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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Talking About Our Mother: Indigenous Videos on Nature and the Environment

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*In this article, I examine 5 participatory indigenous videos from Peru, Kenya, Philippines, Mexico, and France/Argentina to examine how they narrate the relationship between indigenous peoples and nature. I analyze the videos according to A. A. Doolittle's (2010) rhetorical tools. I discuss the way the videos emphasize (a) the intrinsic relationship between indigenous peoples and Mother Earth or (b) a history of abuse and exploitation leading to land dispossession and environmental degradation. The study contributes to the understanding of indigenous video as an instrument for cultural and political activism. It focuses on the rhetorical dimension of video, taking into account both images and sounds/voices.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous Video, Participatory Video, Environment, Rhetorical Tools, Mother Earth, Communication for Social Change.

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An internationally much cited description of indigenous peoples' traditional worldview is a letter from Chief Seattle to President Franklin Pierce in 1855, which states: This we know, the Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. This we know, all things are connected, like the blood, which unites one family. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. Man does not weave the thread of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself. (Heinämäki, 2009, p. 5)

Indigenous video making is both a political and a cultural project. The access to, and use of video recording technology is a political issue that manifests the rights of indigenous peoples to adopt and adapt Western instruments to their everyday existence. Documentary video making is a form of cultural activism (Ginsburg, 1994; Salazar, 2009). It is a political process of making culture visible for political purposes

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(Salazar & Córdova, 2008; Wortham, 2013). Salazar (n.d.) considers video an instrument for “cultural continuity, and a means of generating awareness on important social, environmental, human rights, and land issues” (p. 9). Indigenous documentaries are key elements for empowerment (Magallanes-Blanco, Flores, Atala, & Parra, 2012), decolonization (Schiwy, 2009), assertion and conservation of identity (Ginsburg, 1992), and the construction of citizenship (Rodriguez, 2001; Magallanes, 2007), and autonomy (Ramos, Castells, & Magallanes, 2010) and for the democratization of media (Magallanes, 2008).

What distinguishes indigenous media is its focus on media practices (the process of making documentaries and the products of video making) as part of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) (Salazar & Córdova, 2008; Schiwy, 2009). For Mayan video-maker Mariano Estrada, video is an important part of indigenous communication. Indigenous communities have appropriated and integrated video as an instrument that contributes to collective work according to the needs of a given community (as cited in Molina, 2006). Indigenous documentaries are tools to convey IK, needs, and struggles inside their communities, across other indigenous communities, and to the general population.

Indigenous documentaries, either made by indigenous peoples or dealing directly with indigenous issues from their point of view, are instruments in an ongoing political struggle to challenge power positions and to allow people relegated from decision-making processes to take part and to be taken into consideration. Following Carpentier (2011), I argue that the involvement of indigenous peoples in video making is a form of participation that contributes to balance the power position of indigenous peoples. As indigenous peoples participate in the decision-making processes about video making regarding the nature and the environment, the videos (both as process and as product) become political tools.

The videos discussed in this article were made in a participatory manner. Following Carpentier (2011), they have enabled participation of indigenous peoples either in the video-making process (structural participation) or through the video discourse (content-related participation). The videos from Peru, Kenya, and Philippines were made under the auspices of InsightShare, a British NGO devoted to use participatory video (PV) as a tool for dialogue, discussion, and debate (InsightShare, n.d.). Indigenous communities via collective decision-making processes controlled the production process of these videos. They decided what issues to discuss and to film, how to film them, how to edit, and how to present the final argument (structural participation).

According to Nair, participatory communication is based on the premise that “all people have the right to voice their views and become active partners in the development processes which impact upon their lives” (White, 2003b, p. 37). Worldwide, several organizations and researchers have used video following a participatory methodology for empowerment, consciousness-raising, social change, and collective action in marginalized and disenfranchised communities (Magallanes-Blanco, et al., 2012). According to Protz (1991), an advantage of participatory video making is that

it helps develop analytical and communicative skills as well as negotiation tactics applied to decision-making processes based on self-awareness and self-esteem. For Shirley White (2003a), participatory video enables individuals to become aware of and generate an active interest in particular issues. It is also a tool to motivate participation, build trust as people assume new roles: responsibilities and actions while at the same time develop or deepen bonding ties with the community. White (2003a) characterizes participatory video as a democratic process based on dialogue, creative thinking, and collective action. For her, it is a “vital force for change and transformation of individuals and communities” (White, 2003a, p. 21).

According to Bery (2003), “the participatory video process puts communication tools into the hands of ordinary people who have something to share” (p. 105). The issues shared in participatory videos deal with problems directly affecting communities. Participatory videos allow communities to construct the community’s public image, thus to self-represent and make themselves and their needs and concerns visible, which, for Dudley (2003) is a “first step to contesting unfair practices” (p. 155).

Following a debate on political participation, Carpentier (2011) developed an archetypal model of minimalist and maximalist media participation. According to him, minimalist media participation is (a) mainly focused on control by media professionals, (b) limited to access and interaction, (c) focused on macroparticipation through (microparticipation in) media channels, (d) nonpolitical, (e) unidirectional, and (f) focused on a homogeneous audience. Maximalist media participation on the other hand is (a) balanced in terms of control and participation, (b) attempting to maximize participation, (c) combining micro- and macroparticipation, (d) broadly defining the political as a dimension of the social, (e) multidirectional, and (f) focused on heterogeneity. I consider Carpentier’s notion of minimalist and maximalist media participation useful in the discussion of the videos I analyze. The videos were produced by or with indigenous peoples with varied levels of interaction among video-makers and indigenous peoples and communities. All the videos I discuss are political as they aim at challenging power positions regarding knowledge about nature and land rights; nonetheless, the political dimension of their discourses is not necessarily presented in an obvious way in all cases. The forms of participation are either unidirectional or multidirectional and they focus on different types of audiences.

## **Environmental Issues and indigenous Peoples**

How indigenous peoples represent nature, their relation with it, and its conservation is a key element of their struggles for self-determination. For Vivanco (2002), “the spread of representational and communication technologies has created opportunities for indigenous groups to represent themselves in ways informed by their own aesthetics of social production and value, actively placing themselves at the intersection of cinematic imagery and ecopolitics” (p. 120).

For Heinämäki (2009), self-determination and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin. Hence, the struggle for the rights of Mother Earth

and the benefits of having a sustainable environment is also a political struggle for self-determination and for the exercise of indigenous rights. Indigenous documentary videos addressing environmental issues are contributing to a global dialogue on climate change and environmental degradation. In addition, these documentaries are strategic communicative tools in the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples for political recognition manifested in terms of full ownership and control of their lands and natural resources. The videos encompass a struggle for power over knowledge and over the recognition of indigenous traditional knowledge as valid, necessary, and a key element of their everyday life and their place in the world.

Doolittle (2010) identifies two rhetorical tools used by indigenous peoples when they address international bodies on environmental regulation. These tools were identified in an analysis of written discourses used by indigenous representatives and activists to legitimize their position in international climate change negotiations. The first rhetorical tool is “a belief that the earth is a living being with rights and the conviction that it is the responsibility of indigenous peoples to protect the earth from over-exploitation” (Doolittle, 2010, p. 286). This shared discourse highlights the relationship between indigenous peoples and nature. It emphasizes their traditional and ecological knowledge and validates them as valid interlocutors savvy on environmental issues; hence, they can contribute to discussions on this theme. A second rhetorical tool used by indigenous peoples when seeking recognition concerning climate change debates faces a history of abuse and exploitation against them and their lands. They address “their shared histories of political and economic marginalization and land dispossession, experienced first through colonialism and more recently through globalisation” (Doolittle, 2010, p. 286). For Doolittle (2010) this discourse is more radical and it focuses on past injustices as a way to achieve redistributive justice.

Generalized interest in the environment and in environmental issues has contributed to “the resurgence of indigenous peoples as political actors and as vital and innovative cultural communities, not only at local but at national and global levels” (Turner & Fajans-Turner, 2006, p. 1). According to Ulloa (2001), indigenous notions about nature, expressed in declarations or documentary videos, have influenced the global environmentalist discourse.

On 22 April 2010, in Bolivia, the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, together with the People’s Agreement, approved a proposal for the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth on the considerations that:

- 1 indigenous peoples are part of Mother Earth in an interrelated and interdependent way, sharing a common destiny;
- 2 Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment, and learning;
- 3 the capitalist system has caused grave damage to Mother Earth “putting life as we know it today at risk through phenomena such as climate change”; and
- 4 it is impossible to recognize only the rights of human beings (World People’s Conference on Climate Change [WPCCC], Rights of Mother Earth section).

The Declaration states that Mother Earth is a living being; “a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings” (WPCCC, Rights of Mother Earth section). Therefore, Mother Earth has inherent rights such as the right to life and to exist, to be respected, to regenerate its bio-capacity, and to regenerate its bio-cycles. It also has the right to maintain its identity and integrity, to water, clean air, and integral health being free from pollution. Mother Earth is entitled to keep its genetic structure unmodified and to full and prompt restoration of all rights violated. The declaration also states some obligations of humans to Mother Earth such as being responsible for respecting and living in harmony with Mother Earth. Also, to promote and participate in learning, analysis, interpretation, and communication about how to live in harmony with Mother Earth and to promote and support practices of respect for Mother Earth and all beings in accordance with their own cultures, traditions, and customs.

### The corpus of videos

In this article, I focus on five videos. They are not representative of the body of videos made by indigenous peoples or about them nor of the vast number of indigenous productions dealing with environmental issues. The five videos I discuss in this article are (a) *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, (b) *Response from the Maasai of Kenya*, and (c) *Karbengan si Fatawa* (Videos 2 and 3 were both made in response to Video 1), (d) *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada*, and (e) *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discrodie*. Indigenous peoples made Videos 1, 2, and 3 under the auspice of InsightShare and as part of the campaign Conversations with the Earth (CWE) Indigenous Voices on Climate Change. CWE “is a multi-media campaign led by indigenous peoples that enables them to take part in the global discourse on climate change, conservation and human rights” (CWE & InsightShare, 2009–2011) conveying local experiences of climate change.

*Los Derechos de la Pachamama* (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010) was produced with the sponsorship of InsightShare for the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth and was screened at the side event of the official forum. Based on interviews with indigenous men and women from the communities of Perka, Karhui, Queromarca, Chaka, Perccapampa, and Cochabamba Grande, the video focuses around four of the main rights of Mother Earth. These rights are (a) Mother Earth has the right to be respected; (b) Mother Earth should not be contaminated; (c) agricultural activities should be carried out at correct times, and respecting the rhythms of the moon and the stars; and (d) we should not use fertilizers nor pesticides in agriculture. Based on specific experiences of the communities involved in producing the video, the documentary illustrates the rights, why they should exist, and what people have to say about them.

According to an interviewee, just as there are human rights and children’s rights, Mother Earth is also entitled to certain rights. Respect for Mother Earth is demonstrated through rituals and ceremonies, many of which are no longer performed, especially by young people. Thus, indigenous peoples have to be thankful to Mother

Earth and have to perform rites in which they make offerings to her to be able to ask for favors. They also have to clean polluted areas and to dispose correctly of litter.

*Response from the Maasai of Kenya. Ensipata Enkop* (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011) is a video made by the Maasai of Kenya with the sponsorship of InsightShare. Having seen *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, “the participatory video team of Maasai in Kenya decided to interview people in their communities asking them their opinions about the rights of Mother Earth” (CWE & InsightShare, 2009–2011, p. 9). Although the video does not make explicit references to the rights in the declaration issued in Bolivia in April 2010, it does present the points of view of indigenous peoples about what Mother Earth is entitled to. The survival of indigenous peoples is in tune with the sustainability of Mother Earth. The people interviewed clearly illustrate this. Maasai women and men assert that earth has a right to rivers and springs, and big rocks (home of animals and bees that make honey they use for the engagement ceremony). She also has a right to herbal trees, mountains (which have the right to contain forests on top of them), green scenery, and water (that create a beautiful scenery). The river has a right to encompass trees on its riverbeds, and it has a right to comprise sand because it holds and purifies water. Earth has the right to all of this in order to be happy. The environment has a right to be clean, and earth should not be polluted. Mother Earth also has a right to stay as God created it because he had a purpose of creating it beautiful.

*Karbengan si Fatawa. Rights of Mother Earth* (Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network [APIYN] & InsightShare, 2011) is another video inspired by *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*. “The participatory video team in Philippines [also sponsored by InsightShare] interviewed a group of mothers from the Cordillera community to ask them about their views on the rights of Mother Earth” (CWE & InsightShare, 2009–2011, p. 9). In the documentary, there is no explicit mention of the Declaration from Bolivia but the video focuses on the views of five women interviewed about what they believe are the rights of Mother Earth. The women indicate that Mother Earth encompasses mountains, rivers, water, and air. That she provides all needs of people and should be protected collectively. The interviewees state that as Mother Earth gives us natural resources we should bring about offerings to thank her. When there are droughts or floods is because Mother Earth is mad. There is a need for rituals and ceremonies to thank Mother Earth and to ask her for rain when needed. The youth should be educated in taking care of Mother Earth for her to regain and to maintain the beauty she is entitled to.

*Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* (Comisariado de Bienes Comunes de San Andrés Chicahuaxtla 2008–2011 [CBCSACH], LuzKemada, DEAFAL MEXICO, & CEDAM A.C., 2012) is a documentary produced by the Luzquemada video collective (from Mexico City) and Triqui peoples from San Andrés Chicahuaxtla in the southern state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Based on interviews with members of six communities, the documentary focuses on IK about land and water. The interviewees stress the need to preserve Triqui territory and culture using natural fertilizers and taking care of the environment. In *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada*, Triqui men and women say on camera that the earth is entitled

to be plowed with love and respect, and, if done this way, she will provide good crops. They also emphasize the importance of not polluting water sources and of using natural fertilizers instead of chemical ones. The video does not respond to *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, but it does address local concerns from the perspective of Mother Earth as a living entity with rights that have to be respected.

*Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discorde* (Maldavsky, 2010) is a documentary made by Chilean-born documentary maker Jose Maldavsky. It narrates the struggle of a Mapuche family in the Patagonia region of Argentina to recover 575 hectares of land from the 1 million hectares owned by international entrepreneur Luciano Benetton, owner of United Colors. The film emphasizes two opposite notions of property and their consequent understandings of land as either an asset or a living being. The documentary narrates the story of Rosa Nahuelquir, Atilio Curiñanco, and their indigenous Mapuche community. Rosa and Atilio are living in occupied lands the federal government sold to Luciano Benetton at the Patagonia region in the South of Argentina. Atilio mentions that Mapuches are people of the Earth; they are part of nature because they are one with it; hence, they cannot be the owners of the land. They have the duty of taking care of her in order to survive. Following this notion of Earth/land, what Rosa and Atilio have done is to further the cultural practices inherited from their ancestors who inhabited that stretch of land from times before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century.

### The analytic framework

I analyzed the discourse of the five videos following Doolittle's two rhetorical tools used by indigenous peoples when addressing international environmental bodies. Although Doolittle (2010) developed the rhetorical tools based on written documents, I consider that they are useful to discuss video productions. I searched in each video for elements of both arguments. I looked for explicit mentions of (a) Earth as a living being (having feelings, having agency, referred to as a Mother), (b) Earth having rights, and (c) the role of indigenous peoples in protecting Earth. These categories correspond to Doolittle's first rhetorical tool. I also looked for elements that directly mentioned (d) marginalization of indigenous peoples (economic, politic), (e) land dispossession, (f) globalization as a negative agent acting against indigenous peoples, and (g) colonialism as examples of the second rhetorical tool proposed by Doolittle. The videos were analyzed based on both their images and their verbal discourses. In most videos, the images illustrated what the interviewees were saying emphasizing the arguments. Nonetheless, two of the videos used images to convey meaning without a voice to make it explicit. In these cases, images and narration complemented each other and allowed me to seek for evidences of either rhetorical tool separately.

### First rhetorical tool: The Earth is our mother, and she is alive

For Deborah McGregor (2004), Haudenosaunee, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has emerged from the growing recognition that indigenous peoples all over the



world have developed sustainable environmental knowledge and practices that can be used to address problems that confront global society. According to her, IK is fundamentally related to TEK and TEK is ultimately related to indigenous rights. Despite the many different indigenous cultures around the globe, there are common elements regarding their traditional worldviews and values. The relationship between indigenous peoples and nature is a fundamental part of TEK for different groups around the globe. For Doolittle (2010), indigenous peoples from different parts of the world, environments, or climates speak “of the earth as a living being that humanity must respect” (p. 286). The videos I discuss show in their narration how indigenous peoples refer to earth as a mother.

In *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, a woman says, “What do we understand about our Pachamama? Pachamama is our Mother” (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010, 0:02). Elvira Taguba, Bontoc, says in *Karbengan si Fatawa* (APIYN & InsightShare, 2011), “in Bontoc we call Mother Earth Fatawa or Lawag. Mother Earth encompasses the mountain, trees, river, water, air and all things found above and under the land” (0:42), whereas Virgie Dammay, Tawali, declares that it is necessary to “compare or correlate the role of Mother Earth with that of the role of a mother. She, being connected to our environment, has an important role in the sustainability of the food and life of the people” (1:31).

The Maasai interviewed in the documentary *Response From the Maasai of Kenya*, also refer to Mother Earth although they emphasize more its role as home for animals, plants, water, trees, and humans. They talk about the interconnectedness of all elements found on earth. They say, “This mountain is the home of many animals. It has the forest on top of it. The forest prevent soil erosion and holds the grass for our animals to eat during dry seasons” (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011, 2:14). They also assert, “The earth has a right of green scenery for it to be happy. Our livestock would be happy when the grass are ever green [sic]. When the grass is green, it will be pleasant to the eye of human beings” (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011, 2:49).

Triqui people in Mexico, in the video *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada*, stress that, “earth is like our Mother because from her comes everything that feeds us” (CBCSACH et al., 2012, 26:22). The images of these videos have landscapes with forests, trees, rivers, grass fields, bushes, mountains, crops fields, plough, and farming animals. The images emphasize the beauty and the abundance of resources provided by nature.

The videos’ narratives show how referring to earth as a mother conveys the idea of nourishment, sustainability, and interrelatedness. It also establishes a relationship with the natural environment that does not resonate with the positivist interpretation of nature by which there is no interlocution with it (Hersch-Martínez, González-Chávez, & Fierro Álvarez, 2004). Indigenous peoples have a dialogic relation with nature. They talk to it; they have an exchange of favors and rituals with nature and think of nature as a living being with human-like characteristics and reactions. For Hersch-Martínez et al. (2004), in indigenous cosmovision, “the environment and its components acquire human attributions and behave by interacting with human beings, who establish communication with its entities by asking

for adequate weather conditions and offering presents” (pp. 27–28). Videos made by Quechuas and Aymaras in Peru, Bontoc, Kanlanaen, Kankanaey, and Tuwali in Philippines, Maasai in Kenya, and Triqui in Mexico narrate the emotions of Mother Earth when facing good or bad things. For example, in *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, we are told that “Mother Earth is happy when we carry our duty towards Her” (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010, 2:40) while we see images of a snowy peak and a clear water stream. On the other hand, we hear that the rivers are sad and hungry (as we see images of floods of muddy water) because people are not paying attention to them. Consequently, we are facing floods because the rivers are looking for food and because Mother Earth is “really pissed off” (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010, 4:04) at human kind. In *Karbengan si Fatawa*, Lourdes Ayadi also says that Mother Earth is mad and that we know this because there are disasters and the mountains are eroded as we see images of deforested mountains.

The documentary *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* presents interviews and testimonies of Triqui men and women who state that the water and the Earth are alive and that this is why they can nourish humans. Both water and Earth have a heart and a mind, and humans must take care of them because they have been hurt because of the damage caused to rivers and the reduction of water flows. The images we see in this production show the environment, crop fields, mountains, rivers, and details of flowers, cattle, insects, and clouds. The video includes images of the communities where Triqui people live. It shows the Sunday market with different stands and products. In *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada*, we also see the houses and cooking areas where corn is kept and processed.

Maasai people mainly refer to Earth and its elements as being happy or unhappy. For example, without rocks (home for animals), Mother Earth would be unhappy. Nevertheless, green scenery, rivers with sand, and trees make Mother Earth happy. In the production *Response From the Maasai of Kenya*, several interviewees state that the encroachment of earth by human beings has made the earth (and God) unhappy and sad. The Maasai consider that a balance between the natural elements means sustainability and happiness for every element of nature. They say, “Livestock is happy when the grass is evergreen” (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011, 2:54) (as we see images of a grass field with cattle). They also refer to Mother Earth as being happy for the trees that attract rain and make the grass green for the animals to eat. In addition, the Maasai state, “The sheep . . . really fatten when we have a lot of green grass and bring profit to the Maasai and the pastoralists in general” (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011, 3:20).

### **Indigenous peoples pollute, too, but they are working to undo the damage to Mother Earth**

IK and in particular TEK are ancient. This does not mean that indigenous peoples are stagnant. However, TEK does have continuity over time and across regions and

peoples that comprise diverse modes of living, thinking, learning, interacting, and behaving. The videos I refer to coincide in mentions of ancestors or older times as sources of knowledge about what people have stopped doing or have to do to protect Mother Earth. There is a consensus about how ancestors had a closer connection with Mother Earth because they performed rituals and ceremonies for her, or because they did not pollute, nor took over her resources. In *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, young men and women say that they do not show the affection their elders demonstrated toward Mother Earth because they lack the knowledge regarding the rituals and festivities. Triqui peoples say that the grandparents (elders) used to pass down wisdom and knowledge needed to care for Mother Earth. They also emphasize the importance of working with young men and women guiding them into becoming aware of the importance of taking care of forests, trees, and water sources. They recognize that “we are poor because we have not known how to take care of the river. We have harmed the river” (CBCSACH et al., 2012, 30:55). Meanwhile we see images of a riverbed with poor water flow.

Although, as stated before, there is an increasing notion about the importance of indigenous peoples and their TEK when facing global warming and environmental crisis, there are people who have detected a contradiction. Heinämäki (2009) considers that there is an inconsistency if “indigenous representatives declare their harmonious and sacred relationship to nature in international forums but this philosophy is not reflected in the practical human-nature relationships at the local level” (p. 13), if they fail “to use the biosphere sustainably” (p. 66). What the videos I discuss show is that indigenous peoples walk past the degradation every day in many indigenous zones, so they cannot fail to be aware of it; and many voices within those communities speak against self-induced pollution, but obviously not all, or the only pollution would arise from the outside.

*Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, *Response From the Maasai of Kenya*, and *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* show indigenous peoples talking about how they have polluted, degraded, encroached, and poisoned Mother Earth; how she has become mad, sad, or unhappy about this; and how she has, in turn, punished them. The images of the videos when addressing these issues are of polluted rivers, smoking factories, arid lands, and flooded communities. The videos are consistent with TEK and accept the consequences of altering the environment. They refer to what needs to be done to protect Mother Earth and, as a result, to improve their living environment while restoring nature its balance.

In *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, a man says that “we are eating poison [from chemical fertilizers and pesticides] and that did not happen before. People were healthy, strong and able to do many things” (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010, 7:06). Hence, what they need is to grow food the natural way (with natural fertilizers), stop throwing plastic containers, clean polluted areas, and live in harmony without resentment. While the interviewee says this, we see indigenous peoples picking up plastic bottles and litter from a river in a glacier. *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* discusses how the river flow has decreased. We see a man standing inside

the river with the water level to his calves. He remembers how when he was a child he used to swim at the same place and the water level was higher. The video focuses on the need to take care of water sources (not cutting trees, protecting old trees, not polluting water sources) and heal the damaged land (with the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides) by producing homemade fertilizers and applying them to crops and uncultivated land. The Triqui people avow the importance of using natural fertilizers because it is a collective work and because it allows them to survive on their crops. *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* shows in detail how Triqui people make natural fertilizer. They describe the process as they make the natural fertilizer using seeds, flour, animal manure, sugar, water, and other ingredients. They also show the final product is used around the plants while the men on the screen describe the goodness and the merits of using it. They emphasize that chemical fertilizers pollute and harm the land affecting their health. Hence, it is their duty to use natural fertilizers. Natural fertilizers make the soil rich and it can be more productive while respecting the rights of Mother Earth to be free of pollution.

The Philippine mothers, in *Karbengan si Fatawa*, say that they have to stop cutting trees for building houses and should plant trees and plants at deforested mountains to protect Mother Earth, “so that her beauty comes back” (APIYN & InsightShare, 2011, 4:57) and because she is the source of life. The Maasai also refer to several things they need not to do to beautify Mother Earth, make her happy, and restore the balance of the environment. For example, in *Response From the Maasai of Kenya*, different men and women state that rocks should not be degraded, trees and grass should not be burned, and soil and water should not be polluted. Sand should not be taken from rivers for building purposes and trees (especially medicinal ones) should not be cut (the images accompany each statement showing rocks, trees, grass, and rivers of the community). Each of these actions brings negative consequences to the environment and to the lives of the Maasai. Philip Simel says, “[my] plea to the Maasai community [is to] stop cutting the trees . . . so the river beds will not dry completely” (Maasai Youth & InsightShare, 2011, 5:07).

## **Second rhetorical tool: Shared history of abuse and exploitation**

Following Doolittle (2010), the second rhetorical tool used by indigenous peoples about environmental issues is based on the history of abuse and exploitation they share against themselves and their lands. Several indigenous videos screened at festivals and circulated on the web directly address problems of environmental exploitation. Their main arguments are centered on the abuse of multinational corporations that exploit natural resources located in indigenous territories. They denounce the problems faced by indigenous communities and/or show the resistances of the indigenous peoples against these projects. In the videos I discuss in this article, indigenous peoples comment on modern technologies and nonindigenous practices that harm Mother Earth based on what is happening in their communities. They see themselves as one with the earth, thus all forms of exploitation and abuse done to the earth affects

them. Nick Lunch, director of InsightShare, states that, “Indigenous peoples have been living in harmony with nature for thousands of years. They have contributed little to climatic change, yet they suffer the brunt of its direct and immediate effects” (CWE & InsightShare, 2009–2011, p. 3).

The Quechua and Aymara from Peru mention in *Los Derechos de la Pachamama* (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010), “respect for Mother Earth has decreased because the advances of science and technology are taking its place” (3:58). They also state that (as we see images illustrating what the interviewee describes),

Up in the sky planes pollute with their smoke tails . . . just as smoke from cars and burning tires and plastics. All those fumes from gasoline, oil and the bad odors hurt the sun, damage the ozone [layer] and damage us as well (5:44). . . . We are killing ourselves and destroying Mother Earth. We are eating poison (6:56).

For an elderly Quechua man, “multinational corporations and mining companies have no respect [for Mother Earth] and contaminate her” (Sallqa Videastas & InsightShare Latin America, 2010, 5:12). In *Karbengan si Fatawa* Lourdes Ayadi, Kankanaey, explicitly says that protecting the land is one of the rights of Mother Earth. Governments need to protect the land with laws and policies against large-scale destructive projects such as mining, dams, or logging. She also states that these projects especially affect indigenous peoples. In *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* (CBCSACH et al., 2012), Triqui peoples assert that (nonindigenous) people upstream of the river use pesticides and pollute the water “causing much harm to the environment, the wild animals, and to our health” (29:12). Another man interviewed for the video talks about the relevance of using natural fertilizers to improve the quality of the land and of the crops. This is an urgent need, as they have no other jobs. He declares, “I migrate north and do not always find a job, and then I remember that I have a piece of land here and that if I work on it I do not have to go anywhere else” (CBCSACH et al., 2012, 25:10). Although the discourse about injustice and exploitation is not explicit in the video, this testimony does show how the land is a necessity for indigenous peoples who have no other means to make a living.

The documentary *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discorde* centers its discourse on the abuse and exploitation of indigenous lands by nonindigenous peoples with the complicity of national governments. The argument is close to the struggle of the Mapuches, particularly through the history of Rosa Nahuelquir and Atilio Curiñanco. Nonetheless, Luciano Benetton’s attorney represents the Argentinean official discourse when he declares that the Mapuche traditions and ways of life no longer exist.

According to Deborah McGregor (2004), Haudenosaunee, there is an ongoing interest of environmentalist organizations and other institutions to record TEK, based on the idea that it is disappearing and that it must be preserved (by nonindigenous peoples). McGregor (2004) objects the latter as she states, “perhaps energies could be better spent assisting Aboriginal people to realize self-determination by protecting their rights so they do not disappear” (p. 399). In the case of the lands in dispute between Benetton and the Mapuches, this struggle also entails a struggle for visibility

and recognition of the indigenous identity of the Mapuches. Rosa Nahuelquir asserts in *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discorde* that it is ludicrous that the Argentine government and transnational corporations such as United Colors state that the Mapuches are no longer alive. She narrates how when she visited the local museum in the Patagonia region she noticed that among the evidence of an ancient and dead Mapuche culture she saw photographs (that we see on the screen filmed from the museum) of her grandmother, her aunts, and her people. She says that she is the continuity of the Mapuches, their culture, and their relationship with the earth. Through exercising her right to inhabit the land where her family and community have lived, she is finding a way of gaining recognition for all Mapuches.

Interviewed for the documentary, Luciano Benetton claims that private property is the fundamental element of modern civil society and that the capitalist regime in which we live is based on laws and rights to private property. Nobel laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel is sort of an intermediary between the logic and understanding of Benetton and that of Nahuelquir and Curiñano. On screen, Pérez Esquivel says that Benetton is unable to understand the Mapuche struggle and their need to inhabit the particular part of land they have occupied because his culture prevents him from it. To Pérez Esquivel, the Mapuches are connected to the land they inhabit because they are aware of the balance needed in the relationship between Earth and humans.

The ongoing struggle for self-determination of indigenous peoples around the world is linked to their relationship with Mother Earth and their TEK. Doolittle (2010) mentions that indigenous peoples addressing international environmentalist bodies often focus on past injustices such as land dispossession to demand “transformative change in climate policies that will address the long-standing inequities they have endured and which they feel have contributed to the existing conditions of climate change” (p. 290). The documentary *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discorde* does not address environmental degradation directly but it does present a claim for land occupation based on the Mapuche traditional knowledge about land. The struggle of Rosa Nahuelquir and Atilio Curiñanco shows that there is a fundamental difference in understanding the relationship of humans with land that has historically led to abuses and exploitation of indigenous peoples for the benefit of capitalist interests (such as those of United Colors and Luciano Benetton) that have caused much damage to the environment through industrialized processes.

### Concluding remarks

Overall, the videos discussed in this article share an environmental vision in which Mother Earth is the source of life and of all living creatures. She herself is a living being with rights that have to be protected and enforced. Indigenous peoples consider themselves to be in unity with Mother Earth and they have the obligation to do well by her. They have to perform rituals and ceremonies to thank Mother Earth. Industries, pollution, and chemical fertilizers are damaging Mother Earth and the health of indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples have failed to take care of Mother Earth when they

pollute or by forgetting to perform rituals and ceremonies. Nonetheless, they are aware of their role to restore balance in nature despite the harsh conditions in which they live. The living conditions of indigenous peoples result from the exploitation of their lands and the abuses they have suffered systematically.

Video is a valuable tool to convey the discourses of indigenous peoples regarding environmental issues. Either as a communicative tool used directly by indigenous peoples and communities (Carpentier's, 2011, notion of structural participation) or as a communicative tool where the discourse and positioning of the indigenous community is present with input on the content of the video (Carpentier's, 2011, notion of content-related participation), video does work as both a political and a cultural project.

Video can fully convey the rhetorical arguments of indigenous peoples about nature and the environment (earth as living being, a mother, or the history of abuse and exploitation). Nonetheless, both arguments cannot be present at the same time as the main narrative of a video production. Three of the videos I discussed place more emphasis on Doolittle's first rhetorical tool. Their arguments center on Earth as a protagonist. *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, *Response From the Maasai of Kenya*, and *Karbengan si Fatawa* were produced to reflect on the rights of Mother Earth; hence, they do not address in length the issues of abuse, exploitation, or injustice against indigenous peoples. On the other hand, *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discorde* has as its main argument the problem of land dispossession, historic colonialism, and negative effects of globalization for indigenous peoples. The main argument of the video is to denounce the situation of the Mapuche in Argentina and to present their point of view in their struggle against the multinational corporation Benetton. *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada* focuses on concrete actions that have to be taken to help save the land, Mother Earth, as nonindigenous practices (such as the use of chemical fertilizers) have degraded the land. Therefore, both rhetorical tools can be found but they both have different goals. As Doolittle asserts, the discourse about earth as a Mother and a living being allows indigenous peoples to authenticate and validate their role as nature's caretakers. On the other hand, the discourse about injustice, land dispossession, and marginalization is geared toward denouncing and demanding changes.

The layout of the videos (structure, images, camera angles, camera movements, use of direct audio, use of incidental audio, titles, etc.) reflects the input of indigenous participation in generating them. The videos made under the auspices of Insight-Share are first-time experiences with video making by indigenous communities. They have a planned structure that unfolds as the video progresses. *Los Derechos de la Pachamama*, *Karbengan si Fatawa*, and *Response From the Maasai of Kenya* are based on interviews recorded with a single camera in a fixed position. They use images of landscapes to illustrate what the interviewees are saying or as brief transitions between different interviews. The shots of the interviews are close to the person who is talking. The flow of the interviews is very relaxed and it feels like a conversation. This is because indigenous peoples were talking with each other and because the communities decided the theme and the approach of the video. *Nuestra Tierra Sagrada*

and *Patagonie les Couleurs de la Discordie* reflect the input of professional, nonindigenous, Western video/filmmakers. The structures are complex moving back and forth in space (between Argentina and Italy or between different communities in the Triqui region in Oaxaca). The videos rely on testimonies of interviewees and on a written or heard narrator. The images are varied and they are used as the guiding lines that are dressed up with what is heard. There are visual and audio transitions that set the tone for the scenes or sequences to come. The interviews in these videos are shot from open angles, with some extreme close up of the hands or other details, and although they have rhythm and flow, they feel like a presentation of arguments more than a conversation. It is possible to assert that the layout of the videos reflect the levels of participation of indigenous peoples in the video-making processes. The videos with a maximalist media participation approach (Carpentier, 2011) have simpler structures and a more intimate tone with the subject and arguments presented, whereas the videos with a minimalist media participation approach (Carpentier, 2011) have complex structures and varied visual executions, but they have a more distanced relation with the subjects portrayed in the videos.

The participation of indigenous peoples in the video-making processes, although in some cases limited to having their opinions incorporated, is reflected on the way the environmental theme is addressed in accordance to their everyday experiences and their traditional beliefs. The production and representation of IK and TEK via video is a way to exercise power, to fight for political recognition by way of defending indigenous cosmovision and their unity with Mother Earth. The videos contribute to the dissemination of indigenous voices in a key matter that has a direct impact upon their lives. In this sense, the videos I discussed are part of a larger political and cultural project (Ginsburg, 1994; Salazar & Córdova, 2008) that aims at using IK as an instrument to challenge power positions (Salazar & Córdova, 2008; Schiwy, 2009). Video is a tool to create and disseminate such a discourse. The fact that these videos were made following participatory processes (either maximalist or minimalist) emphasizes the active role of indigenous peoples in exercising their right to communicate (Nair in White, 2003b) while developing analytical and communication skills (Protz, 1991). Participatory video making in the videos discussed here has become a tool to provoke dialogue and collective action (White, 2003a). In addition, the five videos are examples of how different communities are constructing their community's public image (Bery, 2003).

What needs to be explored in further detail is the crossing of Doolittle's rhetorical tools (applied to video productions) and Carpentier's approaches to media participation. It would be interesting to see the characteristics of videos produced with the maximalist media participation approach that have as a main narrative the rhetorical tool of past injustices and colonialism. By the same token, an exploration of the characteristics of videos produced with the minimalist media participation approach that use the rhetorical tool of earth as a living being and a Mother-like figure should be made. Additionally, Doolittle's rhetorical tools can be valuable categories to analyze other kinds of audio (radio shows, podcasts, songs, and speeches) and



visual discourses (documentaries not directly related to environmental issues, fiction productions, musical videos, and photographs). Finally, participatory video making should be analyzed from the point of view of its rhetorical usefulness. Focusing not only on indigenous video, but also on participatory video made by/with the disenfranchised, marginalized communities, and minorities.

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