la construcción de una Bolivia plural y democrática...”; Birk, G. (2000). *Dueños del bosque: manejo de los recursos naturales por indígenas chiquitanos de Bolivia* /c texto, Gudrun Birk = Owners of the forest: natural resource management by the Bolivian Chiquitano indigenous people. Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, Apoyo para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano. p. 150.

57 This term *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* has been translated this way, but some sources translate it as Indigenous Community-Owned Land. The most accurate translation would be Original Community Land. The indigenous concept of territory, as I argue, is larger than just land and the term TCO does not translate into an understanding of indigenous territory that matches indigenous perspectives. I use the more common translation, however to avoid confusion with other English language information about Bolivian forest management.


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Ramírez Aldaya, M. A. (8/21/2008). Personal Interview by Michael J Dockry. Asunción de Guarayos, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. p.8 “Antes de la ley 1700, de la ley forestal, las comunidades indígenas de alguna forma realizaban manejo forestal pero no con esta visión empresarial de que pueda redivitar el dinero, sino más bien con un sentido más… más como… más de supervivencia, tumbar palos para hacer sus casas, para hacer cosas en su comunidad, y algunos pocos hacían piratería, comercio ilegal de estos bosques; pero con la ley 1700 y con la anterior demanda…al gobierno nacional [de] una TCO, su Tierra Comunitaria de Origen…, lo cual les ha permitido contar con un espacio geográfico donde ellos puedan trabajar legalmente en el marco de la legalidad.”

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Añeoinda Yamba, O. (8/22/2008). Personal Interview by Michael J Dockry. Urubichá, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. p. 6 “…iban a vender madera pero asi sin…como pirataría…. La piratería lo que…eso no, eso es lo que no aplica por la ley forestal…—Para ellos no hay ni semillero que se vea digamos remanente, no lo dejan, le meten pero de punta a punta.”

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Canahuira, L., C. Enriquez, et al. (8/20/2008). Group Interview by Michael J Dockry. Asunción de Guarayos, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. p. 2 “Porque, aquellos tiempos, de verdad, los empresarios eran—que les daban los recursos naturales de nuestro—o sea, de, de nuestra tierra, ¿no? De nuestra TCO, pero, no regresa… No, no regresaba ni un centavo, no nos generaba ni, ni el trabajo ni siquiera…. La ley mismo nos respalda, la Ley Forestal nos respalda que lo trabajemos en forma sostenible.”

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In the case I am presenting from Guarayos, Bolivia the forestry law was seen by indigenous community members and forestry professionals as a way to foster land tenure security. However, a forestry law alone is not sufficient to foster land tenure. There are cases, in Peru for example, where scientific forestry laws do not foster land tenure security. See Smith, J., V. Colan, et al. (2006). "Why policy reforms fail to improve logging practices: The role of governance and norms in Peru." *Forest Policy and Economics* 8(4): 458-469. There are also examples similar to Guarayos where indigenous communities use resource management—in this case payment for environmental services—to foster more secure land tenure. See Lastarria-Cornhiel, S., M. Morales Feijoo, et al. (2012). Efforts to Secure Indigenous Communal Land Rights in Northwest Ecuador—A Vital Foundation for Direct Incentive Forest Conservation Programs. *Lessons about Land Tenure, Forest Governance and REDD+*: Case studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America. L. Naughton-Treves and C. Day. Madison, WI, UW Madison Land Tenure Center.

For example, participants in the 1991 workshop included indigenous people and organizations from Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, and Ecuador. See Libermann C, K. and A. Godínez G (1992). *Territorio y dignidad: pueblos indígenas y medio ambiente en Bolivia*. Bolivia; Caracas, Venezuela, Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales; Editorial Nueva Sociedad.
