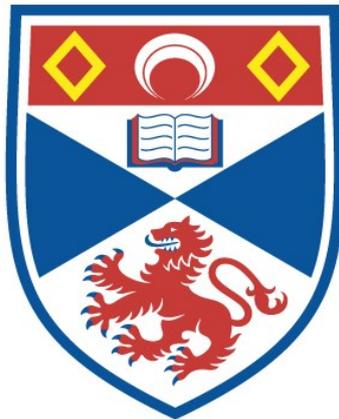


**BEING GERMAN AND BEING PARAGUAYAN IN NUEVA
GERMANIA: ARGUING FOR "CONTEXTUAL EPISTEMIC
PERMISSIBILITY" AND "METHODOLOGICAL
COMPLEMENTARITY"**

Jonatan Kurzwelly

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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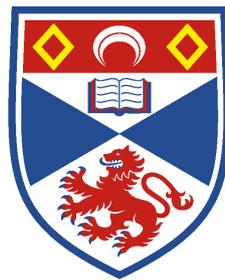
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Being German and being Paraguayan in Nueva
Germania: Arguing for “contextual epistemic
permissibility” and “methodological
complementarity”

Jonatan Kurzwelly



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

15 March 2017

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I, Jonatan Kurzwelly, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80 000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Department of Social Anthropology

Dear Jonatan

Thank you for submitting your ethical application, which was considered at the Social Anthropology Ethics Committee meeting in November 2013 when the following documents were reviewed:

1. Ethical Application Form

The Social Anthropology Ethics Committee has been delegated to act on behalf of the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) and has granted this application ethical approval. The particulars relating to the approved project are as follows -

Approval Code:	SA12474	Approved on:	29/11/13	Approval Expiry:	28/11/16
Project Title:	Nationalism and Lifeworlds in Nueva Germania, Paraguay				
Researcher(s):	Jonatan Kurzwelly				
Supervisor(s):	Dr Mark Harris and Professor Nigel Rapport				

Approval is awarded for three years. Projects which have not commenced within two years of approval must be re-submitted for review by your School Ethics Committee. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year approval period, you are required to write to your School Ethics Committee Convener to request a discretionary extension of no greater than 6 months or to re-apply if directed to do so, and you should inform your School Ethics Committee when your project reaches completion.

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Yours sincerely



Convener of the School Ethics Committee

Social Anthropology Ethics Committee

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For
Marina Girona Raventós

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Abstract

This thesis involves a collaborative study of emic *articulations* and quotidian ways of 'being German' and 'being Paraguayan' in Nueva Germania, a rural municipality in Paraguay. An argument is made that the social categories focused upon during this thesis, were evoked according to different contexts. While many claimed that Germanness or Paraguayanness were key categories, essentialistic characteristics that defined them and others as people of a certain kind, in other situations these social divisions were disregarded or even contradicted. This leads me to the theoretical conclusion that social categories, and epistemic frameworks more broadly, should not be understood as universally relevant or as universally applicable, and should not be treated as such. The thesis therefore proposes to assume '*contextual epistemic permissibility*' as a key axiom for use within anthropology and in the wider social sciences.

The possible theoretical and methodological consequences of such an assumption are elaborated upon. Different theories of *self*, *social action*, and *agency* are debated in the course of this thesis: it is asked which might best analytically accommodate the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility. Furthermore, in order to reflect the multiplicity of emic epistemic frameworks, the thesis proposes that a notion of '*analytical and representative complementarity*' be introduced, rather than monistic theoretical models. Such complementarity is practised in the thesis through the use of different multiscale analyses (for example, the use of different theories of nationalism), and through the simultaneous use of different forms of representation.

The above theoretical divagations are intertwined and related to the individual stories of twelve people from Nueva Germania, and are presented with both textual and photographic means. The stories were created through a collaborative process. Each project participant was free to decide upon the subject of their account, and therefore the resulting stories are able to cover a variety of different themes, at the same time introducing the reader to individual histories, struggles, opinions, plans, and critiques. Some elements of these accounts directly relate to the theoretical debates focused upon within the thesis

while other elements of the individual stories are left to speak for themselves, and for the reader to make sense of independently. The photographs and texts, in their intertextual presentation, allow for an embodiment of the argument concerning representational complementarity.

Acknowledgements

My doctoral project was only made possible due to the generous contributions of many people, towards whom I hold deep gratitude.

This project was made possible thanks to the scholarship which I received from the University of St Andrews.

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The most earnest and heartfelt acknowledgement goes to my supervisors: To Nigel Rapport who always provided constructive and attentive feedback, engaged in provocative theoretical discussions, offered words of encouragement, and in whose work I always find inspiration, and to Mark Harris, who offered constructive disagreements, comments and debate; I found his input valuable and pushing me to consider alternative points of view helped to develop my skills as a writer and as an academic.

My gratitude goes to Witold Jacórzyński, who first gave me the idea for research in Nueva Germania. He also invited me to Mexico for my first research project as an undergraduate student, setting me on the path of anthropological research. I wish to thank Andrew Irving, who supervised my Master's thesis at the University of Manchester.

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Prologue

I drove a few kilometres north to Nordrand to meet Albert again. I had known him for more than a year by now. Looking back to our first meeting or two, I would not have guessed that he would become a close friend of mine. He seemed to be a person whose trust cannot be gained quickly or easily. He was probably testing me during the first instances in which we encountered each other. In retrospect, I can fully understand why anyone would take a step back or at least maintain cautious distance, when meeting such a young and eager madcap, who is desirous of sharing so much of his life and asks so many questions. I am happy that I gained Albert's trust and eventually his friendship.

When I arrived at his house, the dogs did not bark as they used to. They were still a bit cautious towards me, but they greeted me now with happy mouths and wagging tails. Albert came out of his house and trying to maintain seriousness shouted "*Naaa... dieser loco schon wieder!*" [This madman again!]. Immediately afterwards, he laughed heartily and said "*Was wartest du drauf? Komm doch rein!*" [What are you waiting for? Come on in!]. I opened the wicket, which he probably made himself, just as most things in and around the house, and I sat with him at the porch. Albert is an energetic and skinny man, with hands that bear marks of decades of hard work. He is taller than most Germaninos and Paraguayans, sometimes giving me the impression that every seat is a little too small for him. He was wearing his work clothes – we knew each other well by then, so there was no need to dress up or to pretend anything.

He went inside to bring us some ice and prepared tereré – a cold served mate. We did not talk much, but silence was not uncomfortable for me, as it had been when I first arrived in Nueva Germania. I could enjoy these moments of sitting with Albert, looking at the surroundings, the fruit trees, the little corn field in the distance, and the clouds - trying to predict the time of next rain. I tuned my ears into the different noises of the wild and house animals. The goats were shamelessly making loud noises of intercourse in the distance and made nothing of Albert's shouting at them to stop. These sounds very disturbingly resemble human screams of pain or of fear. The chickens contributed some noises when a bored dog started chasing them, but he quickly lay back in the shadow,

resigned. Albert's chicken flock always made me smile – he trained them to react to his call for food, so they would come running and bumping into each other, to the amusement of both humans and dogs...

After a while of sitting and sipping tereré, Alberto asked: “*Do you want to go and see the road? They have made much progress since the last time*”. He was referring to the construction of a new asphalted road that was supposed to connect a remote settlement to our side of the Aguaray'mi River. A bridge had been built a year before, but the construction of the road had not started until recently. Albert saw the road as an opportunity, which was also the reason as to why he had agreed for it to cross over his land. On the one hand, he could potentially benefit from it by opening a little shop or bar at the river side. On the other hand, though, he was slightly afraid of losing the tranquillity and security of his place. He was observing the progress closely and was fascinated by the technological possibilities of the machinery and the speed of the developments. I was fascinated by his fascination. We walked down towards the bridge and we crossed to the other side. A few weeks before, this was just a big impenetrable swamp, now it was brutally divided with a thick line of red and orange dust – the usual colours of Paraguayan soil.

I do not remember what we were talking about during our walk. Nothing particularly important, I guess. We both knew that this might be the last time that we would see each other before my departure from Nueva Germania. We did not talk about it, but there was a noticeable nostalgia and cordiality in our conversation and in our tones of voice. I remembered all of the different times during which we had sat in front of his house and talked, sometimes until late at night. I recall my initial naïve research desire to know everything about him and everyone else in the town and the surrounding settlements. This was often confronted by the need to respect people's privacy, and to permit them to keep some things to themselves. Fortunately, Albert had no problems with telling me “*hasta aquí nomás*”, whenever I asked too much or I would not stop dwelling on certain subjects. I always greatly valued his directness.

Albert once told me that he was Paraguayan, but his mind was German. I kept asking him about this idea. He explained to me how he definitely was Paraguayan and how he would fight to defend his *patria*, his fatherland, but at the same time how he was German, because he thought differently and he would like some things to be different. Although I

think that I understood the main idea, which neatly fitted into my research project on the embodiment of national categories, I never felt fully satisfied with his answers or with my observations. Of course, different people told me about *being* German and *being* Paraguayan, but what did it all *really* mean? What are their words conveying? I felt annoyed by this epistemic impossibility – I would never be able to know, to really know, what it meant to *be them*, or to what extent these categories mattered. I could only make speculations and interpretations based on utterances and observations. And these observations do not conform to singular categorisations or to strong conclusions.

We did however get to share various private and important stories from our lives. In those moments of exchange, I would usually feel as if it was indeed possible to get to know a person well and to create a connection based upon trust. Years ago, Albert lived in the town centre and he was a respectable member of the community. The circumstances in which his life became more complicated and ultimately how he moved back to the remote old house in Nordrand, which he inherited from his grandparents, were a subject of gossip in Nueva Germania. Hearing this gossip always made me angry - not because of the gossip in itself, but because of people's judgements, reductions and classifications, which were clearly present within their comments. I was angered by the ease with which they drew conclusions about a person, conclusions which were based upon simplified versions of the past. I am not claiming that people cannot hold legitimate grudges, but rather that these gossipers were reducing complex stories to essentialist categories, saturated with condescending judgement. For me, the knowledge of Albert's past, of some personal perturbations and difficulties, of the loss of social status, made him a much more honest and real human being in my eyes. Real in the sense of recognition of the messiness of life, of people's choices and consequences, and of the power to continue to face new challenges and to take matters into one's own hands despite harsh circumstances.

These issues and contradictions are also present in the challenge of writing anthropological accounts. The challenge of conveying a familiarity with certain situations and situational logics, occurrences, people and their stories, without claiming to fully know them is part of this challenge. As is the avoidance of tricking the reader into believing that life can be reduced to essences, singular universal laws or categories that together may pretend to offer a "full knowledge". This thesis on the one hand presents twelve peoples

stories, which familiarise the reader with the topics chosen by the authors themselves, as well as with their lives, struggles, and opinions. On the other hand, this thesis explores different answers to the questions that inquire about 'being German', 'Paraguayan', 'Germanino', or 'campesino [peasant]', in relation to these stories and to other situations derived from daily life.

Issues of social categories, in particular those of nationalism and national identity, are strongly related to my own life experiences. I was born in West Germany a few months before the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. I am the son of two artists from the two sides of the Iron Curtain. At the moment of my birth, in accordance with the European laws of blood, the *jus sanguinis*, I was assigned two citizenships. Sometime afterwards my parents moved to Poland, where I grew up. At official school gatherings, I had to stand at attention, salute the flag and sing Polish patriotic songs that proclaimed things like: "A German won't again spit in our face" or "What an alien force has taken away from us, we shall retrieve with a sabre." For many, being Polish was a source of pride as well as hatred, mainly towards Germans and Russians—I did not share these sentiments and I had a hard time understanding them. The manifestations of Polishness were not only being pompous and public – I learned that reading and admiring certain books, drinking large amounts of distilled alcohol, or feeling sad after some people lose an *inter-national* football match, are particularly Polish things to do.

At times I was considered to be Polish, and in other situations I was an alien, a stranger, or even an enemy. I remember some children shouting "Heil Hitler!" at me and performing the Nazi salute. In Germany, I was also treated as a foreigner. With time, I developed a strong resentment towards both categories, of Polishness and Germanness, and towards being classified through them. I personally prefer to distinguish between citizenship and nationality – I consider myself as having two of the former and none of the latter. I have developed an interest in understanding nationalism in an analytical way. What I found to be missing from most of these analyses and theories of nationalism were precisely its quotidian, performative, sensory, sentimental and discursive aspects. This interest led me to conduct eighteen months of research in Nueva Germania in Paraguay. My choice of a fieldwork site was guided not only by the unprecedented history of Nueva Germania, but also by the hope to encounter people with similarly uncertain, ambiguous, or multiple

national identities, and the possibility to reflect on them in a thesis. For these reasons, this theoretical journey is also strongly personal.

The thesis structure deviates somewhat from convention. It begins with a historical introduction to Nueva Germania, which was funded by German settlers at the end of XIX century as a nationalistic and anti-Semitic experiment. The second section introduces the main theoretical focus on nationalism and other social categories. Using ethnographic description, I show how these categories can be regarded as epistemic frameworks, through which reality is understood and acted upon. These frameworks are, however, not universally applicable – an observation which leads me to an assumption of what I term *contextual epistemic permissibility*. I also propose a method of *analytical and representational complementarity*, a method which should be able to contain such epistemic multiplicity. The third section, which is the largest part of the thesis, contains the stories of twelve people. They are presented in complementary textual and photographic forms. These accounts are the result of a collaborative research method in which the participants themselves chose what to tell. The stories are intertwined with additional commentaries and analyses, which are presented inside of framed boxes for clarity. These boxes further elaborate on the main theoretical themes and provide additional ethnographic descriptions.



On a walk with Albert. (Photo. Constanze Flamme)



The new road behind Albert's house. (Photo. Jonatan. Kurzwelly)



01. Historical context¹

For centuries, Jewish people were subject to numerous discriminatory restrictions in the Germanic states and in Europe in general – these included additional taxation, restrictions or quotas of work in certain professions and institutions, restriction of habitation to specific zones or city parts, as well as special distinctive clothing (the “Jewish hat” and the yellow badge). The *Jewish Disabilities* were gradually abolished after the unification and creation of the German Empire in 1871.² This, however, did not eliminate the widespread anti-Semitic sentiments and attitudes. Besides the popular fears of “Judaization” of Germany, the revival of anti-Semitism in the 1870s and 1880s is often attributed to the Vienna Stock Exchange crash (in 1873) and the mass immigration of Jews from Imperial Russia.³

The stock market crash and the following Long Depression strengthened anti-Semitic sentiments. The crisis had a negative impact on industry, agriculture, and the economy in general, affecting the economic stability of the majority of the population. The crash strengthened the position of radical political movements and organisations, who were very keen to blame others, in particular the Jews, for the crisis. In other words, the social categories of Germanness [Deutschtum] and Jewishness [Judentum], seen as opposing dichotomous poles, grew in popularity and importance as an epistemic framework through which social reality was interpreted and acted upon. During these times scientific racism was also on the rise, providing legitimisation for such political movements. Notably in 1883

¹ This historical contextualisation is based largely on the comprehensive PhD thesis of Daniela Kraus (1999). Other publications which describe the foundational history of Nueva Germania exist (for example Macintyre 2011), however, they often lack the credibility of an historical approach with appropriate references to source materials.

² In some of the Germanic states previous to the unification of 1871, the emancipation occurred earlier. For more information on the processes and difficulties of Jewish emancipation see: Katz 1998.

³ The escalation of anti-Jewish policies in Imperial Russia, together with the terrifying pogroms in 1880s, forced millions of people to migrate. Most people migrated to the Americas, however, many also came to Germany. These immigrants were often poor and less educated, influencing negative sentiments and stereotypes against all Jews. For more information on anti-Semitism in the German Empire see: Pulzer 1988 and 1992.

Francis Galton coined the term “eugenics” to describe his ideas of planned improvement of populations by selective pairing (1883, pp.198-200).

Apart from an increase in racist sentiments, the economic crisis also had the effect of increasing emigration. On the one hand there was a general enthusiasm about the opportunities that awaited overseas. Hundreds of thousands of people sought to create better futures for themselves, and many of them decided to emigrate to the Americas. On the other hand, this was a time during which colonial attitudes were on the rise, resulting in the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, organised by Otto von Bismarck, which marked the so called “scramble of Africa”.

This historical context has laid out the conditions in which the concept of a pure German colony, far away from “Jewish influence” emerged. The idea first came from Richard Wagner, who besides being a renowned composer, was a fierce nationalist and an anti-Semite. His ideas revolved around the strengthening of the general Germanness, or the *Volk*⁴, through cultural enforcement, art and vegetarianism. One of his ideas was to create a vegetarian community in the fertile lands of South America, in which the German spirit might develop freely. This idea found a fertile ground in the minds of Bernhard Förster and Elisabeth Nietzsche, both of whom admired Wagner.

Bernhard Förster was born on the 31st of March 1843 in Delitzsch (20 kilometres north from Leipzig). He later studied history, German and classics. He was 175 centimetres tall, had brown hair, and blue-grey eyes. After his studies, he became a teacher in a Gymnasium in Berlin (teaching French, German, Latin, and History). He took part in the Austro-Prussian and the Franco-Prussian wars. Förster sympathised with the ideas of animal protection, vegetarianism, and natural medicine. He was also an anti-Semite and a nationalist, and he campaigned actively for these causes.

Förster was part of the *Berliner Bewegung* [Berlin Movement], a primarily anti-Semitic, but also anti-capitalist, conservative, and nationalist political movement. He was also one of the founders of the *Deutscher Volksverein* [German People's League], an anti-

⁴A word with no direct translation: *Volk* means the people, in an ethnic, nationalist or racial sense. In these times it was one of the key terms used by the nationalist movements.

Semitic political organisation. He held popular assemblies, congresses, gave speeches, and organised a petition addressed to Bismarck. The petition was a warning to the German chancellor concerning the possibility of the disastrous spread of Jewishness. The petition requested a stop, or at least reduction in new Jewish immigration, and an exclusion of all Jews from positions and functions of power. This was intended to protect and enforce the Christian character of school education, and another goal was the creation of a register of the Jewish population.

With support from university student organisations, they gathered 267 000 signatures. His anti-Semitism was mostly limited to political invective and lobbying, although records exist of him getting into a fight with a Jewish man, in a tram in Berlin. (Kraus 1999, pp. 60-63)

His view viewpoint demonstrated general *Volkisch* tendencies, and these tendencies came along with a wish to improve Germanness in racial, physiological, mental, and moral terms, and thereby to give the German people a leading role in the world. Förster perceived Jewishness as the main threat to the greatness of the German people. He also came to believe, however, that Germany itself could not be reformed any further, therefore he decided to realise Wagner's idea of creating a new fatherland in South America, where the German spirit might flourish unimpeded.

"[...] wir wollen lieber dieses unglücklichste aller Naturproducte, den 'homo sapiens judaco-progrediens communis', - wie die Naturforscher sie nennen, in ihrer eigenen Nichtigkeit sterben lassen." (Förster, quoted in Kraus 1999, p. 29)

"[...] we prefer to leave this most unfortunate of all nature's products – the 'homo sapiens judaco-progrediens communis', as the natural scientists call them – to die alone in their own vanity."

It was through the common admiration of Richard Wagner, that Förster and Elisabeth Nietzsche met. Elisabeth was born on the 10th of July 1846 in Röcken (25 kilometres South-West from Leipzig), and went to schools in Naumburg and Dresden. She had a very close relation to her mother and her brother Friedrich. When Friedrich received a position as a philology professor at the university in Basel, she visited him very often and helped him with his household management and acted as a secretary. It was Friedrich who introduced Elisabeth to Richard Wagner and his partner Cosima von Bülow, during a visit in Bayreuth.

This friendship became very significant in the life of both siblings. For Friedrich, the rejection of Wagner's national and anti-Semitic discourses led to a bitter disagreement and disappointment, which haunted him for many years. Elisabeth on the other hand remained in the circle of Wagner's friends and admirers. As a result of these contacts, she met Bernhard Förster, in December 1876.

As Elisabeth Nietzsche developed a closer relation to Förster and his ideas, the distance between her and Friedrich grew. Elisabeth was in regular correspondence with Bernhard Förster, helped him with the gathering of signatures under his petition to Bismarck, and later shared his vision of creating a New Germania overseas. Friedrich openly criticized their political stands and positioned himself against anti-Semitism. This can be represented by a quote from a letter which he wrote to Elisabeth a few years later, after learning that the name Zarathustra⁵ was used in an anti-Semitic article:

“Diese verfluchten schmutzigen Antisemiten-Fratzen sollen nicht an mein Ideal greifen!!

Daß unser Name durch Deine Ehe mit dieser Bewegung zusammen gemischt ist, was habe ich daran schon gelitten! Du hast die letzten 6 Jahre allen Verstand und alle Rücksicht verloren” (Nietzsche 1887: 968).

“Those damned dirty anti-Semitic morons should stay away from my ideals!!

I have suffered much, because our family name is related to this movement through your marriage! You have lost all reason and all consideration in the last 6 years.”

Elisabeth was disappointed by the lack of support from her brother. In a letter to her mother she wrote:

“Siehst Du, ich wünsche bloß, Fritz hätte Försters Ansichten. Er hat Ideale, welche zu fördern und zu befolgen die Menschen besser und glücklicher machen. [...] Du wirst sehen man wird Förster noch

“You see, I just wish Fritz would share Förster's views. His ideals aim to make people better and happier. [...] You will see, one day Förster will be praised as one of the best

⁵Interestingly, Friedrich sent the manuscript of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to Elisabeth to take with her on the journey to South America (Nietzsche 1885: 600). It is however uncertain whether she did bring it with her, and whether the manuscript ever reached Nueva Germania.

einmal als einen der besten deutschen Männer und Wohltäter seines Volkes preisen!" (quoted in Kraus 1999, p.112)

German men and benefactors of his Volk [his people]!"

Bernhard Förster decided to travel to Paraguay, to explore the conditions and potential sites for their new settlement. He chose this country because, in his eyes, it was not infected by Jewishness and, in comparison to other countries, was more or less politically stable. Paraguay had less European migrants, was poor, and offered many possibilities for development. The country was still suffering the consequences of the *Guerra de la Triple Alianza* [The Paraguayan War]. This brutal war, which took place between 1864 and 1870, killed almost half of the country's population. In the year 1862 Paraguay registered 450 000 inhabitants, whereas in the 1872 census there were only 230 000, out of which only 28 000 were men above the age of fourteen (de López Moreira 2015 p.240). Much of the infrastructure, businesses, and farms were ruined; most tools and machinery were destroyed or taken by foreign forces; and many of the highly skilled people either died or emigrated. It took decades for the country to even partially recover.



Portraits of Bernhard Förster and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in the Museum of Nueva Germania. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

Förster travelled to Paraguay in March 1883 and spent two years exploring the country and negotiating with the government of then president Bernardino Caballero. Förster acquired a small piece of land of about 2,5 hectares in San Bernardino (the first German settlement in Paraguay which was funded two years before his arrival). From there, he travelled through different regions of the country, in the search of the perfect place to create as his own “colony” - as the foreigners' settlements are called in Paraguay. After visiting different places in the south and the west, he finally arrived in San Pedro, north from Asunción. Although it was very hard to reach, Förster liked this region the most. The land was fertile, appropriate for both agriculture and cattle breeding, and the indigenous population could be “domesticated” and used as a workforce (Förster, quoted in Kraus 1999, p. 151). He returned to Germany in March 1885.

After his return, the preparations began for the departure of the new colonists. Elisabeth and Bernhard were married on the 22th of May 1885 (Wagner's birthday), and afterwards the couple began an intensive campaign of advertising and recruitment. Funding came from different sources, while Förster travelled through Germany giving speeches and trying to convince people to adopt his idea of a *Neu Germanien*. Finally, on the 16th of February 1886, accompanied by a group of settlers, they departed from the port in Hamburg. The reasons for migration of the people were multiple – hopes for economic stability and prosperity, seeking an adventure, or dissatisfaction with either the private circumstances or the general situation in Germany. Some came with families, some travelled alone. It is quite probable that anti-Semitism was an important motive for some, but certainly not for all of the settlers. It is also important to note that not all of the settlers came together in the first ship, some came later.

The group, the size of which I was unable to determine, reached Asunción in March and stayed there for the first months. Elisabeth and Förster stayed in a hotel, and later moved to a rented house on the outskirts of the city. They were negotiating with the government, making business contacts, and meeting other German settlers in Paraguay. Elisabeth tried to convince Bernhard to create the colony closer to the capital, but he was convinced of his initial choice. The settlers ultimately agreed on the terms of creating a new settlement with the president Bernardino Caballero. Caballero succumbed to Förster's promises that a great migration that would follow them from Germany and so Caballero

offered him free land. The Paraguayan government bought 12 square leguas (out of the 31 that Förster wanted), which equates to approximately 230 square kilometres, and he gave it to the colonists in November of 1886. The requirement was for Förster to settle 140 farming families, within the first two years. Only afterwards would he receive the official title to the land. This meant that the land which he was selling to the settlers was not officially his (Ibid. pp. 158-160). It also forced the funding couple to continue with an intensive advertising campaign, hoping to attract new settlers from Germany. Their letters and accounts were published through their friends and contacts in the Wagnerian circles and the "Colonial Society for Paraguay" which was formed in Chemnitz.

At the end of July 1887, the first group of settlers left for Nueva Germania from Asunción. To reach their new land they travelled by boat up the Paraguay River, entered the Jejuí Guazú, later the Aguara'y Guazú and disembarked upon reaching the Aguaray'mí river. The exact spot of first disembarkation remains disputed amongst the inhabitants of Nueva Germania. On the 1st of October 1887, however, the settlement formally began its operation. Elisabeth continued living in Asunción, while Förster supervised the construction of their new house. She moved at the end of March to the colony, where she received a warm welcome as the *Koloniemutter* [mother of the colony].

Although Elisabeth was very enthusiastic about the settlement, and the letters to Germany kept portraying it as a paradise, the conditions were rather difficult. The never-ending costs, of transportation to and from Asunción, the parcelling of land, the building of a community house, roads construction, purchase of tools and animals, to mention a few of the financial challenges, were difficult to. New settlers had been attracted to come, but not enough of them, and the attempts at farming did not produce enough surplus to commercialise farming processes. They lacked a source of income and Förster had to take loans, which were increasingly hard to repay, making the situation even more difficult. They received help from different family members in Germany, some of whom had bought empty lots in Nueva Germania. Bernhard and Elisabeth had to sell some of their furniture and other belongings. Despite all of the ++financial aid, their economic situation was getting out of hand. The propaganda which was sent to Germany did not spark enough interest. An additional difficulty arose after a new settler, Julius Klingbeil, became very disappointed with the conditions in Nueva Germania and returned to Germany. He then wrote a book

which openly criticised Förster and the colony. In parallel, the new German colonies in Africa⁶ were attracting ever more people, an attraction that was difficult to compete with. Förster had had to continue taking out additional loans.

In parallel to the economic difficulties of Bernhard and Elisabeth, the life of the settlers of Nueva Germania was not easy either. Those who were not discouraged by the long and difficult journey from Asunción had to firstly stay in the “newcomer’s house” in Nueva Germania. Afterwards they received a parcel of land and had to construct their own houses and prepare the terrain - build a corral for the cows, cut down a part of the jungle, plant fruit trees, prepare the soil and begin farming. Until the first harvest, they had to purchase all of the products in the colony shop, and they often fell into debt.

Those who owed any money to the colony were not allowed, according to the Paraguayan law, to leave until they had repaid in full the whole sum. As one settler wrote: *“We need to pay very much for everything [in the colony's shop], and anything we sell, is paid poorly for. [...] If I had the means, I would leave today, but this is the chain which throws people into misery. I will plant as much tobacco as I can this year. I will then sell my corn to the colony in order to earn the money for my travel to Asunción. Therefrom, I will sell my tobacco. To cover my debt, I will need to give my land away, which is nowadays worth more money [...]. However, if there will be no buyers, then it is worth nothing.”* (Kraus 1999, p.206; translated from German)

⁶ *The German Colonial Empire was in control (for varying periods of time) of Togo, Cameroon, Deutsch-Südwestafrika (known today as Namibia), Deutsch-Ostafrika (today's Tanzania), and Deutsch-Neuginea (which today is part of Papua New Guinea and several smaller Micronesian island-states). For a comprehensive account of German colonialism, see the recent edited volume: Gottschalk, et al. 2016.*



Some families own old photographs and postcards of the first settlers. Unfortunately they are they are often unable to identify the people who appear in the oldest pictures. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)



The conditions in which Elisabeth and Bernhard lived were disproportionately better, adding to the general dissatisfaction of the 169⁷ inhabitants of the settlement. The settlers had to adapt to a new climate, animals, plants, insects and diseases. Many people died in the first years. Nowadays in Nueva Germania anecdotes are being told about some of the first colonists trying to build roofs using banana leaves (which fall apart once dry), not knowing how to plant manioc, trying to apply German farming techniques, or dying because of *pique* – a common small insect which reproduces inside the skin of both people and animals. These insects are relatively harmless, if removed quickly with a needle. The first settlers supposedly did not know how to remove them and either burned the skin or waited too long, and died of serious infections as a result.

Many inhabitants lived both long distances from the town, and spread away from each other (thus the double meaning of 'Nueva Germania' still - as the broader terrain of the municipality, and also as the "town", or the "urban centre"). This meant that people lived in isolation and solitude. All of these conditions quickly led to a general disillusionment and dissatisfaction. The struggle for survival was hard, and the previous expectations faded away. Violent incidents, as well as alcohol abuse, became a problem in the colony. Many of those who had money decided to leave, despite their financial losses. The poor, on the other hand, could not afford to go.

In time, it was Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, together with Oscar Erck (their friend), who managed the colony, while Bernhard spent more time outside of Nueva Germania, desperately trying to secure more capital. The situation was overwhelming and it was increasingly difficult to cope with. Moreover, after the news arrived about Friedrich Nietzsche's mental collapse in January 1889, Elisabeth distanced herself from the colony management and neglected other duties. She was blaming herself for not being able to help her brother. The founding couple was increasingly distanced from the lives of Nueva Germania's inhabitants, and their ambitious racial project was fading away.

⁷According to the settlers' internal inhabitants list from 1889. (Kraus 1999, p.180)

When it became clear that Förster would not receive any further loans in Paraguay, in addition to receiving a negative answer from his supporters in Germany, he found himself on the verge of bankruptcy. His life project reached a bitter end, and his physical and mental wellbeing deteriorated greatly. He drove to Asunción and from there to San Bernardino, where he stayed at the Hotel del Lago. On the second of June 1889, he went to bed in a miserable physical state, and died in the early hours of the next morning. The German news reported it as a suicide by strychnine poisoning, which Elisabeth and other settlers denied. The death certificate stated a heart attack, however some current inhabitants of Nueva Germania believe it was falsified under pressure from Elisabeth, who at all costs did not want the world to know about the suicide. Kraus (1999, p.229) suggests that both accounts of Förster's death can raise doubts, and also that it is not possible to determine which account is true.

Since there was no possibility of obtaining further funding, the Paraguayan government took over the supply chain of the colony. Furthermore, Nueva Germania transformed from a private undertaking into a cooperative society, managed at first by Oscar Erck and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche who worked together. Elisabeth had to repay the debts of her husband, for which she made an agreement of selling most of their land, animals, and other belongings to the society. After finding a tenant for her house, she travelled at the end of 1890 to Germany, where she promoted Nueva Germania, and published a book about it. In July 1892, she returned to Paraguay, however her leadership position was not accepted. While she was away, one of the settlers negotiated to obtain the land titles from the Paraguayan government. Through her critique of this man and other settlers, Elisabeth became unpopular in the colony. The settlers demanded her departure. She sold the rest of her land and travelled to Germany, arriving there in August of 1983.⁸

⁸Back in Germany, Elisabeth took care of her brother, whose mental illness was progressing. She dedicated her energy to the preservation and dissemination (famously, also purposeful misinterpretations) of Friedrich's works, notes and letters. She funded the Nietzsche-Archiv, through which she wanted to establish an interpretation of Nietzschean philosophy as a foundation for National Socialism. She later met Adolf Hitler, with whom she maintained contact and from whom she received financial support for the Archive. Hitler was also present at her funeral in 1935.



Bernhard Förster's grave in San Bernardino. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

The history of Nueva Germania has been portrayed predominantly in sensationalist accounts. Moreover, journalists, writers and other visitors, as well as the inhabitants themselves, have only been interested in the foundational events of the 19th century as “history”. The development of the colony over the decades following after its original creation, are not very well known nor are they documented. There are not many documents in private possession, and no archival documents at all in the municipality. Some people blame corrupt politicians, who allegedly covered traces of their illegal activities by destroying all of the documents that had existed in the municipality.

The colony gradually achieved a certain economic stability because of its yerba mate plantations (see the story of Klaus Neumann, below). Nevertheless, Nueva Germania was mostly subject to relative poverty and isolation. There were many problems with maintaining a functional school and employing a teacher, and so education was for the most part neglected. For a long time an evangelic pastor would make visits once or twice a year (Holst, 2005 pp. 227-233), when most of the marriages and other ceremonies were held. It is not clear when municipal politics became dominated by Paraguayans, or at which point in time the population of the colony became predominantly Paraguayan.

Usually the visitor's interest in Nueva Germania is focused on Elisabeth Nietzsche, and the gossip about Josef Mengele hiding in the colony in the 1950s or 1960s.⁹ Journalistic accounts mostly present current inhabitants of Nueva Germania through a sensationalist and reductionist prism of misused selective fragments of utterances and the attempts to prove a continuity of anti-Semitic and German-nationalist ideology amongst a current population [for example, the short video by Beckles (2010) which creates a malicious and harmful representation for the sake of sensation; or by Sussman and Romero (2013) who make generalisations based on very limited interviews, without understanding them through the local meanings]. I have encountered no journalistic attempts to either understand the life and discourses of the erstwhile German population or to represent the later Paraguayan inhabitants. The majority of media portrayals of Nueva Germania focus only upon people who speak German, have German surnames, or who represent a 'German phenotype'. Other people who live there were not mentioned and often ignored. This thesis focuses on people usually left out, and so breaks with the general tendencies by which Nueva Germania has been illustrated.

Nueva Germania was created as a consequence of a world-view, which in its axiomatic basis assumed an essentialist and categorical distinction between different types of human beings. It assumed social categories of alterity, which determined radically different types of beings - Germans and Jews. This division was often saturated with fears, judgements, hatred and different manifestations of anti-Semitism. The categories of Germanness and Jewishness were so popular and important at the time that they guided some people's life-projects. Such was the case of Bernhard Förster and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, whose reasons for creating Nueva Germania were based on similar thinking. Nowadays the social category of "Jewishness" is not used in Nueva Germania, and "Germanness" is understood differently. The past epistemic framework for making sense of

⁹*There is no proof of Mengele ever going to Nueva Germania. Some inhabitants tell stories of a strange German man living there for a year or two. These stories are often incoherent. From people's descriptions (of the person and of the time-frame) it seems to me that this was most probably a different person. The person in question may have been a different Nazi trying to escape prosecution. It is also possible that it is precisely because of the visitor's interest, that the stories about Mengele are being perpetuated. The same may be true of the foundational history in general, of which the inhabitants have at best, a very fragmentary knowledge.*

reality has vanished, and currently other social categories guide people's discourses and actions. These contemporary categories, understood as axioms of epistemic frameworks, or approaches to make meaning of the social reality, guided my research interests. My main research focus lay initially in understanding the importance and impact of being 'German' and being 'Paraguayan', through local perceptions, and later expanding this focus into a depiction of a number of other social categories. The next chapter will offer a way to understand Germanness and Paraguayanness in Nueva Germania.



Entrance gate to Nueva Germania. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)



Eastern side of the urban centre of Nueva Germania seen from above, with the national route 11 that runs through the town. The paving of the route took place between 2001 and 2005, facilitating travel and having a great impact on lives of the inhabitants. (Photo. Mauro Espinoza Rodríguez, <https://facebook.com/megaareo/>)



Nueva Londres (originally "Nueva Australia"), was a different utopian attempt carried out in Paraguay. The settlement was established in 1893, and was supposed to become a white racist socialist utopia. In similarity to Nueva Germania, the project failed and was not carried out successfully. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweily)



A plan of Nueva Germania and the surrounding settlements, which will be often referred to further on in this thesis. The predominantly German settlements have two names.

[Grey – asphalted road; Yellow–land road; Blue–the Aguaray'mí and Aguaray' Guazú rivers]

02. Contextual Epistemic Permissibility

The representation and understanding of Nueva Germania as a town of Germans and Paraguayans living alongside each other, and as two radically different and opposing categories, is a common depiction. Many of the narratives that I heard during fieldwork emphasised this clear-cut social demarcation, whether explicitly or unconsciously. As an anthropologist, trained to see the diversity and fluidity of social landscapes, I was from the outset questioning the character of these seemingly reductionist claims, and I was interested in understanding the extent of their influence upon peoples lives. In this chapter I will discuss how this German-Paraguayan division is explained by inhabitants of Nueva Germania, how it is present in language, and how it is relevant contextually rather than universally (situationally rather than ubiquitously). While considering the importance and influence of this dichotomy, I am also going to introduce another emic social category, the ‘*Germanino*’, in order to further complicate the theoretical analysis. This chapter introduces the main theoretical interests of the thesis: *contextual epistemic permissibility* and *methodological complementarity*.

Waltraud – quotidian Germanness

Waltraud is a woman of German descent living with her family a few kilometres away from the urban centre of Nueva Germania. She agreed to participate in my project of photographic and verbal storytelling (the methodology which I found useful during fieldwork, and which will be discussed in more depth later), and contributed with an account that describes some of the details and issues concerning the lives of German families. In her story she explains the economic management of her household. The main source of income for everyday expenses is the *oleria* [the brickyard], whereas the cows are the family's *Sparkasse*¹⁰ [savings bank]. There is no good healthcare system in Paraguay, she explained,

¹⁰Waltraud went for a trip to Germany, invited by the Evangelic community in Düren. She uses the word *Sparkasse* ironically, referring to the German state welfare system which is lacking in Paraguay..

therefore they need some form of savings for medical emergencies. *“The same is with the Yerba Mate and the wood, those are also part of the Sparkasse, the savings. This is also part of our retirement. There is no formal retirement plan in Paraguay, so this is to make life easier when someone becomes older. This gives us the security we need.”* She told me that working on her story made her reflect about these issues and about the difference between them, the Germans, and the Paraguayans:

We buy as little as possible, we make everything by ourselves here. And then I asked myself: how come this remained so throughout time? Why are our neighbours, the Paraguayans, not doing this? Before it was like that as well. They always came to us and had bought everything from us. Sometimes chickens, eggs, cheese, and things like that. And somehow they always saw it as such, that the gringos [the Germans] have a lot of money, or simply more money than they have. But we did not have more money. We only made everything by ourselves, and we bought very few things. We cooked marmalades, we baked bread, we baked pies, cottage cheese, and made it all ourselves. [...] And vegetables anyhow! Everyone from the German descendants had a vegetable garden. [...] That is why we do not have so many expenditures. But this is also why we can sell our products, because the others do not do it this way. <she laughs> [...] The one that does not do this any more, and does not speak German any more is verhiesigt [Paraguaized]. <she laughs> [...] This is not their culture. They prefer... they have the money and go to buy, and... at one time they have it, at another they do not. It is different amongst them. [...] They have other things which they consider more important. They like to be well dressed... When the electricity was newly brought here, we heard in the radio that people were complaining “we would also like to have a refrigerator, because we want to drink cold water”. And this was different amongst us. The cold water was not nearly as important for us as saving food.[...] They live more simply.

Waltraud presents a narrative in which she makes a clear distinction between Germans and Paraguayans, explaining the difference mainly in economic and performative terms. In other words, the semantic of nationalistic categories is embedded in daily life activities – being German depends on enacting Gemanness. Such elements of daily life and actions such as the growing of vegetables or the baking of bread become more than just individual or familiar habits: these are symbols of alterity between Germans and Paraguayans. What one eats and whether it is made at home or bought is emblematic and denotative of one's nationalism¹¹; thus providing a semiotic and epistemic framework for the understanding and judgement of social reality and a nationalistic dimension to the quotidian.

¹¹*It is important to note that I will be using the term “nationalism” in a very broad understanding. Nationalism, as an analytical category, cannot be reduced to political movements only, since these*

Gringos, Hiesige, and Verhiesigen – examples of nationalect

The social division between Germans and Paraguayans is present in the systems of the languages spoken in Nueva Germania – German, Guarani and Spanish. Jopará Guarani¹² is the *lingua franca*, and is the most frequently used language in the area. Spanish is taught in schools, it is also used on television and in official documents. Although some families speak Spanish daily, Guarani is dominant. German¹³ is spoken daily in German families, especially in the surrounding settlements, it is also the language used in the local Evangelical Church.¹⁴ In the 2002 national census, a little over 20% of the local population declared that they spoke German as a first, second, or third language.

Three specific and locally used German terms are of particular significance for the social divisions in Nueva Germania, namely *Hiesige*, *verhiesigen*, and *entdeutschen*.

-Hiesige – means *the locals* (nowadays it is seldom used in Germany, and is synonymous with *Einheimische*). Germans use this term to refer to the Paraguayans. When speaking Spanish they would also use the word *los Paraguayos*.

movements ground their logic and legitimacy in other, often more quotidian nationalist thinking and behaviour. This is why I will denote as “nationalism” everything that stems from the axiomatic assumption of the existence of nations and nationals. The use of this term, as well as different theories of nationalism, will be discussed later within this thesis.

¹² *Jopará refers to the commonly spoken form of Guarani that uses Spanish loan-words and creates grammatical or semantic fusions. The term “jopará” can be used to distinguish the spoken language from the indigenous versions of Guarani or the artificial, “purified” Guarani that is taught at schools and referred to as “Avañe'ẽ” or “guarani puro” (pure guarani). Avañe'ẽ Guarani has been implemented by the ministry of education. This creates a general confusion over what can be called “Guarani” and additionally, as to what classifies Guarani as a separate language. In this text I will be using the word Guarani in reference to the language that is used day-to-day by the inhabitants of Nueva Germania..*

¹³ *In similarity to the Lagunen-Deutsch in southern Chile, Belgranodeutsch in Buenos Aires, or other Macaronic versions of German, it is incorporating elements from Spanish. Some examples of germanized Spanish words are: kobrieren (from Spanish cobrar– to be paid), avisieren (from avisar– to notify, inform, warn), arreglieren (from arreglar– fix, arrange), traducieren (from traducir– translate).*

¹⁴ *Inhabitants of Nueva Germania mostly refer to the German church as Iglesia Evangelica (Evangelical Church), whereas in Europe it would probably be called protestant.*

-Verhiesigen – is an endemic verb, besides Nueva Germania also used in other German settlements. It means becoming a *Hiesiger* (m) or *Hiesige* (f), becoming local or in other words becoming Paraguayan. In the process of verhiesigen one is entdeutschen oneself.

-Entdeutschen – is another endemic verb of the Germans descendants. It means de-germanizing-oneself, losing the German within, ceasing to be German. Both verhiesigen and entdeutschen have negative connotations.

Hiesige are Paraguayans, the locals, in contrast to the Germans (Deutsche) or German-descendants (Deutschstämmige). Germanness is defined not only by German ancestors but also by religion, traditions and customs. Someone who has abandoned or lost those aspects and assimilated himself with Paraguayans is verhiesigt and entdeuscht – has become Paraguayan and lost his or her Germanness. Referring back to Waltraud's examples of German household work and economics, she said: *“Someone that does not do this anymore, and does not speak German any more is verhiesigt”*. De-germanising is most likely to occur over a number of generations. I have heard this word mostly being used towards members and children of mixed families – those who don't speak any German, became Catholic, and do not participate in the exclusive German-descendants' festivities or encounters. Additionally, the use of nationalistic categories is subject to generational change and I have heard older people using these categories more often.

Ancestry, however, seems to be a non-negotiable requirement when classifying a person as German. Therefore, even if a Hiesiger or Hiesige, a Paraguayan, learns the language and customs, they will always stay Paraguayan in the eyes of the Germans. I have not heard any term that would allow becoming German – Germanness cannot be obtained, it can only be lost. A particular Paraguayan woman [*anonymised*] who married a German descendant, speaks fluent German, learned to cook and bake traditional dishes, participates in the Evangelical church and festivities, is a good example. She is well accepted and respected in the community, however she is still referred to as *Hiesige* and is often used as an example of mixed-marriage.

In contrast to the rather neutral term *Hiesige*, more offensive terms exist. In a few rare situations I have heard individuals using the offensive word *Schweinehunde* [bastards, pig-dogs] to refer to Paraguayans. On the other hand, it is common for the Paraguayans to

talk about the Germans as *gringos*, meaning “foreign”, not belonging to the place, which many Germans consider insulting. These insults are also part of the linguistic clear-cut division between Germans and Paraguayans.

Apart from the words that are locally specific to differentiate between *los Alemanes* [es: Germans] and *die Paraguayer* [de: Paraguayans], the plural grammatical person differentiation between *we* and *they* also apply in relation to these categories - *wir* and *sie*, or *nosotros* and *ellos*. Through these personal pronouns the nationalistic division can be evoked. It is even more noticeable in the Guaraní language, where both inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns for the first person plural exist – *Ñande* (inclusive “we”) and *Ore* (exclusive “we”).¹⁵ The nationalistic categories and pronouns can be used as a normative social deixis – a linguistic framework through which a meaning of the social world can be established, asserting the German-Paraguayan dichotomy as an axiom, a norm and truth about the world, a cultural *non est disputandum* (Michael Billig 1995 even claims that these linguistically microscopic expressions of nationalism assert nationalism in the strongest way). For analytical purposes, I will term the narratives that use this dividing and normative modal base *nationalect*. The act of speaking nationalect is the part of nationalism that gives it its verbalised meaning, a production and reproduction of a semiotic and epistemic framework.

Carlos – work ethics of Paraguayanness

On one occasion, Carlos – a Paraguayan and a participant of my project - was explaining the differences between consumption and the ethics of work. His claims point towards the continuity of the influence of past various environmental adaptations. German customs are based on the adaptation to the harsh winter in central Europe. The harsh climate required production surpluses, food conservation techniques and storage. This, he explained,

¹⁵Unfortunately my basic understanding of Guaraní did not allow me to collect substantial amounts of data. Further research into the differences in nationalistic categories and narrative practices, potential differences in linguistic conditioning, or the intertwining of the three locally used languages, could provide interesting outcomes.

influenced the culture of hard work and saving. On a different occasion Carlos pointed towards the technological adaptations that were necessary for the Germans to survive in Paraguay. This caused further change, distancing them from the Germans in Germany. However, their core cultural distinctiveness, their Germanness, survived the geographic displacement and relative historical isolation.

The Paraguayan customs, on the other hand, derive from an adaptation to a tropical climate and also from a continuity of the heritage of the Guaraní culture. The humid climate makes it hard to preserve food, Carlos explained. Additionally, the possibility of several harvests each year leads to a reduced need for storage capabilities. He told me that traditionally work was organized in *minga* [Guaraní for collaborative work and shared profit] and was based on *jopoi* [solidarity] in which the excess is exchanged for products and for favours. This climatic specificity created a culture of solidarity and openness. As an example, Carlos compared the difference in pig slaughter. Germans would conserve all parts of a pig and eat it over long period of time: this was their European custom, he explained. Paraguayans would preserve little, invite neighbours and friends to eat together and soon there would be nothing left. They would however expect to be invited in reciprocity. "*Jopoi is another form of preservation*", Carlos reflected. In his analysis, he recognises the shared human problem of food preservation, towards which Germans and Paraguayans have developed different methods (preservation as storage and preservation as sharing). This however is not a mere issue of hereditary economic management adjusted to a specific climate, And Carlos provided further analysis in suggesting that these processes also influence the cultural moral norms and values. Therefore, some Paraguayans would claim that the Germans were selfish, stingy, and individualistic, did not know how to party properly, nor how to fully enjoy life. On the other hand, the Paraguayans would be accused of economic recklessness and lack of planning, as well as a poor work ethic or laziness.

While Carlos' analysis explains nationalism, culture and morals in terms of environmental adaptability, it also reveals another important aspect concerning the understanding of nationalistic categories. Namely that the differences between Germans and Paraguayans are understood not as merely different customs, but different social relations, ideas about a good life, as well as different embodied and enacted moral

frameworks. In other words, the dichotomy is presented as something of a core element of a person that influences behaviour, values and the general world-view.



Freshly slaughtered meat for a town festivity in Arroyo Ata. A view that many would find deliciously appetizing, evokes negative affect in myself - a vegetarian researcher. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

This is also evident in the emic terms used to refer to the nationalistic divisions. The inhabitants of Nueva Germania, when asked about the German-Paraguayan division, would often use the terms *raza* and *clase*. For example, in questions as “¿que raza es el?” [What race is he?] or “¿que clase de persona es?” [what kind or type of person is he or she?].¹⁶ This indicates that the German-Paraguayan dichotomy is understood as an essential embodied property which defines an individual as a person of a specific type. The difference between Germans and Paraguayans refer to both the cognitive and behavioral differences, but in some cases also to the phenotypical or genetic. An example could be an older German woman [anonymized] who said: “*Before there were beautiful Germans here – tall and blond. Now they are all ugly. In Colonia Independencia [a different German settlement] there are still many beautiful Germans; here there are almost none left.*” There is an understanding of German phenotype, being tall, blond, with bright eyes, which is considered beautiful. This aesthetic remark is not exclusively a German one, since this ideal of beauty is widely common in Nueva Germania, Paraguay and beyond.

Another person [anonymized], who by some Germans is considered as a *Verhiesigt*, told me that he considers the genetic mix of Paraguayan and German as desired. At the same time being taller, as a German genetic feature, and having darker skin that is better adjusted to the heat and hard sun, is the most beneficial. This person would state a pride in having both heritages and both genetic influences, the best aspects of both. He claimed that the mixed race is superior.

Germanino – another category

The above examples were given in order to emphasise the different and commonly evoked essentialist understandings of these categories. There is one social category in particular, which seems to undermine the power of the German-Paraguayan division – the Germanino, which refers to all inhabitants of Nueva Germania. This term, apart from dividing the society

¹⁶The term “race” does not seem to have the same negative connotations in Nueva Germania as in Europe. The term “clase” is rather used as “kind” or “type”, and is not associated with any type of Marxist “class”. I will abstain from using these emic categories due to their negative connotations for me.

in a different way, also functions to mark an important historical change. As explained by Gerda, a German descendant who herself has thought a lot about the social reality of Nueva Germaia: *“Germanino comes more from Spanish. They use it to describe where you are from. It was not used in the old days, let's say by my grandparents. They would use “Die Deutschen” and “die Hiesigen”. Never “Germaninos”, as for the term it does not matter who is German or Paraguayo.”* This confirms my own observations that currently the older people do not use this category as often as the young. However, it currently coexists alongside the German-Paraguayan dichotomy. To uncover some further meanings and associations of the *Germanino* category I will quote parts of a speech given by Alicia Gonzales de Saiz, the *Intendenta* [city mayor] at the opening of the Nueva Germania's foundational anniversary celebrations. She read a speech which, as I learned later, was written by one of her advisors:

Ladies and Gentlemen, present authorities, special guests, foreign brothers who visit us today, children and beloved youth. Today we Germaninos are celebrating 127 years of foundational life. I wish to give thanks to God almighty, for giving us this beautiful, happy day to share this anniversary party.

The history of Nueva Germania is unique in the world. Different people are interested in it – artists, authors, anthropologists, philosophers, researchers, foreign TV stations... Each of them is looking to discover the philosophy that motivated doctor Bernhard Förster, and his wife, to come to Paraguay and create a New Germany. The 23rd of August, we are celebrating the past and the present of the history of Nueva Germania. But we ought to celebrate more the present and the future of our town. Nueva Germania today is less isolated, we have an all-weather road, national TV reception, two antennas of cellular telephony. Technology is entering, giving us the opportunity to connect with the whole world. And we must seize it for a better integration of we Germaninos in the world. I value greatly that all Germaninos are proud of their joint German and Paraguayan history. That we live in harmony with these two cultures that identify us as a people [“...nos identifican como pueblo”].

Nueva Germania is considered the capital and the place of origin of Yerba Mate. Thanks to the genius of Federico Neumann, continuing to the present day we have many German descendants and Paraguayans who are producing yerba mate traditionally in the barbacuá.

While preparing this message, I was thinking about our founder and his idea to come to Paraguay, and I learned from him that nothing is impossible when one is decided and fights for an ideal. And this morning I want to present a challenge to my people and my district: to fight all together for sustained development of Nueva Germania. For all our community and cooperative work to be based on improving the life and well-being of each Germanino family. [...]

(Municipal Mayor – Alicia Gonzales de Saiz – 23/08/2014)



Students parade during the Fiesta Fundacional. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

The municipal mayor's speech, besides being very politicised, is an example of normative deictic discourse, representative of the *Germanino* social category. It does not disregard so much as transcend the local division of Germans and Paraguayans, and creates a municipal unity - all inhabitants of Nueva Germania are *Germaninos*. The distinctive town history for

which it is famous, usually limited to the first settlers and the “rediscovery” of Yerba Mate seed germination (see the story of Klaus Neumann), is often used to evoke commonness. The foundational celebration has semiotic connotations to the *Germanino* category. It renders the omnipresent German flags, presented together with the Paraguayan ones, as symbols of the *Germaninos* - widely used by the whole town and beyond. *Los Alemanes* march alongside *die Hiesige*, waving German and Paraguayan flags that, when presented together, become symbols of Nueva Germania and of all of the *Germaninos*. So is the cultivation and tradition of Yerba Mate, whose germination method was famously (re)discovered in Nueva Germania by Friedrich Neumann and what has been taken as one of the defining elements of the town – naming it “*la cuna de la Yerba Mate*” [the cradle, or birthplace, of Yerba Mate].

This category is used not only with a political agenda, but also in the daily life of the town and beyond. A good example is the Facebook group “Germaninos around the world” which helps people to stay in touch with the life of the town and municipality. People who live in other parts of Paraguay or abroad share thoughts and photographs on social media, and they are interested in the whole of Nueva Germania, not just the Germans or the Paraguayans.

The *Germanino* category underlines an important characteristic of social categories – they are contextual and relational. Locally, in relation to each other, people sometimes evoke the distinctiveness of the Germans and Paraguayans, whereas at other times the differentiation is located elsewhere. For example, in relation to outsiders, when travelling or living abroad, or when calling for unity and thinking into the future, the commonly evoked collective denomination can be the *Germanino*. Nonetheless there is no set rule for which category should be used in which context - Carlos, for example, would at different occasions use the Germanino category and later talk about Paraguayans and Germans, which he would also conceptualise differently depending upon the context. When I was encountering the German descendants, they would sometimes present themselves as Germans (*Aleman*, *Deutsch*, or *Deutschstämmig*), and at other times as *Germanino* or as *Paraguayan* (usually referring to citizenship). It seems to be the case that both the choice of the individual and the situational context will influence which category he or she will incorporate. In some instances the group distinctions will become completely irrelevant, whereas at other times

they will be of great importance. In the case of the Foundational Anniversary, it is the *Germanino* commonness that was being evoked, shaped and celebrated.



Ballet de Nueva Germania is a youth group of folk dance. Young people from Nueva Germania and beyond practice regularly, perform at festivities and travel to take part in various competitions. German flags are used as symbols of Nueva Germania and the Ballet group and not as symbols of Germanness. This photograph of Marta Villalba Agüero was taken after the Ballet group had won a competition. (Photo. Fidel Benitez)

There are more examples of categories that contextually and relationally divide people into different groups, with different importance and impact. For example, the category of gender turned out to be quite significant during my research, limiting my possibilities as a male researcher to access the women's world¹⁷. Categories related to age on the other hand are also important but posed no difficulties for myself, and I befriended many people of different ages (however, age categories do seem to play a larger role amongst the inhabitants themselves, and I was partially exempt from being categorised through age categories). While considering all of these different ways in which people understand and divide society and social relations, I pose the question of the significance of nationalism in their lives.

Contextual epistemic permissibility

Waltraud's narrative presents a division between Germans and Paraguayans that is reflected in daily symbolic forms and activities, food preferences, and economic management. It is presented as a systemic difference, in which notions both of being Paraguayan and of being German are established through the binary opposition of these categories to each other (an opposition that is also present in language). This understanding of nationalism would suggest that it is not only a matter of belonging or affiliation, but also an *existential condition of being* (as both a noun and a verb) German or Paraguayan. Carlos on the other hand points towards the cultural transmission, conditioned by environmental adaptability, that led to the nationalistic differences. Paraguayans are understood to be descendants of the *Guarani* culture¹⁸ and Germans as descendants from Germany. Adaptation caused different embodied, social and moral values.

¹⁷It would be interesting to research the relation between gender and nationalistic categories in Nueva Germania, it would however require both a male and female researcher.

¹⁸Noticeably he makes no mention of the Spanish conquistadores. The discourses of Paraguayan nationalism usually refer to the mythical archaeological *Guarani* culture.

Waltraud's and Carlos' discourses, although offering slightly different frameworks for the understanding of social reality, both present being Paraguayan and being German as essential in influencing the definition of one as a human of a certain category, and as also evoking radically different types. There is however a third social category. The *Germanino* category does not disregard, but rather transcends or undermines the power of the German-Paraguayan division. All inhabitants of Nueva Germania are *Germaninos*. The distinctive history of the town means that it is famous for often being used to evoke commonness – in terms of sharing the reality of living together and of facing a common future. Germaninos are contrasted with the visitors or with the inhabitants of Santa Rosa, San Pedro, and other municipalities.

If assuming a universal coherence, a monism, as an analytical starting point, it would seem surprising, or even incoherent, how easily people switch between different social categories, based upon different axioms and upon different ways of dividing up the society. This is especially so, with categories that are claimed to determine one's whole being. How could these certainties and essences be so simply disregarded with a different semiotic and epistemic framework? Anthropologists have long debated and criticised monistic and essentialist analytical terms and representations (for example, Abu-Lughod 1991; Wagner 1981). This thesis is yet another presentation of such criticism, and proposes to take *contextual epistemic permissibility* as a central assumption for anthropological analysis and anthropological analysis, and the methodology derives from and reflects this chosen central set of assumptions and mode of analysis.

Max Gluckman developed an approach in which he argues that people within a society pertain to many different groups, through which they are related with cross-linking ties. Through these ties they can either contextually relate to each other or distance themselves from one another. "*Certain customary ties link a number of men [sic] together into a group. But other ties divide them by linking some of them with different people who may be enemies to the first group*" (1973 p.10). In Gluckman's view, the multiplicity of these webs of conflicting ties, which centre on individuals, ultimately contributes to social cohesion. "[W]here custom divides in one set of relationships, it produces cohesion, through settlement of quarrels, in a wider range of social life" (Ibid. p.14). It is the multiplicity of such cross-cutting links, different loyalties at work, which assures an ultimate settlement of all

quarrels and the resulting achievement of law and order. Which relation is being evoked, depends on the context of the situation (Ibid. p.18). Through Gluckman's approach one can emphasise the conflicting cross-linking ties, or epistemic frameworks, however, it is less helpful in recognising all of the instances in which there is no conflict at all, yet in which the ways of understanding, acting upon, and relating to the world and to others are different (not conflicting but multiscalar – take for example meters, litres, watts, hertz, and music intervals).

People in Nueva Germania operate on varying concepts and epistemic frameworks on a daily basis and the incompatibility of these discourses is very rarely apparent - they do not appear to be incoherent in practice - it is rather a matter of situationally negotiating which discourse to incorporate. Waltraud and Carlos use different contextually based understandings of what Germans and Paraguayans 'are', but additionally they sometimes also disregard this division entirely and use different epistemic frameworks. Nationalism is, of course only one of the elements that can influence people's lifeworlds, and when considering the categories of gender, social class, religion, etcetera, the complexity grows exponentially. Leading us to the assumption that different epistemic frameworks may coexist without disagreeing – they are contextual and relational. Therefore, an analytical assumption of a monistic epistemic framework, a universal rationality and individual or cultural coherence, does not seem to be justifiable nor useful. We should rather assume '**contextual epistemic permissibility**', as an analytical starting point, both in order to account for these multiscalar (incommensurable) categories and to avoid judgements of incoherence or of irrationality. A social being is multiple - to paraphrase Mol's (2003) book title—or diverse.¹⁹

This should not be confused with “cognitive dissonance” - a term which assumes some sort of uneasiness or discomfort, a specific situation in which someone realises that their views or beliefs are in conflict. I have not observed such discomfort to be common.

¹⁹Mol wrote a rich ethnography of a single disease in a hospital, in which she explored its enacted and performed multiplicity. She proposes a shift from a purely referential view of knowledge, to knowledge as primarily “partaking in reality” (2003, p.154), and thereby arguing for epistemic relativism. Therefrom Mol argues that reality is not singular but multiple – what she diagnoses as ontological multiplicity. (See also Mol 2012) My use of the term “ontology” is explained in footnote 21.

Besides, the multiscalar epistemic frameworks whilst incommensurable, are not always in conflict.

The analytical assumption of *contextual epistemic permissibility* lies in the centre of the approach that is proposed in this thesis. It is *'contextual'*, because people evoke different frameworks, based on different axiomatic beliefs, in different situations - in different places, with different people, sometimes even within the course of the same conversation. *'Epistemic'* refers to the observation that the multiscalar evoked frameworks provide different ways of understanding²⁰ and acting upon the world. *'Permissibility'* refers to the observation that people permit, or allow themselves such incommensurability or inconsistency – people do not seek universal applicability of the epistemic frameworks they believe in, even if they claim such frameworks to be universal and essential. This permissibility is often implicit and unconscious.

Ontic implications? ²¹

An assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility brings forth questions concerning the relation of social categories, or epistemic frameworks more generally, to the ontic. Whorf wrote that *"A category [...] is an attempted interpretation of a whole large order of experience, virtually of the world or of nature; it attempts to say how experience is to be segmented"* (1956, p.137) He then famously makes an argument that language and linguistic categories condition thought and behaviour. In similar fashion Douglas argues that *"Culture, in the sense of the public, standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas*

²⁰Within a broad definition of episteme which includes different ways of knowing (that is, including unconscious, embodied, perceptual, and others).

²¹I assume the Heideggerian division between ontology and the ontic. In short: ontology is a "theoretical inquiry which is explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities" (1962, p.32). On the other hand an ontical enquiry focuses on the ways of being and its structures (whereas "The question about the structure aims at the analysis of what constitutes existence." (Ibid. p.33)). Thus I will allow myself to remain agnostic towards ontological enquires and assume ontical priority, focusing on the Dasein, its ways of being and lifeworlds. (See Heidegger 1962 and Dryfus 1995)

and values are tidily ordered" (1996, p.39). She describes events and elements that do not fit these norms as "anomalies" or "aberrant forms", which cultures must confront in order to restore balance. However, would it be possible to apply these theories when assuming incommensurable, multiscalar and contextual epistemic frameworks as the norm? Is her analysis correct when the defining categories are not in conflict and there is no "balance" to restore in the first place?

Both of those approaches assume a pre-existing coherent structure of linguistic categories or culture, which conditions people's cognition and behaviour. Above I have argued that the German-Paraguayan division provides people with a linguistic, semiotic and epistemic framework of social reality. However, other social categories exist that divide society along different lines, and which provide different epistemic frameworks. Taking this into account, assuming contextual epistemic permissibility instead of singular-culture, it becomes difficult to claim a universal linguistic or semiotic conditioning of the ontical; rather it requires us to ask more questions. Are people free to incorporate any semiotic and epistemic framework at any time? Do the epistemic frameworks influence people's perceptions only contextually, when using its categories, or do they continue to have an influence despite using incommensurable or even mutually exclusive frameworks?²² I do not have the ambition to solve these questions. I only aim, within this text, to call linguistic or cultural conditioning into question and to argue for the need to expand the analytical approaches in order to investigate the ontic and existential impacts of nationalism and other social categories.

Wittgenstein, while arguing against representationalism, wrote: "[...] *I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish*

²²Boghossian critiqued epistemic relativism and constructivism, arguing that they assume a doctrine of "equal validity" - "There are many radically different, yet "equally valid" ways of knowing the world, with science being just one of them" (2006, p.2). I reject his accusation, assuming that contextual epistemic permissibility does not require equal validity either analytically (some epistemic frameworks, or social categories, seem more important to people – there are limited "ways of knowing" for which people are willing to kill or die for), nor ethically (we do not need to become moral relativists by admitting epistemic multiplicity and diversity). In other words, we ought to research the different social validities of epistemic frameworks while still allowing for ethical debates and judgement..

between true and false" (Wittgenstein, 1969: 94). Here it is necessary to add that the inherited background is not singular, but rather constituted by different, multiple epistemic frameworks. These should not be understood as representational knowledge, or as only cognitive and discursive, but rather as different practices and modes of being. Therefore, my claim here is that in order to argue about linguistic or conceptual conditioning of thought, perception or experience, it is not enough to investigate the linguistic structures. In order to answer the question of the impact and importance of nationalism on people's lives in Nueva Germania, it is necessary to go beyond discourse analysis, taking into account social, (micro-)historical, structural influences, to look also to agency and contingency, and to other unspoken and non-linguistic elements that may be key to an analysis.

Analytical, methodological and aesthetic complementarity

These theoretical deliberations bring about further methodological questions for social science. The aforementioned discourse analysis enables us to have a better understanding of people's narratives concerning nationalism and its proclaimed importance to them. However, the specific model of interpretation and possible outcomes are limited. Equally, to the different epistemic frameworks and modes of being we ought to add an awareness of the different types of knowledge produced by our (anthropological) conceptual and analytic frameworks. Devereux argued that singular explanations make the studied phenomenon "*perfectly comprehensible, controllable and foreseeable in terms of its own specific frame of reference*" (1978). He then argues for the necessity of pluri-disciplinary and complementary²³ analysis.

²³It is worth noting that Devereux takes the concept of complementarity from physics: "*The Notion of Complementarity, of Bohr, represents a generalization of the principle of indeterminacy (or uncertainty) enunciated by Heisenberg, who sought to clarify a fundamental problem of quantum physics. This principle states that it is impossible to determine (measure) simultaneously and with the same precision the position and the momentum of an electron. Indeed, the more precisely one measures the position of an electron (at a given instant) the more one's determination of its momentum becomes imprecise – and vice versa. Thus, everything happens as if the experiments to which one subjects is "forced" the electron to have either a precise position or a precise momentum*" (1978, p.9).

In similar fashion, Rapport (1997) asked the question: *“How to avoid the temptation [...] to reduce social experience to single models?”* He then, drawing from Richard Rorty, calls for edifying, rather than systematic (i.e. aspiring to objectivity) accounts in anthropology. *“[T]he edifying account is distrustful of the notion of essences and dubious about claims that reality can now accurately, holistically, singularly, disinterestedly, be explained and described”* (p.19). Such an anthropological account would be characterised by epistemological complementarity and, by refusing epistemological resolution or closure, it *“maintains a conversation between different ways of being in the world; as reality is multiple so its realistic representations might eschew any singular, authoritative framing.”*

Both authors argue for a juxtaposition of different types of analysis and description. Since analytical frames of reference are characterised by different objects of focus and outcomes, such a juxtaposition creates a dialectical tension, sublation and complementarity (all of which I will just refer to as “complementarity”). In other words, in the endeavour to unveil multiple epistemic frameworks – both in our subject of study as well as its outcomes – the polyphonic analysis aims for *“a representation of human beings not as singular and limited epistemic objects so much as their own plural and limitless subjects”* (Rapport 1997, p.20). Thus, as mentioned above, to ensure a better understanding of the multiplicity of nationalism and its importance in people's lives, it is necessary to go beyond discourse analysis and in doing so, to draw from other interpretative and representative tools from anthropology, social sciences and the humanities in general. Below I will present examples of such multiple ethnographic interpretations, drawing from various concepts and theories available in the social sciences. Below I will expand the understanding of Germanness and Paraguayanness from different perspectives.

Local educational establishments have an influence on the production and reproduction of the German-Paraguayan division. Gerda Kück explained their history: *“Firstly in Nueva Germania there was only a German school. After Germany lost the World War, in all the countryside the German schools closed, the one in Nueva Germania as well. This was in 1945. For many years there was no teaching in German. Later, around 1955 more or less, the German schools returned. Parallel national schools with Spanish teaching existed, besides the German ones. In the 70s our school was officially recognised by the Paraguayan state. In my time, of the 60s and 70s, it continued like this. In my time, we had one*

Paraguayan student assisting our educative institution. Over time there were three more Paraguayan students who also came to our school. That is to say, the school was not only for Germans. It was more for the convenience of the parents and children from each neighbourhood. Germans who lived closer to the colony [the urban centre] sent their children to the national Paraguayan school with teaching only in Spanish”.



Calixto Ramirez, former Spanish teacher in German schools, worked for several months on telling and photographing the story of his life. He insisted on taking this photograph, which he staged himself. It can be interpreted as representative of gender relations amongst older generations or as an example of certain aesthetic preferences (i.e. body position and serious face) in posed group and family photographs. This photograph was important as a commemoration of our friendship. From top left: Juliana Pavon, Marina Girona Raventós, Calixto Ramirez, Jonatan Kurzweilly (photo. Calixto Ramirez)

Many of the German children learned to speak German with the family at home, Guaraní with the Paraguayan workers and neighbours, and Spanish only once they went to school. The school employed two teachers, one German and one Paraguayan, to teach Spanish. Calixto Ramirez, the former Spanish teacher in German schools, told me that there was firstly a school in Nordrand (Costa Norte), which was later moved to Westrand (Takuru'ty), to make it easily accessible for all families. The schools were co-financed by the German Embassy until 1986, when the funding was cut. A big Paraguayan state school opened in the urban centre of Nueva Germania the same year. Currently children from German families go either to this school, or to another Paraguayan school further north in Arroyo Ata. This, as some of the inhabitants have repeatedly pointed out when talking to me, had a big impact on maintaining the German language and community. Although nowadays there are some German language classes in the state school, these are very limited. This underlines that the production and reproduction of nationalism is an important function of schools and other social institutions.

The state school follows the Paraguayan ministerial educational plan. Besides the teaching that portrays certain historical figures and events as symbols of national glory, there is also an emphasis on the *Paraguayan culture*, which is said to be descended from the *Guaranís*. The historical Guaraní indigenous people are being portrayed as both warriors and artists – these characteristics continue to define Paraguayanness today.²⁴ This narrative is reproduced in schools but also in television, radio and other media. Another practice that shows the production and reproduction of Paraguayan nationalism is the official rising of the national flag in all state schools in Paraguay on a daily basis. Students and teachers gather and observe the flag while standing to attention and singing the national anthem.

²⁴While this bond refers to the mythical indigenous Guaraní, actual Guaraní indigenous groups in Paraguay are often negatively portrayed and discriminated against.

First verse and chorus of the national anthem:

<i>A los pueblos de América, infausto tres centurias un cetro oprimió, mas un día soberbia surgiendo, “¡Basta!” —dijo, y el cetro rompió. Nuestros padres, lidiando grandiosos, ilustraron su gloria marcial; y trozada la augusta diadema, enalzaron el gorro triunfal.</i>	<i>The peoples of the Americas, unfortunately, Were oppressed for three centuries by a scepter But one magnificent day surging forth, “Enough!”, it said, and broke the scepter. Our fathers, grandiose in battle, Showed their martial glory; And after smashing the august diadem, Raised the triumphal cap.</i>
<i>Paraguayos, ¡República o Muerte! nuestro brío nos dio libertad; ni opresores, ni siervos alientan donde reinan unión e igualdad.</i>	<i>Paraguayans: Republic or Death! Our spirit gave us liberty Neither oppressors nor slaves exist Where union and equality reign.²⁵</i>

Another influence on the meanings and ways of being German or Paraguayan are the two main churches in Nueva Germania. Most of the German families are Protestant-Lutheran members of the Iglesia Evangélica Rio de la Plata (Protestant Church Rio de la Plata), a sister organisation to the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant Church in Germany). Despite the fact that the town did not always have a pastor²⁶, the Evangelical church quite strongly connects and maintains its community in Nueva Germania. Besides the religious rituals (which are held in a mixture of Spanish, German and Guarani), many aspects of social life are organised by the church. The church has a long story of cooperation with communities and pastors from Germany. Different German pastors were residents in Nueva Germania, but also people from Nueva Germania were invited for visits to Germany. The residing pastors had an enormous impact on the life of the town, to the extent that some

²⁵Source of the original and English translation: <http://www.nationalanthems.me/paraguay-paraguayos-republica-o-muerte/> (accessed 10.02.2016).

²⁶In the old days, I was told, a pastor came only once a year by boat from Asunción and visit the German settlements in the region. On those occasions, all baptisms, confirmations and marriages took place.

initiatives created dependency on their figures as leaders, as the pastors reflect themselves, failing to be maintained by the residents themselves. This was the case of the cooperative of consumption and production, and also the technical high school, which ceased to operate after Pastor Detlef left the town. Another initiative of the “German church” was the construction of the still-existing boarding-house, where children from families that live further away can stay and attend school during the week.



Members of the Evangelic Church, after a Sunday mass in Nordrand.

(Photo. Constanze Flamme, www.constanzeflamme.de)

The Paraguayan Catholic church also maintains a strong community. Besides the mass, which is held in Guarani and Spanish, it also organises a range of events and festivities. An important period for the church and the town is connected to the residency of the *Hermanas Españolas* (Spanish Sisters), who lived and worked in Nueva Germania for many years. The Spanish nuns held many activities and collaborated with individual families. They helped in the creation of the *Organización Juvenil Germanina* (Germaninos' Youth Organization), engaging teenagers in different activities such as cleaning the streets and repainting signs, but also in organising political education in Asunción.

Remarkably, this youth group created the *Museo Multicultural de Nueva Germania* (Multicultural Museum of Nueva Germania) under the slogan "*Memorias, culturas y futuros solidarios*" (Memories, cultures and solidary futures), gathering artefacts related to the origins and history of Nueva Germania, and Yerba Mate. After the Spanish nuns left and the members of the youth organization grew older, the Youth Organization did not survive. Although the museum still exists, it is not looked after and it continues to deteriorate. In any case, the museum is a good example of the production and the reproduction of the Germanino category.



Opening of the Museo Multicultural de Nueva Germania (archival photo-collage from Arnold Garcia Pavon)

Besides the community building, nationalism can also have a dividing influence. A German person [anonymised] has been a repeated victim of cattle thefts. "*Those Hiesige, those are very bad people*", he told me, generalising about all Paraguayans. He would say how Paraguayans don't want to work and that they are to blame for living in poverty. He would explain how the Germans live well because of their hard work. In the same discussion, he would say that Paraguayans are so lazy that one cannot pay them too much for their work -

"If you pay them more than the minimum, they will not come to work the next day." This is a clear example of how nationalism and nationalect can be used to generalise and legitimise abuse or worse treatment (i.e. low payment for work), but also to overlook historical and economical privilege – the fact that much of the land was historically owned and inherited by German families, operating on a bigger capital and economic potential, achieving a larger output from their labour input. I have encountered such examples of nationalism more often and on a bigger scale in other German settlements in Paraguay.

Individuals however do not always follow the simple nationalistic narratives and modes of being. The story of Gerda Kück is a good example. *"I was raised strictly German. When I was 5-6 years old I noticed that my dad's worker had darker hair than dad and I questioned why."* Gerda told me how in her time the Paraguayan-German divide has been much stronger and how it was not well regarded if she interacted much with the Paraguayans. There were many traits of racist ideology, she reflected, which *"was thought by us out of habit. Nobody knew the original ideology so to speak."* She was confused as to what was right or wrong. Two of her German grandparents had a big influence on her questioning of the dividing discourses of other Germans. This underlines the fact that families embodied and enacted their nationalism in different ways, but also is revealing the changes that have occurred since these times. Gerda developed a strong critique of the divisive aspects of nationalism. She says that she was considered a rebel because of her way of associating 'too much' with the Paraguayan culture. *"I was able to free myself from that dogmatic, racial doctrine and create and adapt my own values."* She concluded saying that *"now I have a great relationship with the Paraguayan culture and the Germans as well."* Gerda's story is a good example of both the impact of nationalism on a person's life, the contingency of being born into one of the social categories, the lived experience of nationalism, but also of the potential of an individual's agency to oppose and resist dominant ways of being and in doing so, to create their own life.

Above I have presented examples, interpreted through the concepts of social institutions, production and reproduction. I then continued thinking through these cases with topics such as economic hierarchies, ownership, the means of production, and nationalect as a legitimization of degrading treatment of others. Finally, I presented one person's story that focused on aspects of individual agency. These are all different types of

analysis, which draw from different theoretical concepts and provide multiple complementary ways of understanding nationalism.

Through the unveiling of multiple forms of nationalism, above, it should also become clearer how I use this term. In popular use, nationalism is often reduced to political claims or various xenophobic movements. In this case I agree with Brubaker that “(...) *we should not uncritically adopt categories of ethno-political practice as our categories of social analysis*” (2002, pp.166). However, the use of this concept by many academic authors was also limited. Billig (1995) rightly noticed that the narrow definitions of nationalism, reduced to political or historical aspects, often describe it as irrational; thereby academics project it onto others and disregard their own nationalism. Billig understands nationalism as a broader socio-cultural phenomenon, constituted through symbolic actions, speech, “popular culture”, et cetera. Tim Edensor's analysis (2002) points out similar aspects - he talks about national *habitus*, referring to its embodied and performative aspects. By combining the different theoretical positions, it is the broadest understanding of nationalism that I use - I consider everything that derives from the axioms of existence of nations and nationalities to be forms of nationalism. Therefore, nationalism in its multiplicity can be discursive, performative or enacted, embodied and hereditary; abusive, discriminatory and violent; structural, governmental and political; right wing and left wing; imaginary, a way of being, a way of thinking, existential, administrative; and more... Within such an understanding of nationalism, the most extreme forms of it (which are not present in Nueva Germania), the ones that lead to hate discourses and physical violence, derive from and legitimise themselves through the same axioms. In other words, I call 'nationalism' all of the different epistemic frameworks that assume nation and nationals who are significant in sharing specific characteristics (i.e. Germanness or Paraguayanness) as their foundation. It is important to note that nationalism (just as gender or religion) is a very different thing in different contexts. The utility of the broad category of nationalism lies in its comparative potential.

This broad understanding of “nationalism” may be similar to some uses of “ethnicity”. The division between ethnicity and nationalism has not been clearly defined and it is often based on a popular distinction between these two, which I find problematic. Calhoun (1993), drawing from Gellner (1964) described nationalism as containing claims of

political community, and ethnicity as non-political and "premodern". Eriksen (2002) refutes such understanding, pointing towards examples of poly-ethnic states, ethnic groups with claims of political autonomy, or the relations between states and those whom they define as "ethnic groups". Unfortunately, neither Eriksen nor other authors who are aware of this (e.g. Brubaker et al., 2008) propose a better analytical distinction between these categories, and they use them in parallel. Nevertheless, because both the popular and political differentiation between nationalism and ethnicity convey concrete political implications, agendas and power relations, I have decided not to use "ethnicity" as analytical category. Such parallel use of both ethnicity and nationalism in academic writing might legitimize their political uses and implications (inclusive or exclusive— as for example the act of distinguishing between Ethnic Germans and non-Ethnic Germans). I also look at the state and the citizen (holding citizenship) as administrative and legal units. Consequently, a state does not need to be a nation, and a citizen does not need to be a national. Nation and national are, however, units of nationalism.

Nationalism has often been a subject of critique. Nationalism could be described in Vonnegut's (2008) terminology as a *granfalloon*. A granfalloon is a false *karass*, or in other words a "seeming team"- a group of people who identify with a *karass* that is meaningless. "[E]xamples of granfalloons are the Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, the International Order of Odd Fellows—and any nation, anytime, anywhere" (p.122).²⁷ A common critique made by many of the theorists of nationalism works to describe nationalism as imaginary or socially constructed, based on fallacious self-representations, and therefore these theorists come to a conclusion of the artificiality and meaninglessness of nationalism. However: "*critique of these claimed histories – and especially claims that they justify contemporary violence – is important. But*

²⁷Vonnegut also provides a methodological insight: "If you wish to study a granfalloon, Just remove the skin of a toy balloon" (p.42). An interesting example of similar critique can be found in George Orwell's post-war essay "Notes on Nationalism" (1945) in which British Tory, Communist, Irish Nationalist, Trotskyist and Pacifist, are all described as examples of broadly understood nationalism – characterised by having "the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can be confidently labelled 'good' or 'bad'." Orwell criticised nationalism for its desire to power and reality-distorting lens. The concept of 'granfalloons' will be used later in this thesis – however, not as a misnomer, but redefined as an analytical concept for social sciences (see: "Theories of Nationalism").

it is a sociological misunderstanding to think that the reality of nations depends on the accuracy of their collective self-representations” (Calhoun 2007). In other words, as anthropologists, we understand that such granfalloon as race, gender, or nationalism are both socially constructed and real, in the sense of being real for many people and having real effects in and on their lives.

Complementarity of narrators, analysts, and form

We, the ethnographers, also operate with different epistemic frameworks and theoretical approaches. To what degree do these guide, or even condition, our research? As one of my supervisors told me: *“You see nationalism everywhere!”* And to an extent this is true – this was my main research interest so it should be no surprise that I wasn't always tuned-in to actively ask about or observe human-animal relations or to the omnipresent modification and glorification of motorcycles. Any ethnographic account is already a theoretically guided choice. In other words, the choice of what to pay attention to and what to describe is an analytical one. Ethnography is thus a form of theory, rather than its opposite pole.

In the pursuit of multiple epistemic frameworks, voices and interests, besides analytical complementarity we should also seek complementarity of narrators – that is, to ask people to be their own analysts, and in doing so becoming the representatives of their interests and agendas. There has been much debate in anthropology on collaboration as part of fieldwork, and specifically towards the design, implementation and dissemination of collaborative work.²⁸ I agree with Douglas and Marcus, who see collaboration as *“not some new or revamped practice to be added to the repertoire of methodological tools available to an ethnographer”*, but rather as central to ethnography (2008). My view is that collaboration should be a norm and those who do not account for it in their methodologies should defend their reasons for not doing so.

Another limitation lies within the textual form of representations, which provide a very specific and limited type of understanding and aesthetics. Authors of *Beyond Text?* (Cox,

²⁸A good overview can be found in the *Collaborative Anthropologies* journal.

et al., 2016) argue for methods and forms that provide different, non-textual and non-linguistic, sensory and interpretative encounters. Here I support their call for a wider range of aesthetic practices, forms and methods in anthropology. The dialectic juxtaposition of text and photography in this case (but possibly also film, sound recordings, theatre, drawing, painting, sculpture, music, exhibition, installation, performance..., in other cases) tries to address this issue, opening the possibilities of a complementarity of aesthetics, medium and forms.

The value of photography, besides providing a different aesthetic practice (for authors and readers or viewers), lies in the inability to fully define its relation to text²⁹, perception or knowledge:

“A great explanation is given by François Soulages (2007:295-301). At first it might appear that language by the use of acoustic symbols (signifiant) refers to a multiplicity or to one given thing (signifié), and that photography relates always to one given thing (this exact tree in this exact picture). If so, photography can share meaning through the immediacy of images. But as Soulages explains, to be able to understand photography we also use certain codes. Some artistic photographs can be seen as symbols or allegories. Advertising photographs can give the (fake) informational value about objects and provoke imagination and consumption. Family photography can provoke memories and feelings. Travel photography can provide evidence (“I was there”). Passport pictures can be seen as an evidence of who I am by referring directly to me; but none of those categories are set and defined.” (Soulages in: Kurzwelly 2012, p.8).

Thus, photography presents the possibility of referring to different epistemic frameworks and to an expansion of the possibilities of a multiscale analysis. In other words: *“True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world; and in this sense a historical account [a story being told, a photograph] can give meaning to the world quite as ‘deeply’ as a philosophical treatise”* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: xxiii).

²⁹ *Photography faces similar issues of subjectivity of interpretation as text i.e. an argument of a photographic “trace” to objective reality, as argued by Sontag (1986, p.140) can be easily refuted by assuming a sceptical position towards “objective” or singular reality. Therefore, the interpretation of photographs is very much subject and context dependent (thus the importance of juxtaposing some images with people's explanation of them within the methodology of collaborative or participatory photography, as I have argued in Kurzwelly 2012). This issue will be debated below in “Photography, indexicality, and intertextuality”.*

My own interest in nationalism in Nueva Germania was contrasted by the stories of twelve different people. These people created their own narrations and photographs, exploring and formulating their representations and accounts. I do see nationalism in many of these stories, but they are guided by different people's interests and agendas, showing the intertwining of different aspects of living in Nueva Germania and Paraguay. These stories, from which only short fragments have been presented in this chapter, tackle many subjects that only became visible to me through the participants: how the world of perception and life possibilities change when one becomes half-paralysed and lives in the countryside; struggles over land ownership and the right to make a living; the importance of production cooperatives to be able to compete in a capitalist economy of vast monoculture productions and toxic agrochemicals; activism and political struggles; life and hopes of teenagers living in the urban centre and in the countryside; different life stories; the importance of church and football for moral behaviour... These stories, presented with photographs and my commentary, apply the complementarity of narrators, analyses, forms, and styles.

In conclusion, I make a double theoretical argument. The first argument is about *a broad understanding of nationalism, with its multiple forms and manifestations*. The focus on these different manifestations, their claims of universal applicability or essentialised importance, as opposed to the situations in which it appears to play no role, lead me to reflections on peoples use of multiscalar epistemic frameworks. The second argument is threefold – it makes a theoretical proposition for anthropology, from which it later builds into an analytical and methodological approach. Firstly, I argue for *a theoretical assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility*. Trying to “uncover” a monism (be it culture or an “ontology”), one risks ignoring the multiplicity of epistemic frameworks and ways of being. Secondly, such a theoretical assumption requires interpretative approaches that allow us, researchers, *to produce different types of knowledge, through the use of different analytical tools*. I argue thus for analytical complementarity. And thirdly, I argue for *the complementarity of narrators and form*: that is, juxtaposing multiple voices, using collaborative methods and asking people to be their own analysts and stepping beyond text, and thereby allowing for different types of aesthetic practices and understandings.

Further aspects, which emerge out of this theoretical and methodological approach, will be discussed throughout the rest of this thesis.



My, the researcher's, representation of the experience of slow time flow during fieldwork in Nueva Germania (photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

03. Twelve Journeys

This part of the thesis presents twelve people's stories. They are an outcome of a collaborative project, in which the participants chose the subjects of their accounts by themselves. The resulting topics cover a variety of issues, such as family and personal history, daily life activities, difficulties of migration, struggles of small scale farmers [campesinos], and many others. Each project participant takes us on a different path through the social and individual landscapes of Nueva Germania and beyond. These multiple journeys, the *hodós* (path or journey - constituent of *métodos*, the etymological Greek root of *methodology*), inevitably lead us to incommensurable, but complementary outcomes. The complementarity, as argued in the previous chapter, lies in the juxtapositions of different narrative mediums (text and photography), and the different narrators of these stories. Rather than exploring one pre-determined ethnographic topic, these journeys, led by different guides, permit a broader acquaintance with the people and their social environment. These twelve stories are further juxtaposed against other additions, written by myself in the form of commentaries and theoretical debates. It could be argued that through these complementary juxtapositions, the whole is other than the sum of its parts. At the very least, it provides a possibility for reflection on the limitations of the different approaches. It could, however, also be argued that this way of presenting the stories leads to a broader and better understanding, which at the same time reflects on the limitations of knowing others, or of social sciences in general.

This part of the thesis follows an unusual structure, in which the people's stories are interwoven with textual "boxes". These framed texts constitute an additional commentary and ethnographic anecdotes, in which I further explore the main theoretical propositions of this thesis. The reasons for separating people's accounts from my analyses are twofold. Firstly, this approach is intended to clearly indicate to the reader which text has been created in a collaborative process, and which is *a posteriori* analysis or comment created by myself and guided by my selective theoretical interests. The second reason is symbolic – through this structure my intention is to prioritise the work of the project participators, and so to treat the boxes as additions.

The order of the theoretical boxes reflects my personal journey of considering the different theoretical implications of *contextual epistemic permissibility* and relating it to people's accounts. For this reason, I chose the order of people's stories which both appeared to best speak to the theoretical debate and at the same time, to emphasise the very different character of these accounts (their different styles, levels of engagement, apparent motives, etcetera). Despite the order having been chosen by myself, the text below does not necessarily need to be read in a linear fashion and the reader is free to read them differently according to their interests. To further aid the reader with locating the dispersed debates, the frames have been colour graded. All boxes which have a **black** frame provide additional context to the stories, or present ethnographic anecdotes. Other boxes aim to further explore the theoretic and analytic propositions made in the previous chapter: All boxes that further discuss the assumption and consequences of *contextual epistemic permissibility* have a **red** frame. This approach, as described in the previous chapter, raises further questions, such as: Which philosophical theories of self can best accommodate an appreciation of contextual epistemic permissibility? How are different epistemic frameworks negotiated in various contexts? And what agency do people possess in choosing the frameworks through which they interpret and act upon the world? The texts inside red frames, will also further experiment with *analytical complementarity* of different theoretical approaches. The boxes that further debate *representational complementarity*, and the *collaborative methodology*, are marked as **blue**. These boxes will ask questions such as: What is the difference between text and photographs, and how are they complementary? And what are the semantic consequences of editing?

It is important to note that the boxes quite often focus on a specific theoretical subject and only partially refer to people's stories or their fragments. The stories in themselves propose a variety of different subjects, which are not taken upon for further discussion. My research and writing methodology inevitably leaves many 'loose ends', which I do not see as problematic and have no intention to tie up. It is not my role to integrate these stories independently of the reader, and I only bring them together in a theoretical debate. Moreover, within the collaborative process of creating these accounts, the participants were free to give their analyses and opinions, and it is not my goal to contradict or speak against them, even if at times I personally disagree. This way of writing gives to the

participants the space and the opportunity to be ethnographers and analysts in their own right.

Please note that all photographs inside people's stories were taken by themselves, unless it is indicated otherwise.

03.01 Waltraud Haudenschild



(Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

I met Waltraud at a relatively late stage of my fieldwork and I proposed her to participate in my project. The collaborative process of our work was different than with the other participants, because she decided to use photographs which she had taken before we met. The photographs were originally taken for the purpose of introducing people with little or no knowledge of Nueva Germania and Paraguay, to the environment and life of German descendants (as described in the box “Photography, indexicality, and intertextuality” below). Together, we looked through all of the images, and I recorded her descriptions and comments. She suggested that I should choose the photographs on my own, and at this stage the collaboration finished. Her narrative about the differences between Germans and Paraguayans was presented in the previous chapter. The selection of photographs below were all taken in the surroundings of her house. The photographs are intended to introduce the reader firstly to the local environment and to some important plants. Secondly, they present the hard work of producing bricks.

Surroundings





Plants





The process of making bricks







Photography, indexicality, and intertextuality

Waltraud's photographs constitute a glimpse into her home environment, to important plants and also provide us with a visual explanation on the process of producing bricks. She took these photographs before we first met, when she was invited to travel to Germany, invited by the evangelic community from Düren which organised economic aid to Nueva Germania and organised several visits. She has previously shown these photographs to the host community and told them about life in Nueva Germania. When I invited Waltraud to the project, she decided to reuse these photographs and tell a similar story for this project. Her narrative, already presented as text earlier in this thesis, mainly focuses on the daily life practices, work and economic management of the household. She also talked about the differences between Germans and Paraguayans. The textual story presented earlier in the thesis was an effect of photo-elicitation, and was rather an explanation of what Waltraud wanted to present through the photographs. In this sense the photographs of hard work, cows and plants, constitute both a visual proof and a visual metaphor about the lifestyle of German descendants. Her images constitute both a visual deixis, a form of evidence or index, and a way of telling. In order to explore the meanings and uses of the photographs created in this project, I will firstly briefly discuss the indexicality of photographs and then later I will discuss photographs as a form of communication and narrative.

Much of the theorisation of photography focuses on its objectivity or relation to physical or external reality. John Berger poses a similar question – “*Are the appearances which a camera transports a construction, a man-made cultural artifact, or are they, like a footprint in the sand, a trace naturally left by something that has passed?*” (Berger and Mohr 2016, p.94). Many theorists easily recognise the photographer's input into shaping the image - the processing, moulding and sculpting with the use of light and time - yet they often struggle and go into depths of interrogation concerning the relation between the photographed objects and the resulting images. The intention is often to pinpoint the trace or the indexicality of photographic images, which supposedly gives them a different status than other forms of art or communication. These discussions quite often compare

painting to photography, claiming that the former is only a subjective interpretation, and that the latter has a less subjective status. Or as Berger put it, *“Photographs do not translate from appearances. They quote from them”* (Ibid., p.98). Due to the technical specificities of a camera, of “capturing” light, such authors usually claim for its trace of past time and an objective reality.³⁰

However, such debates often forget that the question of trace in photography relates to a broader question about what is given and what is interpreted, and by extension about the noumenal and the phenomenal; or about the subjective and the objective. Thus, the claims about photography will differ depending on the theoretical approach and its basic assumptions, its axioms. In an earlier paper I have considered the informational value of photography within a framework of multiple, rather than singular, realities. In such an approach, a trace or an index becomes less certain: *“To me “indexicality” means only an intersubjective agreement about the belief that a certain photographic image can be somehow related (by experience) to people’s realities, and that the relation between image and reality will be similar for different individuals. However, this does not undermine the informational value of photography, knowing that all (not only photographic) “truth claims” will be based on similar intersubjective agreements”* (Kurzweily 2012, p.9). Thus, instead of claiming the objectivity of registering light, I argued for the intersubjectivity of belief concerning the real.

By asking **what** photographs are in themselves, we are entering the realm of an ontological debate, in which answers will differ according to the basic assumptions of a given theoretical approach to reality and objectivity. However, by asking **how** photographs are used and interpreted, thus **what** they are **for** specific people and in a given context, the debate moves towards an anthropological question. This makes it possible to shift our attention from index or trace to trustworthiness, and from the ontological to the ontical. Photography is usually usually deemed to be more representative, or more concordant with peoples sensory experiences, and for these reasons, photography is considered to be more trustworthy. Moreover, trust is granted

³⁰Examples of such claims about trace or indexicality can be found for example in Berger and Mohr 2016, Gunnig 2004, or Sontag 1986.

to the technology, trust in the photographer, the photographic process as well as in the tool and its designers.³¹

Some uses of photography indeed rely on the **assumed** trace to external reality. This trust in representative truth becomes apparent with the use of photographs as proof or evidence. To a degree, the photographs of Waltraud, and indeed those of other project participants, were intended to have this indexical outcome. We are being given a glimpse into how the environment **is**, what the different important plants and fruits are, or what the process of making bricks is. The images function as a deixis: they point towards the different physical truths of the author's reality. By seeing the images, the viewer ought to be convinced that this is how it “really” is. This conviction should be stronger than if resulting from any possible utterance about the subject, since photographs do not lie.

Another example of such use of photographs in Nueva Germania, that aims to show a truth, could be the sharing of images of such creatures as *Luison* or *Teju jagua*, through smart-phones or social media. Luison is a creature similar to a werewolf. Teju jagua is a lizard with either one or several dog heads.³² Photographs are often used as proof of the existence of such mythical creatures. However, besides just conveying truths and pointing towards things, photographs (especially the ones taken for this project) aim to transmit certain meanings and affects. They are not aimed to solely function as

³¹We should not forget that the camera does not simply “capture” light. Both hardware and software, in the case of digital photography, are tools used for automated transformation and are measurements of light and time – automation which is not given but is designed for a specific outcome. Imagine, for example, what images a camera with two triangular apertures and a convex sensor would take, and whether these would still be similarly claimed to be trustworthy? It is also worth noting that the belief in indexicality is reflected in language, since we take or capture photographs (in Spanish *sacar* or *tomar*), rather than make or paint them.

³²Those are the only two examples of photographs which people showed me on their cell phones, but I have also heard of supposed images of other mythical creatures. The people I worked with would not refer to a whole bigger mythology (described by various folklorists, for example Acosta et al. 2010), but only to a few main monsters or creatures (referred to as *los mitos* - the myths). Besides Luison and Teju Jagua, I also heard about Kurupí, a dark, short and hairy man, with a penis so long that it had to be wound around his waist, as well as Pombero, who is similar in appearance except for the detail that he does not have such a long penis. Both Kurupí and Pombero are accused of kidnapping and having sex with young women, which sometimes results in pregnancies. Children that result from such kidnapping could turn out to be deformed or half-human. Another creature that was mentioned from time to time, was the Jasy Jatere – a small blond man, who during the siesta time sometimes appears to children and can lure them away from home. Bad things can happen to children kidnapped by Jasy Jatere.

evidence, but also as a storytelling technique. They serve as means of communication, as a way of telling – as a reference not solely to evidence, but to lived experiences. How are such tales and their meanings constructed?



A photograph of a Luison shared through social media. In Paraguay such photographs are often shared as proof. In this text it is shared rather as an example and part of an argument, thus emphasising the contextual meaning of photographs. (author unknown)

The making of photographic meanings is a multi-layered process. Sutherland pointed out that for him, the moment of capturing images was often an intuitive, rather than rational process (in: Cox, et al., 2016, p.38). This might apply to different degrees, since Waltraud's photographs seem to be guided by a rational choice, a consciously designed visual essay that she thought of before the shooting, an essay on two different subjects (her environment and the important plants, as well as the brick making technique as a representation of hard work). On the other hand, the images of some other participants were made more intuitively and had different outcomes. Calixto's photographs

(presented further in the thesis), for example, were taken before he formulated his account, albeit that many turned out to closely fit his story. In his case the semiotic relation of photograph to story became apparent in the process of editing them together – they complement the scriptural narrative on the past with a photographic story about the present. Thus, the meaning-making does not limit itself to the initial choice of frame and the brief moment of releasing the shutter – it continues through the editing and publishing process. There is of course only so much that the authors can control, and the meanings further depend on the readers, their gaze and interpretation. The very act of looking bears the expectation of meaning (Berger and Mohr 2016, p.113-121). Looking or seeing, perception in general, are not universally equal but are learned and embodied in different ways³³ and evoke different interpretations. The perceived meanings are thus not set across time and context, and most certainly will differ and keep changing.

This point refers to Gadamer's (2013) hermeneutic approach, in which all meanings are contextual and historical. Thus, an act of interpretation of a text (a work of art, or a photograph in this sense are texts as well) involves a “fusion of horizons” – an ongoing process of a dialectic tension, or a dialogue, between the text's horizon in the past and the reader's horizon in the present. The texts (visual or scriptural), however, do not contain solely one given “horizon”, but are rather poly-phonetic and poly-scriptural – containing a transposition and dialectic of different meanings within and from outside, an intratextuality and intertextuality³⁴. Therefore, in our case, the readers perspectives, and their knowledge and their context of reading, are confronted with the different stories of the participants, and with different analyses, references to other texts, and with the appearances of many photographs. All of these are subject to the fusion of horizons or a semiotic dialectic. Moreover, the photographs provide non-linguistic meanings and references, since “[...] *not all thought processes take place in language, and they routinely*

³³For more references regarding the subjectivity of perception, see Kurzwelly 2012.

³⁴“[...] intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.” (Kristeva 1980, p.36). Intertextuality can be distinguished from intratextuality as operating on multiple rather than singular codes. Depending however on interpretation of what constitutes one code, the boundaries between “texts” differ. For example within the body of the text of this thesis (intratextuality) there might be in itself different texts that operate on different codes (intratextuality). The boundaries are not clear-cut.

incorporate various non-linguistic and non-symbolic modes of thinking and being that operate beyond or at the threshold of language [...]" (Irving in: Cox, et al. 2016, p.71). This complementarity of different forms generates meanings through their juxtaposition, their contrastive framing, and expands understanding beyond language.

Berger emphasised how photographs on the one hand resist time by immortalising an instant in which in the image has no past and cannot lead to the present, only potentially providing evidence of one split of time-space. As an example, he mentioned photographs of deceased people who were familiar to the viewer, which particularly evoke this rupture in time, provoking uneasiness or discomfort via the discontinuity and absence³⁵. Yet, on the other hand "[t]he significance of the instant photographed is already claiming minutes, weeks, years" (2016, p.105), since the photograph is interpreted with additional intertextual meanings; and if these are not provided, such meanings are instead provided by imagination, empathy, categorisations, history, etc. We understand the photographs as parts of longer time-frames and sets of meanings. In this sense, photographs and words have a similar potential in being able to tell stories, and the complementarity of these two can establish an intertextuality. Furthermore, in the use of photography as a way of telling, the author intends to control and guide these intertextual meanings and possible interpretations of future readers – intending to create an *anchorage* of specific meanings (Barthes 1977, p.38-40). In this sense, both Waltraud and I have created an anchorage for these images – the context in which they are to be read (their order, earlier and latter explanations, and intertextuality), the assumption being that they have been indeed taken by Waltraud, in Nueva Germania, representing the environment and illustrating the lifestyle of Germans. We set the intertextual context in which we hope they will be read. It is, however, the reader who brings along their own perspectives, knowledge, emotions and imagination, which are all then contributors to a fusion of horizons.

This project, however, rather than being a research on photographs, semiotic complementarity or intertextuality, is an experiment in all of these. An experiment

³⁵Roland Barthes (1982) made a distinction between the interpretation of photographs as *studium* – a detached, political, historical, or other interpretation of a photograph; and *punctum* – a touching, personal and emotional interpretation.

designed to be polyphonic from the very outset of its methodology of participatory photography, aiming to be the tool through which we can learn more about Nueva Germania and its inhabitants. The analytical assumption that people operate on multiscalar or contradictory concepts and logics, in other words, the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility should be extended, I argue, to anthropological practice. Intending to reduce this multiplicity of ways of thinking, telling and being, into singular interpretations and forms of representation, aspiring to objectivity, would contradict the initial assumption. As I argued in the previous chapter, complementarity of different forms of representation, different narrators, and different analytical approaches, is intended to oppose monistic interpretations.

03.02 Gerda Kück



Gerda was born and grew up in Nueva Germania in a German family. She had spent the first part of her life in Paraguay and later emigrated firstly to Germany and afterwards to Canada, where she lives now with her husband and children. Although I never met her in person during my stay in Paraguay, we started corresponding afterwards (via social media and email) and our discussions spanned over several months. She expressed genuine interest in my research and I was interested in her experiences of migration from Nueva Germania. I found her stories captivating and proposed the idea that she join the project and contribute with her own story and photographs. She agreed to the idea with enthusiasm. She had scheduled a long visit to Paraguay and decided to write and photograph her story during this time. She talked to her family and friends and reflected upon the generational changes and also upon the situation in Nueva Germania and Paraguay.

After a few months, Gerda wrote the first draft of the story and selected several pictures herself. We have further discussed the text over telephone and Internet, while she was in Paraguay and I in Scotland, expanding the narrative by different clarifications and my questions. Her initial written text was in Spanish, whereas our discussions, which I have recorded, were in a mixture of Spanish, German and English. I further proceeded with transcriptions, translation, merging of the written text with narratives, and stylistic changes, while trying to closely maintain her intended meanings. Afterwards I sent the text to Gerda for further review. After incorporating several comments and making further phone-calls and clarifying a few further issues, we decided that the story was ready.

The collaboration process expanded beyond the making of her story, since Gerda had already read and commented upon a previous chapter of this thesis. After finalising my doctorate, I also plan to send her a copy, and hopefully will have an opportunity to discuss it. My work with Gerda is an example of how different the collaboration process was with each participant. Our collaboration, facilitated by communication technologies and her ability to read English, took place over a long period of time. Despite being bound to the limitation of never meeting in person and the constraints of communication over distance, the collaborative process contained more elements and stages than those undertaken with other participants. What follows is Gerda's story and photographs.

It was hard to make a living

The citizens of Nueva Germania have worked hard to create their lives. My family, as all other German descendants' families, have worked hard in the fields to make ends meet. They mainly dedicated themselves to agriculture and breeding of domestic animals. It was all difficult and complicated. Nothing came easily.

My grandfather, Hermann Kück, came to Paraguay as a young man. At only seventeen years of age he made the long journey from Germany to Paraguay. He came together with his father, his sister, uncles and cousins. They settled in Chingui Loma, which

is another German settlement located closer to San Pedro.³⁶ As far as I recall and understood what he was telling me, in these times for them Paraguay was a much better place than Germany. They also came very well equipped, with many necessary tools and other things. They came with money. Thus, for him at the beginning life was not very hard in Paraguay. It was only later, when he got married and wanted to become independent, that life became more difficult. He got married to a girl from the Schubert family and moved to Nueva Germania. The work was very hard with little gain and a very poor standard of living.

My father's life, just as amongst other German children in Nueva Germania, was also very difficult. He received less than two years of formal education in the German school³⁷. As a young man he went to fulfil his military service, in which he spent eighteen months mainly working at road constructions with other soldiers. They were all treated very badly, and did not receive even basic necessities. The military did not pay any salary either. Furthermore, when he finally came back home, anything he would earn he had to give to his father until he turned 21 years old. Only later did he start to put aside some savings of his own. He started to negotiate his independent life with his parents. Together with his brother, they were able to buy a piece of land of 70 hectares in Nueva Germania.

Social Life

Religion plays a crucial life in the social life of the Germans, who are Lutheran-Evangelical. The important celebrations are baptisms, confirmations, and other general rituals. The neighbours also meet to celebrate together at Christmas, New Year, Easter, and other festivities, including birthdays and weddings. During such reunions there is always someone playing a guitar and an accordion – a tradition which still continues. The youth also meet on

³⁶Now it is within an hour drive from Nueva Germania, however back then it was a day on horseback, as other people have told me. The German settlers from Nueva Germania and Chingui Loma would meet a few times a year for common festivities or religious celebrations.

³⁷"That is why grandfather would understand more things than my father, since he received his education beforehand in Germany" Gerda commented.

Sundays to play volleyball or football. However, people did not have much time for celebrations, since they could not take many breaks from their work.

Hard work and its consequences

Working manually, with axes and shovels, they cleared the forest and felled trees. Some of which had more than one meter of diameter! Out of the trunk they would make planks and boards. All of this was done by hand. Our house was built upon a framework made from these trees, and so were all of the doors, windows, and all of the furniture. My dad made it all by himself, with manual tools only, and he still lives in the same house which he had built back then.



Left: The tool that was used to cut trees and tree rolls. [ed: This photograph is both evidence of tools that have been used for work by the previous generations of German descendants, but also is a story in itself. It helps us to understand how hard the work must have been, by playing on our imagination. From closely looking at the saw, one can see that it must have been operated by two people. Furthermore, knowing how thick some of the trees were, it is easy to imagine how difficult it must have been to both fell a tree and make planks and boards out of them, with the use of such tools.]

Right: In order to obtain fresh water, they have built a 12-meter-deep well – also using manual tools only.

Yerba Mate was one of the most common economic resources in Nueva Germania. However, in order to harvest this resource, one had to plant it first. And this is a very long and complicated process. The seeds of Yerba Mate have to be harvested very carefully, and only by hand. With the use of a glass bottle they would break the outer shell, to collect the little inner seed. These are later stored in ashes for about 24 hours, which helps to soften the shell and allow for germination. Later the seeds need to be carefully washed and planted intermediately. They are planted in a sandbox, filled with very fine and clean soil. It then takes a whole three months for them to start sprouting. When the little plant has first three little leaves, it is located under a greenhouse with a half-shade over it – which is specially constructed out of coco plant leaves. The plants are left there for a whole year where they grow slowly, eventually reaching approximately one meter in height. The next step is again very delicate. Since the plants need to grow in a constant half-shadow, they are planted in a specially prepared forest – which has to be cleared to provide just enough light and shadow. After a further year, all of the other trees are cut, and the yerba mate trees need to be left to grow for a further four years before the first harvest can take place.

After the trees are mature, the harvest takes place once a year. This is when the leaves will be cut. The green leaves need to be passed through a metal drum over a fire, fast enough not to burn them. Afterwards these are thrown on top of a *barbacuá* [a large spherical frame, on which the leaves rest on top and hot air blows from beneath through a tunnel with fire on the other end]. The wood for the fire is also carefully chosen and dried. The whole process is natural.

Leaves dried on a *barbacuá* are later processed in a large mill, which is also hand-made, with a long wooden crane which is pulled in circles by a horse. This grounded yerba is later stored in a wooden deposit in order to keep it dry. The yerba should be deposited for one or two years. This is a very important part of the process, because the longer the yerba matures the better it tastes. It is only after this time that the yerba can be packaged in bags and is then ready to consume or to sell. It takes more than six years to progress from the seed germination to the first harvest.

The quotidian life was not easy, filled with hard work every day from sunrise to sunset. There was no time to read a book or to go out with friends. This style of life has left its mark on peoples mentality and on their way of life. In general, they are more reserved,

distanced, and most of the conversation is limited to quotidian issues. With this amount and intensity of hard work, they had no chance to develop in other areas of life – life was focused upon and more about survival than anything else. Yes, they are ignorant, but I think this is due to the lifestyle they had to live. The hard work and lack of time prevented them from acquiring more information or from educating themselves. This is the main cause as to why there was little progress.

They are also resistant to critique. I am not a psychologist, but I think that amongst the older generation, there is still some sort of remorse over their colonisation effort and the will to prove that it was not a failure. They do not accept any criticism and believe that what and how they do, is the right way. My mother, for example, has not fully accepted the changes I made in my life, the pursuit of education and a different lifestyle. However, they are very kind if someone sits with them without criticizing³⁸. It is impossible to tell 130 years in a few words, or with any words at all, but I think these are the reasons why they are so reserved.

They are indeed ignorant, reserved and even racist. However, they do not realise this, nor can they answer my questions about why they reject the idea of equality. My generation is a bit more open, although it is not a complete change. This is because there was no one to teach them differently. They, especially the older generation, think that we are different than the Paraguayans. Some think that we are more – more intelligent, more beautiful, richer ... I on the contrary think that they are right that we are different from the Paraguayans, but only in our customs – we are the same human beings in our core. I do not think however that their ignorance is maliciously intended, or that they are immoral. On the contrary, it is their circumstance that shaped them this way – all of the hard work and also the conditions they lived within. Some of the older people would simply say “you should not get together with the Paraguayans”; but if you would ask them, they would not know any reasons for it. I only say it all to emphasise that it is their way of life and what they have been taught before, which made them hold these opinions.

³⁸*“This is why I think they liked you, because you are simple-hearted and you did not try to change them” Gerda commented.*

They are however good people and are friendly to others. They always welcome anyone who arrives at their homes, they will offer to sit down, drink tereré, or even have something to eat. They do not even limit the time they dedicate to the guests, despite having much work. I think that not many people would be so hospitable. They are humble and hard-working people, with priceless values – values of cordiality, serenity, simplicity and respect, which form part of the cultural richness of all Germaninos!

The German descendants have adopted a lot of the cultural richness of our Paraguayan brothers. Maybe indeed in 1900 both races lived apart from each other, but today we live all together as Germaninos. What is visually different between the German descendants and the local residents is not as important. We do have different traditions; however, we share many of them. We call ourselves all together the Germaninos.³⁹

Paraguay, Germany, Canada

Nueva Germania did not offer me what I was looking for in terms of work and education. When I was only fifteen years old, I found a job as a housekeeping assistant with a family, firstly in the Mennonite colony⁴⁰ Friesland, later in Asunción, and later in Volendam (another Mennonite settlement). It was a true sacrifice – many hours of work for little pay. In these times, housekeeping work was considered very degrading and humiliating. Moreover, the patrons [“patron” - employer, boss] were not very good and I was treated with little respect. At the age of twenty-two I managed to obtain a place in a nursing course in Loma Plata, the capital of the Menno colony in the Paraguayan Chaco.

In these times my life started to flourish. I achieved what I was longing for – an education and a work which I loved. The Mennonite community of Loma Plata accepted me as if I was one of them. The colony of Menno was established by Canadian Mennonites. Their culture is very different from the Germans in Nueva Germania. They work united in

³⁹*Gerda discussed with me my interpretation of the category of the Germanino described in the previous chapter, which she took on board as a category that could overcome the German-Paraguayan division.*

⁴⁰*The word colony [Spanish colonia] is used as an equivalent of settlement or as a smaller region with a few settlements.*

cooperatives. They are also very well organised, with different factories, a hospital, a school, churches... I also had to adopt their religion, since they treat it very seriously and everything is organised in accordance with the Bible. However, I was not a stranger in their eyes, on the contrary, they invited me to their houses and treated me with a lot of affection. It was there that I have met my future husband. He was born in Paraguay, but he is Canadian and his dream was to go back to his country.

Firstly, however we decided to go to Germany, where we ended up living for eighteen months. It was always my dream to get to know Germany, and while being young, together with my best friend – my husband – we had seen it as a great opportunity. I worked there as a nurse. My expectations of Germany were about work, beautiful nature, and a well organised country. I did find all of that; however, what I did not expect was the frigidity of the people. Of course, there were nice people, but compared to the Germaninos who are so much more hospitable... This was quite a shock. Of course, I did have some good friends as well. Especially one friend, who was different from the majority and always treated me well.

On one occasion, my husband and I went for a walk around the city when suddenly some strangers shouted “Ausländer raus!” [Foreigners out!]. This happened several times. No one has ever said to me something like this in Paraguay. Many would try to make me feel inferior to them. For example, at work some people would tell me: “You come from a country where the deceased are being hung on trees”; “you are from the third world”; “you don't even know how to make a fried egg”; or “you people are eating with bare hands, you do not even know what a spoon or a fork is.” Some would also say that “you people sleep with monkeys”, or at the supermarket when I asked some question they said “can't you read?” Not everyone was like this, but this would happen often.

We were blessed with a daughter while we were in Germany, and so we started our family. We decided to go back to Paraguay and started preparing to move to Canada. We moved there in 1993 and established our home with our two daughters. My very first impression was the friendliness of the people. At the beginning it was not easy for me to learn a new language. Also, both of us had to work. We would take turns, one in the morning and one in the evening, so that someone would always be with the children. In addition, in my previous work I was a leading nurse and there I had to work as a cleaner in a butchery.

This was a very hard change for me. But I overcame all of the difficulties. Once the language was no longer an obstacle I was able to find different jobs. Recently I decided to enter further education and started studying Criminal Justice at the University of Winnipeg. This is because I would like to work with traumatised youth.

After twenty-four years in Canada, I decided to come to Paraguay for a bit longer. I decided to come and stay with my parents in Nueva Germania for half a year. I had to adjust to the change in lifestyle, since it is very different between Canada and Paraguay. But while being surrounded by friends and family, it was not difficult at all. What was the hardest to get used to was the insecurity, the dangers and fear with which people here have to live. One has to be very careful and pay a lot of attention, with all of the surrounding injustice, corruption, and restlessness. However, using my new abilities and knowledge, both the experiences of living and different countries and a better understanding of how criminals operate, thus being able to spot danger earlier, I approached it without fear. The fear can be switched off when one sees the happiness of the Germaninos, who satisfy themselves with little, and live dignified lives.

Now, however, it is time to go back to Canada, back to my family.



My grandfather's ID



After my confirmation



My group of friends, when we were young



In the evening

Contextual epistemic permissibility and the concept of self

After Gerda wrote her story we discussed it further via telephone and messages. One of the questions I had was about her father's military service and the patriotism of the Germans from Nueva Germania towards Paraguay. She answered:

*My father is a German descendant, but **not out of choice, rather by default**. My father never accepted German nationality [citizenship]. Military service was obligatory for all Germaninos back then, which is why he went to serve. However, he says that he did it with pride. Despite it being obligatory, many went to serve with the military willingly. Patriotism towards Paraguay is of big importance, since the majority do not associate themselves with Germany – the country that abandoned them. **They either detached themselves from Germany or never considered it to be their country of birth**. Moreover, many do not know much about Germany. Many German **customs were maintained**, but amongst them politics was not. Some do consider themselves fanatically German and say that **“if a cat is born in a dog's cradle, he is still a cat and not a dog.”** But many, while being German descendants, consider **Paraguay as their fatherland**.*

*Many of us, my generation and younger, do have German citizenship as well. Despite this, we do consider Paraguay as our fatherland. I do not use my **Paraguayan identity** [citizenship], since I live in Canada. However, **my soul and my heart are Paraguayan**. Because **this is the country in which I was born and where I learned how to walk and talk**. Most of the Germans in Nueva Germania are **patriotic and partake in the obligatory political events and duties** – such as voting. Some take an active part in politics. That is why I think the term **Germanino**⁴¹ is a good one – as a mix of the two cultures, which explains it better for us. [emphasis added]*

This short explanation gives us an excellent opportunity for further discussion concerning the different assumptions underlying these claims, with relation to the concept of self (or “personal identity”, as it is more often synonymously called within the school of analytical philosophy – I will use these two terms interchangeably).

Contextual epistemic permissibility is primarily intended to be an analytical assumption for social science, which results in a specific methodological approach that gives legitimacy to peoples incommensurable or contradictory claims and epistemic frameworks. Via examples already introduced in the thesis, we have seen that people

⁴¹It is important to note that Gerda has read and commented a chapter of this thesis before writing her story. She liked my interpretation of the “Germanino”, and saw a moral and political potential in it.

claimed the importance of Germanness or Paraguayanness as a fundamental or essential feature of a person. This characteristic was claimed to determine them as specific kind of persons, their way of thinking and living. Germanness or Paraguayanness are said to be grounded in different properties (body, heart, soul, mind...), abilities, ways of thinking or doing things.

However, if people operate on different, multiscalar epistemic frameworks, which of the frameworks influence how they perceive and act upon the world, and does all of this imply a personal identity that is multiple? Or, in other words, how is it that in one situation I could be a German-self, while in another a Germanino-self, both of which I contextually claim to be fundamental or essential in defining who I am, while remaining certain of being a singular and continuous self? In different moments, I could be a German, a Germanino, a campesino [peasant], a man, and yet I assume a singularity and persistence of being myself.⁴² What approach to personal identity can take this multiplicity into account?

Throughout history, many different philosophical theories of personal identity and of the self, have been formulated. Next, I refer to several of these theories. Some approaches ground a singular and consistent understanding of the self in material or non-physical properties. Other explanations rejected the idea of a singular self that persists over time, or tended to explain such a self as an illusion. I will firstly present approaches which assume Germanness as a fundamental property of self, which I believe can be discussed in relation to different peoples explanations and claims. I will discuss some of the problems that undermine such a theorisation. I will later introduce two approaches which cohere with the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility.

⁴²In the novel *Ferdydurke*, Gombrowicz describes the process of searching for a true self, free of masks, roles, or as he puts it "mugs". The main character comes to the conclusion, that there is no such thing as a mug-less self. "And now come, oh mugs! No, I'm not saying goodbye to you, strange and unknown mugs of strange and unknown people who will read me, I say hello to you, hello, graceful bundles of body parts, now let it all begin—come, step up to me, begin your kneading, make me a new mug so I will again have to run from you and into other people, and speed, speed, speed through all mankind. Because there is no escape from the mug, other than into another mug [...]" (2002)

Materialist attempts to ground the self, locate it in the person's cohabitation of a singular body in time, through which the self is continuous⁴³. Thus, if in such an approach we find that personal identity is grounded in the body and, in accord with my interlocutors claims, would we understand Germanness as an essential property that constitutes the self, and would seem to be located in the body as well? Different people's biological, hereditary or racial explanations seem to correspond with such a materialistic approach of the singularity of the self. As Gerda Kück recalled, some German-descendants would say that *"if a cat is born in a dog's cradle, he is still a cat and not a dog."* Such an understanding would imply that their Germanness or Paraguayanness, which is claimed to be an essential propriety of one's self, is also located in one's body, singular and continuous in time – a biological understanding of nationality.⁴⁴

By similar materialist logic, the continuity of the self could be placed not only in the physical body, but also in the material continuity of objects and surroundings in relation to the person. Such an interpretation could be derived from Carlos' explanation (presented in the second chapter) that Germans and Paraguayans are different due to their adaptation to different environments. Carlos claimed that the properties of German climate and environment resulted in distinct morality, work ethics, ways of thinking, et cetera. However, an assumption that the continuity of a material environment in relation to the body is the basis for the continuity of the self seems to be a flawed idea, especially if we are considering the example of the German migrations to Paraguay.

The assumption of material unity and continuity as the basis for a singular self has been put into question by the famous metaphor of the Ship of Theseus. Does a ship, in which each constitutive element is replaced over time, remain the same ship? At which point of change in material substance—of one's body or its material surroundings—does the person or the object become someone or something else? If Germanness, as an

⁴³For an introduction to materialist approaches see: Martin and Baressi 2002, pp.1-14.

⁴⁴In this example and in those that follow, I present the claims by participants, which reveal nationalism being identified as an essential property of personal identity: of the self. In practice, however, people would still probably treat an individual that ceased to be German as the same person. The persistence of personal identity is assumed, even if the properties claimed to be essential are changed or abandoned. This shows the incoherence of the different logics.

essential property (as my interlocutors seem to understand it), would be racial or biological, then at which point of generational change, or modification of one's body, would it cease to be the same? By the logic of Leibniz's law (Leibniz in: Forrest 2010) concerning the identity of indiscernibles, due to the changing properties of bodies and objects they cannot be assumed to be the same once any change occurs. Thus, in a biological and physical understanding of matter, nothing ever stays the same. The continuity of the self could not be assumed, and we would be a different person after each material change. Thus, for a self to persist over time, for a person to be the same or similar, something more is required than biological continuity.

While trying to locate the self, it can also be argued that its unity and continuity reside in the non-physical—such as in a soul, consciousness, mind or *cogitare* (thinking)—rather than solely in the material. This would refer to Gerda's explanation "*my soul and my heart are German*", and other similar claims. Locke formulated such an explanation. For him; "*Self depends on consciousness, not on substance. Self is that conscious thinking thing—whatever substance made up of, (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)—which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends*" (Locke 1999, p.325). He argues that changes in the body do not affect the continuity of self, because this is not where the singular and continuous self resides. "*This may show us wherein personal identity consists: not in the identity of substance, but, as I have said, in the identity of consciousness*" (Ibid., p.326).

Locke further asks if a person can still be considered as the same self in the case of total memory loss? Could someone be held accountable for actions which one does not remember committing? What about altered states of consciousness? These questions are important not only philosophically, but also from a legal perspective. Locke answers: "*[...] if it be possible for the same man to have distinct incommunicable consciousness at different times, it is past doubt the same man would at different times make different persons*" (Ibid., 325-326). Therefore, for Locke, the self will reside in consciousness and in the persistence through memory. If we were continuing to assume Germanness as the essential property of self, then within this logic it should be located

within consciousness or mind, and the continuity of memory. Or as Albert put it, “*I am Paraguayan but my mind is German*”, explaining how he thinks differently from the Paraguayans and he explains how his actions are based on different (German) reasoning, a reasoning that finds persistence over time. Such an understanding could imply that certain types of mind possess the essential property of being German, of operating in a German-like way (thus connecting mind to particular patterns of behaviour and reasoning), and by extension allowing one to distinguish Germans from non-Germans.

However, Albert himself, during the same discussion, revealed the problem with an essentialist approach to personal identity. He said that although his mind is German, he is Paraguayan, he follows the rules of Paraguayan hospitality, and he would be willing to sacrifice his life for Paraguay – his fatherland. Gerda similarly said that she is Paraguayan because “*this is the country in which I was born and where I learned how to walk and talk*”. This undermines the understanding of personal identity that reduces the self to a given essential property. Despite the fact that such a reductionist understanding is very common amongst the inhabitants of Nueva Germania and beyond, different properties are contextually considered as fundamentally essential to a 'self'. To account for such a contextual variability, a different understanding of the self is required.

David Hume formulated a different understanding of personal identity, *the bundle theory of self*, which considers this problem of different apparent essential properties in relation to the changing self. For Hume, the identity that is ascribed to the mind is fictitious, as are the identities that are ascribed to bodies or to substance.

“It is evident, that the identity which we attribute to the human mind, however perfect we may imagine it to be, is not able to run the several different perceptions into one, and make them lose their characters of distinction and difference, which are essential to them. It is still true, that every distinct perception, which enters into the composition of the mind, is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive. But, as, notwithstanding this distinction and separability, we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity, a question naturally arises concerning this relation of identity; whether it be something that really binds our several perceptions together, or only associates their ideas in the imagination” (Hume 2009, p.405-406).

For Hume, our personal identity, our self, is only an imaginary set, or a bundle:

"But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (Ibid, p.396).

From such a viewpoint, peoples assumptions of a continuity of self would have to be imagined and fictitious. My interlocutors in Nueva Germania would imagine a self composed of all of the available elements – of being German or Paraguayan, or both, Germanino, man or woman, of a certain character, as well as all of the memories and experiences that constitute the self. Being German would be merely one of the threads of the imaginary bundle. In this view, Alberto, or Gerda can of course be at the same time German and Paraguayan, with these properties being just two important threads in his bundle of imagined personal identity.

In Hume's approach, the quest for the tangible and definite personal identity, for a self reducible to singular and independent elements or properties, has been abandoned. The bundle theory of self rejects the existence of personal identity beyond imagination. Parfit's reductionist account of personal identity is somewhat similar, though differs by replacing imagination with a broader psychological connectedness. For Parfit, a person's properties, or components, are the self. "[M]y main claim is that persons are like nations, not Cartesian Egos"⁴⁵ (Parfit 1984, p.275). Through the comparison of personal identity to nations, clubs or political parties, he explains that *"Most of us believe that the existence of a nation does not involve anything more than the existence of a number of associated people. We do not deny the reality of nations. But we do deny that they are separately, or independently, real. Their existence just involves the existence of their citizens, behaving together in certain ways, on their territory"* (Ibid, p.340). By analogy, for Parfit, a person exists as a constitution of their properties or components, and what matters for survival is the psychological connectedness which holds together to different degrees through memory and through

⁴⁵By Cartesian Ego he means a position that claims a person to be a "[...] separately existing entity, distinct from his brain and body, and his experiences" (Ibid, p.210).

character.⁴⁶ By such an explanation, Gerda's or Albert's self would be defined by all of the constitutive essential properties, but nothing beyond that. It would be the psychological chains of connectedness that would constitute their individual personal identities and assure their persistence over time. One of the chains of such a strong connectedness could be the continuity of being German and the continuity of being Paraguayan. This approach can accommodate the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility, since people can operate on the different chains of psychological connectedness, different social categories, epistemic or interpretative frameworks, in different situations.

Heidegger's philosophy might offer a somewhat similar explanation, from a phenomenological perspective. Mitchell in his *Heidegger's Philosophy and Theories of the Self* (2001) points out that the question "What am I?" (i.e. personal identity as discussed above through Locke and Hume) assumes the basic Cartesian separation between the self and the world, the subject-object dichotomy.⁴⁷ *"The pre-supposition of the subject/object framework in which the traditional analysis takes place is that the self is an entity the Being of which is given by being present-at-hand"* (Ibid, p.167). For Heidegger, contrariwise, the self should not be defined as a present-at-hand entity of substance, it should be rather denoted through activity and process, through ways, or modes, of Being - a Dasein. Within such an understanding, nationalism (Germanness or Paraguayanness) can also be seen as one of the key ways of Being-in. This could relate to Waltraud's explanation which describes Germanness as acts and performances, as hard work, strict economic management, and a certain way of relating to others. This view can

⁴⁶This is what Parfit calls the "Relation R". For him, what matters in the persistence of one's existence is the continuity of the Relation R, rather than personal identity. (Ibid, p.215)

⁴⁷ Heidegger opposes the Cartesian assumption within the Kantian approach: "Kant's analysis has two positive aspects: on the one hand, he sees the impossibility of ontically reducing the I to a "substance." On the other hand, he holds fast to the I as "I think." Nevertheless, he conceives this I again as subject, this in an ontologically inappropriate sense. [...] To define the I ontologically as a subject means to posit it as something always already objectively present." (Heidegger 2010, p.305/h.320) In other words, Heidegger understands the being of the self as the **presence** of the *res cogitans* (the thinking thing), as the always situated Being, the Dasein. "What is the reason that while the "I think" gives Kant a genuine phenomenal point of departure, he cannot exploit it ontologically, but is forced to fall back upon the "subject," that is, something substantial? The I is not only an "I think," but an "I think something." (Ibid, p.306/h.321) This is also the reason why Heidegger uses the term *selfhood* rather than *self*.

also accommodate the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility, since the mode of being German is just one of different ways of situational being, and contextually the being-in-the-world [in-der-Welt-sein] can differ and evoke different epistemic frameworks.

There are different possible answers to the questions of the persistence of the self. Whichever approach we choose, it is clear that people in Nueva Germania do assume singularity and persistence of persons. Their claims can be related to different philosophical concepts of the self, which claim such singularity. However, they also contextually operate on different epistemic frameworks which imply different rationalities, behaviours, and by extension different categorisations of individuals, who are ascribed different characteristics. Even if this might seem contradictory from a position of an expectancy of universal coherence, people do not perceive it as such. The two recently discussed approaches of understanding the self, Parfit's and Heidegger's, seem to accommodate such contextual epistemic permissibility. We can thus conclude, that people do not need to be consistent or coherent, in order to legitimise their sense of self and to see themselves and others as singular individuals.

By assuming Parfit's self (a psychological connectedness through the persistence of chains of different "components") we are enabled to recognise some of the key social categories, such as nationality, gender, occupation, or others, as chains that persist over time and that assure connectedness. Such an explanation can help us to understand the high importance of these categories for peoples personal identities. Strong essentialist claims can be seen not just as incoherent truth claims, but as indicative that the given social identity is one of the important "chains of connectedness" of the self. The Heideggerian Dasein's selfhood, expressed through being-in-the-world and different modes of being, allows for an interpretation of social categories as some of the socially important modes that situate the Being within the world. Both authors negate an ontological interpretation of the self (as "*separately, or independently, real*", as Parfit put it, or as a Heideggerian "*present-at-hand*"), shifting the focus towards a question about connectedness or about the ontic.

03.03 Danilo Haudenschild Fischer



Danilo was fifteen years old when we recorded his story. Most of the adult German descendants in Nordrand and Westrand were keen to invite me for a *tereré* from time to time, but explained that they had too much work and could not participate in my project. Danilo and Waltraud were the only two people from these German settlements who agreed to participate. Danilo decided to capture different aspects of his daily activities and surroundings, and he took photographs over several days. Once the photographs were ready we met to discuss them and to record his story. He briefly described his daily chores and routines. We spoke German. I wrote the text below, constructing it on the basis of our recorded conversation, with significant changes to the structure. The practice of creating the stories was slightly different with each person (see boxes “Semantic editing” and “A form of ethnography”). Danilo was quite happy to hear that his story would be part of my thesis, and hoped that he would see the final outcome of it at some point. Since he was not an adult at the time, I asked both him and his parents for their consent towards his participation and for publication of the results.

Here in Nordrand, we usually wake up very early, around 4 am. I firstly quickly wash my teeth and go directly to milk the cows. We separate the calves from their mothers and then we milk the latter. The amount of work depends on how many cows we have, currently it is thirty four that need to be milked every morning. We divide all the work between ourselves, together with my sister and my brother. Once I am done with my chores, I can come back home, bathe, eat breakfast, and leave for school. Normally I only go for the morning turn, from 6.40 until 11.00. It is only once a week that I go for the whole day, and have to go back for afternoon classes.

We go to school together, the Germans and the Paraguayans. When my mother was a child, they would not go together, since people said it was not good to mix. This has changed now, and we do not think that any more. What we do know however, is that it is not very good when a Paraguayan and a German marry each other. It does not end very well. After a few years they usually start having problems. That is often because the Paraguayan person does not work as much, and this is what causes conflicts.

Some say that the school in Nueva Germania, in the urban centre, has a higher level and that it would be a better choice for us. This, however, seems to have changed. There was an inter-school competition recently, and their students did not perform well. Also, the gossip has it that some people sell drugs in the school in Nueva Germania. Therefore, I am happy that I attend the school in Arroyo Ata. Most of the children from Nordrand go with us to school, however some from Westrand go to the boarding-school in town, and their accommodation is paid for by the Evangelical community in Düren, in Germany.

The first thing I usually do when I come back from school is to enclose the calves together with their mothers. Afterwards, we prepare cheese from the milk which we gathered in the morning. Once this is done, we can eat lunch all together. Our parents quite often take a nap after the lunch, but we do not. We rest for a while and then we have many other tasks to do. For example, we need to weed the manioc field, to make sure the plants grow well and get enough sunlight. We learn all of these tasks from a young age, so that we know how to do them.

In our free time we often play volleyball. Normally just with our cousins and others here in Nordrand. Sometimes, usually for birthdays, we also invite our friends from school. In Arroyo Ata there are sometimes local mini-competitions in football. They often play with money - each team needs to deposit an agreed amount, and the winner gets it all. We, however, do not go there very often.

Some people say that our life here is hard, that there is too much work to do. But I do not think that, I think our life is good. We have no major problems. The only thing which I think could improve is the maintenance of the road. The cattle trucks, which drive to and from the big ranches, destroy it constantly under their weight. It also becomes really slippery when it rains, and it is difficult to go anywhere. Another change that would be good for us is to have better English classes in school. Our teacher does not really speak herself and sometimes says that I understand more than she does, because English is similar to German.



My youngest brother.



In Arroyo Ata they often have parties with reggaeton, and similar kinds of modern music. Here in Nordrand, we usually still play our German music with instruments, with an accordion and a guitar and people dancing.



The landscape seen from my house.



To prevent the little ones from hiding, we lock them up with their mothers.



The swine stalls - we need to clean it with water at least twice a week.



They cool themselves in the humid sand.

Teodoro's anti-Semitism

Danilo's claim that Paraguayans and Germans should not marry seems strange, knowing that he attends a Paraguayan school and interacts with Paraguayans every day. How can someone be inclusive during large portions of daily life, in actions and in utterances, and yet exclusive in discourse at other times? An analytical assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility allows us to understand all of this as evocations of different epistemic frameworks – one in which the Paraguayan-German dichotomy does not matter, the other in which it does – at different times and in different situations.⁴⁸ The context of being in school or with friends, evokes the framework in which they are seen

⁴⁸*This explanation by no means intends to legitimise such discourses, it is only an attempt to understand their contextual applications in contrast to other contradictory claims and actions.*

as peers, whereas it might be the case that it was the context of talking to a foreign anthropologist and reflecting upon being German, that called for an exclusive conceptualisation. This can be illustrated in an even stronger example, of Teodoro's anti-Semitic claims.

During my fieldwork in Nueva Germania I did not encounter anti-Semitic narratives, with the exception of Teodoro Sternke Stern and his son Carlos, both of whom openly declared themselves to be “Nazis” and to admire Adolf Hitler. Teodoro explained that Hitler had the potential to dominate the whole world and to create one global German empire. Paraguay would be part of it, and *“we would surely now have it much better”*, he said. In the past *“we were strong and mighty”* he claimed, when referring to Germany in the 1930s', and he regretted that this is not the case anymore. He further claimed that Jews secretly ruled the world's economy. *“If Hitler would have won, we would live better; he would not allow for the Jews to rule the world”*, he told me.⁴⁹

These claims seem strongly contradictory, when considering Teodoro's family background. From his father's side, he is a descendant from the Sternke family and his grandparents were good friends of Bernhard Förster and Elizabeth Nietzsche. They became the leaders of the colony after Bernhard's death. However, on his mother's side Teodoro is a Stern, a descendant of a Jewish settler who supposedly came to Nueva Germania a few years after its foundation. His father, Jorge Stern, who was also a big admirer of Hitler, married his mother Elze Stern, knowing that she was of Jewish descent. When I asked Teodoro if he knew that Hitler would have murdered his mother, he just admitted *“yes, he might”*, but seemed not to be fully acknowledging or considering this idea. His mother did not seem to be perceived within the category of a “Jew”, whom he claimed to be such terrible people.

⁴⁹Teodoro's claims should be understood in the Paraguayan context. The history of the Second World War is not well known in Paraguay, and is often understood as just another historical war in Europe. Teodoro showed me a small collection of his DVDs, with dubious documentaries about the Second World War, which I assume are his main source of information. His claims would surely sound more controversial and horrifying from someone brought up and educated in a European context. This qualitative difference should be noted when judging Teodoro's xenophobic claims.



Teodoro's parents, Elze Stern and Jorge Sternke. Teodoro said that his father was a big fan of Hitler. He implied that the moustache and haircut were a reflection of these sentiments. Teodoro ordered a digitally corrected reproduction of the original old image. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)



All of this goes to underline the ways in which people can operate on profoundly contradictory epistemic frameworks, without perceiving them as such— they can go by with their contradictions unnoticed, since they are not in application at the same time. There might be, of course, moments in which people face realisations of conflicting beliefs and concepts, causing discomfort or distress, which is a psychological phenomenon called *cognitive dissonance*. Teodoro's example seems, however, not to evoke in him a cognitive dissonance. This is a very explicit example, but the same might apply to a vast range of examples, some of which are presented in this thesis (such as the contextual uses of the German-Paraguayan dichotomy or the Germanino category – those are different frameworks evoked separately). An assumption of consistency only leads to judgements of hypocrisy and does not help to understand the phenomenon. An assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility, on the other hand, can shed light on people's incommensurable discourses and actions, and allow us to analytically accommodate such seeming discrepancies, and further investigate their selective contextual uses and limitations. I will discuss different possible explanations on how different epistemic frameworks prevail contextually in the “Negotiating epistemic frameworks” box, below.

Max Stern

According to the stories that I heard, Max Stern was in love with a daughter of the Schubert family. The Schuberts decided to try their chances overseas and join Förster and Nietzsche in their journey to Paraguay. Some people claimed that Max came to Nueva Germania together with the first group, under a false surname. Others said that he came later, shortly after Försters death. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out more about his arrival in Nueva Germania, nor about his relation to other German settlers. However, it is notable that the anti-Semitic colony, shortly after its foundation, accepted a young Jewish man, who married, had children, and lived with them. Today several of Max's descendants live in Nueva Germania, all of whom belong to the general German descendants community, and the categories of Jews or Jewishness are very rarely in use

(except Teodoro, as already mentioned). On one occasion, I was even asked by one of the Sterns if I could explain: “*What is a Jew?*”.



Herminio and Alfredo Stern sometimes play live music at the “Deutsche Stunde” radio program. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

03.04 Fidel Alejandro Benitez Cardenas



(Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

Fidel was the same age as Danilo, fifteen years old⁵⁰, when we recorded his story. He lived together with his parents, in the urban centre of Nueva Germania, where he also went to school. His photographs depicted the activities of teenagers in Nueva Germania, whereas his story focused mostly on what could be improved in the town and on what he felt that the town was missing. The placement of the stories of Fidel and Danilo, one after another, allows the reader the possibility to compare these two very distinct portrayals of male teenage lives.

⁵¹ It is notable that Danilo seems to be rather satisfied with the conditions in which he lives, whereas Fidel has much stronger desire to change and improve the available

⁵⁰ Both Fidel and his parents were consulted for their consent, both for the possibility of letting Fidel participate, and also in consenting to the publishing of his information in the research results.

⁵¹ It is important to note that the collaborative process with both boys (in contrast to the adult participants) required significantly greater encouragement and negotiation in order to produce the subjects of their stories. They were both unsure of what to talk about and found an open invitation to tell any story to be

opportunities and activities, and higher expectations for a different future. Despite the proximity of the farming settlements to the centre of Nueva Germania, teenagers like Fidel live quite different lives to the youths based in the 'urban centre'.

Fidel also represented, both in his photographs and his story, the common passion for motorcycles, amongst both young male adults and teenagers. To see it in a broader context it is important to note that during the last few years, cheap motorcycles have become the main means of transportation in the Paraguayan countryside. Most of the motorcycles are produced in China and assembled in Paraguay with little regulations or testing, which contributes to the low cost. One of the cheapest new motorcycle models costed approximately 3 000 000 Gs (500 euro), and can be purchased with an instalments plan. The second hand market also offers many cheaper options.

There is very little enforcement of traffic regulations, which results in a high number of road accidents. There are no obligatory vehicle checks, and only recently did the government try to enforce the registration of new vehicles (which many people opposed, due to the high cost of purchasing a registration plate). Driving licenses are issued by local municipalities, very few of which require examination of any sort – in most cases one can purchase a license on the spot. Wearing helmets, or a limit to the number of passengers, are not enforced in the countryside. Children learn how to drive from a relatively young age, and for those who live further away, motorcycles provide a means of reaching school each day. Often several people travel on one motorcycle. The most dangerous situation, however, is when intoxicated people drive to and from parties, which is common practice. According to the *ABC Color* news, approximately 1200 people die annually in traffic accidents in Paraguay, 70% of which are caused by motorcycles.⁵²

When I was younger, it seemed to me that the youth of Nueva Germania were strongly united. They organised many activities together - much more than nowadays. I remember

overwhelming. I suggested to them a range of different possible topics, and they both decided to portray their life, and to reflect upon what they deemed as necessary changes.

⁵² <http://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/accidentes-de-transito-se-cobran-1200-vidas-por-ano-558299.html> (accessed 02.02.2017)

that everyone was dedicating much more time and effort to the Ballet Group, to organising everything themselves. They were making public money collections, and going from door to door, in order to cover the travel expenses and go to different dance competitions. They once went to Brazil and twice to Argentina, to compete. I was not part of the group back then, I only joined later when I was bigger.

Our dance instructor, Osvaldo Carmona, is an excellent teacher. Thanks to him the Municipal Ballet of Nueva Germania won several different competitions. Unfortunately, currently we lack the motivation and the will of the youth for it to work properly. Some people even dropped out. It is not the same as it used to be. The group does not travel as much as before. This same lack of motivation and discipline is visible in other municipal groups and activities. Currently it seems that people think more about partying and drinking, which often leads to conflicts or even fights. People are saying that nowadays some teenagers even use drugs in Nueva Germania - marijuana to be specific.

My hope is that if we organise ourselves better, dedicate more time and effort to common goals, we will achieve much more. We should be more conscious that we, the young people, are the future of Nueva Germania. Thus, it is up to us to improve our town, and this is precisely my point – for young people to realise that united, with common goals and dedication, we can achieve a lot. And there are many things which people say that they want to introduce or improve into Nueva Germania.

However, it is not all that bad amongst young people. We still meet quite often to play volleyball together at the riverside. One of the new “sports”, which many of us practice, is motorcycle tuning. It is only quite recently, the last two years, that people started tuning their motorcycles. It also requires discipline and dedication. One has to learn a lot, buy the parts, and dedicate significant amounts of work. What would be a big improvement for us, what is currently missing, is to introduce some courses that increase our knowledge of motorcycles, but also the knowledge of general road safety and driving rules. There are far too many accidents. Some good workshops or courses, would surely be very useful and increase our safety.

It would also be a great improvement, if the town would have a playground for children, a proper place to practice our ballet, and some other places where we can spend

time. Also, our schools are quite good, but we do not have good possibilities for further education in Nueva Germania. Some sort of technical or professional school would certainly permit young people to stay in town, rather than migrate. Another element which is missing, is better access to computers and internet. Children need to learn how to use them. A better education of foreign languages would also be very useful.



This is our Nueva Germania Ballet group. We have recently won a competition in San Pedro.





Two of my friend's motorcycles. They named them "The Black Widow" and "A Poor Guy Is Happy With This..." [El Pobre Feliz Con Esto...]



Drinking tereré and chatting with my school friends.

03.05 Arnold Garcia Pavon



I met Arnold through the Internet, two years before arriving in Paraguay. I was writing to different people from Nueva Germania, trying to establish contacts while planning the research project. Arnold was one of the few who responded to my messages. When I arrived in Asunción, he was the first Germanino whom I met. Arnold, together with his partner and his sister, lived on the outskirts of the capital city. We met to discuss my project, after which he talked to his parents, and they offered me a place to stay at their house in Nueva Germania. Subsequently they all became like a family to me, during the eighteen months of my fieldwork.

Arnold also agreed to participate in my project. We had numerous discussions over many months, however, it was only at the end of my research that we decided to record a concise story which Arnold wanted to tell. I later transcribed, translated, and edited the recording. The individuality of each of the people's stories and the collaborative processes, worked against distinct representations and editorial decisions. It was a challenge to maintain all of the intended meanings and structure in Arnold's account, and I found it necessary to add further descriptions and explanations. Some of these additions were necessary for an audience with little prior knowledge of Paraguay and Nueva Germania, others were intended to enrich the text flow and its emphasis (as explained below in "Semantic editing"). Because of the substantial editing process, I thought that writing in the third person would be more appropriate, and Arnold agreed to it. We have left, however, some parts of his narratives in first person. Through this stylistic manoeuvre, the reader will potentially have an impression of Arnold as a character in the story, rather than as its narrator.

Arnold's account intertwines his personal life-trajectory with more general claims about the situation in Paraguay, the northern districts, and the hardships of an anonymous life in a big city. He prioritised the narrative and written account, and only much later did he send me photographs. Arnold and I have kept in regular contact through the Internet, which made it possible for him to review the first draft of the story, make corrections and introduce further changes.

Arnold was born in 1986. He grew up in Nueva Germania and lived there until moving away for his university studies. Both of his parents are from the region themselves. They own a spacious house in the centre of the town, currently surrounded by grapefruit, lime, banana and papaya trees, which grew taller at the same time as did Arnold and his sister Andrea. The house was built in stages, which themselves are visible in the roof covering – the older part has ceramic tiles, the newer is covered with corrugated metal roofing which makes a lot of noise even with the slightest rain. I, personally, like this sound a lot. The house has only one level – very few houses in town extend beyond the ground floor. The main door, from the side of the street, leads to a spacious living room. Currently the living room is occupied by three long wooden tables, which during the day are full of pieces of cloth,

colourful threads, garments to repair, and papers with tailoring designs sketches. Sometimes during the evening, sometimes only very late at night, it all gets sorted out and tidied, just to gradually get messy again from the early hours. It is Julia's, Arnold's mother's, workshop.

Passing further through a short corridor, on the right and the left are bedrooms - simple rooms with not much more than a bed and a wardrobe each. These were Andrea's and Arnold's rooms. Both Julia's workshop and these rooms have a tiled floor. The corridor leads into a spacious kitchen with a long wooden table in the middle. There is a high book-stand to the left that contains many papers and some of Ramon's books, however it is usually covered with a material curtain that hangs from its top. Ramon was a school teacher and currently works for the state schools supervision office. On the right of the kitchen there are some cupboards, a sink, a long counter-top, the usual kitchen electro-domestics, and a door to the laundry area and a *tatakua*, a brick-oven outside of the house which it is being used for special occasions. Continuing forward to the very back of the house, there is a very spacious room with no floor and with a big brick oven on the right and some old broken machinery on the left. Julia and Ramon used to run a bakery for some time, until a fire accident after which they decided to abandon it. In the back-yard, there are many fruit-trees, some herbal plants and a chicken-coop.

The house itself is located one block from the main road which cuts through the middle of the town and connects it to San Pedro in the east and Santa Rosa in the west. Back then, when Arnold was little, the road was not asphalted and far less traffic passed through. The town was much more isolated and almost inaccessible during the rainy days, when the slippery mud would prevent most vehicles from crossing. When Arnold was a young child, some of the neighbouring houses did not yet exist. Together with his friends, they would spend much time on one of the empty plots, chasing a ball or jumping from the trees and swinging with the lianas, *playing Tarzan* – as Arnold recalls it. Later they constructed a volleyball pitch just by Arnold's house, which became a point of many gatherings and games. Arnold had a rather happy and carefree childhood.

The family is bilingual, but they mainly speak Jopara Guaraní at home. As a young teenager, Arnold became strongly involved with the Catholic Church, at the time locally led by Spanish Catholic nuns. *“The nuns would teach us not only the catechism, but would also*

*ask more communitarian questions: How do you feel in the community? What do you think about the population and the poverty?”, Arnold recalled. They would also engage the youth in voluntary work, like cleaning the streets or repainting signs. Already at the age of 13 Arnold was appointed by the nuns as a leader of a small group of younger children. He recalls that at the beginning he did not know what to do, so he would lead prayers whenever the nuns were around, but once they left he would lead joke-telling contests. With time and experience Arnold was given more responsibilities. At the age of 15 he was already helping the nuns with the *celebración de la palabra de Dios* (the celebration of the God's word)⁵³. He would help out with different organisational duties, but also act as a catechist, both during the Sunday service and during preparatory courses for first communion and confirmation.*

His enthusiasm and leadership skills led to him being recommended for a political education program, *Parlamento Joven* (Youth Parliament), in Asunción. It was funded by Pa'í⁵⁴ Oliva, a prominent priest and activist who had worked in Paraguay since the nineteen-sixties, in response to the *Paraguayan March* manifestations.⁵⁵ Pa'í was seeking to invite and to involve various local youth leaders from the Paraguayan countryside. This is how Arnold received an invitation letter to partake in the fourth edition of the program in 2002, as a representative of Nueva Germania. The meetings took place over weekends, once a month throughout the whole year. The participants were paid for their travel expenses. They brought different foods with them, or bought them together in Asunción, which they

⁵³ Nueva Germania had no resident priest at the time. In place of the Sunday mass, the nuns and the Catholic civilians could deliver the “celebration of God's word” service, which contained almost all of the same elements as are found in mass. The main difference is that the communion wafer had to be consecrated beforehand by a priest, and the consecration would only be remembered during the celebration.

⁵⁴ Pa'i means priest in Guarani. His full name is Francisco de Paula Oliva.

⁵⁵ Marzo Paraguayo refers to the crisis and manifestations which occurred after the murder of Luis María Argaña, the vice-president of Paraguay, in 1999. These events coincided with the annual march of the campesinos (small farmers) from the National Campesinos Federation (FNC - Federación Nacional Campesina) to Asunción. Eight young people tragically lost their lives during these manifestations, seven of them were shot by snipers shooting from the rooftops.

shared, cooked and ate all together. They slept in the church buildings or with host families from the local parish.



Arnold, along with youth from various rural areas, learnt about politics and civic engagement, receiving lectures from scholars and activists from different areas of specialisation – such as economists, lawyers, political scientists, and many others. They also had to read different books in preparation for each gathering. On one occasion the gathering was a week long and took place in the *Bañado Sur* (one of the poor and precarious neighbourhoods in Asunción, located at the riverside). Instead of the usual classes and debates, they spent this week living with a local family. Pa’l Oliva however did not look for host families who lived in good conditions: he instead asked for the poorest families to invite the *young leaders*. Arnold spent these days with a family who lived in a shed constructed out of pieces of corrugated iron sheets, thick plastic bags, and other recyclable and waste materials. *“Fourteen people lived inside this space of six square meters, out of which six were older children and six were toddlers ... With the babies making their physiological necessities inside... They all ate the food which they could find or buy with the little money they could earn.”* Arnold recalled. *“This was a shock for me. It was a brutal realisation about the sad reality of our country. It was January, the middle of the summer, and inside the shed it was around fifty degrees Celsius during the day. Inside the shed I saw an ill baby, lying in a bed made of a wooden tomatoes box. The least I could do was to take it to the hospital... I lived a whole week with this family, inside the shed. I slept on the ground, as they did, with my clothes and my towel underneath. I ate the same as they did. This experience has made me change my vision – it opened my eyes and made me see the whole panorama, the big picture. Since then, each time I went back to Nueva Germania, I saw and became more irritated with the injustices there.”*

The course finished with one more final lesson, on the day of graduation. *“When I began the formation with the Youth Parliament, we were told that at the end of the year we would be graduates and receive certificates in the National Parliament. In the Congress Building which I had only seen before on TV! I was looking forward to this moment with excitement. Going there together with Pa’l Oliva and receiving our final certificates in front of all the senators and members of parliament.”*



Arnold with Pa'I Oliva

Then the moment came, after a whole year; we dressed well and with the whole group went for the graduation ceremony. It is quite a long walk to the city centre. However, after some time we realised that we were not going towards the Parliament... How big was our surprise when we arrived in the centre of the Bañado Sur shantytown, at the rubbish dump called CATEURA. Pa'I Oliva took us to the rubbish dump for the graduation! The public were not senators and members of parliament, but men and women with tired faces that bore the marks of a hard life. These people would tell us the testimonies of their lives and hardships, only to later themselves give us the certificates. They also gave us the mission to fight and transform this situation that caused their poverty and hardships. This passage changed my life! I then learned where my place was, where I pertained, and what my fight ought to be – to never be indifferent towards injustice. Ever since I have never found myself going in the Parliament's direction – my feet keep going to Bañado Sur instead!"

The Youth Parliament was funded in 1999, as a non-profit and non-governmental organisation. Its objective was to educate young Paraguayan leaders, in an alternative and critical educational approach. The young students, from different parts of the country, learned and debated about poverty, unemployment, poor healthcare and education systems, political corruption, indigenous rights, and political organisation. The founder of *Parlamento Joven*, Jesuit priest Francisco de Paula Oliva (known as Pa'l Oliva), is famous for his political activism and resistance, from since his arrival in Paraguay, during Stroessner's dictatorship, until today.

The Youth Parliament provides an additional critical and political education, which is largely absent from the overcrowded and underfunded classes in rural Paraguay. The Department of San Pedro is one of the most overlooked regions, with critically low levels of formal education, in comparison to other districts. It has very poor infrastructure, few teachers, much rote learning, poor student retention and graduation rates (Corvalán in: Codehupy 2014 pp. 253-261). For Arnold, participation in *Parlamento Joven* not only formed his political opinions and guided his future actions but also offered an excellent complement to the school education.

"En cierto modo, la derecha tiene razón cuando se identifica a sí misma con la tranquilidad y el orden: es el orden, en efecto, de la cotidiana humillación de las mayorías, pero orden al fin: la tranquilidad de que la injusticia siga siendo injusta y el hambre hambrienta" (2004, p.22).

"In a sense the Right Wing is correct in identifying itself with tranquillity and order: it is an order of daily humiliation for the majority, but an order nonetheless; it is a tranquillity in which injustice continues to be unjust and hunger to be hungry" (1997, p.21).

"Las venas abiertas de América Latina" (Open Veins of Latin America) by Eduardo Galeano was one of the books which Arnold read for the Youth Parliament gatherings.

Arnold said that he saw the social stratification and the unhealthy and corrupt politics which were part of the general situation in the northern districts of Paraguay more clearly than before. It is common for certain families to maintain an oligarchy-like power for generations in their municipalities: through systems of favours, strategically distributing all of the payroll positions amongst supporters, as well as alleged electoral scams (such as paying for votes, as some people reported to me, registering residents from different regions or even recording votes of deceased people). All of this seems to be popular knowledge amongst residents of different municipalities, many different people have told me such stories. Arnold also realised the social impact on the inhabitants of Nueva Germania of its municipal dismemberment that happened several years beforehand – when Santa Rosa seceded and became a separate municipality, taking most of the administrative territory with it. This was done with the agreement of local and national politicians, when Arnold was twelve years old. *“Nueva Germania suffered a big loss, not only a material one, but also psychological. Like with a tortoise when you scare it, it hides its head and stays like this. This had long-term consequences, the transformative period in which I was growing up, limiting or almost eliminating peoples civic engagement”*.

For a few more years Arnold lived in Nueva Germania, where he joined and later became the leader of the *Organizacion Juvenil Germanina* (Germaninos' Youth Organisation). There was a brief period in which the opposition party was elected in the local government, a period during which Arnold and his friends engaged in many activities and projects. The most prominent of these was the creation of the *Museo Multicultural de Nueva Germania* (Multicultural Museum of Nueva Germania). They organised the first annual *Festival de la Yerba Mate* (Yerba Mate Festival), as well as the town's *Fiesta Fundacionl* (Foundational Anniversary). However, this period was not long lasting and soon the dominant political party took the power back. Due to his political training with the *Youth Parliament*, Arnold became very overt with his opinions concerning the predominant political practices in the northern region of the country.



“There are indeed some cultural initiatives. But what I find painful, is that these are all induced from above. Thus it seems that peoples initiative is very limited. I am not sure to what degree this can be called development or progress.”

As the municipal local elections were approaching, Arnold gathered some of his friends together and they decided to lead a “Citizens' Awareness Campaign”. They would make visits from home to home. They talked to their neighbours about conscious voting, about civic responsibility and about the constitutional right to have a vote — rather than seeing it as a mere electoral formality or even worse, as a merchandise (an opportunity to sell their vote), which is a habitual way of seeing things in the area. The awareness campaign was supported by the Sisters from the Congregation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, who were residents of Nueva Germania.

This church group also organized a collection of signatures to petition against the FTAA agreement (Free Trade Area of the Americas), which was about to be negotiated by the Paraguayan national government. The Catholic Church together with other churches and social movements have led and presented this petition as a means of defending

Paraguayan autonomy. Thus, Arnold with his friends walked from home to home. However, the people did not like their work, they ejected and attacked them. That was because, as Arnold says, they thought it was an action against the government and the Colorado Party. In general, all of the political activities that Arnold and his friends undertook had a personal and a social cost. Tensions and pressures in both social and family life had become visible. As Arnold said – *“In this region of the country, thinking differently, raising critiques and actions against the system, bears a social cost for those who risk pushing forward such political initiatives.”*

Arnold reflected on these times: *“I felt much resignation and political impotence, seeing how many talented young people left the town and the region in general, and how there was not much hope for change. I realised that I had to leave home, to continue my personal, political and civic formation. And do not mistake this for just a simple teenage rebellion. I think that in some way we, the Latin-Americans, are all a little bit Cheguevaristas. Besides, I simply could not act against my moral principles, stay quiet and look the other way when encountering injustice.”*

At the same time, Arnold was offered a scholarship to study law which he firstly undertook in San Pedro, where a branch of the National University of Asunción had just opened. He wanted to gain a degree which would later permit him to return to Nueva Germania and to serve the people there. He did not like it very much in San Pedro and, after only one semester, decided to move to the capital where he continued his studies at the Catholic University. He asked Pa’í Oliva for a place to stay, and the priest permitted him to renovate a garden shed and turn it into a room, where Arnold would then stay for three years. His parents regularly sent him fifty litres of honey, which was enough for him to sell and maintain himself. He was a good student and he received very good grades. He completed two years of study in Asunción, and afterwards he started to travel more around the country, as part of his engagement with the *Youth Parliament*.

When reflecting on his first years spent living in the capital, Arnold said: *“We, the people who come from the countryside, we suffer a lot in the hostile environment of Asunción. Our compatriots, the other Paraguayans, quite often treat us badly just for being campesinos (farmers). We all suffer like dogs, at least the first couple of years. This is because one needs to detach oneself from something so beloved, from the place of one’s origin... [...] And that*

is why the bus terminal is such an important reference point for me. Because each arriving weekend I felt bad, very homesick. But I could only go home once every three to five months, when I was able to pay the bus tickets. So instead I would just pay the 1000 Guarani for public transportation to go to the terminal each Saturday afternoon, after finishing all of my obligations.”

Arnold sat in the terminal from the early hours, facing the direction of the incoming buses, taking in the busy, colourful scene. Inside the hall, lined all around the building, are little shops - buildings in their own right with roofs that almost touch the ceiling of the terminal. These boutiques exhibit their merchandise on all of the surfaces that are available to them, both on the inside and on the outside. Joined together, they form a wall of plastic, fluffy, colourful and shiny baroque-alike splendour. The vendors, mostly young women, sit in front of these exhibitions on simple wooden chairs, either calling to the passing people, chatting to each other, or reading newspapers. This kaleidoscopic line of products is from time to time broken by a fast-food restaurant, which in its own way also contributes to this sensory palette with bright advertising and with an intense olfactory presence.

The middle of the hall, besides containing further self-standing kiosks, is also occupied by waiting travellers and by further vendors. Many older women sell *chipa* (cheese corn beagles), or offer *tereré* (cold served yerba mate). Tereré can be served with a variety of fresh herbs with flavour enhancing and medical properties. The women crush and mix the herbs chosen by costumers in big wooden mortars and put them inside the metal cups in which they serve the beverage. The cups and *bombillas* (metal straws) are washed after each use, however, many people will not risk buying tereré from these vendors, worrying about the sanitary conditions. Navigating between all of these people, luggage porters operate their long metal-frame push carts to help travellers off the buses and into taxis or other means of transportation.

In addition to all of this visual, auditory and olfactory cacophony of travellers and adult vendors, there are also many children and teenage workers in and around the terminal – some offering a shoe polish service, others selling sweets or packs of tissues. There is an NGO with its office on the first floor of the terminal, who work with these children by providing them with classes and fun activities after work. The NGO also fight for the rights of the children, for their fair pay, and also support them through difficult situations. As the

NGO recognise that many of these children (and/or their families) depend on this source of income, they do not campaign to eliminate child labour in general, but prefer to fight for better working conditions and for the general wellbeing and protection of these children.

Arnold did not really fit into this environment. He sat for hours in one place without an obvious agenda, without any luggage and not selling anything. He did not pay much attention to the surroundings and seemed to be immersed in his thoughts, with an occasional teardrop crossing his face which he would quickly wipe off. He only paid attention to the arrivals on the two platforms where buses from San Pedro district would arrive. With each incoming bus he seemed revived, and tried to spot familiar faces in the stream of passing travellers. Sometimes he was lucky and some fellow Germanino would pass by, greet him, or even exchange a few words before disappearing again behind the automatic glass doors.

Semantic editing

In the process of typing up the twelve stories of my participants, I faced the problem of preserving intended meanings. I found that the recordings, their transcriptions, and translations, were only understandable in tandem with a good knowledge of the context and about the given person. A “faithful” transcript would have been obscure. In order for a recorded narrative, interrupted by questions, clarifications, and anecdotes, to be transformed into a written story, much editorial work was necessary.

Limiting the process to stylistic and structural corrections seemed insufficient, because it disregarded all of the previous knowledge that I had about the participants, Nueva Germania and Paraguay, knowledge which was implicit within the narratives. In all cases, I became acquainted with the project participants months before they formulated their stories; I got to know them well and we discussed their chosen topics several times. This knowledge was key to understanding and working with the recorded accounts. This is why I sometimes had to be more creative when writing, whenever I considered that some important aspect was being omitted.

Such is the case of the description of Arnold's house or the bus terminal and his presence in it. It was not an original part of his narrative, but my addition which I considered important to both better introduce this important place to the reader, as well as to convey the dramaturgy of the scene and severity of Arnold's homesickness. The fact that Arnold decided to share this information, which very few people knew, his tone of voice, and the often mentioned affect he had towards the terminal, all emphasized its importance. Moreover, for most inhabitants of Paraguay the knowledge of the terminal can be taken for granted, and they can easily recall the sensory experiences of the building. This is something that readers should not be deprived of. I decided that this could not be reduced to the two sentences from the original recording, but must be described in a compelling and emotive vignette.

Such an anthropological writing technique has been termed a "poetics of resonance" by Simone Toji (2016). It is a method of writing fictional, imaginative stories, which maintain the integrity of people's lives, and address the limitations of research. A poetics of resonance attempts to express the unarticulated, rather than seek "*redemption in truth or understanding*" (Ibid. p.13). The legitimacy of such writing is given through the ethnographer's understanding of the given person and situations, which extends beyond the discursive. A representational focus on the facticity, quoted utterances and occurrences, disregards unsaid, imaginative and embodied knowledge. This creative writing method intends to address these subtle and uncertain elements; not only the meanings originally conveyed by the participants, but also the meanings that I consider to be important, implicit parts of their accounts.

The process of writing these twelve stories involved the use of different creative and editorial techniques. The work required by each story was different. To give an example, Calixto's story (presented later in the thesis), is based on three hours of audio recording, and on notes from many previous meetings. The biggest challenge was in introducing a coherent structure to the events of his narratives, along with a comprehensible translation from dialogues that were already operating on a wealth of implicit understanding. My work therefore involved a lot of semantic editing and crafting. At the same time I had to be careful not to create false or unintended meanings.

In four cases— including those of Arnold, Carlos, Gerda and Klaus—the first draft of the story was revised by the participants. In the two latter cases the changes were substantial and involved much additional work. Arnold only suggested a few changes to his story, and Carlos was satisfied with the first draft and suggested no modifications. Review is a key element of a collaborative process. Unfortunately, the other eight contributors to this project did not review the drafts of their stories. This was, I must admit, my mistake in time management, of not securing enough time for this important part of the process.



A shop inside the terminal. (fot. J. Kurzwelly)

The meaning is further influenced by the bilateral “anchoring” of text and photographs. The meanings of photographs can not only be anchored by the text (Barthes 1977, p.38-40), but the images themselves also “anchor” the text to its pictorial appearances. Similar challenges of editing apply to photographs, which had to be selected, edited, cropped, located within the text and provided with captions. Part of this process was collaborative, since most participants viewed their images with me, selected the ones they preferred and provided their descriptions.

Arnold would repeat this private ritual each Saturday, when his homesickness would become unbearable. The meditative state together with the possibility of encountering a representation of home – either in the face and words of passengers, or simply in the presence of a bus and people that several hours beforehand passed through Nueva

Germania, had a reassuring effect. Arnold never disclosed his reasons for being in the terminal to anyone, fearing judgement or pity. He did decide however to share this story as a participant in my project, as an illustration of the broader difficulties which rural migrants encounter in big cities.

“A person who comes to the city from the countryside has only three reference points in Asunción. They either come for a consultation at the hospital or to arrange something in the Ministry of Education (if they are school teachers), and return to the terminal. They take a shower at the terminal, eat there and sleep there on the benches, awaiting their next morning bus. Those who know the city a bit better go to the Mercado 4, to buy some clothes and gifts for their children. And those who really know the city, would also come to the centre of Asuncion to the Plaza Uruguaya. Those are usually the only points of reference for the campesinos. That is why these places have special significance to me. Especially the terminal – even now, each time I come to pick my Mom up and enter the terminal, it evokes very strong memories and feelings.

The reality is that while I was studying and living in Asunción, whenever I returned to Nueva Germania I would encounter two very distinct and distant realities. One would be the reality of Asunción and the other would be the reality of the northern regions of the country, in the districts of Concepción, San Pedro [where Nueva Germania is located] and Amambay – poverty, oppressed society, petty politics, corruption, even the plantation, production and trafficking of drugs, which often leads to murders... All the towns in these northern districts were ruled by mini-dictatorships. All of the aforementioned characteristics turn the inhabitants of Nueva Germania and other towns in the north, into citizens who function under an operating system of elites who dominate everyone else. That is why for me Nueva Germania is an unfinished dream, which I hope to be able to return to at some point in the future. Only time will tell.

I told you about these characteristics of towns in the northern districts, which suffer from the absence of real governance, to come to the fundamental issue – the harm which such a political malpractice causes, for the children of these communities to decide to leave without knowing if they will ever return! Most of the youth leaves Nueva Germania. Even if they do not leave far, they leave for the neighbouring cities. Nueva Germania will soon become an old population of forty years and older with no young people at all. I often ask

myself whether all the young people leave because they have nothing to do? Do they leave because they want a better future? Or do they also leave, because in some way they have felt what I did – the impotence, anger, the not knowing what to do and how to change things...

Although Nueva Germania is a fruit of these histories of the northern populations, abandoned for its own sake, it never loses hope. Hopefully one day a generation will be born, that will recuperate the forgotten Nueva Germania. Hopefully my children or my grandchildren will witness the wonderful rural town in which their father grew up and lived through some of the hardest moments. Hopefully the town's inhabitants will again be happy, safe, and free... I am confident that I will still see it before I die, since Nueva Germania is worth it, and fighting for it is worthwhile!"

Arnold lives in Asunción now, where he is involved in many grass-root political and activist organisations. During the time of my stay in Paraguay he was offered a position at the national branch of the NGO *Fe y Alegría* [Faith and Cheerfulness], which offers different educational opportunities to children and adults. Thus, his devotion to social change and education continues. Since most of the locations are in poor areas of Paraguay, Arnold travels a lot. Also, Arnold is currently finishing his university degree through an on-line course, which will further facilitate his work. He travels every now and then to Nueva Germania to visit his parents, together with his partner and daughter who recently had her second birthday.



Negotiating epistemic frameworks

Arnold's story draws upon the various particularities of being politically affiliated – many people, as he explained, have a pre-determined political affiliation at the moment of their birth, which they inherit from their family. This political affiliation is often an identity given for life, in which either someone is red (Colorado) or blue (Liberal). Someone who does not commit to these categories is seen by many as not only an outcast but even as a potential danger or a social anomaly. Through his education and political activities, Arnold often disturbs this established political social division of two parties. Because Arnold's account mostly focuses on these tensions, he operates on the level of political social categories and the German-Paraguayan dichotomy is much less relevant in his story.

To further expand the discussion of the contextual applicability of social categories, we can look towards the latter part of Arnold's story in which there is a conflict of evoked frameworks. His loneliness in Asunción, his homesickness and low moods, to an extent discredited the nationalist discourses. In these contexts, it was his being a Germanino (in opposition to being an *Asuncionero*) that was relevant. Even more so, his attempts to use the general nationalistic category had failed. He expresses disappointment over how “*the compatriots, the other Paraguayans*” who live in the city, treated people from the countryside pejoratively. As evidenced in his complaint, he brings to the surface the implicit realisation that the nationalistic claims of commonality and cordiality amongst all Paraguayans are not necessarily universally true, and despite being of the same nationality people can find ways to distance themselves. This again suggests that social categories, the evoked epistemic frameworks, are contextual and multiscalar (incommensurable). It also presupposes that people in a given situation might want to evoke different epistemic frameworks which are in conflict and which bear varying relations of power.

Arnold's disappointment over the treatment from other Paraguayans underlines how the situationally negotiated social categories carry expectations of behaviour and social relations. One can expect to be treated in a certain way through the evocation or negotiation of a given category. As in this example, by the sole virtue of being Paraguayan (that is, assuming the Paraguayan category as contextually relevant) one should expect fair

treatment and respect from other Paraguayans. This assumption failed contextually, since other people evoked the social division between inhabitants of the city and the countryside, and saw him as a peasant. Thus, it is evident that the uses of social categories can disagree or be in conflict. This conflict⁵⁶ presents itself not only in direct relations with other people, but also in own quotidian and emotional life. It is visible in Arnold's use of the Germanino category to direct his emotions of homesickness. In this box we are going however to focus on the inter-personal uses of categories. The above described observation leads me to further theoretical questions: How do people choose which category, which epistemic framework, to use in a given context and how are these usages negotiated inter-subjectively?

This question relates to the academic debates on human *action*. Different explanations originate in various disciplines and theoretical approaches, debating the same subject from multiple points of departure and using different methodologies. Some philosophical debates revolve around the questions of agency, intent, motivations, reasons, will, among other areas of focus (see the edited volume by Dancy and Sandis 2015). The psychological perspectives revolve around similar questions, with attention to influencing factors, structures, mental or cognitive, behavioural, affective, and other aspects (see Gollwitzer and Bargh 1996). Likewise, approaches from neuro-science and cognitive sciences bring attention to memory, mimicry, reactions to stimuli, brain and mental structures, consciousness, habits, et cetera (see Morsella, et al. 2008). Although relevant, to refer to all of these different approaches would exceed the scope of this thesis. My intention is to only briefly emphasise some selected approaches from social science and their different explanations of social action and social relationships. I will do so in order to emphasise that *the contextual evocation of a given epistemic framework, and the possible reasons why it prevails over others, can differ*. Theoretical approaches provide different explanations and thereby can be used in a complementary way.

A prominent typology of social action has been described by Max Weber in *Economy and Society*. He distinguishes between action and social action [*Soziales Handeln*]. "We

⁵⁶This is an example of a conflicting situation, however, we also constantly negotiate between different non-conflicting frameworks.

shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his [sic] behavior - be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (1978 p. 4). Weber distinguished four ideal types of social action:

"(1) instrumentally rational (zweckrational), that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends;

(2) value-rational (wertrational), that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success;

(3) affectual (especially emotional), that is, determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states;

(4) traditional, that is, determined by ingrained habituation" (Ibid. pp. 24-26).

This explanation recognises that the causes of peoples actions are different and are shaped by context. Following this logic, Arnold's evocation of the Paraguayan category might be explained by each of the ideal types – it might be that it was a means to achieve acceptance; it could also have been that Arnold believed that acting through the category of Paraguayans was an ethical way of considering others as equals; it is also possible that he evoked this category because of emotional states related to being in the city, or to national symbols and other manifestations; or, he simply followed the *ingrained habituation*. It is however not enough to understand how precisely in a given context certain epistemic frameworks comes to be prioritised over others.

Weber further proposes the concept of *social relationship* to describe the behaviour of plural actors, of whose actions take account of the others. These relations may be varied in character, ranging from conflict, hostility, sexual attraction, friendship, economic interests, and many others. The goals and outcomes are multiple and subject to change. *"It may involve the fulfillment, the evasion, or the violation of the terms of an agreement; economic, erotic, or some other form of "competition"; common membership in status, national or class groups (provided it leads to social action)" (Ibid. 27).* The subjective meanings of social relationships can be different and asymmetrical, which further

influences the course of action and the form of relationship. For Weber, a social relation of conflict is a competition over opportunities and advantages. By such logic, Arnold's interlocutors saw an advantage in declining to use the inclusive social category and in positioning themselves as city dwellers who are superior to a "peasant", who would be looked down upon with contempt.

This Weberian approach which prioritises the perspective of an individual⁵⁷, his or her interests, values, emotions, and customary ways of acting, can be juxtaposed and complemented with other general theories of social action. Jürgen Habermas⁵⁸ discusses such theories, one of which is linguistic analysis. Within this method we should focus on social action at the level of intersubjectivity, which is "*given in the grammatical rules of symbolically regulated interactions*" (1988 p. 117). Through the analysis of relationships between symbols we are able to understand the symbolically mediated modes of behaviour, or in other words, the connection between linguistic structures and forms of life. Such an analysis should, however, not be limited solely to language because, as the Hermeneutic tradition elaborates, "*assumptions appropriate for the explanation of communicative action refer to covariances of grammatical rules, social roles, and empirical conditions that are in the turn latently meaningful*" (Ibid. p.76). This approach focuses on the pre-existing conditions of action and contextualised meanings. Within such an approach we ought to analyse Arnold's interactions, with knowledge of the symbolic meanings of the categories used, the context of interaction, and the general historical context of the occurrence. We do already possess significant information about the different symbolic meanings and assumptions of the Paraguayan national categories (as they are present in their uses), Arnold's life and his migration to the city, the emotional

⁵⁷ This approach is called methodological individualism. For Weber, all large social structures need to have a micro basis. We should note that, according to Weber, any categories of social relationships such as "friendship" and "state" or in our case "nationalism", only exist in so far as they can be expected to result in a specific kind of action. (Ibid. p.28)

⁵⁸ Habermas' objective in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1988) is to debate the opposite methodological assumptions of sciences and humanities, and to argue that sociology should rather position itself in between them. He raises a critique of absolutising approaches and argues for merging the interpretative and the explanatory research traditions. I use his book only to refer to different approaches to social action, and I do not engage with his overall debate.

states he described, all of which helps in the understanding of this conflicting situation. We are missing, however, a greater knowledge of the symbolic meanings of the *campesino* [peasant; countryside dweller] category, which will be debated further in the thesis.

To give a third example of a different theory of social action, we can consider the phenomenological approach (as proposed by Schütz 1973, and debated by Habermas 1988 pp. 92-117). This approach focuses on the constitution of everyday life-praxis, taking into account not only on the deliberately planned actions, but also the passive and spontaneous experiences within their context. Within this approach, "*There are invariant properties and constitutive rules for the primary lifeworld that are accepted without question as the conditions of possible communication [or any other social action]*" (Habermas 1988 p. 105). Thus, through phenomenological reflection we ought to investigate how reality comes to assume its form and how it shapes the "*reciprocally interlocked perspectives and reciprocal roles within the same communicative context*" (Ibid. p.106). These roles and perspectives are shaped by the pre-existing structures of lifeworlds, experiences and previous knowledge, which consist of prescriptions for action and of what is expected in interactions. Examinations of a lifeworld should thus take the biographical and cultural as roots of social being, which are often non-verbalised and unconsciously assumed. The phenomenological approach also allows us to acknowledge the contextual differences, since "*These rules are as stable or as transient as the world in which the socialized individual lives*" (Ibid. p. 109). This approach makes it explicit that we ought to understand Arnold's action, the evocation of nationalist category, precisely in the biographical perspective which his story provided us with. His conflicting perspectives and roles led to his initial dissatisfaction with living in Asunción, which changed in time as he continued shaping his everyday life-praxis in the city.

These different explanations of social action are, however, each in their different ways, reductionist and limited⁵⁹. Each of these theoretical approaches prioritise different

⁵⁹ I have chosen to omit other theoretical conceptualisations of social action (for example those emerging from game theory or psychoanalysis) due to the fact that I consider these three examples sufficient in illustrating the issue at hand.

aspects of human and social life (making different axiomatic assumptions about what is important and relevant; defining what 'context' is in different ways) – focusing either on individuals, their motives and subjective meanings; conditioning structures of language; or "*reciprocally interlocked perspectives*" and pre-existing structures of lifeworlds and other prescriptions for action. Analytical complementarity allows us to use these different multiscalar and incommensurable theories in parallel, exploring and comparing their different outcomes. My goal in this box is to indicate the different formulations of social action that locate its sources elsewhere, and thereby offer alternative explanations on how and why people contextually evoke different epistemic frameworks. A thorough work in the realm of the philosophy of social science could explore this problem further.

Throughout this thesis, social actions are analysed using different approaches—considering the semantic connotations of social actions, expectations of behaviour, different social relations which given social categories evoke, historical and situational contexts, different reasons for acting, as well as a grouping of different types of social actions under the term “nationalism”. The further question that can be asked, is: What agency do individuals have over the use of epistemic frameworks which guide their lives? This will be discussed in the “Contextual epistemic permissibility and agency” box below.

03.06 Klaus Neumann Gorlitz



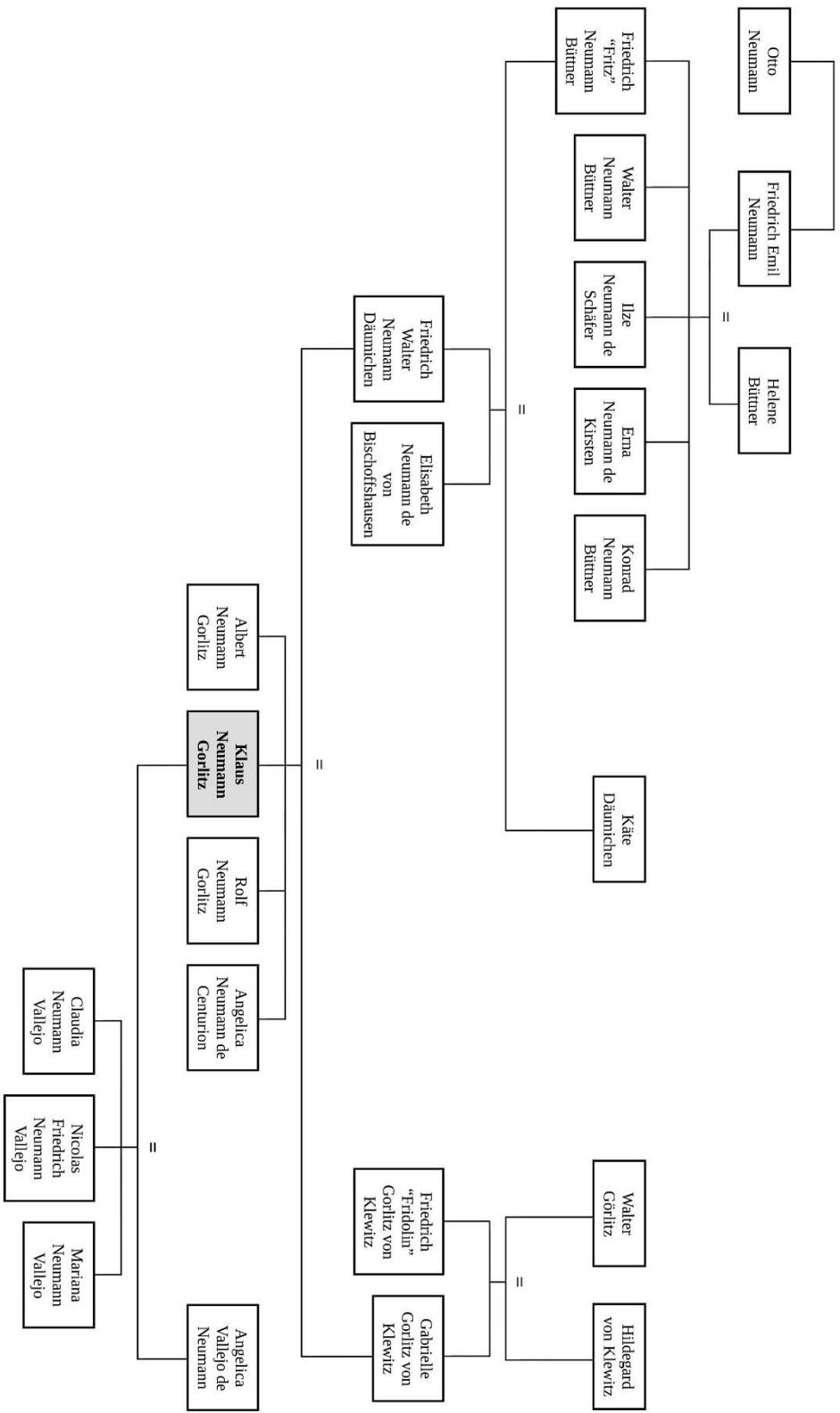
(Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

Klaus currently lives in Asunción and travels almost every week to San Pedro to manage and oversee his yerba mate business. I met with Klaus on many occasions, visiting him both in San Pedro and in Asunción, chatting for hours on end about his life, history of his family, Nueva Germania, and many other subjects. A few times he also took me to visit places and people related to his stories. Klaus was enthusiastic about my project from the very beginning and agreed to participate in it himself. His personal interests in both the history of his family and yerba mate, are visible in his extensive knowledge and in the amount of detail present in the text below. He puts an emphasis on dates, numbers, and other “concrete information”, as he called it. Klaus tells the history of his family, firstly from his paternal and then from his maternal side. He finishes with a third section, in which he tells the history of his own life trajectory.

For the purpose of this project, Klaus took photographs himself and scanned many of his family's historical pictures. After several weeks of photographing and

discussions we recorded his story. We spoke mainly in Spanish and German, often adding phrases in English. After I transformed the recording into a written account, we continued working on the text. The draft was significantly expanded twice, after his review and further recorded conversations. What follows is Klaus' story, in which both the text and the photographs were created in this extensive collaborative process (with over ten hours of audio recordings and hundreds of photographs).

Next page: In order to aid the reader in keeping track of the many family members and ancestors (many of which are called "Friedrich" or "Walter"), I created this kinship diagram. Please note that I used the German spelling only for those born in Germany, and used the Spanish surnames custom for all those born in Paraguay.



The green gold of Friedrich Neumann

My great grandfather, Friedrich Emil Neumann, was very young when he came to Nueva Germania from Breslau [currently Wrocław]. He came together with his brother Otto, crossing the Atlantic on a ship from Hamburg to Buenos Aires. They were not part of the first group of settlers, but they came a relatively short time afterwards. Both Friedrich and Otto were unmarried. I was able to establish that my great grandfather returned briefly to Germany and convinced a young lady, Helene Büttner, to join him in Paraguay. They got married and settled down in Westrand, or Takuru'ty as it is called now.⁶⁰ Friedrich began something that is not well recognised in Paraguayan history books, however it is well documented in different materials dedicated to yerba mate. Since his arrival, he was experimenting with the plant, and was the first person to understand how to systematically germinate yerba seeds. He was the first to have systematically planted *yerbales*⁶¹, cultivated in a similar way as other commercial products had been. This completely transformed the yerba mate market.

This change in production – from a dangerous jungle activity, to having a yerbal behind your home – transformed the industry, allowing for many small-scale producers to appear. A hundred and forty years ago, the Paraguayan yerba mate market was dominated by two companies, who extracted the product from wild growing plants in the forests. The Brazilian *Companhia Matte Larangeira*, which under imperial concession was leased 5 000 000 hectares of land in Brazil – that is 50 000 square kilometers, an area bigger than the whole country of the Netherlands. The other company was called *La Industrial Paraguaya*, and its owners bought almost 2 000 000 hectares (20 000 square kilometres) from the Paraguayan state. These companies employed the *campesinos* [farmers] and indigenous people to harvest the leaves. The contracts however, in accordance with Paraguayan law,

⁶⁰They had five children together, only one of the men had additional offspring – his name was also Friedrich (called Fritz). Fritz had one male child, my father Friedrich Walter, and a daughter, Elisabeth (who passed away, several months ago, in Chile). My father had four children, Albert, Me, Rolf and Angelica.

⁶¹Yerbal – a field of Yerba Mate plants. The Jesuits in their XVII century reductions knew how to plant yerba trees. However, after they were expelled, the knowledge concerning the germination of seeds was lost. In this sense, Friedrich Neumann rediscovered this practice and its associated knowledge.

specified that an employee who owed any debt to the company would not be allowed to abandon their work under any circumstances. The companies had the right to enforce this rule with the use of violence or confinement. The workers were usually paid only once every three or four months, and could only purchase any products from the company's expensive shops, rapidly entering into debt. It was a form of legal capitalist enslavement. Many people died in these *wild yerbales*. This all ended when the cultivated small *yerbales* started to appear, eliminating the big industry within a relatively short time of twenty or thirty years. This positive transformation is due to the fact that suddenly one could plant mate trees close to the household, care for and maintain them just as any other crop, like for example oranges or wine.



Friedrich Emil

I was able to find the information, in old notes written by my great grandmother Helene Büttner, that in 1901 her husband Friedrich Neumann collected the first harvest, from his

yerbal. He produced 8700 kilograms of dry yerba, from approximately 20 000 five years old plants. In the second year of full production, in 1902, he already had 52 000 adult plants and produced 45 000 kilograms of yerba mate. This corresponded to a little above forty hectares of land. At the same time, in 1902, he sold approximately 50 000 small plants to other local producers, and to German settlers from Hohenau, in the South of Paraguay.⁶² He never expanded his own yerbal beyond the 52 000 trees, as he continued selling small plants to other producers. In these times, Yerba Mate was called “green gold”, because its price was very high. Friedrich became a wealthy man in a relatively short period of time. His wife, Helene, wanted to take the children to Dresden, and he was able to pay for all of the expenses. Additionally he sent his son, also named Friedrich but called Fritz, to attend school in Buenos Aires, in Argentina.

Unfortunately, Friedrich Neumann's life ended suddenly in 1905, due to a lung infection. His brother Otto carried on the production and sales of yerba mate, and continued to send money to Helene and her five children, including Fritz who still studied at a technical school in Buenos Aires. It is astonishing, how out of the produce of these forty hectares of land, that he was able to send money abroad. Helene and her children were able to live comfortably without having to work themselves. Otto kept sending money for fifteen years.

Fritz, the oldest son, lived in Buenos Aires and joined his family in Dresden only after finishing his studies. It was probably in 1912 or 1913. He undertook a job at one of the big electro-mechanic companies, either Bosch or AEG. However, soon afterwards the First World War broke out. In 1914, he and his brother Walter were both adults, and both of them had to present themselves for military service. Only a few weeks after enrolling, Walter died on the French front. This tragedy had an enormous impact on my grandfather Fritz. He had a very good relationship with his younger brother. He, however, had to continue his military service until the end of the war. According to my father, my grandfather

⁶² *This was an extremely complicated undertaking, because the small plants had to be transported in boats and in horse or mule carriages. Many plants did not survive these trips. An interesting record exists, from a Swiss-Italian botanist, Moisés Santiago Bertoni, who lived and conducted research in Paraguay. In this time he was already famous amongst different agro-producers in the country, and was answering different readers questions in a monthly journal. In one of the issues, he was asked if there is any other way of obtaining yerba plants, to which he responded that for now the only way is to travel to Nueva Germania and to buy them there.*

never killed anyone during the war. He was a *Funker* [a radio operator], and even though he served in the trenches on the front line, he was not a combatant himself. He was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant, and after the war he received the *Eisernes Kreuz* [Iron Cross] military award for his service.

During the war it was very difficult to keep sending money from Paraguay to Germany. The family began finding it hard to make ends meet. Additionally, not long after the First World War finished in Europe, news arrived that Otto Neumann died in Nueva Germania. This caused Helen to tell her son Fritz to travel to Paraguay and take care of the family's yerbal. When he arrived, he realized that the situation was not easy. On the one hand, the yerbal provided much less money, since the price of yerba kept decreasing in relation to the increasing competition and availability of the product. On the other hand, most of the plants were already approximately twenty years old, which meant that they grew fewer leaves every year. Despite these problems, Fritz decided to stay and to expand the business.

In the meantime, he also wrote letters to his girlfriend, and my grandmother, Käthe Däumichen. They had fallen in love before the war, and maintained their relationship while Fritz was on the front. He was trying to convince her to come and join him in Nueva Germania. Käthe's family were in a good economic position, and she was used to a good standard of living. Her family owned an important *Konditorei* [confectionery shop] which provided for many cafes in Dresden. She finished her *Abitur* [A-level] in Germany, which means that she was rather well educated. Despite all of this, she agreed to join Fritz and to live with him in rural Paraguay. She travelled firstly to Buenos Aires, where Fritz was awaiting her arrival. They got married in the German evangelic church in Buenos Aires, before travelling together to Nueva Germania. They settled down in the house constructed by Fritz's father, Friedrich Emil. My father, Friedrich Walter, was also born in the very same house, in 1924. He and his sister Elisabeth were the only two children of Fritz and Käthe.

The business was not going very well. Knowing that he was expected to send money to Germany to his mother, Fritz took a mortgage loan, bought more land and planted more yerba trees. He expected to get the production back on track in two or three years. This, however, turned out to be a terrible mistake. Not long afterwards, in the year 1930, the financial crisis occurred, initiating the period of The Great Depression. The price of all of the

agricultural products fell significantly. The price of yerba mate fell in a short time from six Argentinian pesos for a kilogram, to only one peso. My grandfather was not able to pay the loan back, and as a result he lost all of the inherited land. This resulted in further conflicts between Fritz, his mother Helene and brother Konrad, who both blamed him for the loss, and accused him of economic recklessness. Due to the difficult situation, Helene and Konrad decided to return to Paraguay.⁶³

Since my grandfather Fritz lost all of his source of income together with his land, he at first took the position of a teacher in the local German school. However, after Adolf Hitler was elected to office in 1934, the German government started sending teachers to German communities in various parts of the world. They also sent one such teacher to Nueva Germania, who was paid by the embassy. With his arrival, my grandfather lost his job. While he undertook some other work as an accountant in a company, another coincidence occurred. His best friend, Martin Schmidt, decided to leave for Germany. There were a few people in Nueva Germania who, influenced by Hitler's propaganda, decided to travel to Germany. He was trying to convince my grandfather to go as well - "*Fritz, gehen wir zurück nach Deutschland, jetzt geht es dort wunderbar!*" [Fritz, let's go back to Germany, things are going very well there now!]. My grandfather was however unconvinced and said "*I already participated in one war, and I do not want to fight in another one. To me it looks like there is going to be another war soon in Germany.*" Before leaving, Martin Schmidt decided to give his shop to my grandfather. Fritz was only supposed to pay it off in a few instalments, sending money to Germany. This is how Fritz Neumann became the owner of the most centrally located shop in Nueva Germania.⁶⁴ My father had helped out in the shop since he was little and he later took over the business himself.

⁶³Helene lived in Paraguay until her last days. She was buried in Nueva Germanina. Konrad on the other hand, firstly intended to cultivate yerba mate himself. He was not very successful. For reasons I do not know, Konrad decided to travel back to Germany in 1939. He was arrested by the British military, while still on the ship on the way to Hamburg. Since he was a young man of military age, he was taken as a military prisoner. He died in a prisoners' camp in Canada. Out of the three male children of Fritz, Walter died in the first world war, Konrad died as a prisoner in the second world war, and only my grandfather Friedrich Walter had children himself, passing the family name further on.

⁶⁴It was in the same place where today Fischer's BR petrol station is located.



Fritz, Käte Däumechen, Elizabeth and Walter – 1933



The house which Martin Schmid sold to Fritz in 1935. Albert and Klaus Neumann were born there.

When my parents moved together, they had a lot of work with the management of the shop, and so we were spending a lot of time with our grandmother Käte. Since she was a person who wanted to have a say in the life of her son, and even more so after her husband Fritz passed away in 1940, it was important for my mother that she did not live in the same house as us. My father constructed a separate small house for my grandmother Käte, about fifty or forty meters away from ours. It had one bedroom, a small living room, and a small kitchen. Behind the house, my grandmother had a very impressive vegetable garden. I also remember that once a week she baked several big loaves of bread. We loved our grandmother very much. She always came to eat lunch with us at our house. Sometimes she made *Berliner Pfannkuchen* [a pastry that is similar to a doughnut] for us, which we liked very much. I remember that she had a piano in the corner of her small living room, which she brought with her from Germany, and played it for us often. She also helped us with all of our homework and with other school activities. At the same time, she taught us how to read and write in German (which was not taught at our school). She was a very demanding teacher, of the old Prussian style, she always made sure that we sat straight, wrote carefully with the right hand, and listened attentively. My grandmother Käte never returned to Germany. She wanted to, when her father became ill, but it was impossible at the time.

Yerba Mate as a positive form of agriculture

In contrast to the monopoly of the big companies of a hundred and forty years ago, today in Paraguay there are over twenty thousand families who have a certain quantity of the total production of mate. That is to say, it is a commodity of small and middle-size producers, assuring a significant annual income. Moreover, mate is a product which practically requires zero usage of agrochemicals, and certainly no agrottoxics. It also does not degrade the soil, since it does not require many nutrients in comparison to other plants. Thus, even though some natural fertilisers, like cow-droppings, can somewhat help the plants, there is no need for a regular enrichment of the soil with any chemicals (as happens with large-scale production of different grains, cereals, and oilseeds). Yerba Mate trees do not require very much maintenance, beyond removing any weeds or bushes from the *yerbal*. If one maintains the plantation in an adequate condition then every winter, from May onwards,

one can harvest the leaves. This generates a good income for producers during times in which there is a scarcity of work available to them. It is profitable, suitable for households of different sizes, and good for the environment. It can also be accompanied with other types of economic activities, such as cattle raising or growing other agricultural products.

Most of the current large scale agro-production limits itself to grains or to cereals. For this kind business, it is profitable to have three harvests of soy or corn per year, even though this continual harvesting indeed puts pressure on the environment. However, yerba mate remains as an interesting and lucrative alternative for small and medium-scale farmers. For most families who own between 5 and 20 hectares of land, which applies to the majority of the population in this region, a production of grains would not be profitable. A diversified agriculture which includes about two hectares of yerba mate for each producer, is a positive alternative for the future.

Paraguay has all of the right conditions for yerba mate production – it has good soil and many rivers, many sources of water. The only problem lies in the initial cost of starting production. One requires between 1400 and 1500 small plants for one hectare of land, some of which will inevitably die. This costs somewhere between 400 and 500 US dollars (the price is around three plants for a dollar). This is a high cost for a small-scale Paraguayan farmer. This is especially so, since the farmers will have to wait for a long time for returns on their investment. It is only after five years that such plants become productive, and only after seven or eight years that they achieve their highest outcome, which they maintain for between fifteen to twenty years. That is why I believe that this type of economic activity should be supported by governmental agencies and NGOs.

There are only a few things that can harm the plants. Unfortunately, we recently lost our large *yerbal*, with over 100 000 trees. This happened because of a type of worm, a sort of a nocturnal caterpillar. These insects plant their eggs and attack the plants from inside. The larva attack the stems of the trees, perforating it all the way down to its roots. Most of the trees died. This is another reason why I emphasise that yerba should be a production for small-scale farmers. If one simply walks regularly through the yerbal it is easy to spot signs of such an insect invasion. Moreover, if the small yerbals are at some distance from each other, the problem can be contained. It took about fifteen years of work to raise this particular yerbal, which I planted together with my brother Rolf, and in less than two months

70% of the plants were destroyed. It was very sad to watch. Unfortunately, there isn't enough support from the state to help farmers who are facing such critical situations. After this misfortune, we resisted falling into resignation, and rather we planted many thousands of yerba trees.

The lucrative business of the past today offers a positive agricultural alternative, or simply a significant addition for small-scale producers. I am convinced that without discovery of its cultivation, and the initiation of production of yerba mate on small plantations close to peoples homes, Nueva Germania would have disappeared as a failed project of colonisation. The expensive "green gold" made Nueva Germania an important centre of yerba production, for the first thirty years. However, my great-grandfather did not keep his technique to himself, he shared it with others. Vast plantations of Yerba opened in Argentina and in the south of Paraguay, which drove Nueva Germania into fifty years of stagnation and deep isolation. It was only after the opening of the land routes in this region that the situation started to slowly change. An alternative to the so far only available fluvial transport, together with a great agricultural development, initiated a gradual increase in the value of the land and an increase in economic activity. Today, due to the accessibility of cheap transport, small producers can sell their products easily. To conclude, Yerba Mate is an *Umweltfreundlich* [ecologically friendly] product, which secures revenue for small-scale farmers during winter, when there are few other economic activities. I am proud to say that my family has been working with yerba mate for 125 years⁶⁵, and I hope that this tradition will continue.

⁶⁵*To be more exact – in 1930 my grandfather lost his yerbal, and the family did not work with yerba mate for almost twenty years. It was only in 1951, about a month before I was born, when my father bought the Fortin company. He was buying dry yerba from local farmers and transforming it into a commercial product – transporting the yerba with oxen cars to the mill and packeting it into large bags. Since then, the company grew (from processing 20 000 kilograms annually, to about 500 000 kilograms nowadays).*



Klaus is holding an adobe brick found on the ground, in the place where his grandparents house was. Most of the houses were made out of adobe, rather than burned bricks, thus once the roof collapsed, the rest deteriorated very quickly and after a few years not much was left. The view in the background is towards the Aguaray'mi river.



This is a yerba mate plant. In this very place, with maybe 50 meters difference, where the very first yerbal was cultivated by my great grandfather They had a terrain of more or less 200 hectares



Left: This is a, more or less, one year old yerba mate plant. We planted the seeds during Easter of 2014, and it will not be until 2020 that the trees will be ready for harvest. For the first two years the plants are very fragile and the risk of them dying is high.

Right: This is a young plant which is ready to be planted. An adult plant can produce about eight kilograms of leaves. An optimal plantation should end up having around 1200 to 1300 plants per hectare, which can produce up to 10 000 kilograms of yerba. However, an average plantation will normally have an output of 6 kilograms per plant, thus about 7 000 kilograms per hectare. This however gives only about 3 000 kilograms of dry product.



Left: This is a traditional barbakua, belonging to the Flaskamp family, over which Yerba Mate is dried. This one has a roof over it, whereas before the smaller ones would have it. Nowadays, to guarantee a good quality of the product, it is better to create a roof over it to protect from any unexpected rain.

Right: Yerba mate should mature in storage for more or less two years. This enhances the taste, just like with the maturing of wine. Yerba Mate does have refreshing, stimulating properties, but it is not addictive.



The final stage of the process is packaging and distribution. In Paraguay about 50 millions of kilograms of yerba mate are sold per year, very little of which is being exported. The domestic consumption is high and can be calculated as on average seven kilograms per person per year, however it is much higher in the rural areas and lower in cities. In the rural areas a consumption of any other infusion is practically non-existent – only a little bit of coffee and no other type of tea whatsoever. An interesting anecdote is that the only country with a higher average consumption of mate, of about 10 kilograms per person per year, is Uruguay. And they do not have a single plant of their own production. They also do not drink it in the form of tereré or cocido (warm infusion with milk), but only as warm mate drunk through bombilla. A further difference is that their mate is drunk individually – each person drinks only from their own cup and carries their own Thermos. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)





Above: The students of Nueva Germania School (Walter, top row, second from the left). Their teachers were Frtz and Käte - 1932

Below: The young plants and the young generations. What started in this place continues throughout time. My son planted these little plants himself. His name is Nicolas Federico [Spanish for Friedrich] – the name is also a part of the family tradition. My great grandfather was Friedrich Emil, my grandfather was just Friedrich (Fritz), my father was Federico Walter (people just called him Walter), and my older brother is Alberto Federico.





This is the Jejuí River. This photograph marks the symbolic beginning, since all of the initial settlers had to travel through the Paraguay, Jejuí and the Aguaray Guasu rivers.

The bitter life of Walter Görlitz and the noble precariousness of Hildegard von Klewitz

The history of Walter Görlitz is extraordinarily tragic. He was born close to Berlin, in a family of *Gutsbesitzers*, meaning that they were quite well-off. Most of them were in the Prussian cavalry for generations, and his father was in a high position within the military. Walter Görlitz, just like his brothers, was sent to a military school in Berlin. Since he had quite a difficult character, the director of the school recommended his father to take him out of school and to ensure that he learn about discipline. Since Walter's father had some contacts in *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* [*German South-West Africa*, currently Namibia], he decided to send his son to work there. I am not sure where exactly he resided, I think it was Swakopmund. He did not stay there long, probably less than two years. Walter's father again received complaints about the behaviour of his son, and decided to pay for his journey back to Germany. Walter embarked on a ship and very soon after, to his misfortune, the First World War broke out. However, they did not know about it on the ship and, just before

reaching the English Channel, a British military ship stopped them. All men were arrested as prisoners of war. Walter was sent to a prison, where he had to stay during four long years, the whole duration of the war. This experience made him into a very bitter man.



Hildegard Von Klewitz, Fridolin, Gabrielle and Mariane Görlitz – 1928.

At this point it is worth adding that Walter had a girlfriend in Germany. Her name was Hildegard von Klewitz, who was a direct descendant, the great granddaughter, of Wilhelm Anton von Klewitz – an important politician and one of the initiators of the German *Zollverein*, the customs union. That is to say, she was part of the German nobility or upper class. Walter and Hildegard did not see each other for almost six years, since leaving Germany for Africa. It was only after the war ended that Walter was able to come back home. The embittered man was blaming his father for all the misfortunes that happened to him. After some quarrels and strong verbal exchanges, the family gathered and decided to solve the situation. They offered Walter to pay him his corresponding part of the family inheritance, under one sole condition. He had to cross the Atlantic and never come back to

Germany. Walter took the money. Hildegard, who must have loved him very much, decided to go with him. They were married in Berlin and then decided to go to Argentina. The money he received supposedly was worth so much that they planned to buy 1500 hectares of land in the Buenos Aires province and to create a cattle farm. After the wedding, they packed all of their belongings into different cases (some of which still exist today), and embarked on a ship in Hamburg.

While travelling to South America, another tragic historical circumstance occurred – the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic. While Walter and Hildegard were on the ship, the family inheritance money rapidly lost its value. When they arrived in Buenos Aires, he could only buy half of the land that he had initially planned to acquire. Since people were advising him that the situation must surely get better and the currency should regain its value; he decided to wait. However, the hyperinflation accelerated and soon they could not afford almost any terrain in the province of Buenos Aires. At this stage, someone recommended them to go to Paraguay, where the land was significantly cheaper. They spent part of their money on the travel to Asunción, while the rest of their savings continued to lose value. In Asunción they were informed that the cheapest land was in the north of the country, and so their journey continued until they stopped in Puerto Antequerra, close to San Pedro. There, they managed to buy a twenty hectares parcel of land in Rosario Loma, a village where some German families were living already. They further sold some of their belongings, in order to construct their house and buy a few domestic animals. Walter transformed himself completely into a bitter grumpy man, with a permanent bad temper. Hildegard however, astonishingly, was always seen with a smile.

In these precarious conditions, a wooden house with no flooring, they had four children. One of them was my mother, Gabrielle Gorlitz von Klewitz. She was born and grew up on this small farm. To emphasise this historical contrast, you should understand that Hildegard was born and grew up in Germany in almost aristocratic conditions, attending very good schools. She spoke perfect French and good English. She even won a Prussian national award in a students writing competition. Whereas her daughter and my mother, Gabrielle, never went to school at all, not even for a year. This is the environment and the atmosphere in which my mother grew up, almost like from a García Márquez novel. They lived in a simple house, with walls made of adobe and with a thatched roof. However, they

still owned silver cutlery with engravings of their family crests, which I remember seeing as a child.

Walter and Hildegard continued writing letters to Germany, which was a very slow means of communication that allowed for a maximum of two message exchanges per year. Hildegard's sisters knew about their poor living conditions. When their first child was born, Friedrich (whom we called “uncle Fridolin”), the sisters wrote “*Das ist ja so traurig!*” [this is so sad] to my grandmother, and offered to finance the education of their first son in Germany. Thus he, in contrast to my mother, received a good education and lived in Berlin for twelve years, after which he returned to Paraguay. While Fridolin was doing his military service in the Paraguayan Marine, he met another German descendant from the San Pedro district – Friedrich Walter Neumann. They became friends and after some time my uncle asked my father if he had a girlfriend, and recommended him to meet his sister Gabrielle. This is how my parents met.

After more or less three years of a relationship, my parents decided to marry. My grandfather, Walter Görlitz, did not like my father and even less so as a candidate for his daughter. He would have preferred a rich man to marry Gabrielle. When my father went to talk with him about the marriage, he responded “*Friedrich Walter, du bist ein Schleimschlucker*” [Friedrich Walter⁶⁶, you are a mucus-swallower], and ordered him to leave. My father remembered this sentence, as one of the biggest offences anyone has ever made him suffer. However, he did not leave immediately. It was midday, the 26th of December, and the temperatures were high. Since Friedrich had come on horseback from Nueva Germania to Rosario Loma in the morning, he told Walter that his horse needed to rest before returning, and that he was going to wait in the shadow of a mango tree close to the house. Walter agreed to that. Then, my mother sneaked out of the house, took a horse which she received for Christmas, and decided to leave with Friedrich. When Walter realised what was happening, he ran out of the house and ordered her to stay. She responded “*Ich*

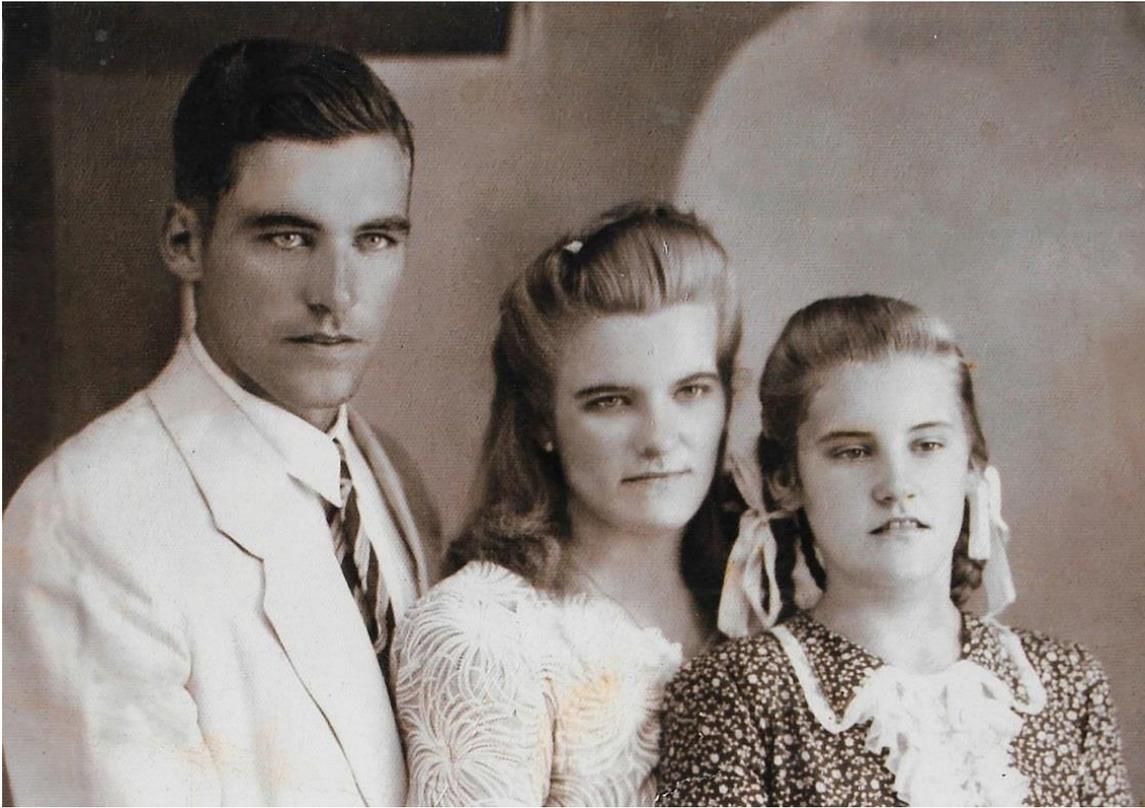
⁶⁶*In reality, Friedrich Walter Neumann, was usually called Walter by people who knew him. The use of a double name in this text has been implemented in order to avoid confusing him with Walter Görlitz, and so to make it easier for the reader to differentiate between the two Walters.*

bin schon 18 Jahre alt, und Ich gehe los mit Friedrich" [I am already 18 years old, and I am leaving with Friedrich]. They started to negotiate. Ultimately, under this mango tree, Walter agreed to their marriage. His only condition was that they had to marry before moving in together, and that it had to take place within the next two months. This was how my parents got married, in February without much celebration, and Gabrielle moved to live in Nueva Germania.

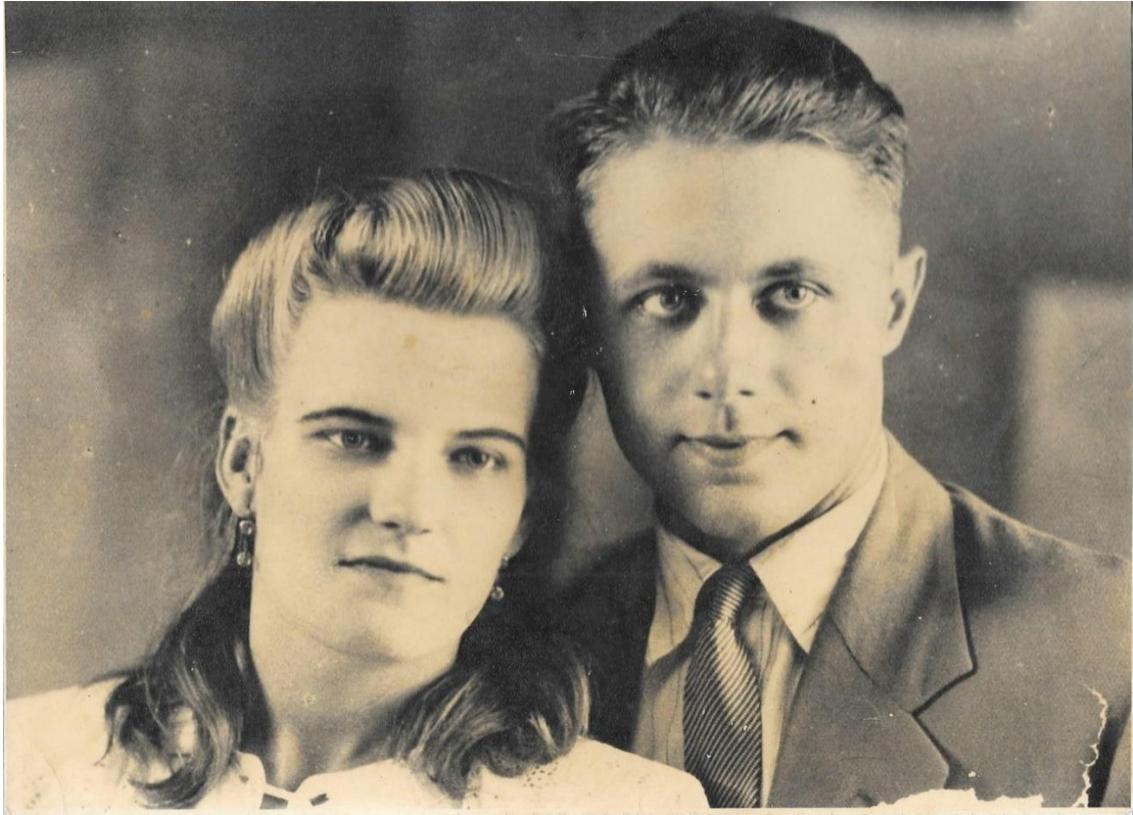
Walter Görlitz died years later. His grave is in Rosario Loma. My grandmother, Hildegard, decided to move back to Germany, to Berlin, where her two sisters still lived. This is how Hildegard von Klewitz spent her last years, together with her two sisters, who never got married and who lived together. It is quite an astonishing story, how a young noble lady ends up living in miserable poverty in Paraguay, only to go back to Germany at the end of her life. Yet she always remained cheerful and smiling. I remember her as a very gentle and beloved grandmother. However, my siblings and I did not look forward to visiting them often, since we were all a bit afraid of *Opa* Walter [Opa means Grandfather in German]. Besides, it was a long journey – it was seven or eight hours one way on horseback from Nueva Germania to Rosario Loma.



Garbrielle Görlitz and Luise (wife of Friedolin) holding Angelica Neumann – 1957.



Fridolin, Gabrielle and Luise Görlitz – 1945.



Gabrielle and Walter Neumann - just married – 1949.

Sweet Home Paraguay

When I was a child, growing up in Nueva Germania, I heard often the histories of these two families. These were some sort of “stories of origin” for us – on the one hand, the great grandfather who had the first cultivated *yerbal* in the world, and on the other hand, my mother telling us about our grandmother, a descendant of a very important family from Germany. However, as children, we did not pay much attention to these stories. It was only later in my life that I gained much interest in the history of my family, and investigated it further.

When I was little, Nueva Germania was a very precarious place. There was no electricity, no press, or other media. We did however have some books at our home, which was very rare, in comparison to other families. It was only later that my father bought a Philips radio, which was powered from a battery and had to be charged regularly from a little generator. We did not have shoes or bicycles. We lived in an enormous precariousness; however, we never felt poor. We never felt poor, because there were no rich families, we all lived in similar conditions. There was no one who had shoes, or nice new clothes. No one had a bicycle either. Although it might seem strange, in 1955 there was not a single bicycle in Nueva Germania. We lived in the centre of the town, where my father had a little shop. He also managed the *Fortin* yerba mate company, which he bought the same year as I was born. We spoke German at home and Guaraní on the streets. We went to school, without really knowing how to formulate a single sentence in Spanish, and we learned it in class. I finished the first three years of school in Nueva Germania, after which we moved to Puerto Antequerra.

We moved to Puerto Antequerra because of a very Paraguayan reason. My father was a councillor in the municipality of Nueva Germania. He was one of the councillors, the only German descendant at the time who participated actively in politics.⁶⁷ In these times,

⁶⁷At one time the municipal authorities wanted to change the name of the town, in order to honour a recently deceased politician. However, by law they required a unanimous approval of all members of the municipal council. My father was the only one to oppose the change. He argued that in doing so, he was honouring his ancestors, who came from Germany and who funded the settlement.

the Colorado Party was divided internally between the so called Guiones Rojos, who had a more authoritarian position and saw all the Germans as *gringos* [whites, foreigners], and the Grupo Democrático, to which my father pertained. My father won the internal sectional elections of the Colorado party, against a member from the Guiones Rojos. This man publicly announced that "*I will not permit for this gringo to be the sectional director. I will kill him!*" One could potentially ignore such a threat, were it not the fact that this man had already killed other people. That is why my mother said, "*Walter, gehen wir hier los!*" [Walter, let's go away from here]. My mother preferred to go to the south of the country, where some of the rich colonies were located. My father however preferred to stay in the region, and found a possibility to buy a shop in Puerto Antequerra (close to the city of San Pedro, at the Paraguay river).

It made quite a difference for us, since Antequerra was a bigger settlement, with electricity, and many boats and ships stopping regularly in the port. We went to a school there for a year, after which my parents sent us to the school in San Pedro. Then another coincidence occurred. My father bought a new truck for his business, and needed to run-in its engine (with new trucks, one needed to firstly make at least a thousand kilometres with no load). He thus went on a journey to the south of Paraguay, to get to know new places and to see how people lived there, and how their yerba mate plantations were. During this trip he encountered a German evangelical boarding school in Hohenau, which was supported by an evangelical community from Berlin. Since he always had ambitions for his children to be well educated, he sent me and my brothers to study there. It was an excellent school with a great curriculum. During the day we would go to the national school, with classes held in Spanish. During the evenings and weekends, the director of the boarding school, Rudolf Thümmeler, organised various educational and artistic activities for us, and everything was taught in German. Even today I remember him as an extraordinary teacher. I learned how to play the trumpet very well, and once we even went to Buenos Aires with our school's music group to perform a concert. We, my brothers and I, only returned home to Antequerra for the summer vacations. After reaching the last, ninth year, we moved to Asunción and matriculated at the *Colegio Goethe* for the next three years of formal education. We lived in the house of a friend of my parents. Sometime afterwards, my

parents moved to Asunción as well, and my father travelled back and forth managing his shop and the *Fortin* company.

When I was in the last year of the *Goethe* school, a friend of mine told me about the *American Field Service* scholarships, which offered opportunities to study abroad. I organised all of the formalities, and prepared for the interviews. I was awarded this scholarship, which initiated another very influential moment in my life. I went to a school in Connecticut for a whole school year. I travelled in July of 1969, a few days before Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. It was also the time of many protests against the war in Vietnam. I even participated in a few of the demonstrations. I remember it had a big influence on me, meeting all of the young people who would do whatever it took to avoid going to the military and dying in Vietnam.

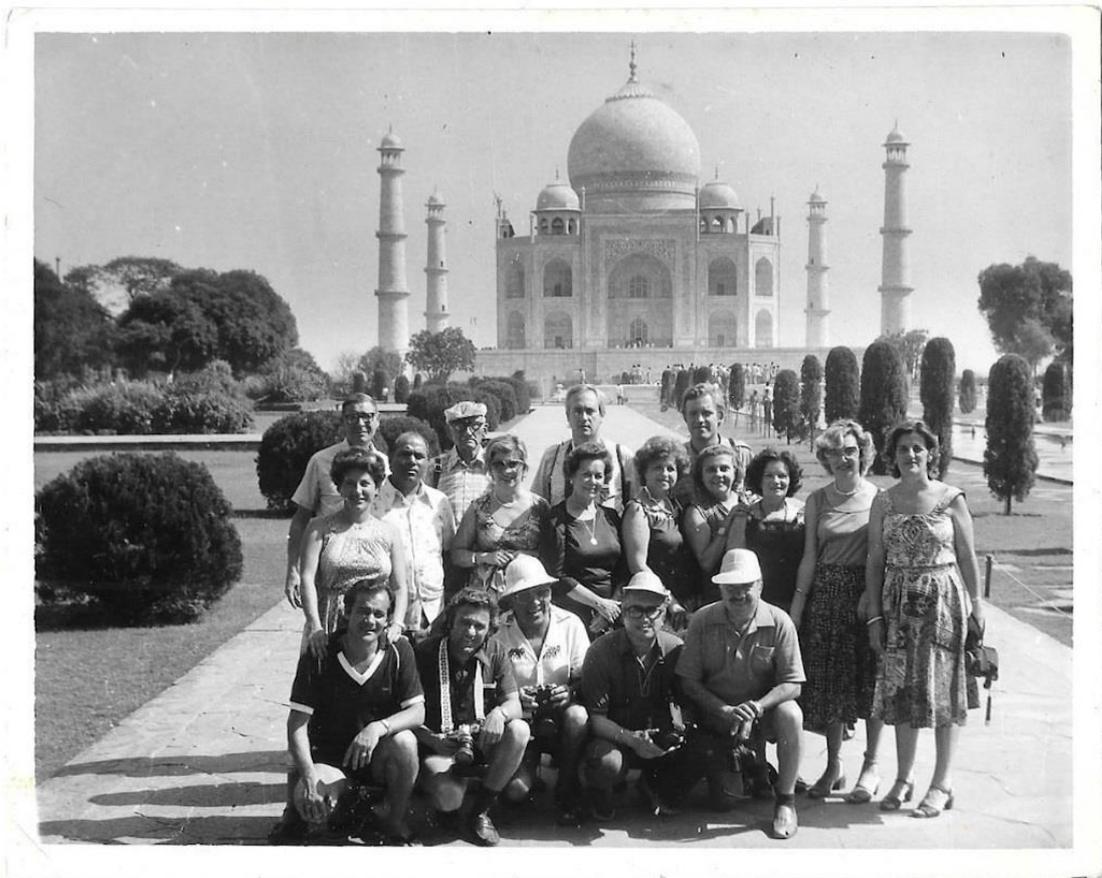


School band of the German boarding school in Hohenau.

From the left: 1st Klaus, 3rd Rolf, 8th Albert – 1963.

After this year abroad, when I returned to Paraguay, I had to finish my obligatory military service. However, as soon as I finished military service, my main goal was to leave Asunción and to go to study in Buenos Aires. I was quite dissatisfied with the general situation in Paraguay, in large part due to the government of Stroessner. I talked to my parents, and I

told them that I already had some contacts in Buenos Aires, even though I did not know anyone. Two or three days after leaving the military, I took the bus to Argentina. The first three months were very hard. It was not easy to study and try to find some jobs at the same time. However, I soon realised that, besides speaking fluent German and English, I had a natural ability to both talk a lot and interest people in what I was saying. These attributes made me a successful tourist guide. I always received excellent feedback and my economic situation improved significantly. For two years I was studying and working at the same time, until 1976 when the military coup happened. This is when I stopped going to the university, which became a redoubt of the military. In this period, from 1976 to more or less 1981, I worked full time as a freelance tourist guide for various companies, travelling the whole world. The only region which I, unfortunately, did not visit was Eastern Europe. I did however travel with groups to Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Africa... I was successful in what I was doing, securing contracts with some of the very important tourist companies. At the age of 26, I already had my own apartment in the centre of Buenos Aires.



Taj Mahal with an Argentinian tourist group in 1977 - Klaus is in the upper row.

After travelling for six or seven years, when the government of Raúl Alfonsín took over, I returned to the university. Soon I got married to Ruth, a girl I met at the faculty. I finished my degree in psychology in three years, while limiting my work to local tourism only. After finishing, I worked for the next five years as a clinical psychologist, even though people were always telling me "*Klaus, you are a guy made for talking, not for listening.*" I later realised that they were right and that I would cope much better with work which would feel more dynamic to me. Psychological work, especially within the school of psychoanalysis which was predominant at the time, requires a lot of listening and patience. Some patients come weekly, for many months, and often one cannot see many changes. This is normal within the serious cases we were dealing with, but I found it hard to find the patience for this kind of work. Additionally, there was a lot of competition between different psychologists, and I was earning much less than in the tourism industry.

The crucial moment came during a consultation with a regular patient of mine. He was a brilliant and successful scientist, but was the most boring patient. During one of our sessions, while sitting in the traditional psychoanalytical setting, outside of the sight of the patient, I fell asleep. I do not know for how long I slept, I think the patient did not even notice, but the very same day I decided to quit this job. All of my friends thought that I was nuts; they would say "*Klaus, no seas pelotudo, eres el único que puede leer al maestro (Freud) en original, ¿y vas a dejar el trabajo?*" [Klaus, don't be stupid, you are the only one of us who can read the master (Freud) in the original, and you are going to quit the job?]. But I was determined, and I initiated the process of directing all of my patients onto other psychologists.

When Carlos Saúl Menem was sworn into office as the president of Argentina, his neo-liberal policies had a dramatic effect on the political and economic situation. During that time also, I got a divorce. Shortly afterwards, a friend of mine, who worked in New York, contacted me and proposed that I become his business associate in a tourist company. Even though I lived in quite a good situation in Buenos Aires, I decided to go. They promised to help me with obtaining a green card and with all of the other necessary formalities. I worked in New York for almost three years, managing tours within the city, and developing a system of audio-recorded guides for bus tours. We had our offices in the Empire State

Building, and I lived in a rented flat on 3rd Avenue. Even though I was doing relatively well, I never really felt at home in New York. I suffered a lot from loneliness and missed my family and friends.



*Klaus stands in front of the company bus, in front of the Empire State building-
New York- January 1993.*

After these three years in the US, my father called me and told me that my mother was ill. It was in 1993, when I was 42 years old. He told me she had probably only three months of life left. So I passed all of my responsibilities to my partners, and went back to Asunción. I spent a few months with my parents, being with them but at the same time reconciling myself with the already democratic Paraguay. After these few months my mother died.

My father asked me to stay some time with him, offering me work in the *Fortin* company. This is when one of those things occurred that can change a person's life trajectory – I met Angelica Vallejo, and I decided to stay. A year later we decided to marry, and I have been living in Paraguay ever since. We have three children - Claudia born in 1997, Nicolas born in 1999, and Mariana born in 2002. Here in Paraguay is where I feel best,

together with my family who make me very happy. I have returned to Nueva Germania after many years of living in Argentina, in the USA, and travelling the whole world. After my return, I have realised the strong tie and relation which I have to Nueva Germania, and to the northern part of Paraguay. Together with my brother Rolf, I managed our family business, *Fortin*, the yerba mate processing and distribution company. It was not easy to return from a life in the city centres of Buenos Aires and New York, back to the rural district of San Pedro. I think, however, that it was the right decision and I am satisfied with it. I do recognise the strong tie and identity which I have with Nueva Germania. Nueva Germania is an indissoluble part of my own history. At the end of the day, I think that to a degree I am a *campesino* [farmer] who has travelled the world.

Even though I did not feel truly at home in New York, in Buenos Aires I could quickly integrate as just another Argentinian. I would quickly pick up on the *porteño* [Buenos Aires] accent, and soon everyone would see me as one of them. Today however, I much more prefer to live in Paraguay. In some things I am still a *campesino* – I enjoy to experience rain, to see a tree grow, a certain degree of solitude, silence, and a slow rhythm of life. Moreover, I think that the fact of being a German descendant is not absolutely conditioning. I think however, that indeed my parents have taught me some of the values which come from the German mentality – mostly related to hard work and an austere life. We live today in an extremely consumerist society, which I rather try to avoid. I like things which are durable and useful. The fact of being Paraguayan manifests itself in the feeling of being a part of this region and in speaking Guaraní. However, there are also many things which annoy me, which I reject, such as the general acceptance of injustices and corruption. However, I like and associate with the great majority of Paraguayan culture. Thus, I am a German, a Paraguayan, and also to a degree a *campesino* and maybe even a little Argentinian.



Walter signing the marriage certificate of Angelica Vallejo and Klaus Neumann - March 1996.



My mother was never sent to school as a child, and only learned how to read and write from her own mother. When she died, my father decided to build a primary school in a neighbourhood of Antequera, and he named it after my mother. He donated the school to the state. My father was the mayor of Antequera twenty years before that.



This photograph was taken in our summer house in San Bernardino. This was the last time we met all together – my siblings with their partners, our aunt Elisa with her husband, even my mother in law is in the picture.



Family Christmas in 2016.

Below are some additional photographs, taken by Jonatan Kurzwelly, which represent the work and the workers of the Fortin Company.



When a film crew came to Nueva Germania.











Contextual epistemic permissibility and agency

The three long stories, of Gerda, Arnold and Klaus, can be used to discuss the question of agency in relation to peoples lives. Could we see them as examples of people who in various ways challenged pre-existing roles and ways of thinking, the conditions which they were born into? Or were they determined to live their lives the way that they did? Gerda's story is an example of challenging the German-Paraguayan dichotomy, the expectations towards life in the countryside, and of ultimately moving to Canada. One could argue that she chose each action herself, manifesting her power to shape her own life. The opposite argument could be made, that she was determined or conditioned to each of her choices by different aspects of her life trajectory (for example, the influence of her grandfather), her experiences, various particular and important occurrences, and other countless factors. Similarly, Arnold from a young age was learning about and engaging in political activism, as well as challenging the socially established two-party division. He later settled down in Asunción, where he keeps working and advocating for social and economic changes. Is his life an outcome of his inherent agency, or a product of his circumstances? Is Klaus' life story an example of challenging local belonging, travelling around the world, trying different jobs, and later re-discovering his attachment to Paraguay? Or was he set on this course by the sole virtue of the family he was born into and the actions of his ancestors? Was the “bitter” life of Walter Görlitz, Klaus' grandfather, largely conditioned by large-scale historical events over which he had no control? Or was his life an example of non-conformist action and agency from a very early age? How can these life stories be understood in relation to different theories and conceptualisations of agency? How might different approaches to agency accommodate the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility? I will present three different approaches to these questions.

Baron D’Holbach argued strongly against the idea of free will, of an ability to control one's life and actions. For him, everything is determined by a causal relation of past actions, and free will is just an illusion. Action and reaction are the basic laws which govern nature, and we are only part of an unbreakable chain of events.

"That which a man is about to do is always a consequence of that which he has been--of that which he is--of that which he has done up to the moment of the action: his total and actual existence, considered under all its possible circumstances, contains the sum of all the motives to the action he is about to commit; this is a principle, the truth of which no thinking, being will be able to refuse accrediting: his life is a series of necessary moments; his conduct, whether good or bad, virtuous or vicious, useful or prejudicial, either to himself or to others, is a concatenation of action, a chain of causes and effects, as necessary as all the moments of his existence. To live, is to exist in a necessary mode during the points of its duration, which succeed each other necessarily: to will, is to acquiesce or not in remaining such as he is: to be free, is to yield to the necessary motives that he carries within himself" (D'Holbach 1820)⁶⁸.

For D'Holbach, there is no such thing as chance or free occurrences. Contingency is nothing else than the events, of whose causes we are ignorant.

"[...] in Nature, where every thing is connected by one common bond, there exists no effect without a cause. In the moral as well as in the physical world, every thing that happens is a necessary consequence of causes, either visible or concealed; which are, of necessity, obliged to act after their peculiar essences. In man, free-agency is nothing more than necessity contained within himself" (Ibid).

Within such a view, all the above presented stories were pre-determined and the individuals had no control over their actions. Their actions were determined by previously existing causes. In that view not only did Walter Görlitz have no control over all the unfortunate events, which determined his life course, but equally Gerda, Arnold, and Klaus did not. Gerda's critical thinking might be explained as merely a result of her grandfather's teaching, and she herself had no control over it. In other words, she did not invent it out of a "free will", but was led to by the inherent rule of Nature – causality. Her grandfather's life and critique were, following the same logic, equally determined by other cause-effect relations. Gerda was pre-determined to lead a life which we could consider as "critical" (and through the word itself falsely attributing some sort of agency to her). Equally, Klaus was pre-determined, by the aggregate of all causes, to leave Paraguay and travel. His family's relative wealth, different education, spoken languages, and all of the other conditions, resulted in the course of his life as it has been

⁶⁸The quotes are from an on-line version of *The System of Nature*, therefore no page numbers are available. Both quotes come from Part 1, Chapter XI: "Of the System of Man's free agency".

lived and as it continues to be led. Every action is inevitably caused by a range of pre-existing conditions, thereby no one can be seen as having a “free will.”

This logic may not merely be used to describe individual lives from a historical perspective, but may also be useful to analyse each situation in itself. In this sense, it can be applied alongside the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility. By such a deterministic theoretical position, peoples contextual evocations of different epistemic frameworks are conditioned by all the factors which determine them. These causes, we can infer and expand from D'Holbach statements, do not only emerge directly from the physical world, but also, for example, from: cultural norms or laws, structures of language, personal biographies, history, et cetera. We can refer this back to the previously discussed situation, in which Arnold intended to evoke the commonness of all Paraguayans, but in response was reduced to the *campesino* [peasant] category and treated with contempt.

By this logic Arnold's evocation was determined by all factors which led to that moment, including all situational determinants, and he could not have made other evocations within such constraints. Equally the person who treated him badly, was determined to do so. Referring this approach to Klaus' story, we could say that he did not really take the decision to stop working as a psychologist, the decision was determined by a set of casual relations. Within this deterministic approach the theories of social action which uncover the casual relations and conditions seem to be the most relevant, and research should be designed in accord with them. All beings could be reduced and described by the circumstances which made them, thereby taxonomizing and essentializing them into particular fixed categories.

A different approach, based on influences from neuroscience and from the study of the brain, is presented by Patricia Churchland. She argues against such views as D'Holbach's. She disagrees with an assumption that there is no such thing as *free will*, or that it is only an illusion, just because everything is influenced by causal relations. She refers to such a position as ignorant, explaining that: "[...] *nothing in the law, in child-rearing, or in everyday life depends in any significant way on the idea that free choice requires freedom from all causes*" (2013, p.184). She argues that free will should

not be equated with contra-causal free will.⁶⁹ She herself prefers to rather talk of *self-control*, which is a characteristic of the brain, rather than use the fuzzy concept of *free will*.

“What is not illusory is self-control, even though it can vary as a function of age, temperament, habits, sleep, disease, food, and many other factors that affect how nervous systems function. Nonetheless, evolution, by culling out the inveterately impulsive, saw to it that, by and large, normal brains have normal self-control” (Churchland 2013, p.185).

In accord with this approach, we can shift from using the concept of *free will*⁷⁰, and debating whether it exists or is an illusion, to using the concept of *self-control*, and recognising its varying degrees. This is particularly relevant, as Churchland argues, in juridical cases and in the assessment of individual self-control in the situation in which a person has committed a crime. Churchland explained that agency might change with certain biological and habitual impediments. Could we, however, also assume that it can be limited by socio-cultural and other factors (either directly or also by having effects on the brain and the nervous system)? Could we assume that there are degrees of agency, or self-control?

In this sense, Klaus indeed might have had the right conditions, the causal relations, which allowed him to leave Paraguay, travel the world, and become a psychologist, it was however his decision to do so and his actions that led to this outcome. Or, it may have been indeed the case that the different causes led him to dissatisfaction with his work as a psychologist, but also that it was his decision and

⁶⁹ Her critique of such approaches is quite outspoken. "As the philosopher Eddy Nahmias has shown, normally people do not think that free will is to be equated with contra-causal free will. Perhaps the claim might be interesting to a small subset of Kantian philosophers. As for the rest of us, it is a bit like announcing with great fanfare that alien abductions are not real. Oh really, no flying saucers arriving on the lawn in the middle of the night? Gosh. Thanks for the heads-up" (Ibid. p.184).

⁷⁰ A critique of the concept of free will (and its consequences) can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche's attack on Christian morality and psychology. When distinguishing between will and the Christian free will, he saw the latter as an error and a "theological trick", originating from ancient priests, the purpose of which was to inculcate a sense of responsibility and guilt, and also to establish a right for the priests to judge and to punish. Because "[...] every action had to be regarded as voluntary, and the origin of every action had to be imagined as lying in consciousness", thereby creating a dependence on theologians to guide morality and give a sense of purpose (2007, p.35-36).

actions which allowed him to change jobs. Similarly, Gerda might have had the influence of her grandfather's critical thinking, it was however her choice to listen to him and to keep being critical towards the German-Paraguayan dichotomy. While positioning herself against the ways in which this division was socially performed, she consciously redefined her own uses and understanding of Germanness and Paraguayanness. Walter Görlitz, however, did not exercise self-control over his actions in several key moments of his life, which further changed his character and influenced the rest of life choices⁷¹. That is to say, that his *conscious intentions* and plans either were not amongst the causes of his actions, or forced him to constantly change his intentions. This, of course, does not mean that his self-control over interpretations and explanations were equally impaired. Although his intended actions might have been hindered, his *mental or cognitive capability* to understand the situation and imagine or invent a new plan of action was not. Should we thus locate agency in the ability to perform intentional actions, or should we rather locate agency in the ability to produce meanings? It is apparent that human agency can be understood and defined in many different ways - either as free will; intentionality, self-control, mental ability, or existential power.

If we decide not to accept, or are not convinced by the neuro-philosophical explanations, negating this viewpoint for its focus on the brain, we might also explore a different argument made by Nigel Rapport. His claim for recognising an individual's capacity of self-control, or “existential power”, has a predominantly moral character. He discusses the control that each individual may have over courses of action and meaning-making - “[...] *an existential power that individuals possess over and against an impersonal, social-structural or institutional power that I feel schools of social science*

⁷¹Referring this point back to the previously discussed theories of social action, and to the question of what are the influences on the contextual evocations of epistemic frameworks - an understanding of agency which allows for different degrees of self-control might reconcile the approaches that prioritise the motives of individuals as key along with those that seek socio-cultural, historical, or linguistic influencing factors. These could be reconciled within the assumption that there are influencing (but usually not determining) causes for action, as well as a self-control or agency over the actions of individuals. This approach seems to fit better with the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility. We might therefore say that people use different epistemic frameworks contextually, and that the degree of an individual's control over these usages will also vary from context to context.

have had a tendency almost exclusively to focus upon" (2003, p.5). For Rapport, this power is a capacity that people should strive to explore and increase, in order to allow themselves to control and lead meaningful lives, and at the same time, Rapport takes this viewpoint as a moral analytical assumption. Its basis lies in a "bodily force" which derives from the very fact of being alive as individuals.

Rapport's claim to assume that individuals can have control over their lives, their possession of an existential power that is "*an inherent attribute of individuals as active beings, beings who, through their ongoing activity-in-the-world, create and recreate meaningful environments in which they live*" (Ibid. p.75), is based on a moral or pragmatic claim (a "tactical humanism", as he calls it after Richard Rorty, referring to the ideals of Renaissance and liberalism). He argues that a recognition of an individuals capacity of power offers them a possibility to both describe the universal and the particular, and in doing so, to escape essentialism. Through the recognition of one's existential power, we do not risk reducing people to culture, society, community, ethnicity, gender or race. "*These concepts have operated as means of making and maintaining alterity: creating differences between people, and implying separations which have translated into hierarchy and inequality; creating samenesses, categorizing and stereotyping so as to portray homogeneity, coherence and determinism*" (Ibid. p.19).

Rapport's argument focuses largely on the power to create "life projects" (goals and a directionality towards reaching them, a single-mindedness), and a very strong positioning of the individual as the central unit for social sciences. Rapport discussed existential power in the case of a Nazi death camp, based on the descriptions by Primo Levi (Ibid. pp.242-250). Being under frightful pressures, where no reaction or resistance against the tyranny was possible, individuals were still capable of some acts of personal meaning-making and senses of self. Some individuals possessed innate abilities of "valour" and "virtue" which aided their self-survival and allowed them to resist dehumanisation and also to retain their will. Primo Levi argued, however, that the characteristics of valour and virtue were beyond the awareness and control of these individuals. This is where Rapport disagrees - "*the fact that we are self-aware means*

that we can make ourselves aware of how we came to have that self-awareness” (Ibid. p.249). He further argues against the idea of an absolute determination by external factors, and claims that ultimately *“individuals are always responsible for the sense they make of their lives, for the meanings by which they live”* (Ibid. p.250), even if in face of physical violence or obliteration. The only circumstance in which individual's life meanings become irrelevant, is the ultimate extreme circumstance, in which the only free choice is to commit suicide.

In Rapport's approach, agency can be understood as an internal capability of making meanings, rather than an immediate ability to perform intentional actions. Regardless of whether one analytically accepts his positions - of whether one takes the category of individual as valid, in what form, and if individuals can indeed create “life projects” (as some critical voices might argue against) - the same moral argument concerning the recognition of agency can be applied. Such an argument can accommodate both the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility, and an analytical recognition of varying degrees of contextual agency – that is, causal influences, over which the individual can hold varying degrees of control. Only through the rejection of determinism and recognition of the innate ability of meaning-making of fully conscious individuals, of varying degrees of agency to act, interpret and shape our own understanding, can we avoid reductionism and essentialism.

The question of agency, as described in this box, is by no means exhausted and much further work could be done. My intention was to relate different theories of agency, to some of the stories presented in this thesis. These theories conceptualise agency differently and locate it elsewhere – either in non-causal free will, self-control, intentional actions, or in the power to create one’s own meanings. Thereby, these approaches can accommodate the analytical assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility differently. As social scientists, by shifting from a conceptual to empirical endeavour, we do not need to strongly position ourselves in favour of a single theory. Using analytical complementarity we can explore the different contextual causes, interpretations, and meanings of the actions of individuals.

03.07 Juana Mercedes Benítez López



Mercedes is the owner and manager of Hotel Germania – until recently, the only hotel in town. She is not from Nueva Germania herself, but has lived there for many years now. Mercedes is one of the first people whom most of the visitors get to know. However, because I lived with Arnold's parents, I only got to know her later. She was rather enthusiastic about participating in the project, partially because of the possibility to promote her hotel and to promote the things that Nueva Germania has to offer to tourists. This is what her story focused on. Mercedes wrote most of the story herself, which we then expanded upon in a recorded discussion. Her photographic account introduces the reader to the surroundings of Nueva Germania, some important places and shops, as well as to the hotel itself. She took many pictures over a period of a few weeks, out of which we selected a few. Her story emphasises the diversity of opinions and agendas which motivated the people to participate in this project.

Nueva Germania offers its visitors the town's history and the two surrounding rivers, both of which are an unparalleled attraction and curiosity. In the year 1886 the German settlers came to establish Nueva Germania. They were inspired by the ambitious project of their leader, Bernhard Förster, who was married to Elisabeth, sister of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Their main objective was the improvement and conservation of pure German blood. They came to this place by boat from Asunción, through the Paraguay, Jejuí, and Aguaray Guazú rivers. They settled relatively close to the river, where they built their houses, schools, shops, and began cultivating the land. The most important building was the house of Elisabeth Nietzsche, where she lived together with her husband Förster.

In a very short time the project failed. One of the possible reasons could have been the lack of adaptation to the environment and the harsh conditions of the jungle. There may have been other reasons for their failure as well, possibly including some more profound adversities during the implementation of the project, which we do not know about. Mr Förster moved to San Bernardino, where he committed suicide. Elisabeth Nietzsche returned to Germany. Many other settlers returned to their country of origin as well. Some, however, stayed and fought to survive and to make a living. Today both Germans and Paraguayans live in Nueva Germania. The German descendants are slightly isolated within their culture. However, they are good and hard-working people.

Some of the houses built by the first settlers in Nueva Germania still exist. Unfortunately, the first school and the house of Elisabeth did not last. People say that her house burned down years ago. Today it is still possible to see the old floor and fragments of bricks, covered by a thin layer of dirt and leaves. There are also a few old trees, planted by the first settlers. Today Nueva Germania, is a beautiful and clean city, with all of the necessary institutions and services. It is located approximately 300 kilometres away from Asunción, surrounded by its two rivers – Aguaray Guazú and Aguaray'mi, both of which are less than a thousand meters from the city. The rivers are excellent for fishing, beautiful sights, beaches, where one can spend an enjoyable time with family or friends.

My hotel, The Germania, opened in the year 2004, on the 31 of December. It was the municipal mayor who gave me the idea to name the hotel “Germania”, relating it to the foundational history. The building initially had four rooms, and was later expanded by another four in 2008. The hotel offers private bathrooms, a large garden, and other facilities,

that provide a peaceful and comfortable space for our guests. Hotel Germania is open throughout the whole year. This hotel welcomed different writers, journalists, researchers, some of whom were from other countries. All of these people were interested in the history of Nueva Germania. The hotel also welcomes internal Paraguayan tourism and other people who pass through. The visitors to Nueva Germania are divided into two groups – those few who are interested in the foundational history of our town⁷², and an internal summer tourism. Most people come to spend the end of the year in our town, and enjoy the pleasant summer time, beautiful nature, and sometimes some concerts, parties, or other events.

Of course, the service which our hotel offers is one thing, but the development of the whole town is another important issue. People who come to our town, especially those who arrive from far away, want to see something special. Thus, we should suggest and invest in different attractions, which could attract more of these visitors. I have hopes for the future development of tourism in Nueva Germania. The riverside with its beaches has great potential in attracting more local visitors during the summertime. What in my opinion is necessary, is more investments that further expand our attractions and events. Last year's concerts attracted so many visitors, that there were no more free rooms available in Nueva Germania and they had to stay in Santa Rosa. There are some plans by the municipality to further explore this potential and invest in our infrastructure. We will see if these projects will come to life. We would certainly benefit from further developing the riverside (for example, by installing appropriate lightning). It is important to add that all of this should be done with the environment in mind, being ecological and not destroying our beautiful nature.

At the same time the historical museum could be renovated and expanded, in order to attract more visitors interested in Nueva Germania's history. The museum, in its current state, would require a big investment in order to become an important tourist attraction. Another possibility is to expand the agritourism. This could be potentially related, for example, to the production of yerba mate. By improving the production, making it into a

⁷²*These guests, guided by their admiration of the incredible person of Elisabeth Nietzsche, came here to investigate the causes of the first settlers' failure to implement their project. Usually their goal is to describe and dramatize this history.*

special local product accessible to the visitors, we could also sell it to the visitors.⁷³ We could also consider producing some souvenirs, which could also be sold to the visitors, at the same time creating a source of work and income for Nueva Germania's inhabitants. Furthermore, it would also be important for there to be some people trained as tourist guides, welcoming people to our town. My hope is that by further improving the hotel, and with potential municipal investments in tourism, there will be many more visitors and more income for the inhabitants of Nueva Germania.



Our advertisement at the roadside.

⁷³In Paraguay festivals dedicated to different agricultural products are quite common – such as the festival of the watermelons or the festival of strawberries.



Entrance to the hotel.



Elisabeth Nietzsche and statue of the Paraguayan Woman.



This is our police station.



An old house constructed by the first German settlers.



The rests of Elisabeth Nietzsche's house.





The water level grew enormously during the last rainy season, flooding the surrounding areas. Some people's houses were flooded. This is getting worst every year. Is it because of climate change?



First of January at the Aguaray'mi River. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

The anniversary of the town's foundation.











Bernardino Caballero was the president who gave this land to the German settlers.

03.08 Calixtro Ramirez



(Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

I drove together with Alberto to Arroyo Ata, a settlement located further north from Westrand (Takurty) and Nordrand, to meet Calixto - his former Spanish teacher - and to watch the Sunday football match of the *Liga Germanina*. Calixto Ramirez Mbaivé is a fit and energetic older man. He was 76 years old at the time. Both Albert and Calixto seemed very happy to see each other, hugged warmly and exchanged many cordialities. Alberto used many grand and praising words to introduce his teacher to me and to express his gratitude for the education that had had a great impact on his life. He later introduced me as a student of anthropology and explained the difference between “an anthropologist and a social anthropologist”, stating that the first is occupied with bones and the second with current events and with peoples stories. Calixto gave me his telephone number and told me to visit him again, saying he would do everything in his power to help me. He offered to be my local guide and to put me in contact with other people. This initial meeting, Calixto's curiosity about me and my project as well as his

willingness to help, set us on a course for collaboration and later friendship. He agreed to participate in my project and tell a story, using text and photographs, which he worked on for several months.

Calixto was educated by Spanish missionaries in Concepción and later started working as a lay missionary at the age of 16, commuting between different communities and preparing grounds for the priests to arrive. He dedicated the first part of his story to these events, describing in detail his work, and impressively remembering the names of many people who had helped him. He then told me about how he became a school teacher and how it happened that he started teaching in German schools – firstly in Chingi Loma and then in Costa Norte (Nordrand). He was also leading religious education in Arroyo Ata, where he lived. He later proceeded with telling me about what he was visibly most excited about: about how he introduced football to Arroyo Ata. He finished his narration with the story of his wife's disease.

Calixto wrote the first part of the story himself. As he found it hard to continue writing, both due to having trouble finding the time to do so and struggling with the written word and his own expectations towards style, we agreed to continue with a different approach. We decided it would be better if I recorded him telling the story in a conversation, and later transcribed and edited it. Calixto prepared a list of the topics he wanted to cover and later sat down with me in the shade in front of his house; I took my voice recorder out and switched it on, and he started narrating. We had already met many times, often chatting for hours, and I already knew most of what he was saying. This made it easier for me to ask for any clarifications or further details.

What follows is Calixto's story – firstly the short part he wrote himself and later the outcome of his storytelling. Although the structure of his story required significant editing, to mimic his narrational style which switched swiftly from one subject to another, the account below is presented without division into sections. Calixto also took many photographs over several months, which constitute a different story in themselves, another way of telling. The photographs however often thematically relate to the written text, through telling a story about the present situation.

I am Calixto Ramirez Mbaivé. I'm going to write some passages from my life. I was born on the 14th of August 1938. At the age of 16 I started working as a secular missionary and helping three priests - Máximo Rojas Chivije, Benito Lezcano, y Ernesto Echaüer. I started the evangelic work in Picada Fernandez, Oratorio, Naranja Ty. In Naranja Ty I stayed in the home of Mr Lucas Cañate, and was attended by Darmazia Ruiz in the Rembo Callaty church. Lorenzo and Fausto Pavon brothers have not abandoned me either. From there I moved to Aguaray'mi, and Arroyo Ata. Here I stayed in the home of Simon Mercado. Afterwards I moved to Costa Poi, where I have met young people, even 20-25 years old, without having received the sacrament of baptism. I asked why, and they have told me that it had been 35 years since a priest had visited them, named Juan Carlos Garcia (who was coming from Concepción). Responsive, I went back to San Pedro in the sulkey in which I was commuting. I returned to San Pedro with a bus from Nueva Germania. Sometimes this journey would take a whole day. The bus was named "The White Bus", belonging to Mr Antonio Nol.

Soon afterwards I returned to Nueva Germania and stayed in the house of Gustavo Voll. This man, German, was not Catholic. But he would allow his wife, Alberta Sanches, to follow her Catholic religion ["very respectful", Calixto commented when reading this passage out loud]. From Nueva Germania I crossed the Aguaray River in a sulkey, with the help of others. From there I arrived at a farm, belonging to a German lady, who treated me very well during the day. This lady was called Patrona Karumbe ["I do not know the real name of this lady" Calixto commented, "karumbe means 'lightning' in Guarani", he said]. Later I visited Lima, and this lady was marshalling her animals like a first class herdsman. She behaved, with a gaiter and a revolver at the waist, like a man. But she was giving me good treatment. In all of these communities carnage raged, between brothers with knives and revolvers.

One week earlier I had gone to work for the church. I had already visited Lima and toured different communities. From Lima I would go to one community, and would come back in the evening to the central house where I stayed, and the next day the same thing. I was preparing for baptism. I travelled in the name of God, and the parish priest would give me money for my food. The favourite sport [in these communities] was horse races and card games.

In these times people were killing each other a lot in those settlements, such as Oratorio, Costa Pucu, Aguaray, Jagua'í,... It would quite often be after card games, when one would lose but would not want to pay. But I was not frightened, because I was going there in the name of God and with His protection. I would spend a week in each community, make preparations for baptisms, confirmation, and marriage. After the week of my work three priests would come and would divide the work on different sacraments between themselves. But they would do so under no obligation to the people. On their arrival, they would receive all of the documents that I had prepared and I would leave for the next community, to again make preparations for the priests' arrival. Usually riding a horse or travelling by sulkey. [Here Calixto recalled the names of many communities and in most cases the names of his hosts.] It was a Monday to Sunday cycle. It would only be problematic when it rained, as sometimes the carriage could cross through muddy roads; thus everything would be prolonged. The Pa'í did not pay me much, but I was not lacking anything. After six months of travel I would return home to San Pedro to get a little rest before starting again.

I would always be accompanied by a person from the community I visited. Usually it would be a man, but sometimes it would also be woman. And then one has to be careful. When a young lady would come trustfully to assist me, give me food, give me supper, and I would stay overnight, I would need to be careful not to commit any sin. “Para no meter la mano” [“Not to lay my hand upon” - a Paraguayan expression relating to intimacy. Often the implicit assumption is made, as part of the masculine ‘bragging’, that women are easily ‘available’ to them]. Surely with God's help, I never sinned. People here always say that a man who ignores an available woman is ‘ruined’ — is not a real man. But I prefer to be considered ruined than to mess up my good name. Until today I hold myself true to that.

After working as a missionary I became a teacher. I was firstly contacted by Bruno Romero, a friend and neighbour. He was a teacher in Chiingiloma [a German settlement close to San Pedro] who came one evening to my home and told me:

- “I want you to defend me.”

- “What happened?” I asked.

- "I am messing with a student and I don't want the people to realise it. I want to run away. And I hope you would replace me in the school."

He was in an amorous relation with one of his students, Adelgunde [anonymised]. Afterwards he disappeared and I took the job. I understood what he was talking about, because in the breaks all students would go to play but this Adelgunde would not leave me alone. But I did not fall! And so I taught for three years in Chingiloma, from 1965. Later the school closed because of the low number of students and the lack of further help from the German embassy.

Sometime afterwards Mr Roberto Fischer came to see me at my home, accompanied by another neighbour of mine, Iginio Aguero. He offered that I teach in the German school Costa Norte [a German settlement, also called Nordrand]. We agreed that I was to come to see him at his house where we would discuss the details. I went to Nueva Germania by bus and there paid 150 guarani to rent a horse and go to Roberto Fischer.⁷⁴ In the first years I had to teach only in the mornings and in the afternoons I would watch over his shop. Back then Mr Fischer's shop was the only shop around here. I would ride on horseback from Arroyo Ata every day back and forth⁷⁵. I taught there for 4 or 5 years before the school moved to Takurutu [Westrand].

I would go to Costa Norte from Monday to Friday. On Saturday evenings I would teach religion to children here in Arroyo Ata. And on Sundays I would teach football, which initially caused some trouble. At first, I lost people's sympathy because they were afraid that football would have a bad influence on the youth. "This man is teaching laziness, he will destroy our families", they said. For some time I was not liked amongst the parents. Later however, they themselves got excited about football. This was partially because I announced that "the mitaí [child in Guaraní] who does not come to the catechism, will not be allowed to play football." In this way all of the children were coming.

⁷⁴People often refer to the big ranches by the names of its owner(s). Today, many people continue to refer to this terrain as "ex-Fisher" even though currently, it is the Tierra Prometida settlement..

⁷⁵Arroyo Ata is a settlement with a Paraguayan population, located further northwards from Nordrand.

They did not know the rules of the game. Since I had played before in different clubs, both in Concepción and in San Pedro, I knew them well and I would teach them. Additionally, in these times we did not have any sport shoes, and many children did not have any shoes at all. We would use the plantilla instead – a piece of a truck cover with added twine which we wore on our feet for the everyday work. We made the ball out of the plantilla as well. Later even the parents decided to join, and they would also come to kick the ball with us. Since we did not have a football field, we would use the airstrip on the outskirts of the village⁷⁶ - it was 500m long and 38mwide. Since so many people wanted to play, we put the posts 150m apart, so we could all fit in. Later we created a proper playing field – up there by the brickyard, on government land. With time, I gained the trust of the inhabitants – they would do what I told them to. If I had wanted to abuse it, for example by telling them that we needed more money to pay for the hoeing of weeds, they would easily have given me money and I could have kept it to myself. But I did not do it! And by the way, the hoeing was done by Lazaro Espinosa and Tomas Colman, for 1500 Guarani (which back then was worth much more than nowadays), and we spread the cost amongst all players.

Some of the players were entering the pitch with a knife at their waist. This was a potential risk both to themselves and to others, in case of an argument or a fight. I was afraid that they would get upset if I forbade them to play with their knives. I thought of a method to solve it. I would also take a knife, so that everybody could see me, and I would enter our football pitch. And then I would go to the person who had a knife with them, and tell him: “What do you say my friend if we put those away? It is hazardous, since if we run after the ball and we fall over, we could get injured. Let us put them away!” I would go and put my knife in a safe distance outside of the pitch and they would follow me. In time, they stopped bringing any weapons to the games. This is how I achieved it! In time, they stopped carrying weapons altogether. Not completely, because even nowadays there are people who do carry weapons. And some still play cards. But it is nothing like before, when there

⁷⁶Back then many towns and villages would have their own airstrips – simple plain long strips of land, on which small airplanes could land. Currently, since the road system has been improved, many people have motorcycles and some of them have cars, and most of the airstrips have disappeared.

would be knives, revolvers, and other firearms everywhere... They are all becoming decent people. It did not stop completely, but football and religion civilised them.

Football also provided motivation to resolve conflicts. I would sometimes be asked to mediate between people who had a quarrel. If one player would threaten another, or if someone would come asking for help in resolving a conflict, I would ask a police officer to accompany me and we would go and talk to them. I would never go alone, because if something would happen as a result, I could be accused of it. And I would always succeed. I would always succeed, and the next day I could see them already shaking hands and playing football together.

We wanted to play with other settlements. Thus we decided that in order to appear like a team we must get proper football sport clothes. The decision about the colours of the outfits quickly became politicised. Firstly, I received a visit from one man who was a liberal [from the Liberal Party] and he told me - “order the clothes all in blue – blue t-shirts, blue shorts, and blue socks” [the official political party's colour]. I agreed, ironically. On the next day a different man came to see me, this time a Colorado [from the Colorado Party] and told me - “order the clothes all in red – red t-shirts, red shorts, and red socks”. And I also agreed, again rather ironically. Later I went to see Mr Roberto Fischer, our patron [boss, landlord], and asked if he could order the clothes for us from Asunción, in return for work. I told him about the problem, that one party wants the outfits to be blue and the other wants them red. He agreed. He told me that he had two and two thirds of hectares, which is 27,500 square meters, of manioc field that needed hoeing. I asked him if he could order either the outfits of Cerro Porteño, which are red and blue stripes, or the Guaraní⁷⁷, which are black and yellow.

When Mr Fischer returned, he brought black and yellow outfits for us. He wanted to hand them over to me straight away, but I refused – I told him that we will firstly do the work and then we will take them. When I told all the people that the outfits were already at Mr Fischer's house, they all got very enthusiastic. They kept asking me all the time – “When will we go to work? When will we get the outfits?” Everyone wanted to go and work as soon

⁷⁷Both Cerro Porteño and Guaraní are first league Paraguayan football clubs. It is a common practice in Paraguay to name small local clubs after the major national ones and wear the same outfits.

as possible. And so we went. We were more than thirty people. We took a big cooking pot and groceries from Mr Roberto's shop and we named two cooks amongst us. The rest went to do the hoeing. With only short breaks for *tereré*, we finished really fast, before 3pm. I went to tell Mr Roberto about this and to ask him to check if everything was all right. He said “excellent hoeing!”, and then we went to receive the outfits. Everyone was so happy! We were all still dirty from work, but most of us put the clothes on anyway, and we went down to the *Aguara'y* River to wash ourselves and to bathe. And still in the water, we were already playing and passing the ball amongst us. We were all so happy and content!

One day a soldier came to see me at my house. He was sent by Juan Rolon, a former classmate of mine, who was the police chief in Nueva Germania. Back then Arroyo Ata pertained to the municipality of Nueva Germania, so we were within his jurisdiction. The soldier told me that his major [as far as I understand back then the military was fulfilling the role of police] would like to talk to me and that he was currently in the house of Mr Fischer. I went to see him. When we met he told me - “I have come to know that you are teaching football in Arroyo Ata. I think this is great, this will civilise the people!” He announced that he wished to help me, but did not say much more. Three days later the soldier came again to see me, bringing a football, size five, sent to us from the major. What a surprise! Since then, we had a proper ball to play with! The major would come periodically to play with us as well.

We started inviting other communities, firstly *Isla Guasu*, to play with us. We would prepare food for everyone and eat all together after the game. And afterwards we would go to them for a rematch. We elected Mr José Franco – nicknamed *Jose'i* [little Jose]- as our club's president. Even though he did not understand much about it, we would do the work together and would never oppose each other. This is how the *Guaraní* club officially started in Arroyo Ata. It was still an internal league at the beginning, we would only play with neighbouring villages, but nevertheless it was a club. Much later, when the municipality of Nueva Germania entered the departmental San Pedro league, our club was also invited to

join. Our club was renamed (Juan Agüero, Mario Lujan Portillo, and Nicolas González renamed it, if I recall correctly), from “Guarani” to “3rd of March”.⁷⁸

A form of ethnography

All of the stories presented in this thesis, even the short ones, were made through discussion. In Calixto's case, we were meeting for months before finally recording his narrative. It is important to stress that this collaborative approach requires a lot of contextual understanding, of both the person and the general context, from the researcher. The recordings themselves are often very distinct from the final written story, and would probably be hardly understandable for a person with no knowledge of Paraguay and Nueva Germania. Some topics would also not be covered, without my encouragement to add them to the stories.

To give an example, Calixto's multiple remarks about football were usually very incoherent and were mentioned in different unrelated parts of the story. My writing then often required clarification towards place and persons involved, as well as the general understanding of local topography, naming habits (i.e. the common use of important dates as names), customs, daily chores, and many others. Often, in the writing process, I had to add additional descriptions or clarifications, which are only necessary for a reader who has not lived in this area (as described above in “Semantic editing” box). Even with this knowledge, understanding the narration required a fluency in the local way of speaking Spanish and telling stories, which can get a little fuzzy, especially when talking passionately.⁷⁹ To give an example, here is a short fragment of a transcript and its translation, from the original recording:

Y antes de las tres de la tarde
tenemos terminado ya la carpida.
Muy rápido. Vinimos y yo pedí

And before three in the
afternoon we have finished the
hoeing. Very fast. We went and I

⁷⁸It is also common for sports clubs to use important historical, religious and political dates for their names.

⁷⁹In Calixto's case it was somewhat easier, since his language was highly influenced by the education received from Spanish missionaries.

que se vaya a controlar si hacemos bien o no hacemos bien. Y se va. Se fue don Roberto. "Excelente carpida." Ahora si, recibimos la camiseta. Y todo el mundo contento!

asked to go and control if we do it well or if we do not do it well. And he goes. He went, Mr. Roberto. "Excellent hoeing." Now yes, we received the t-shirt. And everyone happy!

This by no means intends to discredit people's stories or their abilities to tell them. My intention is to reiterate and put an emphasis on how this collaborative process is reliant not only on translation, but on ethnographic experiences and fieldwork. It enables me to create written accounts that are legible and understandable for an international audience. This is why the stories should be seen as a form of ethnography.

The students from Takuru'ty [Westrand] had to walk very far every day to the school in Costa Norte [Nordrand]. Thus it was decided to relocate the school in the middle between the two settlements, in order to make the distance comparable for everyone. Mr Walter Flaskamp offered his land as the place to build the school upon. I remember still teaching in 1983 in Costa Norte, thus we must have moved the school sometime after that. I was teaching Spanish and Mr. Reinaldo Fischer was teaching German. I was commuting, as always, every day back and forth on horseback. It would take me an hour and a half one way. Later Ms. Margarita Hoffman took over teaching German and I would work with her. We did not divide the classes into subjects, it was called "plural-class". The school, registered with the ministry of education under the number 1200, was not only German. There was also one son of a Paraguayan. He was the only one, but in principle the school was accepting both Germans and Paraguayans.

Once we even received a visit from the German ambassador. He came escorted by several police cars. That is because the commissar told me: "If something bad would happen to him, what would happen to us?" I showed him the school, while the police officers were around the whole building, for protection. This is how it was.

The Germans are very responsible and punctual. It was a pleasure working with them. We would hold meetings with the parents every month. During each meeting I would tell

them the date and time of the next one. I knew I would not need to repeat it. On the agreed date they would always be in the school beforehand, waiting for me.

I would receive my salary only once a year from the German embassy. But they would help me out. The director would often give me some money in advance, without even asking for a receipt. They trusted me. I think one time the director tested me. He lent me some money and later it did not appear on the final salary breakdown. "Mister, I think you are mistaken. The money you lent me is not on the bill", I told him. It could have been a test. They trusted me a lot. Once even they bought a motorcycle for me in advance, so I did not have to ride on horseback every day, and gave me all of the documents without any receipt from me. Until today they trust me and appreciate me.

I suffered several difficulties because of being affiliated with the Liberal Party. At one time a vicious director of a different school in Nueva Germania went to speak against me to the Germans. She told them to fire me because of my being a Liberal. But they told her: "We are not interested in your accusation. Calixto Ramirez fulfils his responsibilities and we are not interested if he is a Liberal or a Colorado". They later told me about the whole situation. This is how the political affiliations would cause prosecutions.

I worked in Takuru'ty [Westrand] until the school closed. I think it was in 1986. I became unemployed. I was unemployed for a long time. I worked for some time at a big farm, where I was assigned a few workers, and we were rooting out plants. Fortunately, later a director of a school, not far from here, contacted me and offered me a job. I worked there from the year of the coup d'état, from 1989, until 1997 when I negotiated my retirement.

However, the political persecutions against me continued throughout these years, because of my being a Liberal. I was accused of being a communist by the Colorado sectional and sub-sectional representatives. I was arrested three times because of them. The police chief of investigations took me to the police station. However, when he was telling me about all of the allegations, at no point would I lower my eyes. Because one should not be afraid, if one has done nothing wrong. I asked for permission to talk, but they would not allow me. I wanted to know who gave them this false information about me, but they also would not

say. Later they threatened me: they told me that they would beat me up and that I would go to prison. I told them: "You have wrong information, I am not a rapist and I am not a communist. I did nothing wrong." They threatened me further, but I defended myself and did not fall into their traps. Fortunately, later a man, a Colorado and a friend of the deputy, entered the police station and came to the room where I was held. He told them: "With due respect Sir, this citizen is a Liberal, but he would never say that it is cold, that it rains, or that he is tired, when I need him. This man did nothing wrong. He is a Liberal, but he works for me and helps me from time to time." What he meant by this was that I would help him with different documents or copies (since he did not know how to write very well). I would often help him without asking for any money. Later another man entered and said similar things in my defence.

The persecutions continued even further. I think that this is also why I do not receive my retirement pension. Once I was called to see one of the local superintendents in his office. I was told to go and to see him immediately. I thought that this was about football, since he was the secretary of the club as well. It turned out not to be. He told me: "Mr. Ramirez, as a former class mate of yours, since we studied together in the second grade, I appreciate you very much. That is why I want to recommend you to affiliate yourself with the Colorado Party. This would be beneficial for your career." I was surprised. I responded: "My father was a Liberal and this is why I am a Liberal. I do not want to change that, but I am not politically active." He seemed to respect my answer and said: "I will not do you any harm, and I will continue as before." But I think that it was him who later did not pass my work documents, the certificates of how many years I worked, and effectively made it happen that I do not receive my pension. He did it because I did not want to join the Colorado Party. I am not sure, however, if it was him. I do not know who committed this betrayal. All of the documents simply disappeared. This is very upsetting to me, especially because this politics is not important to me. For example, I do have one blue shirt, but I would be ashamed to go and walk the streets in it. I only use it as pyjamas. I have a red shirt as well, but I only use it for work. The party divide is not important to me, what is important is the person. I retired in 1997 and have not had a paid employment since. However, until this day, I do not receive my retirement and have to struggle to make ends meet. I sell my cows whenever I need to. Thanks to God, I am surviving.

The man who prosecuted me the most, who made most accusations, died already. I forgave him however... He was ill for a long time and requested for a priest to see him. Since no one could get a priest for him, I did it. I talked to the Pa'i [priest] Renato Buccolini and he agreed to come. Together with the priest, we, the local coordinators of the Catholic Church, came along – twelve of us. We waited outside of the house while the Pa'i went to speak to the ill man. Later the priest came out and told me that the man wants to talk to me in confidence. I went in. He was lying in bed, weak, looking at me. He asked for my forgiveness for all of the persecutions. I told him: "It is because I already forgave you that I organised this visit." I do not regret forgiving him, despite all of his wrongdoing towards me.

I always say that one needs to be kind and offer favours to others. One day, when I was coming back home after a day of work, there was a broken car at the side of the road not far from my house. It was raining. I went there to see what had happened and saw the driver struggling with the vehicle and not knowing what to do. I asked him in Guarani what had happened and he explained that the engine broke, and that he was already there the whole day trying to fix it. He received no help thus far. I told him: "We are both Paraguayans my brother, I do not have much, I am poor, but I want to help you. Come to my house to pass the night, we have at least some manioc at home." He accepted my help. Because it was raining so badly, he stayed for three whole days, working on the engine whenever the rain stopped for a while. His name was Mauro Sosa, he was working as an ambulance driver for the hospital in San Pedro. After these three days he drove back home.

Later, in 1983, my wife got sick. I took her to the hospital in San Pedro. She had meningitis. I was there with her. She had to get an injection every four hours, and I had to pay for those. It was like this for a few days and I was desperate because I did not have much money. I did not have enough. And then all of a sudden a young fellow came to me and asked:

-Are you Mr Ramirez?

-Yes, I am. And who are you?

-You know me well, sir! My name is Mauro Sosa. You helped me and gave me food for three days in your house and you did not charge me anything. Now it is my turn to return the favour. Do not buy these medicines, I will provide them for you.

He apparently had access to some of the medical samples, which he gave me free of charge. He also brought me some food.

After fourteen days, my wife died. She died at night. The doctors were telling me to leave her behind. I was insisting that I could not do that. They asked me: "Do you have the money to take the body with you?" "I have a lot of money", I lied to them, because I had nothing. But they called the ambulance driver, Mauro Sosa, and told me "This man will take your wife to Arroyo Ata in the ambulance. You need to pay him for 25 litres of gasoline." And so we went. On the way he ordered the 25 litres of petrol, but told me "You will not pay anything sir! They have no shame these doctors; by the law they should pay for the petrol!" He signed the receipt as if I had paid for it. And this is precisely why I always say that one needs to give favours to others! I always tell my children to help those in need, because when they will need help, people will return the favours.

At first I did not want to remarry. One of the reasons was that I was afraid that a new wife would not value and respect my children. However, when my oldest son decided that he wanted to go and live in Asunción and work there as a policeman, he spoke with my other children and they asked me to marry again. They thanked me for always being there when they needed me and told me that they wanted me to be have a wife, to be happy and to have someone with whom to share all of the household tasks. And very soon I found a new wife. My first wife's name was Melania Portillo, my current wife is Juliana Pavón. We have one child together. I am very happy because she treats all my children as hers, so as if she is their mother. To this day, it is like this. Most of my children live in other places now, but they always come to visit.

Besides his textual story which is based on narratives, Calixto also took many photographs, representing various aspects of his life, household chores, his friends and other people from Arroyo Ata. A selection of his images are presented below.



Giving a blessing to my son, together with my wife Juliana.



Juliana's mother gives a blessing to her daughters and grandchildren. I was there as well.



Feeding chickens and milking a cow.





Above: Preparing "chipa"; Below: Preparing a pig's head.





The "chipa" is ready (above) to bake it in the "tatakua" oven (below).





Preparing meat for an "asado" (grill), while eating lunch.





*Above: Before our neighbour passed away, he asked to give food to children in his memory. This is what his family does every year on the anniversary of his death.
Below: Children getting ice cream.*





In the church.





Procession during the day of our patron (above) and the “asado” afterwards (below).





Juliana.





Calixto is also one of the local organisers and representatives of the governmental Tercera Edad program – a program of monthly economic subsidies for the elderly, introduced by the government of the former president Fernando Lugo (president from 2008 to 2012, when he was removed from office in an impeachment process that has been criticised by many as a coup d'état). These four photographs from one of their local meetings with the beneficiaries of the program were taken by Calixto's son – Carlos. I read these photographs as representative of the economically problematic, or even desperate, situation of elderly people in Paraguay and at the same time representative of the trouble with the successful implementation of the program.





Theories of Nationalism

This thesis proposes to understand nationalism as a broad set of different contextually-relevant epistemic frameworks, which share a similar axiomatic assumption concerning the existence of nations and nationals (people with certain shared characteristics). This has been reiterated with the use of different examples within a broader theoretical debate on contextual epistemic permissibility – the observation that it is individually and socially permissible to apply different, multiscale or even contradictory frameworks, in different situations. Within this approach, nationalism plays a role only contextually, and cannot be seen as an essentialist determinant, as is often claimed in emic discourses (as will be explained throughout this box). Or in other words, we cannot analytically assume nationalism to be relevant or present in each situation. We have seen several such examples in the course of this thesis, in which a different situational and relational logic was evoked at different times. In this sense, nationalism is to be seen as one of many different ways of relating to others, of interpreting and explaining the world.

This thesis, however, also makes an argument towards an approach of analytical and methodological complementarity of different (often incompatible) interpretative and explanatory approaches. Can we expand our anthropological understanding of nationalism by drawing from different theoretical approaches, presented in juxtaposition? Here, I will discuss different theories of nationalism and how they can be related to the aforementioned examples and to Paraguayan nationalism more broadly. My intention is not only to experiment with thinking through the different analytical approaches, but also to better locate the claims made in this thesis within other theories of nationalism. Later, I will also reflect on the problem of using both *nationalism* and *ethnicity* as analytical categories.

Primordialist approaches to nationalism (as discussed by Özkirimli 2010, p.49-71), are characterised by an assumption that nations, in some form, have always existed amongst humans. Different versions of such an understanding relate it either to a continuity or evolution of large kinship-like structures, a commonness through hereditary ties of blood,

socio-cultural aspects, or relation to a given territory. Although such a view is widely discredited amongst researchers and is not in use nowadays as an analytical approach, it remains present as a popular discourse among different types of nationalisms themselves. Amongst the people from Nueva Germania, claims of long biological or cultural hereditary continuity are also present. For example, Carlos explained differences between Germans and Paraguayans as an effect of socio-biological, evolutionary adaptation to environment, and as a hereditary continuity of national characteristics (in chapter 2, "Contextual Epistemic Permissibility"). Carlos claimed that the differences between Germans and Paraguayans emerged out of adaptation to different climates. He claimed that these differences also became passed on hereditarily. Although in Nueva Germania, Germans and Paraguayans have grown up in the same environment, these hereditary differences continue to persist. A similar claim to *longue durée* can be found in popular historical discourses, in the media or in school books, which see Paraguayanness as a hereditarily transmitted influence of pre-Columbian "Guarani culture". These mythical Guaranis are portrayed as heroic, grand warriors, from whom current Paraguayans inherited many cultural traits, alongside their language. The primordialist approach, although belonging to a different epoch of social science, is similar to various emic essentialist discourses, and can be used to classify them as such.

Modernist approaches, including those of Hobsbawm, Gellner and Anderson for instance, disagree with the claims to long historical continuity of nationalism, tracing its emergence to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and analysing it from a constructivist perspective (Özkirimli 2010, p.72-142). Eric Hobsbawm notably described the comparatively recent innovation of the nation and nationalism, its symbols, histories, and others, as an outcome of social engineering (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992, p.12). He claimed that nationalism is constructed through a process of a partially deliberate inventing of traditions - formalization of rituals, symbols and rules, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours, all of which ultimately serve the purposes of the modern state. Within such an understanding, history is often used to legitimate actions and to establish group cohesion. "*We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable, paradox:*

modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion" (Ibid. p.14). Such an approach to nationalism focuses mainly on an abstract social analysis, in which individuals are coerced by these acts of social engineering. It would explain the claim of a cultural continuity from the ancient Guaranis as an invented tradition which serves the Paraguayan state, legitimises it and evokes social cohesion. Peoples belief in this ancestral continuity is an effect of widely spread manipulation, through which a Paraguayan nation-state is legitimised. The belief in ancestral continuity can also be seen as the reason why some German descendants, despite not fitting well into the invented discourses, identify to a degree with Paraguayan nationalism (and, for example, serve in the military) because of these structures of nationalist indoctrination that they grew up within. This approach, however, does not explain the different contextual uses of nationalism and of other social categories.⁸⁰

Ernest Gellner's theoretical approach described the processes of the social construction of nations and nationalism as a product of industrial revolution. He distinguishes between pre-modern ('agro-literate', non-homogenous) and modern (industrial, homogeneous) societies, and it is only in the latter that nationalism emerged. Nationalism, as he described it, is mainly a political principle, in which the political and national units are congruent (Gellner 1983, p.1). Nationalism emerges, according to Gellner, out of changes in labour – namely, in the mechanisation, specialisation and delocalisation of labour. He argues that these changes and wider modernism (including a standardisation and homogeneity of culture) bring about a chain reaction, contributing to the emergence of nationalism. The historical context forced people to adjust to new types of work. These types of work required unified knowledge and skills, thus resulting in the

⁸⁰*This approach may be incapable of explaining how German nationalism continues in time, since there is no state to reproduce it or to benefit from this nationalism. Possibly, the Germanness in Nueva Germania would be described as ethnicity rather than nationalism. This already indicates the problematic division between these two terms – if a nationalism detaches itself from state structures, should it be named an ethnicity? And what can we say of the case whereby some people hold German citizenship or have even lived in Germany for some time?*

development of universal educational systems. Popular education furthered the cultural homogenisation of the population, and also led to the reinforcement of a centralised administrative state.

In contrast to the self-presentation and symbolism of nations, which draw from history and 'folk culture', nationalism in fact invents and disseminates its own culture:

"The basic deception and self-deception practised by nationalism is this: nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population. It means that generalized diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind [...]" (Ibid. p.57).

In his later writing, Gellner further developed his theory, describing different stages of transition from pre-modern societies to modern nation-states. In such a transformation process, nationalism begins to spread as a political principle, and ultimately give legitimacy to nations as a political units. Such an emerging new nation-state needs to confront any opposition from minorities and further homogenise its population, what often results in mass murder, forced migration, or in some forms of oppression. Ultimately the virulence of nationalism declines, although it never fully disappears (Gellner in: Özkirimli 2010, p.103-104). These historical stages, as Gellner recognised, did not apply equally and had many variations.

Gellner's broad socio-historical analysis can be applied to analyse the Paraguayan case. A growing nationalism, a dissatisfaction of the "Paraguayans" -meaning, the non-Spanish mestizos - with the Spanish holding most public offices, led to the proclamation of independence in 1811 (as claimed by de López Moreira 2015, p.133)⁸¹. The new nation-state almost immediately employed social institutions that might effect a reproduction of

⁸¹It is notable how she, in her book on the history of Paraguay [Historia del Paraguay], on the one hand produces an academic historical account, yet on the other hand reproduces the nationalistic assumption of long historical continuity – for example by writing a chapter at the beginning of the book, on "The Neolithic: The Guarani" [El Neolítico: Los Guarani], or simply by naming the local population of the Spanish colony as Paraguayans.

the nation-state. At the beginning of 1812 an obligatory primary education for all male children was established, and the government focused on the construction of schools and on the training of teachers (Ibid. p.139). Subjects taught in these schools included “chronology”, geography and history of America. All of which, within Gellner's approach, can be seen as perfect tools for the spread of national consciousness and nationalism as an ethos, because of these subjects' potential to legitimise Paraguay as a nation. Another notable policy aimed to undermine the previous rule of the Spanish, and enforce Paraguayanness was a decree promulgated in 1814 which prohibited Spaniards to marry white women, under threat of harsh fines or deportation. This law served the nationalistic purpose of an eradication of Spanishness—seen as something reproduced through biological or cultural heredity—without the use of physical violence (Ibid. p.143). The population was being homogenised. Currently this tendency continues - most of the Paraguayans see themselves as mestizos, and schools teach children (amongst others, in 'anthropology' classes) about the ancient ancestral Guarani culture. A standardised artificial version of the Guarani language has been created and has become a part of the educational program, and children (many of whom speak fluently the *jopara* Guarani) are forced to learn it in parallel to Spanish classes. Through all these processes of social homogenisation, the nation-state asserts itself and is perceived as a natural political unit.

The Gellnerian modernist approach to nationalism, despite receiving much critique for allegedly being reductionist or simplistic, offers a perspective on nationalism as socially constructed: created and recreated by different social institutions. The main purpose of nationalism as ethos is the legitimisation of political power of the nation-state, which today can be seen as true on a global scale.⁸² Thinking through Gellner's proposed view on nationalism, we can see historical claims of long continuity, much of formal education, military service, etcetera, as instrumental inventions for social cohesion and legitimisation of a nation-state. His approach, however, does not serve very well to explain the

⁸²On the day of writing this text a headline on the daily news was introduced as: “Leaders from twenty **nations** gather for a conference” (Al Jazeera, live news, 3.06.2016). Another headline stated: “Referendum voting papers sent to some EU **nationals** by mistake” (The Guardian, web page, 2.06.2016). This use of wording emphasises that citizens and nationals, as well as nation and state, are treated synonymously – thereby continuing to conflate the nationalistic, political and administrative categories.

nationalism of German descendants, nor does it allow an incorporation of the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility.

Benedict Anderson, besides asking how nations emerged and changed over time, emphasises the need to investigate why nationalism commands such profound emotional legitimacy. Part of the problem lies in the analytical approach which classifies it as an ideology. *"It would, I think, make things easier if one treated it as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion, rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism' "*(2006. p.5). Anderson proposes his own definition, which intends to tackle this emotional legitimacy and propose a cultural, rather than ideological, approach to nationalism.

"In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Ibid. p.5-6).

He further reflects, that 'imagined' does not mean 'fake', as the previous theories might imply.

"[...] Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations" (Ibid. p.6)

For Anderson, nations are rather imagined as a 'horizontal comradeship', which creates a strong attachment, for which some people are even willing to kill or sacrifice their own lives. Although this 'comradeship' is imagined individually, it is through observations of everyone's participation in nationalism that people become *"reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life. [...] fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations"* (Ibid. p.35). In this sense, nationalism is socially made into reality, and emerges out of large cultural systems rather than merely via political ideologies. The same examples from Paraguay and Nueva Germania can be used within

this approach, better explaining how nationalism becomes so important in peoples lives, and how it comes into being through imagination rather than political indoctrination.

One other issue raised by Anderson was that the study of nationalism ought to expand beyond the European context, widening the perspectives on the phenomenon. In an argument about historical chronology, Anderson claimed that nationalist consciousness emerged in the colonies of Latin America, as led by Creole elites, earlier than in Europe. This was so due to different factors, one of which was the fact that they had already been administrative units, as colonies, for a longer time (Ibid. p.47-66). Another argument against the theories of nationalism which focused solely on Europe has been raised by *Partha Chatterjee*. He strongly rejects the universalist theoretical positions which saw the emerging colonial nationalisms as simple repetitions, or modular forms, of the European nation. He claims that such theorists and historians should not assume the post-colonial world to be a simple perpetual consumer of modernity delivered by the Western colonisers. "*Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized*" (1993b, p.5). Chatterjee observed that the 'anticolonial nationalism' was a different creative phenomenon, which addressed both the new members of a nation and the colonial masters. It was a way to deny the alleged inferiority, "[...] *to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world*" (1993a, p.30). An anti-colonial nationalism was thus a form of a passive revolution, a legitimisation of autonomy.

Such an interpretation can be useful for the Paraguayan case. As described above, the nationalist discourses and formation of a nation-state were very much a struggle against the Spanish rulers. Paraguayan nationalism was a creative political act of gaining political legitimisation and establishing a relative social cohesion within the new state. Paraguayanness imagined itself as a unity of differences, basing its self-understanding on the mestizos of many different backgrounds and allowing for certain diversity. This is also why within nationalist historical discourses Spaniards are presented as 'others', rather

than as part of national heritage (a continuity of Spanishness), and why cultural ancestry is claimed to derive from the ancient Guarani culture.

Chatterjee also reflected on how nationalism retained the distinction between men and women, through an assumption that the feminine role was related to spirituality and home, rather than any political contest. This point was also raised by different authors (in Özkirimli 2010, p.175-182), who pointed out that nationalist movements do not incorporate all people equally, and that this is clearly visible in their assumptions about the role of women. Most of the theorisations of nationalism have ignored gender relations and different roles prescribed to men and women. Nationalism has been described mostly as a male phenomenon, whereas women are figuring as “*conquerors' mistresses, wartime rape victims, military prostitutes, cinematic soldier-heroes, pin-up models on patriotic calendars, and as workers, wives, girlfriends and daughters waiting dutifully at home*” (Enloe in Özkirimli 2010, p.175). The understanding of citizenship does not encapsulate how the state forms its political project, thus does not allow us to identify the ways in which women participate in the national process – that is, as biological reproducers, as reproducers of boundaries, ideology, culture, as signifiers of national differences, and as participants in the economic, political, and military struggles (Yuval-Davis in Özkirimli 2010, p.176-177).

Such an analysis can provide us with further insights into formation and discourses of Paraguayan nationalism. Women, with few exceptions, are not celebrated as national heroes or political figures. There is, however, a collective idea of the Paraguayan woman (*La Mujer Paraguaya*) as a national heroine. This anonymous collective portrayal reaches back to the Paraguayan War (*La Guerra de la Triple Alianza*), after which Paraguay was left with very few adult men. In this time, it is often said, women kept the country running, by performing not only the feminine but also the masculine chores.⁸³ Women are seen as guardians of traditions, religion, and family values. Such views are popular not only in

⁸³I have also heard several times from different men that because of the post-war period there is a general 'culture' of having mistresses and relations with multiple women. They claimed that after the war it was a patriotic duty to have many children and “make many women pregnant”, in order to repopulate the country. This, they claimed, became part of Paraguayan culture.

history classes, but popular discourses and folk songs (a statue of 'Paraguayan Woman' can be seen in one of the photographs which Mercedes made, located on a shelf next to a photograph of Elisabet Nietzsche, in the entrance of the Hotel Germania). Such is the case of the poem *Kuña Guápa* ['Hard-working Woman' in Guarani] and its musical interpretations⁸⁴ which glorify an anonymous woman for her complete dedication and sacrifice without any signs of fatigue or aversion. Although changing, the traditional gender roles and expectations of their fulfilment are present in Nueva Germania and Paraguay. This analytical approach to nationalism can help us to identify how and when nationalism and gender are both relevant in discourses and action. However, this understanding of nationalism, as well as all of the other previously presented theoretical approaches, assume a universal relevance of nationalism.

Another widely quoted contribution to study of nationalism, was made by *Michael Billig* (1995). He took the approach of understanding nationalism 'from below', focusing on its quotidian reproduction. He looked at nationalism not as a mere ideological position or psychological equipment but as a social phenomenon of which the everyday constituents should be researched – such as omnipresent national symbols, stereotypes, as well as historical, political, media discourses, or even weather reports, by which nationalism maintains its strong presence in much of quotidian life. For Billig, the central question was: “[...] *why do 'we', in established, democratic nations not forget 'our' national identity?*” (Ibid. p.93). The matter is not just ceremonial use of national emblems or passionate weaving of flags, he argued, but in the everyday details such as coins or stamps, in small words, habits of language, and other routines, which contribute to the constant reproduction of nationalism.

Such an approach, of looking towards daily manifestations and reproductions of nationalism, has already been applied to a degree within this thesis. In the case of Germanness or Paraguayanness, it is not only the most visible markers of difference – such

⁸⁴A musical interpretation of the original poem by *Clementino Ocampos*, performed by the group *Vocal Dos*, can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLLDsFBEEnQo> [accessed: 17.02.2017]

as the different spoken languages or religious denominations – but also, as Waltraud and Carlos claimed (described in chapter 2), more quotidian and '*banal*' aspects, such as pig slaughter, cultivating a vegetable garden, saving money, or making and eating *Quark Käse* (curd cheese). However, the question which we might ask is whether these markers of difference are indeed always relevant as such? For Billig, coins and bank notes which contain national symbols are a source of the constant reproduction of nationalism. Even though often absent from people's conscious attention, he argued, they can be "*simultaneously present and absent*". Billig used Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' to emphasise such unconscious daily reproduction of nationalism, embedded in symbols and actions. Habitus, for him, is "[...] *the dispositions, practices and routines of the familiar social world. It describes 'the second nature' which people must acquire in order to pass mindlessly (and also mindfully) through the banal routines of daily life*" (Ibid. p. 42). Tim Edensor, after Billig, similarly accepts the concept of habitus as explanatory for the conscious and unconscious reproductions of nationalism. "*Such performances are shaped by unreflexive assumptions and dispositions as often as they display calculated intentionality, revealing kinds of habitus that evolve within a national field*" (2002, p.88). By such tokens, nationalism never disappears and elements like coins are its constant reminders and reproducers.

Should we then accept that the *Quark Käse* is and always remains a factor in reproducing Germanness, even if eaten '*mindlessly*'? Could there be no situation in which it is understood and acted upon in a completely different, non-nationalistic way (consciously or unconsciously)? This of course refers to some of the big philosophical questions of agency, structure, social action, or the nature of society and social reality itself (for example- is reality idealist or materialist?). According to the position put forward in this thesis—the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility—there are many different epistemic frameworks through which this cheese can be understood and acted upon. I would thus only accept a weaker version of Billig's claim that different symbols and routines reproduce nationalism. Within his approach such symbols are at work ubiquitously. Whereas the approach put forward in this thesis recognises that in some

situations money or cheese can have different meanings and do not necessarily reproduce nationalism.

In yet another theoretical approach, *Craig Calhoun* (1999 and 2007) focused his analysis of nationalism on its rhetoric: on how different claims and ways of speaking can shape consciousness, ways of thinking and acting, through which nations are constituted. Criticizing approaches which portrayed nationalism as false or fake, Calhoun argues that it would be an analytical *“misunderstanding to think that the reality of nations depends on the accuracy of their collective self-representations”* (2007, p.41). In other words, nations and nationalism exist because they exist for the people and within their collective practices [an argument somewhat similar to that made by Anderson, as described above]. Calhoun claims that nationalism has many different forms and is in itself a heterogeneous phenomenon, which is why we require different analytical approaches to study its different manifestations. In his analysis of nationalist rhetoric, he distinguished several features which are important to varying degrees:

1. *Boundaries, of territory, population, or both.*
2. *Indivisibility- the notion that the nation is an integral unit.*
3. *Sovereignty, or at least the aspiration to sovereignty, and thus formal equality with other nations, usually as an autonomous and putative self-sufficient state.*
4. *An 'ascending' notion of legitimacy - i.e. the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will or at least when it serves the interests of 'the people' or 'the nation'.*
5. *Popular participation in collective affairs- a population mobilized on the basis of national membership (whether for war or civic activities).*
6. *Direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of the nation and in that respect categorically equivalent to other members.*
7. *Culture, including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices.*

8. *Temporal depth - a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history.*
9. *Common descent or racial characteristics.*
10. *Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory” (1997, pp.4-5).*

Calhoun claims that nationalism is a particular way of thinking, which is largely constituted through the claims themselves. His approach can be used to recognise and classify different types of nationalist discourses with various axiomatic assumptions – or, as I have called it, types of ‘nationalect’.

How does the view of nationalism presented in this thesis fit with these different approaches? What is the key identity upon which my work is based? Many of the above presented theories, assume a continuous presence and influence of nationalism. Özkirimli argued that nationalism cannot be reduced to '*simply*' socially constituted discourses or narratives – for him, it is more than that, it "*forms the framework of the world as we know it*" (2010, p. 216). This is where this thesis disagrees, claiming that indeed nationalism is a set of frameworks to understand and act upon the world, *but these are plural and not constant*. To reiterate, firstly, nationalism assumes different forms: from political claims, moral and economic attitudes, to the perception of cheese. The aspect which can be analytically seen as common in all these heterogeneous manifestations is the axiomatic assumption that such things as nation and nationhood do indeed exist. Secondly, nationalism cannot be assumed to be relevant, to be at work, at all times. People operate contextually on different epistemic frameworks.⁸⁵

⁸⁵*Nigel Rapport, in a study of nationalism in a Scottish hospital, came to very similar conclusions. In his observation, nationalism is situated as Wittgenstein's 'language game' or a way of being. Nationalism "is part of a field or range of legitimate ways of speaking and behaving in the everyday. There is tension among these because they are alternatives: at any one moment of expression people make a selection between nationality and other ways of being" (2012, p.71). This way of being conveys certain assumptions in regard to belonging, loyalty, behaviour, etcetera, and can take various different forms. Rapport's use of 'language games' is similar to my use of 'epistemic frameworks' – as ways of being and knowing the world. Also similarly, Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, and Grancea, see ethnicity and nationhood as profoundly*

All of these theoretical approaches can provide different ways of understanding nationalism, and through their different kinds of focus, we may be led to explore historical, political, postcolonial, gendered, linguistic, and other perspectives. Even if we are disagreeing with some of the key claims of such approaches, I believe they offer interesting insights, and that their juxtaposition is valuable. We can think about the reproduction of nationalism through history, state policies, social institutions, or daily practices – look at the history of Paraguay, school curricula, or speech practices. Looking at Calixto's story, Germanness and Paraguayanness seem to be relevant at times - when referring to punctuality of parents or people's religion. Through different theories of nationalism, we can speculate differently about how these manifestations of nationalism were learned, socially or politically imposed, or evoked through different daily life symbols. More often, however, nationalism seemed to play little or no role, and being a civic missionary, a teacher, or a husband and father, was what mattered the most. When Albert first took me to meet Calixto, I saw no evocations of national differences – their meeting was based mostly on a former student and teacher relation, on gratitude, cordiality and respect. Albert remembered his early education fondly, and he thanked Calixto for everything that he had learned in school. I observed no use of potentially distancing categories between Albert and Calixto. In regard to me, they positioned themselves as two local people who were happy to host me and to share their knowledge. Albert emphasised the importance of seeking Calixto's expertise and perspectives from the past. We should clarify that although nationalism plays a limited contextual role in these stories and interactions this does not mean that this is always the case, and people and contexts in which nationalism is strongly relevant do exist.

However, even if we disagree with some key assumptions, if we think through all of the different theories of nationalism in parallel, we should be able to shed light on other possible interpretations and explanations. It allows to look at historical continuities, state structures, political discourses, linguistic structures, etcetera, and experiment with exploring research data from such perspectives. Complementarity, in this sense can be

embodied modality of experience, as something that 'happens' in various 'temporal registers', but is not omni-relevant (2006, p.357-364).

seen as *Exercises in Analysis*, to paraphrase the title of Queneau's brilliant book⁸⁶, allowing for a juxtaposition of different analytical perspectives.

Ethnicity and Nationalism - Problems with analytical concepts

These different approaches to nationalism represent a variety of different theories each prioritising different analytical units: long historical perspectives, social constructs, political claims, discourse analyses, and performativity. The concept of nationalism is in itself defined in a different way, and sometimes conflates emic and etic perspectives, and as a result becomes fuzzy and inconsistent. One of the key problems, as I see it, lies in the parallel uses of both 'nationalism' and 'ethnicity' by many authors. This difference between them is often described as political. For Calhoun “(...) *nationalism is not simply a claim of ethnic similarity, but a claim that certain similarities should count as the definition of political community. For this reason, nationalism needs boundaries in a way premodern ethnicity does not*” (1993, p.229). Such a view risks limiting the understanding of politics as solely being a domain of occidental nation-states. Furthermore, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen pointed out, the division between nationalism and ethnicity becomes even more problematic when considering poly-ethnic states, ethnic groups which make claims of political autonomy, or the multiple political relations between states and those whom they define as ethnic minorities (Eriksen 2002, p.119).

As Brubaker rightly noticed, “(...) *we should not uncritically adopt categories of ethnopolitical practice as our categories of social analysis*” (2002, p.166). An analytical distinction between ethnicity and nationalism risks reproducing emic connotations, and also risks legitimising the power relations that arise from keeping a distinction between nationalism/nationality and ethnicity. The term *ethnicity* itself can be used to include or to exclude certain people. Such is the case with the terms *Volksdeutsche* (Ethnic Germans), used mostly in the Third Reich, or currently used terms *Aussiedler* (Expatriates) and

⁸⁶*His Exercises in Style (2013) were an important inspiration for me in thinking about complementarity.*

Deutscher Volkszugehöriger (German Volk-Members⁸⁷). Such emic terms had, and still have, political consequences related to the “*right of return law*” or rules of obtaining German citizenship. By differentiating between someone who is just national, and someone who is ethnic-national, people can gain or lose certain privileges. In our case, using the term ethnicity rather than nationalism could risk legitimising the political consequences of that term. However, most scholars do continue to use both terms.⁸⁸ In this sense, my consistent use of the term nationalism (as encompassing such other terms as: nation, nationhood, nationality, nationals – all of which derive from similar axiomatic assumption) to refer both to the local division between the Germans and Paraguayans, as well as to the state politics, discourses, beliefs, performative reproduction, etcetera, is subversive.

Another possibility for achieving analytical consistency, besides choosing to use only one of these concepts, is to find a third term. One could use *nationalism* or *ethnicity* in reference to the emic terms, but also analytically withdraw, for example, to Vonnegut's *granfalloon*s (as mentioned in chapter 2). We can understand the concept of *granfalloon*s, redefined for our purposes⁸⁹, as any form of epistemic frameworks which rely on an axiomatic belief in the existence of a group with supposed common characteristics. Such an understanding would allow us to analyse the social categories of Germans, Paraguayans, Germaninos, Campesinos, and others, under the one analytical term of *granfalloon*s, exploring commonalities in distinct phenomena.⁹⁰

⁸⁷The term *Volk* can be translated into either *people*, *ethnic group*, or *nation*. In general the term is rather used in a *primordialist* sense - referring to the people who are considered German through heritage of blood and culture, independently from citizenship and residence.

⁸⁸For example, in a more recent co-authored book, Brubaker et al. distinguish between *nationalistic history and politics*, and *'everyday ethnicity'*. Although the authors assure that they do not intend to create a sharp distinction between *nationalism* and *ethnicity*, they continue using both terms (Brubaker et al., 2006).

⁸⁹Vonnegut described *granfalloon*s as *'false' groups* – in the spirit of Anderson's critique we should abstain from describing social reality as *false*, or *invented* (at least not, without making it an explicit philosophical position), and *redefine* the term, *disassociating* it from a *misnomer*.

⁹⁰Our consideration of *nationalism*, can also step outside of the *interpretative* and *explanatory* realms and enter a *moral* or *prescriptive* debate. In the case of *nationalistic epistemic frameworks*, we might ask ourselves if we should keep using them, if their use is *ethical*, or if and when is it *useful*? Personally, I feel a *resentment* towards all uses of *nationalism*. I believe that a *first step* in the direction of *de-legitimation*

03.09 Carlos Alberto Benítez Vázquez



I met Carlos by coincidence during my first bus journey to Nueva Germania. He became an important contributor to my research and a good friend. Carlos is originally from Asunción, but he has been living in the department of San Pedro for almost three decades now. As a little boy, he remembers his mother secretly participating in the organisational part of the “*Movimiento 14 de Mayo*” [The Movement of the 14th of May] – named after the independence date of Paraguay. It was an armed guerrilla organisation, which in 1959 attempted an unsuccessful military intervention. When he was older he joined a revolutionary group himself and engaged in secretive movement against Alfredo Stroessner. Part of the group decided to undertake an armed action, despite the

of nationalistic thinking, is a careful attention to discourse (for example, replacing the word “nationals” with “citizens”, or “nations” with “states”). I will however abstain from a moral or prescriptive debate, which lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

disapproval from other members, and the action turned out to be unsuccessful. There were repercussions for all members of the movement. Carlos had to hide and live on the run for some time, and fortunately managed to avoid capture. He suspects that this explains why all of his official school records had been erased without trace from the institutional registers. This was the reason why he could never enrol into a university, which as he says had an impact on his whole life. He continued studying by himself, as well as attending various courses and workshops. His social analysis and critique never ceased to impress me and to inspire fascinating discussions.

Carlos offered to participate in my project early in my fieldwork. However, we only recorded his account towards the end of my stay in Nueva Germania. This was beneficial, since the accumulation of numerous long discussions led to a thorough representation of Carlos' ideas and opinions on family agriculture and cooperativism. As is the case with most of the project participants, we recorded his narrative and I transformed it into a written account. For the purposes of this thesis, many details and examples had to be excluded, keeping in mind the future audience and length of the text. I also restructured the story slightly. After finishing the written version of this story I had sent it to Carlos for corrections, but he had none and was satisfied with it. Furthermore, Carlos did not take photographs especially for this project but selected some of his previously taken images and asked me to choose which ones to use. What follows is Carlos' story.

In my story, I would like to share my experiences, observations, and reflections about the socio-economic organisation of people in Nueva Germania, and about our current initiative to form a new cooperative. Firstly, however, I need to introduce the situation and the challenges of today's farming communities. In this region, and in Paraguay in general, agriculture has always been the basis of economic activity for most families. Moreover, family agriculture⁹¹ is not only an economic practice, but is also a culture in itself. This

⁹¹*“Agricultura familiar”, also known in English as “family farming, is a very broad subject, well described in academic and non-academic literature, as well as in general political terminology (an example being The 2014 International Year of Family Farming, of the United Nations). An in-depth engagement with this issue beyond Carlos’ story lies beyond the scope of this thesis.*

activity permits a *campesino* [a small-scale farmer] to live from it, communicate through it, relate to other campesinos, and to the environment. It is an economic, social, political and environmental issue. It is a type of agriculture which is oriented mainly towards the sustenance of one's family, community, and towards the continuity of a way of life. This is a key difference with large scale agribusiness, which is oriented towards the accumulation of wealth, and is keener on quick industrial solutions which poison the environment and disregard other people. It provides few work places and expels family agriculture. For such large scale agriculture, to plant something is to make business, rather than a way of life and a culture. The workers and owners quite often do not reside in the places in which they plant. It is solely an economic activity. That is why I do not want to call those who engage in extensive capitalist agriculture “farmers” – they are businessmen who are only interested in accumulating wealth.

Unfortunately, the modern society, the government, and the system itself, gradually force the farmers, the campesinos, to incorporate the agribusiness methods of production. It wants them to reproduce the capitalist model. This however does not work, since the capitalist model requires precisely the one thing which the campesinos do not have – capital, in the form of financial resources. They only have their labour, and their human and natural resources. Moreover, even with sufficient financial resources, the scale of campesinos' production is insufficient to compete with the agribusiness which will always be able to offer lower prices.

It is however possible to adapt the family agriculture to the capitalist system. There is an alternative to the monopoly of agribusiness. Because the world always has a demand for food, campesinos need to produce a surplus, and to find ways to commercialise it. This is the central aspect of the philosophy of agricultural cooperativism. Its goal is to satisfy the food market with high quality products, and provide the farming families with sustainable income. It prioritises people over the accumulation of wealth, and it is possible to achieve it within the capitalist system. United in cooperatives, the campesinos are enabled to sell their diverse products and to compete in the market. Farmers within cooperatives, rather than competing with each other, benefit together from everyone's successes, thereby increasing both cooperation and ultimately the quality of their products. These can thereby reach, or even exceed, the quality of agribusiness products.

Unfortunately, products that have ecological and family agriculture certificates are in demand in markets that have high purchasing power and high social consciousness, which is not the case of Paraguay. Moreover, such a process of certification is too complex and too expensive to achieve for small regional cooperatives of campesinos. Furthermore, the discussion about whether GMO food (Genetically Modified Organisms) is harmful for people's health has not been resolved, and it is not a debate that we want to engage with. These are not the arguments which can convince campesinos to produce organically. However, according to my own experiences and observations, organic farming is cheaper, produces better results, and empowers the campesinos. For us it is important that the farmers remain the owners of their own means of production – both owners of their seeds and in control of the fertility of their soil. Agribusiness solves all encountered problems with investments in chemicals of machines – something which the small-scale farmers cannot afford. These are the reasons why organic methods of farming are better for family agriculture. One of our future goals is to fight a widespread belief in agribusiness methods and agrotoxics, to raise people's consciousness and to educate them in fully organic and ecological methods of farming.⁹²

Once a cooperative is established, it can expand further. In order to cut out further intermediaries, it is possible to form an alliance or an agreement with consumers, in order to directly provide them with high quality agricultural products. Through this it is possible to further expand the cooperative function. This model assures a fairer redistribution of wealth, which moreover stays in the region, rather than being transferred elsewhere. In a cooperative with many extending functions, different work places are created and highly educated people are required. There is a need for agricultural engineers⁹³, accountants,

⁹²For example, recently it has finally been proven that it is counter-productive to dig up the soil before sowing, because it kills microorganisms and reduces the mineral content. A direct seeding into shallow holes proves to be much more profitable and ecological. Another example is that often an appropriate diversification of different crops reduces the threat of pests, because some plants act as repellents. This allows one to eliminate, or at least reduce, the need to purchase any chemicals. Family agriculture has yet to learn and incorporate such methods, while demystifying and abandoning the harmful habits.

⁹³ Unfortunately most agricultural university careers focus currently only on industrial agribusiness methods. Young people who finish such studies are not prepared to work with family agriculture and campesinos. They know a lot about large soy plantations and different chemicals, for example, but nothing

lawyers, medical doctors, electricians, veterinaries, and many other professionals. The farmers' children are encouraged to study, knowing that they can find employment at home. Currently most of the young people that leave Nueva Germania, especially those who pursue specialised education, do not come back due to the lack of opportunities. Moreover, a cooperative can decide to dedicate part of their profits to the community, making investments such as the construction of a nursing home, a cultural centre, or general improvements to the infrastructure. A successful democratic cooperative has the potential to, over time, revitalise farming communities.

To conclude, nowadays campesinos have expenses which have been introduced to them by the modern consumerist society, and from which they cannot escape any more. Goods such as electricity, running water, mobile phones, motorcycles, and many other things, demand a continuous cash flow. All of these things were not used previously and so the campesinos did not require a lot of money to get along. In Nueva Germania electricity was installed only 25 years ago and there were only two telephones in town. A lot has changed since then. From today's perspective we ask ourselves how we were able to live like this. We cannot imagine a life without these commodities any more. We all became much more dependent on money. The family agriculture model needs to fight to maintain its culture and its values, but it also needs to adapt itself to the capitalist system in which we live. In other words, the consumerist capitalist system is global, and the campesinos are already a part of it. We should not seek to separate ourselves from it, but to introduce alternative models which can assure our existence within it. Cooperativism is a solution which allows for a sustainable family agriculture, which can compete with the destructive agribusiness models.

about small scale diverse farming with cooperative organisation, organic pest control, or natural remedies for plants diseases.

I came here as an official of the ecumenical non-governmental organisation *Comité de Iglesias* [Committee of Churches]⁹⁴. During those times we were conducting a rural aid program, created in the year 1979, for agricultural land acquisitions. We were helping different campesinos' organisations to obtain land or to overcome any legal difficulties that they were facing. I was firstly appointed to work in Alto Parana, later in Chaco, and only afterwards, in February of 1987, did I come to Nueva Germania and I have stayed since then. The *Comité de Iglesias* was invited to work in this region, by the local German evangelical congregation [who are part of the *Iglesia Evangélica del Rio de la Plata*]. Some of the local farming communities were in conflict over their land rights, or did not possess property titles, and required our assistance.

One such example was Aguaray'mí, the campesino settlement located close to the urban centre of Nueva Germania. One man used his contacts in the Stroessner government, and registered the whole land area of this old settlement in his name. People had occupied this land, and had been living there for many years. Suddenly this man came and claimed the right to all their properties. At the beginning, he wanted to sell it to a company, but the current occupants protested against this. He did not manage to sell the land to the residents themselves either, since he was asking for very high prices. He ultimately took a mortgage loan from one of the Paraguayan banks, with this land as a guarantee, which he did not intend to repay. This is how the ownership titles of this land were passed on to a bank. We were involved in helping out with the negotiations. Ultimately the bank sold the land titles to the residents, for a relatively low price.

This was just one of many such stories of the farming settlements that I worked with. In Paraguay in general, people just used to occupy an area of land and work it. There was enough available land, thus it was not a big problem. Only when the land began to have a high monetary value, in more recent years, it has become much harder for campesinos to obtain it, or fight legal battles against its official owners.⁹⁵ My work initially was to help with

⁹⁴It later changed its name to *Comité de Iglesias Para Ayudas de Emergencia* [Committee of Churches for Emergency Relief].

⁹⁵I think that the ownership of land should not be secured solely by possession of a title, but also by cultivating it productively.

the organization and collective actions of the people in the settlements, and in helping with the formalities and with the negotiations.

At the *Comité de Iglesias* we believe that organizations such as ours should not only help the campesinos obtain their land titles but also assist them with making a profitable use of land. That is why further assistance in improving their crops and sales is crucial. Together with an agricultural engineer who was also sent here by the *Comité*, we worked on the improvement of cotton production in the different settlements of campesinos in this region. Cotton was the primary agricultural product in Paraguay at the time. Furthermore, we convinced the people to sell their harvest together as a collective. By doing so, we were able to bypass the intermediaries and to secure a better price, thereby generating a higher income from the product. This was sort of a cooperative system.

In parallel, pastor Detlef (who was the Evangelical pastor in Nueva Germania back then), told us that he was thinking about creating a consumption cooperative, a store in which all members could purchase cheaper products. We worked with him in the organization process, convincing many people to join the cooperative (many of whom were from the cotton producing settlements). We named the cooperative “*Jopoi*”, which is a Guaraní word that means mutual help, or an organization based on reciprocity. We achieved something unprecedented in Jopoi: we managed to connect and to integrate, for the first time, Paraguayan and German descendant families.

Over time, the store became very big and well equipped. It not only sold everyday groceries and utensils, but also different agricultural tools. Additionally, the store functioned as the collection centre for the cooperative sales of agricultural products. We even came to have a yerba mate processing machine (a grinder), packaged it, and sold it within the region and to the rest of Paraguay under our own brand - “*Ka'a Jopoi*” (Ka'a means yerba mate in Guaraní). It was of a truly excellent quality and was in high demand. Additionally, the Evangelical congregation had a tractor and a pickup truck, which was also used by the cooperative. We often worked in a *minga* system. *Minga* is a Guaraní work which means “mutual help”, usually related to work exchange.⁹⁶

⁹⁶The difference between the words *jopoi* and *minga* can be illustrated via the following examples: *Jopoi* is when someone says “I will kill a pig today and I will give you part of it. When you will kill a pig next week,

The success of the cooperative converted the surroundings of the store, which was located behind the Evangelical church, into the centre of the town's social life. In Jopói there were no religious, political, or national distinctions – the whole community was welcomed.⁹⁷ As a result of this integration, we created a social club – *El Club Centenario*. Its name derives from the fact that we were celebrating the town's centenary anniversary. Since we did not know when exactly the first settlers arrived here, we chose the 23rd of August for the town's foundation day. Many guests arrived, including foreigners from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. This is when the cooperative Jopói was officially inaugurated. It was a beautiful celebration and a very good time for Nueva Germania. Unfortunately, it lasted only about five years. When pastor Detlef left Nueva Germania, the whole cooperative fell apart within a few months of his departure.

In Detlef's times, many other great things were achieved. For example, a professional technical school was created, in which young people could choose to learn different subjects – horticulture and organic agriculture, electronics, mechanics, carpentry, as well as social organization (of which I was the instructor). It was an excellent school, but it also fell into ruin. When Detlef left, it was decided to hand it over to the state, to the ministry of education. The school closed within a year or two. It fell into ruin quite literally, since today the buildings are falling apart.

One of the main causes of this failure was that the new management of Jopói lacked Detlef's rigorous scrupulousness and administrative skills. People were not well enough prepared to manage such an undertaking by themselves. This also relates to the general lack of political and social education, necessary for people to fully incorporate such a cooperative approach.⁹⁸ It is also true that he was an important leadership figure whom people trusted. No one was able to replace him in this role. Another important factor was that he was very

you will give me a part as well." Whereas minga is when someone says "today I will help you working on your field, and tomorrow you will help me on mine."

⁹⁷*It could be said that our integration was in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which took place not long before. The Council increased ecumenism between Catholics and Protestants.*

⁹⁸*There were also issues with some German descendants opposing any decision of choosing Paraguayans as successors in management roles. However, they did have some legitimate grounds for such doubts, since the culture of corruption was already well visible in Paraguay at the time.*

good at obtaining external funding for all of our projects, much of it from Germany, and when he left no one knew how to do it. Most of the initiatives were not yet developed well enough to maintain themselves without external economic support.



The buildings of the former Jopói and the technical school are unfortunately falling into ruin.



Detlef Venhaus

Having heard about pastor Detlef many times from various people, I decided that it was important for me to meet him. It turned out that he had begun working in a small city with a significant Danish and Dutch population, located about five hundred kilometres south from Buenos Aires. I travelled there and we have spent one whole day together, from the early morning hours when I arrived, until my return bus late at night.

Detlef grew up in Germany, where he finished his studies and became both a nurse practitioner and an evangelic deacon (with preparation not only for social work but also to deliver religious service). Then he was led by a desire to leave Germany and to work as a deacon abroad. An opportunity presented itself to come to Nueva Germania, to Paraguay, where the community was asking for a pastor. He came to South America in his late twenties, in the 1980s. After a short Spanish course in Buenos Aires, he travelled to Nueva Germania. It was only when he arrived, that he started learning about the foundational story of the town. He said that one of the things which he found surprising and impressive, was that after 96 years, at the time of his arrival, the descendants of the first settlers still maintained their Evangelical religion. His interpretation was that the German identity relied mostly on three elements: religion, language, and tradition. Many of the settlers had few original belongings, which either broke or had to be sold; thus, in order to protect their identity, they mostly focused upon the cultivation of immaterial elements. However, the reasons as to why particular German descendants kept their identities for generations (which is also the case in some other settlements), while many other European immigrants did not, remains an interesting question for him.

Alongside his religious service, he engaged in developing various projects. One of the most important undertakings was the expansion and maintenance of the local hospital, which he did in collaboration with the Catholic Nuns. They obtained funding from Germany, and it was possible to expand and to equip the building significantly, and to search for staff members. Additionally, the German settlers from Nordrand and Westrand were complaining that there was no proper school. Thus, one of the other

important projects was the opening of the boarding house, located by the Evangelic church in the urban centre of Nueva Germania, where children could stay during the week and attend school. Besides these, and all the different projects which were already described by Carlos, Detlef was also coaching a local football club, which was very important both to him and to other inhabitants.

One important tradition which began through his influence, was the celebration of the town's anniversary. He was contacted by a music composer, who stumbled upon the history of Nueva Germania while studying Richard Wagner, and became fascinated and wanted to make an opera about it. This man told Detlef, and all of the inhabitants, that next year the town should celebrate its 100 years. No one in the town, Detlef said, knew the date or details of their history. This was due to the fact that they only knew the year, but not the exact day of the first disembarkation. He recalls that they wrote to the German embassy asking if there were any records of it. Based on some archival information, the ambassador responded that the day was 23th of August, coincidentally the same date as Detlef's birthday. A great party was organised, with visitors from Paraguay and abroad. Detlef, together with a group of inhabitants, organised a theatre play about the foundational history. It was a memorable event for the whole community, and the tradition continues up until today.

He told me that during the same time period a BBC film crew came to make a documentary about Nueva Germania. Their work was one of the main reasons why he became very sceptical about all future journalists and visitors interested in the town and in its history. As Detlef recalls with ire [I have not seen this film myself] they misrepresented people, falsely translated their words, directed scenes according to their interests, and only filmed people with white skin. Supposedly one of the scenes which angered many people, was from a party for which the film-crew paid for, in which they selectively only presented the Germans and did not show the Paraguayans at all. They filmed two German women dancing together, and the narrator's voice explains that this is so because they could not find Aryan boyfriends. This open lie was one of the outrageous examples. Additionally, they did not use any footage from interviews with people who had the greatest historical knowledge (i.e. Walter Neumann, whom they interviewed in Antequerra – Klaus' father), but only with people who would say

statements that could be portrayed as racist. This sensationalism unfortunately continued in many other publications, creating a strong suspicion towards most visitors.

One of the subjects which I often talked about with Detlef, and which is relevant to Carlos' story, is the subject of his experiences of work as a deacon and additionally, I was interested in how he reflects upon these experiences. He criticised the idea of *Entwicklungshilfe* (Development Aid) which drives so many international organisations, including religious ones - *"Some people go with no previous knowledge or experience of a country, and immediately want to be directors of hospitals and teach people how to live,"* he told me. However, even though he carried these critiques before his arrival in Paraguay, and planned his work accordingly and to a large degree with the inhabitants themselves, many of the undertakings failed. This was for a variety of reasons, Detlef reflected, and there was no easy answer to finding a single and clear reason for the failure. To a degree, the whole undertaking became too much dependent on him. That was partially so, because he became some sort of a '*cacique*' (a chief) figure, as he called it. Detlef considered that in Nueva Germania, and largely in Paraguay, these local authority figures sometimes become overly important. *"When I came there, I realised such authority figures existed, and I respected them. Ultimately, I myself became such a figure."* Therefore, the different projects worked well whilst he maintained a high degree of supervision over everything. Once he was there, some personal interests were already playing a role, but not to an excessive degree. However, once he left Nueva Germania, these personal interests and lack of careful management terminated the undertakings. Detlef reflected, similarly to Carlos, that the only solution for people in the countryside who wished to secure an improved economic circumstance, would be in the organisation of cooperatives. He is however somewhat more pessimistic and said he is not sure if it would be possible to form such organisations in the San Pedro district in Paraguay.

Ultimately, when he realised the impossibility of his situation, he understood that he had to leave. He worked later in a community in Argentina, close to the Paraguayan border, and afterwards moved to his current location. Detlef reflected, considering his experiences and also those of others, that the perfect prescription for a deacon, or for anyone wishing to put his skills into work for other people, should be: *"Go to people, live with them, listen to them, and if one day they achieve the biggest successes they*

*themselves wished for, and can say that they themselves have reached it, this is when you have succeeded. To come from outside and tell people how to live and what to do, to organise their lives, has no sense and brings no good results.”*⁹⁹ This is also, more or less, the strategy of the current pastor, Christian Stephan, Detlef's friend, with whom they discussed it many times, and so did I.

This was an attempt to create a social and cooperative organisation, of consumption and production. Jopói had the possibility of becoming a much larger cooperative, and the plan was to formally register it as such. Unfortunately, the attempt failed. After Jopói closed, the cooperative sales of agricultural products, which we initiated with the *Comité de Iglesias*, continued for another few years. Since I did not work with them any more, there was only one person from the *Comité* who kept on helping the campesinos. However, it was mainly technological agricultural help, and there was no one to coordinate and oversee the social organization of the whole undertaking. After some time the cooperative sales of agricultural products also ceased to exist.

There were two other attempts at cooperativism in our town. I did become a member of one of them - not as a representative of any organisation but as an inhabitant of Nueva Germania. However, it seemed that it was only profit oriented, with people seeking solely individual gains, thus it fell apart rather quickly. Afterwards there was another attempt, with a few people who were socially oriented, in which they created a cooperative of production, commercialization, and consumption. They obtained some international funding and started to work together. This cooperative at the beginning worked well, but due to a lack of administrative skills it went bankrupt after about five years. One of the main causes was the amount of loans that the cooperative gave out and never managed to get back. The legal troubles have not been fully resolved yet, but the cooperative does not exist anymore.

⁹⁹Unfortunately, this is not possible with big international funding institutions. In order to receive funding from such sources, one needs to say what they want to hear. “For me this is no longer acceptable,” Detlef reflected.

There were a few other attempts at cooperativism in the region, which came about as a result of the work that we have been doing with campesinos in different settlements. One of them is in General Diaz, called Py'Aguapy, and has been working officially as a cooperative for several years now. Some of the people whom we worked with as the *Comité de Iglesias*, are currently involved there, in the local politics and management of this undertaking. It works well for them, it is a democratic structure, and they are producing and commercializing different agricultural products together – currently it is mainly milk. Just recently they decided to expand beyond production and commercialization, and to open a cooperative store as well. It is still a relatively small organisation, with only about sixty active members; however, we have high hopes for its growth and expansion. It is one of the few examples of, so far, successful cooperatives which benefits both its members and also the community.

What is mainly lacking in our region is administration and management training for campesinos. There have been numerous examples of different projects, many of which I was involved in as an advisor, which fail due to the lack of basic administrative skills. Some organisations like this work well as long as they rely on the help of external advisors, like myself, and later struggle once they have to work by themselves. Sometimes it is the general management that is lacking, and sometimes it is just a specific set of skills which is missing. Quite recently the government helped one campesinos organisation to create a small plant for the production of balanced animal feeds (mainly for cattle, but also for poultry, swine, and other farm animals). They received a governmental loan and the plant was built for them within a few months. It has the potential to produce a big income, since animal feeds are in high demand in this region. The organisation is built on a cooperative model, in which the members would deliver their corn and soy to the plant and at first receive the payment for it at the market's price. However, once it would be processed and sold to the cattle ranches, the additional income would be divided in accordance with each member's contribution (after discounting the expenses and the agreed percentages for the development of the cooperative, of course). However, this campesino organisation did not think of a good way to repay the government loan, and they risk losing the plant. They asked me for advice with their financial problems. They also seem to struggle with the efficiency of their work. All of this demonstrates their lack of preparation. They received a loan, a

building, a silo, and all the necessary machines, but they did not receive management and accounting training. This threatens the whole undertaking. Such stories repeat themselves often. Stories in which people lack the capacity to administer resources that have suddenly been injected by the government. Often they receive none, or only very short and insufficient training. Within such projects they should either receive proper in-depth training, or should be given the possibility to employ a manager.



A small factory of balanced animal feeds

There is also a general problem with the lack of a sociable approach and with harmful attitudes amongst many farmers. Some people think that as soon as they have formed a cooperative, or an association, the government is obliged to give them different things. Once they receive something, they also often lack the initiative to invest their own money

and the time to develop it properly.¹⁰⁰ Some even say: “This was a gift from the government; if we want to, we can sell it and share the money amongst us.” This approach still exists amongst many people in Paraguay. A lot of educational work is required, but there are not many of us educators... Together with such governmental investments, there is a need for administrative, economical, management, and political education – all of the elements which are currently neglected. Moreover, in my opinion, such education should come first, before any other investments towards the infrastructure.

I do believe however, that cooperativism is the only solution for small-scale family farming. Campesinos have no other way in which to compete with the large agribusinesses than to form collectives or organisations in which they produce and commercialise together. We should learn from the mistakes of all past attempts, and create a new cooperative. This is what I am working on currently, developing a new undertaking which we call “*SOSTenible*” [sustainable]. It will be a cooperative that not only produces and commercialises together but also unites different professionals (educators, advisors, engineers, and so on) who will offer their services to its members and to different organisations. I am currently negotiating with the Evangelical community, here in Nueva Germania, to rent the building of the old abandoned technical school, in which we want to create our office and our production line. The idea is to focus firstly on cooperative sales of milk. In Nueva Germania cattle raising was always a significant economic activity;¹⁰¹ however, most people only breed cattle for meat, and milk commercialization is largely neglected. We want to change this. We are in the process of obtaining government funding for three, strategically located, refrigerated

¹⁰⁰Such is the case with the repayment for the animal feeds plant. It is not a big debt, it is about 30 000 000 Guaraní (approximately 5000 euro at the time). If it were divided between all of the three hundred members, it would become fairly easy to repay the debt. However, many of the members do not want to invest any of their own money. They do not understand, or do not trust in the future benefits for the whole community. They are currently at risk of losing the whole plant. One of the options that they are considering includes the possibility of renting the plant to a private entrepreneur for a period of five years. The entrepreneur has offered to repay the debt if this rental goes ahead. This example highlights the lack of education and preparation of the people, to successfully manage and participate in a democratic cooperative. It also highlights the lack of leaders with managerial capabilities, who could easily generate this kind of money from other sources of communal work.

¹⁰¹There is even an example of an instance that may sound contradictory – there are many “landless small-scale cattle ranchers.” They are people who keep their animals at roadsides, or who rent pieces of land.

storage stations, and for a vehicle with cooling capabilities. This will enable us to collect milk from all local producers and then to sell it directly to the industry, thereby bypassing the intermediaries and generating higher profit. Our next step, hopefully achievable in the next year, is to begin our own yoghurt production, further increasing our income and the profits of our members. Moreover, we already negotiated with several potential, large partners, who are very much interested in buying our milk and yogurt, thus the market is already secured. Our hope is to create a dynamic and a fast growing undertaking, which will expand into different types of cooperative activities and services¹⁰² and will benefit not only its members but also the whole community.



A meeting with members of a cooperative

¹⁰²We decided not to offer any kind of financial loan, since this is exactly what had ruined many past cooperatives. Such loans bear high risks. However, although we will not give loans ourselves, we will be offering to aid people in obtaining governmental or bank loans themselves.

Campesinos – a social category

Carlos' story, his political tract, is based mostly on the social division between the *campesinos* and large agribusiness entrepreneurs. The word *campesinos* usually refers to small-scale farmers, or *peasants*, in Paraguay. The word is however used with different connotations, and in different ways. Carlos proposes to use it as an epistemic framework for socio-economic planning. In his usage of the word, it can be seen as similar to the Marxist category of *class*. However, as we have seen in Arnold's story, it is also sometimes used by city dwellers to show contempt, since they often see *campesinos* as inferior, uneducated and coarse. Equally it is sometimes used to create a romantic representation of *campesinos* as hard-working patriots, who are close to nature and share a common 'campesino culture'.¹⁰³ Because the category of '*campesinos*' assumes the existence of a group, with certain characteristics in common, similar to '*Germans*', '*Paraguayans*', or '*Germaninos*', we can use our analytical term *granfalloon* to refer to it. The above story, and the next two persons' stories, underline the importance of this category (see also the box "*Campesinos in Paraguay*", further ahead in this thesis).

Carlos' story is divided into two. The first part outlines the problem of today's rural communities, who face an impossible competition against extensive fields of monocrops. People who own little cultivated land find it very difficult to sell their products individually, and as a result they do not have enough resources to maintain their (relatively new) consumerist lifestyles. The best solution, as Carlos claims, is for the *campesinos* to unite in cooperatives – socially oriented bubbles in the flood of individualistic consumerism and capitalism.

The second part of Carlos' account describes the cooperative attempts in Nueva Germania and in surrounding settlements. This is not a pompous narrative but a story of

¹⁰³An example could be the popular song: "*Chokokue purahéi*" (*Song of Campesino*), which portrays them as hard working people, who share a fraternal love, who are the real Paraguayans and hope for better conditions of life. The song played by Vocal Dos can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Hf12y8zMI> (accessed 20.02.2017). The category of *campesinos* is used sometimes alongside 'patriotic' nationalist discourses. It is also often used to express dissatisfaction with the government.

many failures and mistakes. It shows that creating a functional cooperative, although potentially very beneficial, is a complex undertaking. It depends on many factors, of which the key ones seem to include managerial and accounting skills, but also a 'social attitude' or 'consciousness'. It means that people need to understand their benefit not only as individuals, but as members of an entire community, and be able to make some personal investments for the cause. An expectation of social behaviours, of contextually prioritising this collective epistemic framework over immediate individual gains, is however not given but is a political and economic undertaking. These ideas underline the common practice of using this *granfalloon* for political purposes.

The failure of different cooperative attempts can be seen as a failure to incorporate and perform the social category of *campesinos*; that is, the ability to become united in a common cause, over an extended period of time. When contextually presented with potentially immediate personal gain at the expense of communal good, many choose this option. Carlos suggests that this is mainly due to lack of education. In other words, it is a failure of convincing others to apply the *campesino granfalloon* as an epistemic framework. The use of the *campesino* category, as a project which requires thinking and acting through the idea of a collective, a strategy to plan and control the future and benefit all members, has failed numerous times.

However, the weaknesses in thinking and acting solely through an individualistic framework, of prioritising the 'I' (as an individual or a family-unit) over 'us' (as a bigger community), are equally visible. Individual *campesinos*, or families, cannot obtain land, produce quality products, or commercialise them, due to a lack of financial capital and because of a limited means of production. As a consequence, they cannot easily maintain the quality of modern life, with electricity, groceries and other utensils, motorcycles, "modern bathrooms"¹⁰⁴, or even cover basic medical expenses. This situation offers little promise for a better future. The category of the 'individual', which is also an epistemic

¹⁰⁴'Baño moderno' is the term used for an indoor bathroom with running water. It is a relatively new commodity and many people in rural areas aspire to have a modern bathroom.

framework and a social category¹⁰⁵, can result in failure when applied as a political or economic project - just as granfalloon can fail (epistemic frameworks that assume axiomatic groups). This seems to be the case especially amongst underprivileged or financially exploited people, as is the case in our example.

Utilising the approach that has been proposed by this thesis, the situation described by Carlos can be explained as a conflict between choosing different epistemic frameworks for political and economic organisation and planning. The current approaches, based on thinking through individuals or family-units, result in a situation with which many people are dissatisfied. The proposed socio-economic project, which assumes the social category of campesino as its axiomatic unit and tries to connect the idea of common good with individual gain¹⁰⁶, offers the possibility of a prosperous future, but seems very difficult to achieve. Examples of successful cooperatives exist¹⁰⁷, yet will it be possible to create such an organisation in the broader region of Nueva Germania? Will it be possible to convince people to apply a given epistemic framework to all contexts related to labour, economic planning, and personal gains?

¹⁰⁵The 'individual' is a social category, but is not a granfalloon, because it does not assume existence of a group.

¹⁰⁶Carlos, in his account, is conscious that these two epistemic frameworks should not be separate, but should be employed together. It should be beneficial for a (consumerist and capitalist) individual, to plan and act according to the social approach of cooperativism. He said: "I believe that since we live in a capitalist country, we need to organise in a capitalist way. However, the outcomes of our work should have a social purpose. That is also because currently this is the language which people will understand easily, and thorough which a shift in people's mentality is possible."

¹⁰⁷Often the Mennonite cooperatives are given as examples of such organisational success. Many Mennonite settlements are amongst the richest towns in Paraguay, with a cooperative mode of the organisation of work, production, processing and consumption, as well as community hospitals, schools, elderly care houses, etcetera. They have, however, built their socio-economic projects upon different categories. The critique which I often heard of the Mennonites, is that they are very keen on sharing and on mutual help, but only within their group. Some claim that outside of their 'cooperatives' they lead very exploitative politics (for example, by using local indigenous or campesinos populations as sources of cheap labour, and not granting them any of the cooperative privileges). I did not endeavour to confirm any of this criticism within my research.



Above: A campesino demonstration and a road blockade in Santa Rosa (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweilly)

Below: The “Partido Paraguay Pyahura” is an emerging political party, which unites many campesinos. This photograph is from a demonstration in Asuncion, which was a culmination of a protest march of campesinos from different parts of the country to the capital. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweilly)



03.10 Pedro Hernan Halke Arevalos



(Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

I met Hernan through Carlos, who introduced us in the first days of my fieldwork. Early on, he also agreed to participate in my project. We worked in a way that differed from the other participants in that we recorded his narrative early in the process, since he was already very certain of the story that he wanted to tell. He later decided to show me around the *Tierra Prometida* settlement, where he also staged one important photograph which he had in mind to accompany his story. He also asked me to take a few other photographs that day. Later, however, he agreed to keep taking photographs himself, which are unrelated to his story. After a few weeks, we sat down together and he described what these photographs represent. He told me to decide myself which ones to use. Unfortunately, because I transcribed his story too late and because he has no access to Internet, he did not have a chance to review it. This is yet another example of how different the collaborative process was with each participant. My work with the text, besides some 'semantic editing' (as described earlier in the thesis), required certain restructuring to assure better chronological continuity. I have located Hernan's story

after Carlos', since it explicitly shows both the effectiveness and the later failure of using the campesino category.

Before the year 2000, a big piece of land was sold and given to the landless campesinos [farmers] from Nueva Germania. They formed the settlement *Chamorro Kue - La Germanina*. However, around 100 people had been left out and did not receive any land at all. Together with these people, we formed a committee, which we named *El Resto* [The Rest- meaning, the rest of the people who were left out of the new settlement]. Our goal was to obtain land for all of us. We started meeting regularly, every week, in the home of Don Spitaleri, who was our committee vice-president. After a year the first president Roberto Denis resigned, and the vice-president, Spitaleri, took over the leadership of our initiative. These meetings continued for another three years, and during these times we were debating on how to collect funds and which parcel of land would be available. Most of the people wanted the land north from Nueva Germania, which belonged to Don Fischer, a parcel of 1700 hectares. After some time, however, Mr Spialeri resigned from his function as well. We organised an assembly and voted for a new president – Mr Habram Pereira. It was he who proposed that it would be beneficial to hold our meetings in front of the parcel of land which we wanted to obtain. This is when we put a tent at the border of the land area and started to gather regularly there.

Habram Pereira, did not know how to read or write, and only spoke very little Spanish (he only spoke Guaraní). He did not know Asunción either. This was an organisational problem for us, since we had to be able to negotiate with the authorities in the capital. This is when I stepped up to the role of secretary, to help with all of the formalities. We decided to travel to Asunción, to ask personally about our case at the IBR, *Instituto de Bienestar Rural*¹⁰⁸ [Institute of Rural Well-being]. It turned out that during the four years of our meetings and organisation, the committee was not officially registered with the IBR. So, how were we supposed to obtain any land, if we were not even recognised

¹⁰⁸In 2004 IBR changed its name to INDERT - *Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y de la Tierra* [National Institute of Rural and Land Development]. They are a governmental institute who help campesinos [farmers] to obtain land, regulate its use, and they work towards a general “development”.

by the state as a committee of campesinos? Our plan from the very beginning was to ask the government to lend us the money that would be necessary to pay for the property and the initial costs of creating a settlement. The very first step should have been to be recognised as an association. I do not know if the previous presidents of our committee did not know about it, or just did not bother to register us.

With time it became clear that our committee needed mostly this kind of work, which Mr Preira could not really perform. This is when we changed the president again and elected Eugenio Perez. I kept working as an informal secretary of the group. Together with Mr Perez, we started the negotiations with Don Heriberto Fischer, the owner of the land. We went several times to his home, at the different ranches he owned, close to San Pedro. Ultimately we received a formal written offer of sale. Within the letter of offer, he agreed not to cut down any trees from the property while we were trying to secure the government loan. He however did this, some time later, and started to sell thousands of cubic meters of wood from the property. This is when some people got a bit angry. Additionally, a short time afterwards, Mr Eugenio Perez resigned from the position of the president of our organisation, and moved to a different municipality. This is when I was elected to the role of the president of our campesino association.

Shortly after I took over, the deadline of the offer of sale passed. That is to say, the government did not pay Don Fischer the money for our land in time, and he offered it to someone else. He signed an official offer of sale to a Brazilian, Jair Antonio Kieffer. When we found out that the land had been offered to someone else we went again to talk to Mr Fischer. We told him that we would not allow any Brazilian to enter this property, even if he bought it. Don Fischer got quite offended and told us to leave his house. We were telling him not to sell the land, since we were determined to borrow the funds from the government and buy the land from him, but he had made the offer to the Brazilian anyway. In response, we occupied the entrance to the property and did not allow the Brazilian to enter when he came to see the land. He came with all the details about the property, aerial photographs, information about the soil quality, but we were 120 people strong, opposing his purchase. This caused a major conflict, since we were all camping in front of the entrance, taking turns; and we did not even allow the owner, Mr Fischer, to enter. He still had approximately seven hundred cattle on this land, which he wanted to transport elsewhere.

We did not allow him to do that either. Thirty the big trucks came to transport the cattle. We, however, told the drivers to go away, since we would not allow them to take any of the animals. I even started receiving calls from Don Fischer, offering me each time bigger sums of money to encourage me to withdraw from the role of president and from the association in general. I did not accept it.

At this time, it also happened that the president of IBR, the government institution we were talking to, changed. A man called Erico Ibañiz became the new head of IBR, which was quite a fortunate change, since I knew this man. He invited me to meet him. We went there to Asunción, together with the new secretary of our association. Don Erico Ibañiz told me that the IBR was indeed offering to buy the disputed land for us. Additionally he asked us to allow the owner to enter his property and to wait for another two or three months, without invading the property.

We were happy to hear this news. As a symbolic act, we installed a Paraguayan flag at our campsite, on the border of the property. We were not expecting however, that our fight would be ongoing, and indeed that it was going to intensify. Some employees of the Brazilian came. They destroyed our whole campsite, and they beat up the few people who were there at the time. I was not there at the time. When I came, our flag, with a tear in the middle, was lying on the ground. I picked it up and kept it as a symbol of our fight for the land. The struggle was not over.

The government was not quick enough with negotiating the purchase of this land for us. Shortly after this fight, Don Fischer formally sold the land to the Brazilian. The contract had been finalised, and the Brazilian transferred the full payment, officially becoming the new owner. A few days later, we realised that the Brazilian and his employees had entered the property, using a different entrance located on its other side, with heavy machinery (bulldozers, excavators, tractors, and other machines). We called for an urgent assembly of our group, in order to decide upon our course of action. We decided to force the people to leave, take their machines with them, and to expel the Brazilian from this land. We were determined not to give up. We entered the property all together. We firstly spoke with the Paraguayan employees, and told them to step aside and not to intervene. They agreed. We then talked to the Brazilians, and told them that they had two hours to leave the property and take their machines with them. They all left rather quickly.



Hernan Halke standing in the exact spot where years ago he, and other “landless farmers” (campesinos sin tierra) camped and fought to obtain a piece of land. This photograph was planned and staged by Hernan, while I operated the camera. (Photo. Hernan Halke and Jonatan Kurzwelly)

The new owner, the Brazilian, issued a formal complaint to the police, which complicated the issue even further. We did, however, endure this as well. We were called to a meeting with a judge in San Pedro, where we had to defend our case, putting forward the case that the government had promised to buy this land. Meanwhile, the Brazilian brought a whole unit, of approximately 60 men, of heavily armoured riot police from Asunción. When the police came they told us to leave the property, and so we left and waited at the roadside. They tried to provoke us into a fight, but we did not let them. However, as soon as the police went away to eat or to rest, we entered again. This is the strategy we had agreed on in the assembly of our committee. We kept doing this, and the police got annoyed, since they had no one to fight against. Some people did construct some home-made firearms and other weapons but, thanks to God, they never used these. The Brazilian, on the other hand, had to pay for all the policeman's expenses –pay them a salary, pay for their food and drinks, pay for their transport... The police stayed for twenty days, so he must have lost a small fortune.

More or less a month afterwards, again a big tractor entered the property from the other side. This time we reacted more violently. People were really upset and beat up the driver, who was a Brazilian. His wound was not very big, nevertheless this caused more problems, because the Brazilian owner made another formal complaint. This time it was quite serious, since it was to the higher police officials in Santa Rosa. I told the people that we needed to go all together and present ourselves at the police station. It was more or less a hundred of us who travelled by bus to Santa Rosa. We told the prosecutor that if they wanted to, they had to throw all of us into jail. Happily, the very next day we have received an official declaration from IBR, signed by Erico Ibañiz. The document confirmed that the price had been agreed upon with the Brazilian, with Antonio Kieffer, and that the government would purchase the land for our association of landless campesinos. This was our victory!

The people were so happy that they wanted to enter the property immediately. And the president of IBR warned me not to do that yet, and to wait for one more month. This was due to the fact that the Brazilian wanted to receive the whole payment at once, which was not within the governmental practice (the practice was to firstly pay 20%, make sure over some time that all of the details regarding the property were correct, and only afterwards pay the remaining 80%). Ultimately the government agreed and paid the whole sum at once.

Afterwards, we received a phone-call from the IBR inviting us to discuss the details of our future settlement. They were asking us what model of settlement we wanted to implement. One option was for the settlement to be based upon a nuclear model - all houses gathered closely together, in a centre, with peoples fields extending to the outskirts. The other option was to implement the traditional model - which in Paraguay means that all families live in long rows, alongside roads, with the fields extending into the back areas of each of the houses. This decision caused further conflicts and divided the group. We proposed to incorporate the nuclear model, with individual small parcels of land and one extensive cooperative field. The idea was for everyone to have their own small land on which they might cultivate whatever they wanted, and to dedicate 200 hectares to a big communal field, for a mechanical planting of such plants as soy, sunflower, manioc, or other similar crops. We could thus communally own some heavy machinery and make a better profit.

However, the people voted differently. They preferred to divide the whole settlement into individually owned parcels of land and to incorporate the traditional settlement model.

Afterwards I was asked by the IBR president to present a proposal for the construction of houses. Our proposal was accepted and we have received 124 economical houses, paid for by the government and made by a contract company. The government also constructed roads, a school, electric network, and a water well with piping for our settlement. We even received food provisions for six months, to be used by the people before they started gathering their first harvests. The agreement with the government stated that we received all of this, and only after ten years we had to start paying it off.¹⁰⁹ It is also important to mention that we have chosen Tierra Prometida [Promised Land] as the name of the settlement, in order to recognise the history of our struggle. The previous government agreed to buy this land for us, but at first they did not fulfil the promise, and we had to fight for it. Some people did not like this name, but at the end it was officially registered as Tierra Prometida.

After the construction of the houses, I was still trying to convince people to agree on creating a communal field, which could be worked with big agricultural machines, work from which we would all benefit. The IBR was also in favour of this idea, and offered to provide us with machines to prepare the land. But it was impossible, since the people did not want it. Paraguayans are not accustomed to work in cooperatives. The conflict arose to the extent that during an argument, my brother Jorge Halke was shot dead. He was also active in the organisation and planning, and was also strongly advocating for the cooperative field management. We were working at the time, making corrections and adjustment to the newly constructed houses¹¹⁰, when it happened. My brother did not have any firearm with

¹⁰⁹*This time has passed and now we need to start returning this loan. Each family needs to decide whether they want to pay it all in one single payment (which results in being 40% cheaper – it would be 17 000 000 Gs [approximately 3000 euro, in 2014]), or to pay it little by little in instalments. Formally any given family will only become the full and sole owner of their land and house, after paying this back to the government. In practice however, many people have already sold their houses, despite the law that forbids it.*

¹¹⁰*The company who won the tender to build our houses did a poor job. The design of the houses was inadequate and with any strong wind or storm the roofs were literally flying off. Roofs of eighty houses were damaged, some ripped apart completely and thrown onto the ground metres away. Only a few of them were repaired by the company and we had to repair the rest ourselves. This system within which*

him, whereas the other man had a revolver. My brother's four children were left without a father. The person who murdered my brother ran away, was never captured and never returned to Nueva Germania. When this happened, I resigned from the position of the president of our association.

I want to emphasise that the reason I got into all this, my reason for becoming a campesino leader, was to fight for my people and for my community.¹¹¹ But at this moment, I had to withdraw for a few years from any such public roles. After the two negative things that happened—firstly that people did not accept the cooperative model, and secondly that my brother was killed. If we had agreed on the cooperative model our settlement would have been an example for others. The plan was to firstly have a big communal field, later to construct a silo to deposit the grains, and to provide work and a source of good income. Now, ten years later, people want to work the land with agricultural machines. But now it is too late to change it all.



We encountered two such stones when we entered the property, but we did not understand what it means. We decided to leave them where we found them.

different companies compete to win governmental contracts is not very good, because it often results in work that is completed only cheaply and poorly.

¹¹¹*That is especially so since Nueva Germania lost 70% of its terrain, out of its original 263 000 hectares. This had happened after the Santa Rosa had separated itself as a separate municipality, with the agreement of the local municipal politicians. With this succession, we lost an even bigger percentage of our population. This is why I think that it is crucial to repopulate our municipality of Nueva Germania, and this is best done, with the creation of new settlements.*

Hernan, besides his story, also took many photographs, documenting his family and different events in Nueva Germania. Below are a few selections from his collection of images.



They were cooking Caldo Ava, a soup made with all the different animal rests, which are not good for grill or other purposes - for example, the intestines).



This is a mute guy, people call him by the nickname Mbeje (his real name is Gregorio Alfredo Sánchez). He also does not know how to read or write, however, one man is currently teaching him how to write his own signature. [Mbeje is very visible in Nueva Germania, because of his couch-assistant role in one of the local football clubs. He also works in a grocery shop, next to the pitch. He communicates through hand and body gestures.]



Fiesta Fundacional.





Grandmother (above) and family lunch (below).



Campeños in Paraguay

Hernan's story is another example of the importance of the *campesino* category, which is used in opposition to owners of extensive land. The category seemed to be very effective in mobilising people in the common fight for land; however, it turned out not to be effective in the socio-economic, or political cause of establishing a cooperative, in this case. Hernan's story might seem somewhat shocking for readers with little or no knowledge of the Paraguayan or broader South American context. The subject of campesino movements in Paraguay is extensive and its description lies beyond the scope of this thesis (or any single thesis). In this box, however, my aim is to very briefly summarise three examples of other campesinos struggles in Paraguay. Through this I wish to indicate to the reader the widespread and long historical continuity of structural disadvantages and outright oppression, directed towards different campesino movements.

The first example is the tragic history of the *Ligas Agrarias Cristianas* (Christian Agrarian Leagues). The organisation of these ecclesiastical communities of campesinos was based on cooperation and solidarity. Ignacio Telesca claims that it was the first organised movement of campesinos in Paraguay (2014, p.17). Its origins are disputed - it drew from a tradition of workers' syndicates and unions, as well as the influence of some prominent figures within the Catholic Church. Bishop Ramón Bogarín Argaña, for example, inspired by the new directions of the church given by the Second Vatican Council in 1962, and the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín in 1968, was one of the key animators of this new campesinos movement. That is to say, certain figures of the Catholic Church (as well as other Christian denominations) played and continue to play an important role in different campesino and popular movements. However, as Telesca argues, many authors have searched for external influences on the creation of the *Ligas Agrarias Cristianas*, but often fail to give adequate merit to the campesinos themselves, who were meeting to discuss their lives and futures, and together formed a movement (Ibid. p.23). It was largely the historical and political context which forced the campesinos to take collective action.

In the ruined Paraguay of the 1940s and 1950s, a country that had suffered several wars (the Paraguayan War 1864-1870, the civil war in 1922, the Chaco War of 1932-1935, and the second civil war in 1947), the campesinos were largely neglected and left with little state support. Most Paraguayan land was sold, or given to a few individuals and companies, and the majority of campesinos either did not own their land or were in possession of provisional titles (Ibid. p.26). Many settlements were completely dependent on working and living on land which did not belong to the inhabitants, and this often created conflict and offered very little prospects for the future. In this context, an even bigger repressive force came into power in 1956 – the dictator Alfredo Stroessner, whose rule was largely enforced by brutal oppression, torture, and coercion. It was during these turbulent times¹¹², that some groups of campesinos, in various parts of the country, started to gather in peoples houses and discuss plans for change. Collective action was used to put pressure on the authorities and to obtain farming terrain, either through negotiation, land occupation, or both. The *Ligas Agrarias Cristianas* were formally established in Santa Rosa, in the south of Paraguay in 1960, with the help of the Jesuits and the *Joventud Obrera Católica* (Youth Catholic Workers). However, the idea quickly spread, and new groups in other regions of the country joined the movement. Members of all of the different leagues (the plural form is used to emphasize their autonomy) shared their experiences and trained each other, ultimately forming a national federation in 1964 (Ibid. p.34).

The newly created communities were motivated by the movement's religious values, the Bible's preaching of unity, brotherhood, and mutual help. Such was the case of a group of campesinos who negotiated with the IBR (*Instituto de Bienestar Rural* – Institute of Rural Well-being) for the creation of a new settlement in the north of the country, in the Department of San Pedro. Three thousand hectares were given to their management, which they were supposed to pay for in due course. In 1969 they moved to San Isidro de Jejuí, and established a community based on an alternative model. They implemented a system of collective labour, with both individual and communitarian

¹¹²For a brief introduction to Stroessner's repressive state, see: Boccia Paz 2014, and others in the same book series.

fields, and a redistribution system based on each persons work. There was also a community shop and a primary school, with an education program adjusted to the childrens needs, as distinct from the formal governmental plan. Their community, the alternative model of society, was seen as a threat to the government and was often visited by police and political representatives. On the 8th of February 1975, a group of 120 policemen¹¹³ were sent and they brutally destroyed the settlement. Several people were shot during the confrontation, others were taken and subjected to inhumane torture, and later imprisoned. San Isidro del Jejuí became one of the symbols of the violence and inhumane treatment of campesinos. At the same time, thousands of campesinos from the country-wide movement were detained, incarcerated, many brutally tortured, and others evicted from their homes. San Isidro is just one of numerous examples of struggles for a better future, of an attempt at proposing an alternative system of management and of rural life.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Information from: <http://ea.com.py/v2/jejui-sitio-historico-y-de-conciencia-campesina-memoria-de-la-lucha-de-ayer-y-de-hoy/>

¹¹⁴For more information on the religious foundations, organisation and economy, see: Telesca 2014.



Once Stroessner's dictatorship ended (in 1989) an association of the former inhabitants was formed. Their intention was to recover 230 hectares of land which had already been paid for prior to 1975. After a long battle which utilised both legal means and property occupations, part of the land was recovered and passed on to the association. In 2014, in a small ceremony with the presence of survived witnesses, as well as representatives of different organizations, was held. San Isidro de Jejuí was declared as a Historical Site of Consciousness. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzwelly)

I will briefly mention another more recent¹¹⁵ example of an alternative campesino settlement, which is also located in the north of Paraguay - **Táva Guarani**. Unlike San Isidro, which was inspired and motivated by religious discourses, Táva Guarani was funded in a socialist spirit, on the 16th of September 1991¹¹⁶. A group of landless

¹¹⁵A highly recommended account on the struggles and legal battles of campesinos after Stroessner's dictatorship, is the anthropological work of Gregg Hetherington (2015). It discusses in depth the problems with historically privatised land and the different strategies to obtain it.

¹¹⁶The description of Táva Guarani is based on personal interviews with its inhabitants and leaders. A documentary film about the town, made by Keese, Martin and Vilchez (2012), can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUoE28IJ5Uk> It is also important to note that a neighbour settlement, Aguerito, is also an example of alternative collaborative organisation.

campesinos occupied the area, with the intention to create a new settlement. Twice they were brutally expelled by the police, with further repressions and violence. It was only during their third attempt of land occupation that the campesinos were able to stay. From the first numerous group only a few families resisted until the end. However, in a short time the settlement grew in new members.

The repercussions, however, did not end there. In 1995, people from Táva Guarani were asked by a different group of campesinos to help them with land occupation for a new settlement. They agreed. To speed up the negotiation process, one of the effective methods of the campesinos is to block important national roads. During such a blockade, there was a confrontation with the police, and twenty people died. Many were injured and detained. A similar situation happened in 2004, where at another demonstration police opened fire, and one man (who was not even part of the manifestation, he was just sitting in front of his house), was shot in the head. At this time, several of the campesinos were taken into custody and one of them, Ernesto Benitez, was brutally tortured. He told me that the policemen seemed to torture him “for fun”, with no particular goal. Despite international pressure, the Paraguayan government did not recognize any misdemeanour, no one was convicted, and there were no compensations or apologies, as Ernesto told me. Táva Guarani, however, survived the repressions and continues its existence. Today the settlement has over 8000 hectares, divided between family fields and community fields. Besides the communal participation in labour, there is also a big collective store, a school, and a radio station.



Foundational anniversary celebrations in Tava Guarani in September 2014. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweilly)



Ernetto Benitez giving a speech. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweilly)



A wooden stage in Tava Guarani, with paintings of different idols celebrated by the community. Amongst the famous historical figures, Pedro Jimenez is also represented – a boy who died in the 1995 confrontation. He was 18 years old at the time. (Photo. Jonatan Kurzweilly)

The third case that I wish to briefly mention, is an occupation of the **Maria Kue** land in the **Curuguay** district, in June of 2012. After a few weeks of occupation by a group of campesinos, an eviction order was issued and police troops were sent to execute it. During the confrontation shots were fired, in circumstances which until now have different explanations, and as a result seventeen people died – eleven campesinos and six police officers. The investigation and court hearings lasted four years with numerous reports of violations, issued by different organizations and journalists. The situation was used as a political tool immediately after it happened. The president of the Republic was accused of having political responsibility for the occurrences. A week after the massacre, president Fernando Lugo was impeached in a short process, a process which the media were banned from witnessing. This resulted in suspicion that the tragic outcome of the eviction might have been orchestrated by the political opposition. The investigation of

the Curuguaty massacre continued for another four years, culminating in a widely disputed court ruling in July 2016, in which only the campesinos were pursued, sentencing eleven of them to imprisonment. There is a general mistrust of the investigatory proceedings and the official court ruling, however, due to the high stakes of this case and the unclear role that it played in the impeachment process of the president Fernando Lugo; many people suspect that the truth will not be known.¹¹⁷

I have very briefly presented three examples of different campesinos movements and repressions. The goal of this summary is to somewhat contextualise the stories of Carlos, Hernan, and Cecilio, and to give the reader a sense of the widespread importance of campesinos struggles and movements. In a country in which historically most of the land was handled by, or sold, to a handful of private owners and companies, the *campesino* category remains at the centre of many political debates and struggles, which unfortunately too often end in violence or even death.

¹¹⁷To learn more about the Curuguaty case, see the report by Codehupy (2012) or the article by Fernanda Canofre (2016).

03.11 Cecilio Alcaráz Sanchez



Cecilio is a school teacher in the settlement Tierra Prometida. At the time of creating this story, he was 27 years old. We were introduced by the family with which I lived, since Cecilio was Arnold's friend. He was the first person to agree to participate in my project. At the beginning I did not communicate very well to him the idea of the collaborative method and he understood that I wanted to write a whole thesis about just one person. He was a bit discouraged by it, until I explained everything again. In the end, he took photographs for one month, during which we met several times to discuss the images and different subjects important to him. Rather than work on his textual and photographic accounts separately, he prioritised the images and built his story through them. We finalised our collaboration through a photographic elicitation, in which he described the images and reiterated several points from our previous discussions. Cecilio did choose a few photographs which he preferred, but then he said that he would prefer for me to structure the story and decide which images and information to use for the thesis.



The Paraguayan president, Horacio Cartes, wants to implement the APP, La Ley de Alianza Público-Privada [The Law of Public-Private Alliance], which would privatise a vast amount of public developments and services - such as road constructions, expansion of the international airport, and many others. The new law would allow for public companies to realise these developments of public infrastructure or services in exchange for a long period of benefits from the given investments. Many people, and many organisations of campesinos, have been organising protests against the new law. We do not want Paraguay to be sold, little by little, to big companies (some of which are probably owned by the politicians themselves). We organised road blockades and marches against this and other such new legislations. In order to pay for the expenses of our demonstration, we collect money in different ways – in this photograph we were selling different agricultural products at the roadside in Nueva Germania. At the same time we used this opportunity to spread the news about this dangerous new law and to tell people about our action against it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸[Despite enormous protests, in all parts of Paraguay, the law has been introduced and implemented towards the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014.]



On sunny summer days it is too hot in the building, which is why we sometimes choose to have classes outside, in the shadow of a tree. All of our struggles, demonstrations and political actions, are also for our students – for the young people to hopefully live in better conditions in the future. Our school building, for example, requires further investments to fit all students and also to assure adequate learning conditions. If the schools remain public, we hope to be able to obtain all of these things through political negotiations or pressure, or through entering into politics ourselves with our own political party. However, the risk of privatisation and laws such as the APP are that private companies would prioritise their monetary gain over educational necessities. There would be no hope of improving schools in poor rural regions, where parents are not able to pay for their children's education. This is one of the reasons why we protest against this new law.



This photograph was taken during the Teacher's Day. In spite of all the difficult circumstances - overcrowded classrooms, poor facilities, lack of educational utilities, and false accusations from the politicians about us being mediocre teachers – we prove each year that we are able to teach well and we have very good relations with our students.



In this photograph there are all the teachers from our school in Tierra Prometida - I am third from the right. I have already worked for four years as a teacher. I studied in the Instituto de Formación de Educadores [Teachers Training Institute], which is a public institution, and I received my diploma in 2010. There are almost no other subjects one can study for free, since there are no other public institutions. Almost all professional and higher education is private, bearing costs which very few campesinos can afford. That is why studying to become a teacher was the only way in which I was able to continue my education. This demonstrates the importance of accessibility to public education, rather than expensive and private businesses.



In this photograph you can see part of my family. We are eight – seven brothers and a sister. My family has been always fighting for our community and our political causes. We were amongst the campesinos who fought to obtain this land and construct our settlement.¹¹⁹ We continue the struggle to improve our conditions. We are all currently opposing the implementation of the APP law. There are however many other political battles which need to be fought. One other example is that we are all campesinos who produce many agricultural goods, but we have nowhere to sell them. It should be governmentally regulated, to secure a market for the fruits of campesinos labour. For us it is also impossible to compete with the rich large-scale agribusiness. They not only can sell their products at very low prices, but they also harm our plants, and the environment in general when they fumigate and use agrotocics on their fields not far from here. The government should introduce laws that benefit and protect campesinos.

¹¹⁹I was not an adult yet, I was only sixteen at the time, which is why I did not receive a house of my own once we had won the fight for this land.



In this photograph, my mother is preparing a chicken for dinner. We produce most of our food ourselves – not only fruits and vegetables, but also meat. Our fight is to have better conditions, while still maintaining our way of life as campesinos, maintaining the importance of close relations with one's family, community, and land. This shows that politics is not something abstract but is present and influences all aspects of our daily life.

03.12 Abel Rodrigo Pavon Acosta



"I was not really studying at that moment, I just posed for the photograph."

I met Abel through his aunt, Julia, in whose house I was living. She told me about him, his desire to study, and encouraged me to visit him. Abel lives in General Díaz, a settlement located less than thirty kilometres north from Nueva Germania, already in a different municipality. Usually it took me a little over an hour to reach it on my motorcycle, but only if the weather and road conditions were good. When I asked Abel if he would like to tell a story for my project, and explained to him what it was about, he agreed without hesitation. I told him, just as all other participants, that he could present any story he would like. I lent him one of the automatic digital cameras that I had bought for the project, and came back to see him after a few weeks. We met several times, discussing a wide range of topics. Most of the pictures were taken by Abel's sister, Lurdes Fatima, whom he instructed on what to photograph. After she had already captured many

images, we looked together through them with Abel, and recorded his comments and descriptions. Afterwards we proceeded to record his story, which I later transcribed and edited. As with all other stories, it required some changes of structure, wording and 'semantic editing'. Abel was 31 years old when we recorded his story.

I would like to tell the story of how I lived before and how my life is now. It is also the story of my mother, my father, and of my entire family. Both of my parents are from the district of San Pedro. My father is from here, from General Díaz. His father was one of the founders of this settlement. My mother, on the other hand, is from Villa Rosario. We, my four siblings and I, were all born here. My mother's story is of a daily struggle to keep up with the domestic work – to care for the animals, to wash clothes, to cook, but also to take care of me. My sister works at home together with my mother. My father, together with my brothers, dedicate themselves to the production of carbon. They have also worked with different types of agriculture in the past. They all help me every day, with everything I need. I used to work with them, but my life has changed completely. I now dedicate myself to my studies. My intention is to become a professional psychologist. It will be difficult, but it is not impossible.

When I was little, I went to school firstly here in General Díaz until the sixth grade. Afterwards I went to school in Arroyo Ata, where I had to cycle every day 15 kilometres one way and 15 back. After I finished the third grade of the second school, I finished my education and started working. I worked a lot and very hard, together with my family. We bought our first tractor when I was about eighteen years old, and I have driven it since then. My father and my brothers are all *tractoristas* [tractorists] as well. And then, six years ago, when I was 25 years old, I had an accident. I almost died. However, God gave me a second chance, and I survived.

I was working in the forest, and pulling large tree trunks out of it. There were only two of us, with two tractors, without any other workers. My friend has left with his first load, and I was supposed to follow him a bit later. This is when one of the large trunks fell on top of me. At first I lost consciousness, but after an hour or so I woke up. The trunk fell to the side, however, the tractor was still running and pulling forwards, with a gear switched on. A

large root was blocking it from behind, and with the wheels still turning, it pulled the front of the tractor up in the air. It was about to fall back at any moment, on to the other large tree trunks that were lying behind it. If it had turned upside down, it would have crushed me to death under the weight of the tractor. I was not able to do anything – I could not move, I could not switch the tractor off, I could not get out of it. I was hanging in the air, bent in the tractor's chair, unable to do anything. I could not move my body, I could only feel the pain. I was there, in this situation, for another hour, or an hour and a half. I thought that I would die there.

After my friend unchained the trunks from his tractor at the roadside, where we were loading them onto trucks, he drove back into the jungle. This is when he found me. He switched off the motor, and pulled me down from the tractor by himself. The doctors say that this probably further fractured my bones. He then called for help and my family came to rescue me with their pick-up truck. They took me to the hospital in Santa Rosa. In Santa Rosa they called for a private air plane and transported me to Asunción to Emergencies. They conducted the first basic examinations. Unfortunately they had no free beds in the hospital and I had to wait somewhere between 12 and 24 hours on a stretcher in the corridor. This is when my parents and my aunt started making calls, and managed to obtain a place for me in the military hospital. It is a semi-private institution, thus my family had to pay for everything. I spent three weeks there. Firstly the doctors had to perform different types of procedures, which were necessary before the main surgeries. They had to cleanse my stomach, liver, and also to drain my lungs. I almost died out of the continuous high fever that I had for two weeks. Only once the fever dropped, were they able to operate on my spine, and insert a surgical plate. The doctors explained to me that the spine and the nerves were fractured, the impulses could not pass, and this was why I could not feel anything in the lower part of my body. They doctors said that it was impossible fix.

After these days in the hospital my family managed to gather some further resources to pay for physiotherapy. I stayed in the house of my uncle, attending thrice weekly sessions with therapists in a medical centre. It was mostly different types of exercises, mostly stretching, necessary to both maintain my muscles and increase my mobility (I could not move my arms very well at the beginning). After the initial six months, I applied to a special foundation, where I started learning how to move in a wheelchair and manage myself on

my own. I could only go there for a month because it was too expensive. Afterwards my family paid for a private therapist, and I continued having daily meetings. Altogether, I stayed for an entire year in Asunción. Afterwards I moved back home, to General Díaz, where I now live in the house of my parents. We still travel from time to time to Asunción, but not very often.

The pain is sometimes unbearable. I do not have feeling in the lower part of my body, I cannot feel if someone touches me; however, I do feel pain. Sometimes it is so strong, especially during the night, that I wake up crying. Because of these pains, we went recently for an examination in a hospital in Curitiba, in Brazil. The doctors said that the initial surgery was performed badly. That the material of which the plate on my spine is made is very bad and this could be the reason for these pains. We are in Paraguay, so maybe the doctor messed it up, or maybe he used a cheaper material to keep more money for himself... The doctors in Brazil said that I would need to undergo another surgery, to change the plate for one of better quality, and then hopefully the pain would stop. For now it is not possible, because of the high cost it would bear.

In parallel to all the procedures, already in the hospital after the accident, I started meeting psychologists. When the news came, that I would not be able to walk any more, that I would be tied to wheelchair, I lost the will to live. I wanted to die. I wanted to take my own life. I never really tried to do it, but I kept thinking about suicide. Thanks to the professionals, and to my family who never left me alone, even for a minute, I continued living. Their presence, as well as thinking about them, stopped me from doing anything. To be honest, the suicidal thoughts are a daily struggle for me even today – this one voice keeps coming back to my mind, telling me that this would be the best solution. However, there is another voice, which tells me I should keep living. It is a daily internal battle in my mind.

Since I came back here, I have had nothing to do. Each day I would just drink tereré and watch TV. I had many friends before the accident. After I came back, they were trying to take me out, to do something together, but I closed myself off and did not want to see anyone. I did not want to leave the house at all, since I am ashamed to go out like this, to be seen by other people. I rejected my friends, and with time they eventually stopped coming or calling. During this time, my mind would be all the time busy with different negative thoughts. I was in a bad state, I felt terrible, I almost did not sleep. I talked to a psychologist

I knew, who was visiting me here from time to time, and told her about my internal struggles. She advised me that I had to dedicate myself to something, to find new goals. It was she who suggested that I could study for a university degree. This never occurred to me before, especially since it was many years since I left school, and I never wanted to study much anyway. It was not an easy decision either – on the one hand I wanted to, but on the other hand, I was afraid to do it. My family was very supportive and encouraging. I finally decided for it. They were all very happy to hear that.

Since this friend, the psychologist, was involved in the opening of a new faculty in Santa Rosa¹²⁰, she told me that I could study either psychology or law there. I know how much help I received from different psychologists, that to a big extent I am still alive because of them, thus I decided to study psychology. I very much like the idea to work in the future as a psychologist myself. I know how helpful it could be for other people in a similar situation to mine. There are almost no psychologists in the region, and many people who have had accidents live as I do, closed and isolated in their homes, with little to no help. Moreover, none of the psychologists I met were in a wheelchair themselves. Thus, I think that if I worked as a psychologist it would be different, since I could draw from my own experiences while talking to patients. I think that it could be potentially much more helpful. I would really like to work in a hospital, for example in Santa Rosa, helping others.

This friend of mine helped me with all of the formalities, and recently I started studying. After meeting all of the people in the course, and going for a few meetings, I started liking it. They meet three times a week, but since it is so far away, I go only once a month and study the rest of the time on my own at home. However, to be honest, I am still afraid and struggle internally each time before going to Santa Rosa. I am afraid of being a failure, of disappointing myself and others. This is because I do not feel well prepared, I feel that I lack knowledge and skills. A few days before going I start eating less and am very nervous. It is because often when I read, I do not remember much of it afterwards. It is also because I have not been meeting other people for so many years, and now I have chosen a career in which I have to be able to share with others... Even though with time it becomes a

¹²⁰In Paraguay there are hundreds of small universities (by some called “garage-universities”) of different levels. They are all rather small, in comparison to what the reader's idea of an 'university' might be.

bit easier for me to go to Santa Rosa, I am still stressed and nervous each time. And then, each time on the way back, I feel very happy.



My accident occurred on a very similar tractor, the same model, when I was pulling tree trunks out of the forest. I had a girlfriend before, with whom I have a son. My accident occurred two days before his first birthday. He will soon celebrate his seventh birthday.



My family – they are my reason to keep living. They give me everything. Unfortunately not everyone is in the photograph.



This is how carbon is produced. One has to fill it with wood and then burn it slowly in high temperature, so that only smoke is coming out. It's my family's business. I have not seen this place for six years now – it is more or less 50 meters from our house, but there is no path for the wheelchair. I asked my sister to take most of the photographs.



This is my brother working. Before my accident I also worked in this type of work.



The most delicious are the young, small pigs, since they have less fat.



This is my house.

Internal battles

Abel's personal story discusses not only the dramatic and painful experiences of an accident, slow and poor medical service, and the different difficulties in the immediate aftermath, but also the general problem of living with a disability in rural Paraguay. There is little to no psychological help or rehabilitation for those with few economic resources. The infrastructure is insufficient, to say the least, and being independent in a wheelchair is impossible. Abel told me that he knows about a few other people in the broader region whose mobility is reduced - all of them, he said, live in their houses with their families, and do not engage much with others. Abel's story opens up another range of subjects, which could be investigated in a separate project.

With regard to our discussion of social categories which assume the existence of big groups, the notable thing is their apparent absence in Abel's story. In his story, as well as in almost all my encounters with him, I very rarely observed any evocation of other *granfalloon*s¹²¹. He sometimes used the category 'campesino', when talking about his past experiences of work, the importance of it for living in the countryside, and his current detachment from it. He emphasised how detrimental it is not to be able to work, or in other words how the category 'campesino' alienates, or fails to incorporate, those who do not participate in rural labour. The use of any *granfalloon*s, in his discourses, was usually to demonstrate lack of belonging, or the failure of the given social category. It seems to me that he largely saw himself, and was seen and interacted with by others, through the category of *discapacitado* (a disabled person). This is a very alienating category, which evokes no group belonging in his case. However, seeing himself as a student and future psychologist, although involving some further anxiety to battle

¹²¹He uses the term 'family' often, but whether or not this can be categorised with other social categories under the term '*granfalloon*s', is open to discussion. My definition of a *granfalloon* requires it to be an assumption a group which includes many people, most of whom are not known. The boundaries of this term are not well defined, since the term 'family' could also be used in a way that includes many unknown people. In most of his contextual uses, however, it was not the case. The only exception that I observed was in terms of the categories related to football, and specifically, the sense of belonging signalled by the Cerro Porteño fans (one of the two major clubs, which largely divide the Paraguayan population into two opposing groups).

against, offered a perspective of being able to think and act through these different social categories – expanding the different social roles—or, in other words—epistemic frameworks which are at hand to evoke. We could thus conclude that being reduced to one social category, which assumes no belonging to a broader community, can be detrimental. Thinking and acting (as well as being thought of and interacted with) through granfalloon and or other broad social categories, can be beneficial – both in the political realm, as Carlos would claim, and in the realm of daily life and emotional well-being. Here lies a potential subject for research, on the affective and mental-health consequences of the use, or lack, of different social categories and granfalloon, as well as on their importance and manifestations within the inner life of people.

A question which Abel's story throws at our discussion of social categories relates to what he described as his daily 'internal battles'. This thesis has largely debated the contextual epistemic permissibility of using different frameworks, or social categories, in the realm of discourse and social action. However, a further reflection is required upon the use of social categories within people's internal expressions. As Nigel Rapport wrote, the subject of internal 'speech' has largely remained “*a terra incognita of the more positivistically inclined sociolinguistics, even of psychology and psychoanalysis (not to mention social anthropology), a terra denied or deprecated*” (2008, p.333). In other words, this topic has remained largely neglected despite the fact that we quantitatively may have more 'internal conversations' than inter-personal ones; or as Virginia Woolf noted, this is perhaps when we are the most expressive (in: Rapport 2008, p. 334).

When considering internal expressions the theoretical questions multiply, many of which we can only speculate about, such as: how much of it can be interpreted as linguistic? To what degree are internal expressions similar to inter-personal ones?; when is the internal/external dichotomy clearly present, and when does it blur?; what is the relation between the linguistic and non-linguistic elements of internal expressions? And, what role do social categories play in them? Another question could be posed concerning contextual epistemic permissibility within the inner conversations and perceptions: how, when, and to what extent do people internally conceptualise and perceive others through such social categories as 'German', 'Paraguayan', or some other granfalloon.

Also, if the internal expressions or 'speech' ought to be an important research subject to research, appropriate methodologies need to be developed.

One of the major methodological challenges is, in words of Andrew Irving: “[...] *how to go about researching, understanding and accurately representing the complex inner expressions and life-worlds that exist beneath the surface of people’s public expressions and activities*” (2014, p.219). Irving himself used different methodological tools to research the subject of internal expressions. For example, Irving showed his research participants photographic images of different artworks, a method of elicitation that helped to create a dialogue and to provoke discussion on informants experiences. One such photo-elicitation, depicting people who, in similarity to the interlocutor also had HIV, resulted in a very personal story that was told by a man from Kampala. The man, Daniel, who could identify with the art of people with similar experiences, narrated the events and thought processes, or inner expressions, of an attempted suicide. This story was made in a collaborative process together with the anthropologist, and it included taking photographs of its important sites. The goal of this methodology was “*to understand the life-world of someone confronting the radical uncertainty of their own existence in a public place*” (Ibid. p.226). In this sense, Abel's story and the photographs, which were mostly taken by his sister at his instructions, also create some understanding of his experiences as well as inner expressions.

For Abel it was highly important to take a photograph together with his family for his story, emphasising their importance in his life and his survival. His daily 'internal battles', whose contents are beyond other people's reach, are present in the lives of those close to him. His family plays a central role in this internal warfare, and their care and support have been one of the key forces that shape Abel's internal debates. Abel also does not necessarily want the wheelchair to be visible in the photographs, underlying that he does not want to be perceived through it, through the reductionist category of *descapacitado*. At the same time he explains the process of charcoal production, one of main parts of the family business, yet he does that in a context of a photograph, which aims to show a place to which he has no access. “*I have not seen this place for six years now – it is more or less 50 meters from our house, but there is no path*

for the wheelchair,” he said. The photograph of the tractor can be also quite revealing. In the moment of 'photographic elicitation' (the method of asking people to describe and comment on images), Abel firstly compared the tractor to the one that he had an accident in. Without stopping, he then related it to his son's first birthday in the past, and then to the forthcoming birthday in the future. All of these examples can give the reader an understanding of some of the daily life struggles and experiences of Abel, as well as providing some insight into the internal struggles which torment him.

Although my research and this thesis did not set out to investigate the internal expressions and narratives of individuals, through the twelve stories, in their textual and photographic forms, we can say that “(...) *while there is no independent, objective access to another person’s consciousness or experience, we can use the performative and collaborative imperative of ethnography to develop practical approaches to knowing, theorising and representing the modes of inner expression, experience and memory that are fundamentally constitutive of daily life but would not otherwise be externalised or made public*” (Irving 2015, p.4). Abel's story speaks to our debate on social categories that assume the existence of big groups with some shared characteristics (granfalloon), mainly by their absence in his discourses, and in the consequences of such an absence. We should also ask, however, whether people lead to some extent similar internal battles through granfalloon? Or, in other words, whether and to what extent do granfalloon matter for people's internal expressions and existential dilemmas? Gerda's story, her struggle to keep questioning and challenging the meanings of being German and Paraguayan, suggest that they do matter. This thesis, however, did not set out to investigate these issues, though they will be investigated in future research, becoming some of the main questions in my next planned research project.

Conclusions

Following the prologue this thesis continued with a historical contextualisation of Nueva Germania, the main site of my research. The town was founded at the end of nineteenth century by German settlers, who were led by Bernhard Förster and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Their project was guided by anti-Semitic and nationalistic sentiments, which were based on ideas of race and eugenics. However, this project did not last long, and after Bernhard's death and Elisabeth's departure, the colony abandoned this ideology as a driving force for its development. More than a hundred years later, the existing forms of nationalism are based on different understandings and, with the exception of two people (described in the "Teodoro's anti-Semitism" box), I did not hear any anti-Semitic discourses. My main initial research interest lay in the current forms and manifestations of German and Paraguayan nationalism in people's daily and existential lives. The chosen methodology involved not only traditional ethnographic participatory observation, but also participatory photography and collaborative writing of people's stories.

The key observations and theoretical problems are described in the second part of the thesis. I started by showing different emic explanations of what it means to be German and to be Paraguayan for certain people. I also attempted to reveal the differences between these important categories. When asked about the importance of being German, most people would claim that being German is one of the key defining characteristics of who and what they are, determining their morality, economic decisions, work ethic, dietary preferences, and many others. While exploring the different uses of such nationalistic discourses, I noted that sometimes they were not relevant at all, but that other social categories were used and provided a different framework for social reality. In other words, the observation that it is socially and individually permissible to use contextually different epistemic frameworks, which rely on different axiomatic assumptions. Such as the example of the *Germanino* category, which divides people along different lines. This observation led me to the key formulation of *contextual epistemic permissibility* as a theoretical assumption for anthropology and for wider social sciences. We should recognise this multiplicity of different epistemic frameworks, rather than assume an expectation of coherence, or universal relevance of social categories (for example, an assumption that *nationalism* is a

relevant 'force' in each context, and should be always be considered in analytical terms). Anthropologists have often criticised monistic approaches (for example, Abu-Lughod 1991 and Wagner 1981); this thesis is another such critique, with the proposal to take contextual epistemic permissibility as a central theoretical assumption.

The recognition of contextual epistemic permissibility, I argued, should be reflected in our methodological approaches. I thus proposed to use *complementarity*, as a key method for research, analysis, and representations – that is, to use different research methods, different theories and analytical approaches, as well as expand the forms of representation beyond single-authors and beyond text in general. I argued that complementarity minimises the risk of reducing people to singular interpretative, explanatory, and representative models, which would be both essentialist and reductionist. I also argued that the outcomes of complementary analyses and representations are more than the sum of their parts. At the very least they provide the possibility of reflection on the differences and limitations of the many approaches, through their juxtaposition. We can, for example, reflect on the different axiomatic assumptions of the chosen theoretical models and how these fit with emic claims and etic observations. Equally, the intertextuality of different forms of representations, provide the reader with a better ethnographic understanding.¹²² Both the assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility and the method of complementarity were further discussed in the thesis.

The third and longest part of the thesis presented twelve different peoples stories, which in both textual and photographic forms focused on a variety of different topics. These stories, which were created by a collaborative research and writing process, were intertwined with numerous 'boxes' that further discussed the main theoretical subjects. The methodological discussion (in blue boxes) oscillated between explanations of certain aspects of my collaborative research and writing experiences, as well as on some theoretical reflections. On the one hand I debated photography, arguing that *what* it is largely depends

¹²²*Limits of complementarity seem to be notable once we step out of interpretative and explanatory realms, and enter into some prescriptive endeavours (such as, for example: law-making, juridical, or any other realm in which requires solid assumptions and structural models). In these cases, analytical complementarity may still be informative, but ultimately it is better to choose just one approach. A thorough discussion of the possibilities and limitations of complementarity, would require further reflection and preferably experimentation.*

on the assumed theoretical approach and its basic axioms, and that we should instead consider *how* photographs are used and interpreted. Attention to how photographs can be used and what informational value they can convey, allows us to legitimise photography as a research method and ethnographic representational medium (as argued in: “Photography, indexicality, and intertextuality”). The ambiguous ontological status of photography (not being able to define *what* it is) is not an impediment to its use for anthropological purposes. Even more so, using it alongside text (whose ontological status is also ambiguous), allows for precisely the complementarity, or intertextuality, which I argued for beforehand - allowing for a polyphonic representation in and beyond language. On the other hand, I discussed the collaborative storytelling method, how different the process was with each person, and what editorial work was required. Reflecting back on the fieldwork method and the resulting outcomes, I can conclude that my methodology allowed a space for peoples representations of the subjects that they considered important, alongside a space for the exploration of my own theoretical interests. I also argued that a certain extent *semantic editing* is required in order to preserve the intended meanings, or clarify elements that might not be clear to a broad readership. Because this process requires much engagement and fieldwork familiarity, the final result should not be treated as just peoples stories being repeated by the anthropologist, but as a form of ethnography.

Contextual epistemic permissibility also led to further theoretical questions that relate to different long-lasting debates in philosophy and in the social sciences. One of the first questions discussed in the thesis was: if people contextually use different epistemic frameworks through which the world is understood and acted upon, what does this imply for the *concept of self*? Or in other words, how is it that despite this multiplicity, people assume a singularity and continuity of self? I have presented a short overview of different theories of self, in relation to the different emic claims of my interlocutors (see the box “Contextual epistemic permissibility and the concept of self”). After presenting several different approaches, and showing how they might relate to the examples, I mentioned two, which accommodate the analytical assumption of contextual epistemic permissibility – one coined by Derek Parfit and the other by Martin Heidegger. The first explains the notion of the singularity of self (or '*personal identity*', as the analytical philosophers call it), and explains the self as a continuity of psychological connectedness, which holds true through

memory and character. Within this view, we could see a sense of being German or Paraguayan as one of such strings that contribute to the psychological connectedness, and ultimately the assumption of singular self. Heidegger's approach goes against the Cartesian separation between self and the world – rather than defining the 'I' as a subject which is already objectively present, he sees it as a presence - as an always situated Being (the *Dasein*). In this approach the self (or rather *selfhood*) should be denoted through activity and process (through ways or modes of being). Using Heidegger's approach in our debate, Being German or Paraguayan could be seen as one of the important ways of being, which only situationally constitute the situated self. Importantly, we can conclude that an assumption of the singular self does not necessarily require it to be consistent or coherent. Such approach can potentially facilitate the understanding of people as ever-changing individuals (not only in time, but also in different contexts), who can use radically different epistemic frameworks that imply different ways of understanding and acting upon the world, yet all the while maintaining a sense of a singular self.

Another question which emerges from the focus on the incommensurable contextual uses of epistemic frameworks is as follows: how do people choose which social category, which epistemic framework, to apply in a given context, and how are these inter-subjectively negotiated? Within this discussion, I briefly introduced several different approaches to *social action* - Weberian, linguistic, and phenomenological (see “Negotiating epistemic frameworks”). I also proposed a way in which these approaches can help us to explain the ethnographic examples in which conflicting epistemic frameworks were being evoked.¹²³ Without reaching a strong conclusion, my goal was to emphasise that while assuming contextual epistemic permissibility, social action should be analysed within its context, and different theoretical approaches can provide alternative or complementary explanations of social action - that is, the different formulations of social action locate its sources elsewhere, thus offering alternative explanations on how and why people operate contextually on different epistemic frameworks. A further question which followed from

¹²³ Earlier, I also explained that contextual epistemic permissibility should not be reduced to the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance. Dissonance assumes some feelings of discomfort or distress when people use conflicting categories or logic. Such discomfort might indeed sometimes appear, but in most of the cases I have not observed it.

this debate, asked what agency do individuals hold, over their contextual uses of given epistemic frameworks? Again, I presented different theoretical approaches and related them to ethnographic examples, reaching no strong conclusion, but arguing that we ought to analyse agency, or people's self-control (as it is referred to by Churchland), in a given context. I also seconded Rapport's claim that we should assume people's agency as a moral stand (see: "Contextual epistemic permissibility and agency").

In another box, I discussed the key concept that originally guided my research interests – *nationalism*. I presented different theoretical approaches, and explored how these might provide additional interpretations of Paraguayan nationalism (see "Theories of Nationalism"). I also argued against theoretical positions that hold nationalism as universally present, or relevant. I proposed that we should instead see it as a broad term that includes all discourses and behaviours that share the axiomatic belief in an existence of a nation and shared characteristics amongst its nationals (i.e. Germanness or Paraguayanness). Furthermore, considering the problematic parallel uses of *ethnicity* and *nationalism* as analytical terms, I proposed to use Vonnegut's term *granfalloon*, redefined¹²⁴ for our purposes. My use of the term includes all social categories that assume the existence of a big group, whose members share certain characteristics or predispositions - thus including Germans, Paraguayans, Germaninos and Campesinos, the four main granfalloon discussed in this thesis, under one analytical concept (see: "Campesinos – a social category").

The thesis finished with Abel's story, and a box discussing some theoretical topics that emerge from that story. Abel is usually reduced to a single social category, which in his case includes no belonging to a bigger group (thus is not a granfalloon). I argued that we should consider the potential importance of granfalloon in people's lives and their general wellbeing. I also considered Abel's description of his '*internal battles*', and reflected on how the thesis had hitherto focused to a large degree on people's discourses and actions, but not on their internal expressions. I seconded Irving's work and argued that despite the fact

¹²⁴For Vonnegut all granfalloon are a misnomer - fake communities, not actually existing in reality. Because all social categories could be deconstructed and depicted as fake, our use of the term needs to be redefined and separated from Vonnegut's claims. Rather than being interested in the ontological status of granfalloon, my interest is in using the term as an analytical tool that allows comparison. The term is somewhat similar to Anderson's '*imagined communities*', however it aims to broaden its uses (for example, by incorporating more performative understandings).

that we have no direct access to this important element of people's lives, we can design different methodological techniques to enrich our understanding of it. Abel's story, his photographs and comments to them, can give the reader some sense of his internal struggles and debates. The discussion on internal expressions ended with an open question for further research, asking how are nationalism and other grandfalloons used in people's internal dialogues and to what extend can they cause similar internal struggles?

Both key theoretical debates of this thesis – contextual epistemic permissibility and complementarity – are open to many other questions and examinations. The issue of contextual uses of multiscale epistemic frameworks, can be debated in relation to most major theoretical debates within social sciences. Complementarity can be discussed in different methodological constellations, which would further explore its possibilities. It proposes to use many theoretical models which are based on different multiscale key axiomatic assumptions or basic units – might it be the individual, society, nature, or god¹²⁵. Even though we might hold personal preferences to some approaches, their complementarity and lack of strong analytical positioning (or its suspense) can be valuable for interpretative and explanatory endeavours, by permitting the consideration of different analytical outcomes.

To conclude, the combination of these two main debates of this thesis, could result in a proposition that anthropologists, on the one hand, should research people's different contextual uses of epistemic frameworks in relation to their ways of being, without assuming a universal coherence or relevance. On the other hand, we ought to explore the range of different interpretative, explanatory, and representative approaches in complementary and dialectic juxtapositions. Through such complementarity, we can avoid falling into monisms, legitimising some political standpoints, and assure a constant reminder of the limits of all theoretical models, which stem from their basic axioms.

¹²⁵*All of which can be deconstructed or criticised from within other positions, yet we most probably cannot escape them and it seems that we always contextually accept (consciously or unconsciously) some axiomatic basis.*

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