

Trapped in nature: discourses on humanity in processes of environmental naturalization

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Abstract

The naturalization of protected areas is based on the discursive redefinition of both the environment and the social actors that inhabit it. This article studies how, within the processes associated with the creation and management of protected areas, discourses are generated that define humanity in relation to nature and its effects on access to resources and power relations. These processes are analyzed on the basis of a comparative ethnographic case study of El Manu National Park (Amazon, Peru) and the Galapagos National Park (Ecuador). Finally, it is concluded that discourses on humanity are instrumental in the processes for legitimizing or delegitimizing the role played by locals within protected areas, depending on attributed proximity or distance of humans to nature.

Key words: nature, naturalization, humans, discourse, protected areas, Amazon, Galapagos

Résumé

La naturalisation des aires protégées repose sur la redéfinition discursive de l'environnement et des acteurs sociaux qui l'habitent. Cet article étudie comment, au sein des processus associés à la création et à la gestion d'aires protégées, nous générons des discours qui définissent l'humanité en relation avec la nature. Les processus sont analysés sur la base d'une étude de cas ethnographique comparative du parc national El Manu (Amazonie, Pérou) et du parc national des Galapagos (Équateur). L'humanité joue un rôle déterminant dans les processus de légitimation ou de délégitimation du rôle joué par les populations locales au sein d'aires protégées, en fonction de la proximité ou de la distance qui leur est attribuée par rapport à la nature.

Mots clés: nature, naturalisation, humains, discours, zones protégées, Amazone, Galapagos

Resumen

La naturalización de las áreas protegidas tiene su base en la redefinición discursiva del entorno y de los actores sociales que lo habitan. En este artículo se estudia cómo en los procesos asociados con la creación y gestión de áreas protegidas se generan discursos que definen lo humano en relación con la naturaleza, así como los efectos de esos discursos sobre el acceso a los recursos y las relaciones de poder. Estos procesos son analizados en el contexto de un estudio de caso comparativo del Parque Nacional del Manu (Amazonía, Perú) y el Parque Nacional Galápagos (Ecuador). Finalmente, se concluye que los discursos sobre lo humano tienen un papel instrumental para legitimar o deslegitimar el rol que juegan los habitantes de las áreas protegidas, dependiendo de la proximidad o distancia que se le atribuye a lo humano respecto a la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: naturaleza, naturalización, humanos, discurso, áreas protegidas, Amazonía, Galápagos

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1. Introduction

Nature and humanity are central concepts in the hegemonic discursive construction of reality in Western societies and, therefore, in its critical analysis (Arnold 1996; Glacken 1967). Discourses on nature have become a fundamental field of enquiry in environmental research, since different approaches have called into question the categorization of nature as universal (Bourg 1993; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Gonseth *et al.* 1996; Raffestin 1996). Indeed, when we talk about nature we are referring to very different realities, as it is difficult to separate it out from the categories that define it (Wade 1993). For that reason, from a post-structuralist standpoint (Escobar 1999), not only does the analysis of nature in the abstract become important, but also the analysis of what Raffestin (1996) terms *natures*, inseparable from the political (De la Cadena 2010; Latour 2004) and social spheres (De Sousa 2009).

By questioning nature as a given category, we undoubtedly move on to questioning the category of humanity and the human element as an essential, internally coherent, and ahistorical reality that is in binary opposition to nature (Braun 2004; Derrida 2002). As pointed out by Geertz (1973), we cannot disassociate notions of humanity from social contexts. In discursive processes surrounding the construction of what it is to be human, the alleged unity of the species becomes fragmented based on the naturalization of racial groups (Wade 1993) and gender (Ortner 1972), among other categories.

Discussions about the modern Western constitution of ideas of nature and humanity have sparked major debate with regard to the current ecological crisis and efforts to redress it via nature conservation policies and strategies. Starting with the critical analysis of connections between the US National Park model and ideas of wilderness (Cronon 1995), social anthropologists and scholars from cognate disciplines have made great efforts to demonstrate how conservation practices, such as the designation of natural protected areas, mobilize, materialize and territorialize dualist ideas of nature and humanity (West *et al.* 2006). Critical analysis of the discursive use of ideas of nature and humanity in natural protected areas has been particularly useful to approach and unveil power relations and conflicts over land-use rights, resource access, and political legitimacies, particularly with regard to the dispossession and even physical eviction of certain social groups (e.g. Adams and Hutton 2007; Brockington 2002; Valcuende *et al.* 2011).

Addressing these debates, this article analyzes the articulation between processes of naturalization of the environment (understood as the redefinition of protected areas into natural environments; see more in Ruiz-Ballesteros *et al.* 2009) and the naturalization of its inhabitants. The naturalization of a protected area implies the potential naturalization of the people who inhabit it. This process is grounded in the application of the discursive nature-culture dichotomy, so that, when a protected area is created, greater distance or proximity to nature is attributed to its inhabitants: complete separation can be established between humans and their environment (humans remain exclusively within the sphere of culture), or, on the contrary, certain groups can be considered part of nature, thus naturalizing them. To study these processes, we have taken Descola's approach to naturalism (2005, 2009) as a starting point, which enables us to examine in depth the intimacies between ideas of human and non-human nature, as two closely intertwined realities, which are particularly pronounced in environmental conflicts in protected areas. This article will show that the discursive use of both categories is a central element of dispute and legitimation in protected areas, concluding, beyond Descola's ideas on naturalism, that: (1) nature and humanity, as discursive categories, are not so separate; and (2) humanity is internally discontinuous and segmented. Thus, naturalization processes within protected areas have an ambivalent effect since, although they can legitimize certain rights for native populations, they also place these populations in a highly asymmetrical position within the new framework of power relations generated.

To support this reflection, we propose a comparative study of two protected areas of international relevance, where the discursive processes that interest us here are clearly expressed: the Amazon (El Manu National Park, Peru) and the Galapagos Islands (Florea Island, Ecuador). In both cases, we conducted extensive ethnographic research over several years.

2. Naturalism, naturalization and humanity: physicality and interiority

Naturalism, following Descola (2005, 2009), is the hegemonic ontology of Western societies and Modernity, based on a classification that —grounded in the concepts of physicality and interiority— clearly

separates humans from the rest of living beings. Through the notion of physicality, Descola (2005: 212) refers not only to simple materiality, but also to the exterior form, substance, physiological processes, even the way of acting in the world. Interiority refers to non-tangible elements such as consciousness, spirit and soul, which support intentionality, subjectivity, reflexivity, affects or attitudes to signify or dream (Descola 2005: 211). Naturalism posits a homogeneity and continuity of humans and non-humans in terms of their physicality, whilst considering qualitative differences in their interiority, which makes them *de facto* different beings.

The hegemonic vision of humanity is thus constructed in opposition to the non-human components of the environment: their physicalities are similar but their interiorities are not. From this perspective, the hegemonic thinking of naturalism proposes that: (1) there is an evident difference between humans and non-humans (interiority), which is extrapolated into a clear separation between human and environment; and (2) the human element contains no internal discontinuities; human nature, therefore, is represented homogeneously. However, as we shall analyze in this article via the critical examination of discourses on humanity and nature in two protected areas of Peru and Ecuador, we come across discourses that blur the internal unity of humans and that establish lines of continuity between human and non-human. A number of questions emerge from these findings: to what extent does the process of environmental naturalization also entail a definition of the human component? What effects does the discursive construction of the human have on the use and management of natural resources?

To a certain extent, these concerns have been tackled by Pálsson (1996), who proposed the existence of three logics on the basis of which we signify nature and situate ourselves in relation to it as humans: orientalism, paternalism, and communalism. These logics also point to different positions between humans themselves with regard to their access to natural resources. For Pálsson, there are two dominant logics in the Western context: *orientalist*, which understands nature as a source of resources available to humans; and *paternalist*, through which human beings are protectors of nature (Pálsson 1996). These two logics reproduce a perspective in which the human component is situated above the natural sphere, creating a dual hierarchy: one between humans and non-humans; and another between humans who have the capacity to exploit or protect nature and those who do not (Pálsson 1996). These representations legitimize the power of humans over nature, but at the same time justify androcentric, ethnocentric, and colonialist positions. Thus nature is a key category of legitimation through which discourses are constructed that separate humans into different categories, creating discursive discontinuity between them, which turns into social differences (Montenegro 2011). This fact is made patent in processes of environmental naturalization and also in the naturalization/denaturalization of the human, especially in relation to the construction of indigeneity (Boccaro 2003; Canessa 2006; Dove 2006; Kuper 2003; Rubenstein 2004).

We are certainly witnessing a progressive blurring between the boundaries of human and non-human nature (Escobar 1994), as we see in the humanization of animals turned into pets (Pastori and De Matos 2016), but also in the blurring between human nature and machines, as Haraway (1985) showed us through the image of the *cyborg*, in an age defined as post-humanist (Coyle 2006). The questioning of nature as a static reality, as well as the radical separation between culture and nature, and criticism of rationalist discourse as the only form of knowledge (Leff 2014), among other issues, have given rise within political ecology to what has become known as an ontological turn (see Kohn 2015). We have also seen the development of political ontologies through which the existence of various pluriverses (Escobar 2014) and, therefore, of different natures have been manifested (Blaser 2009), brought to the fore particularly through conflict.

In any case, in practice, nature as a reality outside of culture continues to be central to the functioning of our societies. The processes of discursive naturalization/denaturalization in the protected areas we study in this article highlight the endurance of a central dichotomy (culture versus nature) when it comes to ordering socio-environmental reality and positioning the different actors and agents therein. But how do these processes come about?

To answer this question, we will look in greater depth at Descola's proposal and will endeavor to show the extent to which the notion that specifically defines the human component from the perspective of naturalist discourse – its interiority – is linked to non-human elements within the processes of naturalization that take place in protected areas. In fact, the potential linking of some humans with the natural world seems to call into

question that 'common interiority', fostering discursive discontinuity between humans. In other words: the naturalization of the environment can entail the total alienation of all things human (human and nature are represented as antithetical categories) as well as a naturalization of certain humans (human beings are represented as an integral part of nature). Hence, we are presented with two markedly different human interiorities, which generate evident discontinuity.

This analytical perspective helps us to reflect on the discursive relationship between the human and natural elements within the heart of naturalism: under which conditions do humans share an interiority with the non-human? Which discontinuities develop between human beings according to their possible different interiorities? These questions not only have a theoretical dimension; they also help us to understand the role of these narratives to legitimize or delegitimize environmental policies and appropriations, as well as conflicts over the use of certain 'natural' resources and, more generally, the very conceptualization of indigeneity within the context of environmental politics (Dove 2006; Rubenstein 2004). This all depends on the distance or proximity of humans to what is understood as 'natural' within hegemonic naturalist discourse. We cannot forget the performative nature of discourses, constructing while they represent reality.

3. Case studies and methodology

To develop this proposal, we focused on two of the most emblematic natural spaces in the world: the Galapagos Islands and the Amazon (Figure 1). The Galapagos Islands are a space that has only very recently been occupied by humans, emblematic for scientific and naturalist discourse since the 19th Century, precisely through the absolute negation of the human within nature. The Galapagos Islands are presented predominantly as an uninhabited place, which allows for an unprecedented nature-centric discourse (Andrada *et al.* 2010; Quiroga 2009).

The Amazon, on the other hand, in Peru, and more specifically within El Manu National Park (created in 1973), is valued for its megadiversity, a space that is still home to human populations who keep themselves in voluntary isolation, usually interpreted as a throwback to the past and as 'natural humanity' (which is routinely labeled 'savage'). In El Manu, we see the co-existence of an area deemed to be "natural" with a humanity that is a part thereof (indigenous in general and in particular uncontacted populations) and another humanity that is presented as being alien or outside of nature, fundamentally the population of the Andes who migrated there in successive waves. In both contexts —Galapagos and El Manu— contemporary naturalization of the environment has been a very intense process, and the discursive recreation of humanity in relation to that naturalization has followed ostensibly divergent pathways. For this reason, they are particularly appropriate case studies to reflect comparatively on the articulation between the naturalization of the environment and the processes of naturalization/denaturalization of the people who inhabit these areas.

In El Manu National Park, we implemented a multi-situated ethnographic model in the buffer zone, working with various communities (Pilcopata, Queros, Santa Rosa de Huacaria, Shintuya) from our basecamp in Salvación. We also carried out fieldwork in Cuzco and Puerto Maldonado, strategic cities for this area from an administrative and economic perspective. The fieldwork was conducted over the course of six months between 2012 and 2015, although previously different research projects had been carried out in the Region of Madre de Dios, linked with this subject, from 2007 onwards. In the Galapagos Islands, after looking at the whole archipelago, the National Park, and the Charles Darwin Foundation, we decided to focus on one of the islands, Floreana, carrying out intensive fieldwork over the course of nine and a half months between 2009 and 2015.

The ethnography conducted in each case study includes the three most common data sources in qualitative research: consultation of secondary sources, interviews, and observation. Key informants were chosen taking into account the different positions (settlers, indigenous) and sectors (conservation, tourism, administration, farming...) occupied by local stakeholders. We considered the internal heterogeneity of each case study, prioritizing significance over the representativeness of interviewees and applying a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing until a reasonable level of theoretical saturation was achieved following grounded theory (Charmaz 2003; Glasser and Strauss 1967). A total of 40 semi-structured interviews were held in the buffer zone of El Manu National Park and 35 on the island of Floreana. Once the transcribed interviews

had been coded, the analytical development stage combined elements from grounded theory and content analysis.



Figure 1: Floreana Island, the Galapagos Islands and El Manu National Park.

4. El Manu: naturalized humanity

El Manu Natural Park covers an area of 17,163 km² and is located in the regions of Cusco (7.2%) and Madre de Dios (92.8%). The Park was created in 1973 as part of a strategy for environmental conservation by the state, encouraged by the scientific community (Patterson *et al.* 2006), but also as a sustainable development alternative, based on research and tourism. In 1979, it was declared a Biosphere Reserve, and in 1987 it was made a World Heritage Site. Unlike other protected areas in Peru, indigenous peoples live within El Manu, but the majority of the population lives in the buffer zone.

Occupation of this territory during the 19th Century was linked to the extraction of rubber (Grupo Fronteira 2009) and subsequently to the cultivation of sugar cane and cocoa (Rummenhoeller 2007). The construction of the first roads (1920-1940) enabled a more consistent occupation of the rainforest, but it was not until the 1960s that the road network expanded, progressively occupying the current buffer zone. This last stage of occupation involved a population originally from the Andes, settling over the course of different stages, some unplanned and others planned by the State. These waves of migration led to a major transformation in land use and consequent deforestation, following the tracks of the new communication links (García 1982; García 2003). In 1940, there were 4,950 inhabitants throughout the Department of Madre de Dios, whereas in the last census compiled in 2007, the population had risen to 109,555 (INEI), with 20,290 inhabiting the province of El Manu.

Settlers originally from the Andes, located fundamentally in the buffer zone, have very low economic resources. Currently, their fundamental activity is subsistence agriculture, since agro-livestock production presents serious problems in terms of commercialization and is strongly controlled by intermediaries. Commercial activity focuses on larger nuclei, such as Pilcopata and Salvación. Tourist activity within the Park is run by a limited number of companies that require authorization from the Park, and which regularly operate out of Cusco (Valcuende, Murtagh and Rummenhoeller 2012; Valcuende 2017). Timber extraction was fundamental in the past, and although it continues to be a major source of revenue for the area, its importance has declined owing to the Park's restrictions as well as the depletion of timber resources in the most accessible areas.

Indigenous peoples located within the area of the Park present great ethnic diversity: Matsigenka, Amarakaeri, Harakmbut, Wachiperi, Yine. In addition to these groups, there are also indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation (IPVI). The total number of indigenous peoples in this area is around 2,300 people (Araoz 2016). Whereas indigenous peoples in initial contact and voluntary isolation sustain themselves by hunting, fishing, and gathering, contacted populations within the Park (Tayakome and Yomibato) combine hunting and fishing with agriculture, obtaining some economic benefits from tourist activity (Rummenhoeller 2012).

Since the creation of the Park, the principles of conservation have been strongly contested by regional and local administrations, as well as some of the settlers who consider that protection policies, materialized in the Park, limit their capacity for economic development and restrict regional articulation by hindering the construction of new infrastructures, such as roads, which are in turn considered by other agents to be a greater risk for conservation and especially for the survival of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation.

Within this Park, 85% of its territory is dedicated exclusively to conservation and research. Indigenous populations who live inside the Park are only permitted to carry out their traditional hunting and fishing activities within certain limited areas, as long as they do not commercialize their products. The logic of conservation determines the way in which they inhabit the territory to the point of denying them ownership of it. Populations of settlers and indigenous peoples located in the buffer zone must cope with major shortages in terms of services and infrastructures, and limitations imposed by conservation policies are not compensated by alternative activities such as tourism. Political-administrative institutions are based far from the area. In fact even the Park offices are located in the city of Cusco. NGOs to a certain extent stand in for the absence of the State in different areas.

Images of El Manu focus on its natural character (Beltrán 2012) on account of its megadiversity. In this discursive construction, 'the human factor' plays an irrelevant role, a fact that is not specific to this protected area but which affects the representation of the whole of the Amazon, seen from the collective Western imagination as the paradigmatic non-anthropised space and, therefore, 'truly' natural, but also, and unlike the Galapagos Islands, as a place for the wild and savage (humans?).

There are different settlers in these 'imaginary geographies' of the space and the humans who inhabit it, given a different 'interiority' to those who represent civilization. This way of appropriating nature responds paradigmatically to a logic of orientalist exploitation, which historically defined the occupation of the Amazon until well into the 20th Century. Since then, another nature has been valued, linked to the conservation of the ecosystems, in accordance with factors such as biodiversity, which has come to be valued in itself. Hence, when representations of the Amazon are modified on account of its new natural values (the 'lungs of the world', biodiversity), a process of environmental naturalization takes place, which will be the basis for the 'sustainable' exploitation of resources, also leading to the reappraisal and valuing of indigenous peoples and their ancestral knowledge. The image of the primitive and threatening world is progressively being transformed into one of a harmonious paradise that needs to be protected. But this new logic once again relegates the local population, this time because of its incapacity to protect the 'new nature.' Both of Pálsson's logics —orientalist and paternalist — have turned the inhabitants of this territory into silent guests, and the case of El Manu is not exceptional in the context of the Amazon (Pálsson 1996).

The naturalization of the environment is inseparable from the naturalization of the 'indigenous', represented as a single united reality, essential, the object of protection together with the other biophysical elements of the environment.

Among its pristine forests you will find enormous trees, over 40 meters high, and wildlife such as jaguars, giant otters [...] It is one of the few areas of the world where people still live just as their ancestors did, in harmony with their environment (Manu National Park, <http://www.visitmanu.com/>).

The re-reading of a harmonious natural world is constructed by negating the role played by the original dwellers in shaping that world, thus obscuring an important part of Amazonian history. This reinterpretation is now being called into question by historians, archaeologists and anthropologists, who point out the importance of the original dwellers in shaping the Amazonian landscape, as well as identifying a significant human presence in large-scale settlements (Heckenberger 1999; Heckenberger *et al.* 2003; Roosevelt 1999; Viveiros de Castro 1996). Indigenous peoples were not analyzed from a historical but rather from an ecological perspective, based on evolutionist presumptions, which tie them with our own pre-civilized past, as an ancestral reminder of a time when 'humans' were closer to animality.

Indigenous peoples, in hegemonic representations, do not constitute a factor that shapes the environment. Their lifestyles have been considered mechanical strategies, merely adaptive to the environment and, therefore, not cultural. This fact is particularly evident in interpretations made of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation (IPVI). They are frequently represented as an archaic ancestral remnant, ignoring a fact that many experts on these populations agree on: their situation is a consequence of the modernity and the violence of national society (Huertas 2012; Kirsch 1997; Murtagh 2012). Hence, in these representations of a supposed pristine nature, the central role played by the native peoples in shaping the environment is completely ignored. IPVI have history just as the other indigenous peoples represented through other logics (Shepard and Rummenhoeller 2000; Valcuende *et al.* 2012) that, by denying their past, also deny their possible contemporaneity. In fact, the underlying logic of these discourses of nature supposes the creation of a corporeal order (Valcuende and Vásquez 2016), which is grounded in a dual discursive distancing from human beings who are not the object of protection: a temporal distancing (they are part of a past time, a remnant) and also spatial distancing (their place, their true place, the only place where they can be indigenous is within a harmonious or infernal nature, of which they are part). IPVI are known locally as *los calatos*, those without clothing, an external sign that denotes the absence of culture, a central element to differentiate —through dominant discourses— the civilized from the reviled savages or the innocent indigenous, who are now the object of protection, at least at a discursive level.

Environmental protection policies, which have led to the discursive resignification of the indigenous, have translated into restrictions on extractive activities deemed to be harmful to 'pristine' nature, but also to them, leading to the zoning of areas with different levels of protection, by means of a process of heritageization that selects elements considered to be of special value. As Rodríguez (2013) points out, nature must be created before it is protected. In fact, human presence in natural environments, from this logic, has always been considered problematic, especially when these territories are subject to the protection of true nature, in other words, non-human nature. Beyond contemplating the indigenous presence in the Park, principles of conservation take priority over the political rights of the indigenous peoples. As highlighted in the Management Plan for El Manu National Park:

... tribal groups shall not be granted legal title in Conservation Units, although they may remain there, provided their activities do not threaten the principles that govern these protected areas" (Ministerio de Agricultura y Alimentación 1985:10)

These rules enclose the indigenous communities who live in the Park within a discursive circle, not only from a political perspective but also from an economic one: among other things, their commercial activity with the outside world is limited. Thus, the naturalization of indigenous peoples is materialized in the form of legal regulations that restrict their activities and movements: spatial reclusion by zoning the use of the protected area and rejection of their right to collective ownership. All of this generates a structural conflict that is also

materialized in the hegemony of State institutions that manage the protected area, but also of the different actors that mediate between national society and local populations (NGOs, and tourist businesses).

From the perspective of the market, alternative development proposals to tourism place indigenous populations in an equally structural situation of inequality, which is materialized in the control over the tourist product exercised by companies, NGOs, and even non-indigenous administrators who operate from outside of the Park (Rummenholler 2012). All of this also has its discursive correlate that illustrates the evident conflict.

The representation of 'immutable' indigenous peoples associated with static nature clashes with a changing reality. One of the leaders of the indigenous community of Santa Rosa de Huacaria denounces those very contradictions that are generated, for example, within the sphere of tourism, which requires indigenous peoples to maintain their customs and lifestyles:

[Tourists] they don't pay, if they want to pay they say "give us a receipt", or they say "where are the savages? To pay we want to see them with feathers, dancing"; they say this to us, or "I want to see a crocodile or a monkey swinging from the tree", but what monkey are you going to see? They came here with chainsaws, you can see the road, the cars; to see that you have to walk into the forest, with shoes or barefoot. (Indigenous leader. Santa Rosa de Huacaria, 2013)

Tourism is proposed to many of these communities as the alternative, curiously reinforcing among the indigenous peoples themselves a process of self-naturalization that helps to raise their visibility in the tourist market, but also in the eyes of public institutions, albeit it from an asymmetrical position. This discursive trick is reinforced in the case of IPVI, as sightings and conflicts become habitual, and hidden peoples cease to be so. This fact has generated diverse opposing stances in relation to the need for controlled contact (Walker and Hill 2015) or to ensure the right of these peoples to self-determination (Huertas 2012).

The naturalized image of the indigenous implies a gaze trained on the environment itself, which requires the former in order to continue existing. This gaze highlights the importance of an interiority, which is claimed by other agents operating in this area, especially those linked with tourism and environmental protection. One non-indigenous tour operator stated "we say that the real solution for sustainability is that we all have to recover our indigenous soul, and then we can talk about sustainability and many other things" (Tour operator, Salvación, 2014). The vision of an ancestral and mythical world, which binds us to nature, is contrasted with a world that has lost its roots and which is being destroyed as our inner world, our true nature, is transformed. "The worst thing about this world is money, money serves no purpose" (Tour operator, Salvación, 2014): this is how another small tour operator spoke to us about the transformation of a system that has been steered away from a series of values he considers essential, anchored to nature that is interpreted in sacred terms. It is interesting to see how many of the people who work with indigenous populations come to revalue a way of living (associated directly or indirectly with the indigenous) that to some degree is linked to the conservation of an environment threatened by new settlers and by oil drilling.

One educator, who works with indigenous children who leave their communities to study in Salvación, has a very significant view of the indigenous: "...they are privileged, because I really love nature, and I think it is a privilege to have been born in a place like El Manu National Park. I think they have a lovely way of life, I think it's a very healthy way of life" (Educator, Salvación, 2014). In such discourses, the indigenous represents true human nature, with a different interiority to that of Westernized humans and one that must be preserved. Environmental protection is linked to the protection of those who are inseparably intertwined with it: the indigenous, considered at a discursive level as part of nature and allied to protection. However, for much of the population, particularly the Andean migrant population who have settled in this area, protection poses a threat. The protection of 'the natural', or 'the wild' is seen as an enemy to the development of a full human life (civilized). All of that is materialized from the discursive sphere in a situation of conflict of interests between the actors present in the area:

State politics do not allow this park to become a source of leverage in development, and for this reason people see the park as a hindrance, because all the activities carried out are tailored around

the park and the natural protected areas. Because we have the park, the Amarakaeri Reserve next door, we have the NGOs fencing us in, backing us into a corner, and there will come a time when people will explode (...) I think the park is something extraordinary; no one would disagree with that, but it should not be there solely to be used by a small group of people. (political leader of Pilcopata, 2015)

Through this discourse, the Paradise recreated by certain stakeholders is transformed into a prison that makes regional articulation and local development impossible. These developmentalist logics reproduce a differential discourse in relation to the signification and significance of voluntarily isolated indigenous peoples. Whereas within discourses of conservation, it was necessary to maintain the autonomy of these peoples in order to preserve their natural state and thereby contribute to conservation, developmentalist approaches focus on the right of these people to access the advantages of civilization.

Whereas before it was felt that these populations have everything they need to live, and that problems begin to occur precisely from their insertion into a monetized society, now the focus is more on what they are lacking in terms of diet and healthcare, resulting from secular abandonment. This is manifested for populations settled in the so-called 'cultural area' (pre-reserve or buffer zone), and particularly for populations inside the park, and also for indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation, who have been, from this perspective, 'sequestered' by the State with the endorsement of international cooperation and NGOs.

The ministry of culture has come to 'protect' isolated communities with all the comforts, with luxury, with their chef, their food, everything. Who do they think they are going to protect? There's an isolated person with *huta* [disease]. Is it humane to leave him like that? You can't treat them like that. (inhabitant of Salvación, 2014)

In spite of this apparent recognition of IPVI, ultimately a structural position of power is reproduced, which reinforces the intention to access the resources of the environment more freely, without recognizing the 'other' on an equal footing.

Look, unfortunately there can't be any contact between them and us because the law does not allow it. The law is very clear about this, if you go near them, you're going to prison, you're going to infect them. But they have already survived alongside other people, they have sat down, they have visited a place, they have eaten, and they haven't developed the diseases the ministry of culture claims they will (...) So the ministry of culture is monitoring, but monitoring, what are you doing? It's almost like you are looking at an animal and you don't do anything, in other words, there's no state policy that says, look, you know what? You make contact with these people, and you locate them anywhere, and you teach them how to hunt and fish, well they already know how to hunt, and how to fish, you have to teach them how to farm (political leader of Salvación, 2014).

This paradoxical testimony advocates the agency of indigenous peoples whilst at the same time denying it to them, since it aims to dictate what should be done with indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation, those who have no voice. Indigenous people must learn to farm, or as other testimonies claim, they should learn to wash, or to develop lucrative activities, or even, as various churches propose, they should find God. They have the right to be like us, which ultimately means that they are not like us. This shows a unilinear evolutionist/developmentalist logic. The noble savage is transformed through this discourse into the uncivilized being who must aspire, naturally, to the comforts of the modern world. To do this, they need to be 'taught', and at the same time their 'natural world' must be modified, denying them the capacity to decide over this world.

The naturalization of El Manu is associated with a naturalized human interiority, that of the indigenous peoples, which is contrasted with the interiority of those who are not part of the rainforest. This differential

interiority makes the indigenous 'naturalized' humans in contrast to Westernized humans. Yet our 'interiority' is inseparable from the place we live and even the way in which we live. Hence, as the indigenous get further from their 'original' situation, they are no longer considered 'truly' indigenous. The naturalized interiority represented by IPVI explains and justifies the absence of their voice, since their nature brings them closer to a kind of animality that must be overseen and preserved. 'Civilized indigenous peoples', on the other hand, use their discursive proximity to nature as a political argument to reclaim their decision-making capacity and rights to use the protected area. This natural character of indigenous people positions them politically within the territory. The naturalization process of El Manu, as in so many other protected areas on the planet, implies not only a distancing of humans from nature, but also a naturalization of some humans, namely the indigenous, with consequences that are at the very least ambivalent and paradoxical: does this naturalized humanity represent liberation or is it a trap?

The discursive process that naturalizes indigenous peoples focuses fundamentally on the State and the market, and it is associated with a new episode in the appropriation of territories and resources, either for extraction or tourism; all actors within and outside the context of El Manu accept this: conservation agents, settlers, scientists, and tourism promoters. This discursive phenomenon is materialized at multiple levels. In the everyday reality of life in the Park, there is increasing contact with indigenous communities in voluntary isolation (around populations such as the Shipitari or at the crossroads of communication), which provokes conflict situations that are not always resolved – contact is illegal. At an institutional level, the State acts on the indigenous population by imposing regulations and limitations on the use of the space by virtue of a discursive separation between nature and culture that also justifies the prohibition or development of different activities within the protected space, the most recent episode being tourism. In El Manu, the naturalization of the environment and of some of its (indigenous) inhabitants is evidenced in most spheres of life and has clear political consequences.

5. The Galapagos Islands: an 'ahuman' place

The Galapagos Islands are located in the Pacific, around a thousand kilometers from the coast of Ecuador. They are one of the few places on the planet that have truly been 'discovered' within the period of historical records: there is no record of any human presence before the mid 16th Century when Fray Tomas de Berlanga came across them by accident (Figuera 2009). However, there was no stable occupation of the islands at that time; only pirates and whalers would temporarily drop their anchors there, and so they were a place with barely any anthropic impact where ecological transformations were introduced (extinction of the turtles, for example, and the introduction of goats). For centuries, the archipelago was a place for provisioning, not a place for production, and it remained truly uninhabited (Andrada *et al.* 2010, 2015; Grenier 2007). In the 19th Century, when it was claimed by Ecuador, the first colonists settled there with a view to developing farming, and anthropic impact multiplied, albeit without the substantial alterations that were to take place later on.

It was after this time that expeditions such as the one Darwin travelled in 1835 with 'discovered' the biological exceptionality of a space marked by the total absence of humans and a unique evolutionary development of plants and animal species. It is not a place of megadiversity, but it is a unique one. In fact, since then it has been a place that has inspired thinking about biological evolution, because it shows the evolution of species (finches, turtles, plants...) eloquently. It has become a natural sanctuary, but in particular a sanctuary for science (Quiroga 2009). However, since then, human presence has progressively undermined that 'natural evolution'.

The first farming colonies failed, and in the late 19th Century the islands gradually became more depopulated. This was particularly true of the island of Floreana, which previously had around 300 inhabitants (it now has approximately half that many). But the environment has already been altered by human presence (species were introduced, and there was extinction of native species). In around the 1930s, an unprecedented event took place, as several groups of European and American utopian idealists arrived seeking on that uninhabited island a pristine paradise that preceded human influence (Strauch 1936; Wittmer 1960). But in actual fact Floreana could not fulfill that desire since its habitat had already been altered by humans at least a

century before that. In spite of this, the island was recreated internationally as a dehumanized natural place: the planet's final frontier (Andrada *et al.* 2015).

From the 1950s onwards, political awareness emerged surrounding the natural importance of this archipelago, and the Galapagos National Park was created in 1959. It was understood as a place for science, whilst also initiating tourist development, closely linked to science: the Galapagos Islands as the mecca for nature and science tourism. The scientific-tourist image forged of these islands is one of a natural area without people. The human element is consciously denied in spite of its presence to a lesser or greater degree since the 19th century, and environmental regulations establish zoning for the inhabited islands in which humans are confined to 3% of the territory and the remaining 97% remains a natural area, in which no human activity should be developed whatsoever (with the exception of certain areas reserved for tourism). That 3% must provide room for human settlements and the cultivated areas used to produce the food required for them to subsist (together with imports from the continent), along with fishing possibilities. On the Galapagos Islands, conservation has only been understood as being truly compatible with tourism; for this reason, these islands are perhaps the best example of nature tourism: tourists are sold a visit to a place of pure nature, with no people (their presence is denied and their influence is demonized). Furthermore, the hegemonic model of protection is based fundamentally on erasing all traces of humanity: restoring the ecosystem to how it was when Darwin arrived. Hence, on the island of Floreana, environmental restoration projects have been implemented that pursue this goal. However, it is all one great discursive fiction: when Darwin visited Floreana in 1835 there were twice as many inhabitants as there are today, and a few years later, all the turtles on the islands were extinct. In spite of all that, there has hardly been any room for the human element in the natural definition of the Galapagos Islands, which have become a paradoxical and ambivalent place (Andrada *et al.* 2010; Quiroga 2009).

For scientists and tour operators —united by a shared discourse— the living beings who inhabit the Galapagos Islands (animals or plants, of any type or size) are classified into two categories: indigenous and introduced. The first are pure; the second a threat that endangers the natural purity of the islands.

Indigenous species are, in turn, divided into *endemic* (original and exclusive to the islands, products of their particular evolutionary development), and *native* (also existing elsewhere, perhaps with specific characteristics on the Galapagos, but above all, they have reached the islands 'naturally', in other words, without the mediation of human action). 'Invasive species' have been introduced directly or indirectly by humans. Human beings themselves are the biggest invasive species. Paradoxically, an animal or plant species is considered 'legitimate' (indigenous) only when it has arrived 'naturally' by itself, without human mediation. Hence, humanity is considered the epitome of 'unnatural', and the human populations who have arrived there in greater numbers since the 1980s (currently more than 20,000 inhabitants) are treated as such. Migratory restrictions on citizens of Ecuador are almost tougher than to enter the US or Europe, even though the islands are part of the country. Legislation in this regard (1998, renewed in 2015) classifies people rigorously either as residents – permanent or temporary – or illegal.

Within the hegemonic discourse anchored in the introduced/indigenous dichotomy to classify organisms, humans always carry a negative connotation, seen as an invading plague. Hence, different categories are articulated to describe their presence. Just as indigenous can be endemic or native, human beings —always introduced— seek to assimilate with the indigenous by labeling themselves 'permanent residents', who would come to represent the 'authentic' Galapagos islanders. Whereas those who are passing through or who were not born on the islands are classified as 'temporary residents', on a par with invasive organisms. And finally, there are 'illegal residents', who obviously do not have the right to be on the islands. Some temporary residents, only half joking, commented that this system created a kind of Galapagos *apartheid*, used to forge a hierarchy between humans, similar to the hierarchy established between animal and plant species by virtue of their authenticity as endemic and native.

Permanent residents are 'pure' and have extensive administrative privileges. Temporary residents cannot remain on the islands for longer than one successive year. However, they are all humans —sharing physicality and interiority (Descola 2005) — and as such, they do not form part of nature, which is the park's main *raison d'être*. In general terms, we find two major discursive frameworks to situate the relationship between nature and humans: 'nature first' and 'humans first' (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Brondizio 2013). Ultimately they both dispute

control over the islands: the former is led by conservationist institutions and major tourist companies (which control cruises around uninhabited areas); the second is led by the permanent resident population who seek empowerment and local management of tourism. This discursive tension reveals the centrality of control over tourism in the sociopolitics of the Galapagos.

The discursive trend of 'nature first' can be easily associated with paternalist positions regarding nature (Pálsson 1996). This discourse seeks protection but without losing sight of tourist exploitation that derives directly from that very protection. Science and tourism go hand in hand in this respect, both representing outside interests to the inhabitants of the islands. Humanity is clearly separated from nature, portrayed as the enemy of nature, and human presence is only feasible in a research capacity or as an occasional visitor, including obviously those who provide services to tourists and who work to protect nature. Any others only cause problems for nature. Humans, who are all the same, do indeed share physicality with nature, but not interiority to any extent (Descola 2005).

The 'humans first' discourse is linked to orientalism (Pálsson 1996). It defends the presence of humanity in the Galapagos and so twists the discourse of 'nature' to include 'life-long settlers' ('permanent residents', although it is hard to find two full generations). They are presented as guarantors that the environment remains as it is today; they are defended as 'islanders' who, with a very particular mode of living (very recent), have found a kind of 'Galapagos authenticity' (by way of a local indigeness). By doing so, they set themselves against the interests of scientists and outsiders, but ultimately they are aiming to achieve something similar: to control tourist business, but to do so locally. This position is reminiscent of the aims of indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world: in many cases, a kind of 'ethnocapitalism.' Undoubtedly, it could be argued that locally based tourism is fairer than tourism in the hands of multinationals; it seems evident that the effects at a social level would be different. However, it is questionable as to whether it would truly generate a different environmental impact.

In this case, permanent settlers claim a specific human 'interiority' that sets them apart from newly arrived migrants or temporary residents, to whom they attribute a 'different interiority' that delegitimizes their claim to the islands. Furthermore, this 'interiority' that marks a discursive discontinuity with the rest of the settlers aims to bring them symbolically closer to the 'interiority' of the islands' indigenous organisms. This game of discursive discontinuities and continuities positions inhabitants unequally within the territory, and also establishes a series of rights, associated with the differential nature of the 'interiorities' of its inhabitants. The search to naturalize the human element is fundamentally a search for legitimation. This is particularly marked in Floreana, where a locally based tourism proposal has been developed that is unmatched elsewhere on the islands (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Brondizio 2013). The people of Floreana claim that they are the authentic Galapagos islanders because they are the first modern settlers of the islands: the invader becomes native (Berkes 1999). There are unequivocal examples among the local population of how those who came originally from the Andes have become islanders, capable of adapting, fishing for lobsters with no diving equipment, and hunting wild goats in the park. That is how they claim their unique way of being in and experiencing these islands.

In 1993, this was very desolate. I arrived on Monday, and I felt desperate, this was all dry, I didn't have that freedom I had elsewhere. There I used to bathe in the river and there was fresh water. Here I had to buy fresh water to drink. This was like going to a desert [...] We felt desperate. We cried. Why had we come here? We hadn't murdered anyone. At night the surly donkeys would bray and fight in the village.

Now I don't want to leave here. [...] For me, my life is peaceful, no crime, no traffic, I sleep well, this is paradise. My daughters love it here. [...] We have made our life here, and I'm not moving, this is my home. Now I feel like I'm from here, but during those first years I wanted to leave right away.

I grow crops on the upper part [of the island], I have chickens, I learned to hunt wild goats, R taught me to fish. In Cotopaxi I fished in the river, with *gaveta*. Here you have to know how to swim in the sea, to catch lobsters with no diving equipment. It's totally different. I know the island really well, I walk everywhere. It's my home... (interview with A., arrived in Floreana in 1993 from Cotopaxi in the Andes)

With these types of stories, they define themselves as an inextricable part of a specific nature, which they have experienced, setting it in contrast to the abstract distanced nature of science and the panoramic nature of major tourist interests, where they have no place whatsoever, as no human being does. The political response is also discursive, implicitly reclaiming a specific interiority (Descola 2005, 2009). By claiming authentic Galapagian status, they are brandishing an allegedly anti-development discourse that protects Floreana on the basis of a community management model with low impact on tourism, led locally, for which they feel legitimized because they present themselves as the native, indigenous, natural humans of the islands. Hence, the president of the parish, based on his standing as a 'lifelong' islander (even though his maternal grandmother arrived on the islands in the mid 1940s), and on 'truly feeling and experiencing the island', claims the right to a local tourist operation:

We represent the Galapagos of old, we have not undergone such transformations as the other islands. If they want this to be conserved they should let us be the ones to organize tourism with regard to the local culture and nature. (Floreana's parish president, interview 2013)

Faced with the hegemonic representation of unnatural humanity, and nature without humans, which excludes invasive/introduced species, the people of Floreana claim their own particular kind of humanity that is represented as a continuum between the environment and their own interiority. This fact is made evident in the multiple epic tales that focus on the isolation and hardship they have had to endure on this small island, shaping a different kind of humanity, forged in the rigors of the most inhospitable nature. To claim legitimacy in the Park, the people of Floreana could simply deny nature—a discursive category that fosters a very restrictive system for their presence and use of the environment—but they do not. Instead, they integrate into that nature in a unique way, claiming cultural specificity as 'islanders', which implies *de facto* their naturalization. Hence, they defend their active contribution to the current configuration of nature; they merge their humanity with nature as a way of legitimizing their right to the place they inhabit. That is the model of the authentic Galapagos islander, through which they construct themselves as being a kind of 'indigenous' people to the island, although those never existed. This discourse is set against the hegemonic discourse (scientific and touristic), which continues to represent the Galapagos as a place in which there is almost no room for people, to the benefit of nature without humans.

6. Discussion

Analysis of the discourses of local stakeholders in El Manu and the Galapagos have allowed us to understand the representation of humanity linked to processes of turning the environment into nature. Two very different contexts offer us a convergent tendency: the centrality of nature as a reference point to construct humanity and mark out relationships of power. The ethnographic account points us towards the assumptions that, in either case, sustain discourses of humanity in discourses of environmental naturalization.

As Descola points out, the radical line of separation drawn between humans and nature is part of the hegemonic world vision through which we order and give meaning to our reality. It is precisely this world vision that establishes bridges between the human and non-human, blurring the boundaries to reinforce, but also to contest, the hegemonic vision. It is no coincidence that the Amazon, exemplified in El Manu, and the Galapagos are represented as 'frontier' places. A frontier has a geographical nature but fundamentally an ontological one, by bringing us, through our dominant visions, up against 'true' nature.

According to claims based on naturalism, true nature contains no human presence and has not been contaminated in one way or another by culture. Unsurprisingly, the Galapagos have become a global benchmark for nature, allowing us to catch a glimpse of mythical times and places of a human harmonious nature. This circumstance is, however, a grave problem for the inhabitants of the islands. In El Manu, on the contrary, we come across 'other' humans who were already present before the arrival of the settlers. In spite of this, El Manu in particular, and the Amazon in general, have also been reinterpreted as a paradigmatic natural area. This fact has implied the discursive construction of a temporal and spatial distancing of the pre-civilized and ahistorical indigenous peoples.

Narratives about place and its naturalization have a clear translation in the different types of humans that have been constructed from within local contexts themselves (on the basis of global categories of representation). Interpretations of IPVI, the people without a voice, project images of natural beings, associated with the nature to which they supposedly belong. This nature is 'good' or 'bad', according to protectionist or orientalist discourses respectively (Pálsson 1996), which translates into an environment understood as harmonious or infernal, and into innocent or savage humans. These moral categories imply either maintaining nature, the indigenous, and the IPVI, or overcoming that state of nature (wild and savage) to transform the indigenous into civilized peoples, and 'developing' the Amazon environment.

However, whereas the indigenous people do not have to justify that they are nature, and that gives them certain (albeit limited) rights to a territory, the inhabitants of Floreana are widely delegitimized in their environment. Hence, they need to legitimize their status, claiming their naturalization and creating types of humans that are also moral and political. Therefore, they are the ones who, from this dual perspective (political and moral), can claim their place as part of a nature that is denied to outsiders. Differences in degrees become class differences—just as in the case of the indigenous populations of El Manu—questioning and at the same time reproducing dominant categories of conservationist discourse. In both cases, it is the 'interiority' that feeds back into the logic of certain allegedly naturalized humans, capable of connecting with non-human nature, in a way that other humans are unable to do. The radical difference is that the inhabitants of Floreana have naturalized themselves (*self-naturalization*), whereas in the case of the indigenous peoples of El Manu, naturalization has been imposed on them (*exo-naturalization*).

In the cases analyzed, proximity to or distance from nature generates discontinuities in the conception of the human, as we can see in the situations of inequality that emerge between human and environment, and among humans themselves through orientalist and paternalist discourses (Pálsson 1996). However, this process of naturalization and denaturalization of humans has contradictory consequences. On the one hand it contributes to the recognition of certain rights of the populations who live in these naturalized environments, and this explains the reasons for the tactic assumption (de Certeau 1990) of this naturalist discourse by the indigenous and the Galapagos islanders. Yet, at the same time, the naturalization of these populations condemns them to the supervision of 'others', of those who are a part of the sphere of 'culture', and, therefore, who are situated structurally in an asymmetrical political position. The indigenous have rights as long as they continue to be nature and not culture, as long as they have no history and, therefore, they have no present. The Galapagos islanders have trodden the opposite path; they have chosen to situate themselves within this discursive discourse of conservation, precisely to camouflage themselves in the nature that surrounds them, and to distance themselves from the threat that, within this ahuman context, comes from outside, from 'other' non-natural humans.

Until fairly recently, according to the hegemonic discourse, humans should not reside in natural protected areas, and if they do it is because they are in one way or another 'nature' as well. As much as this discourse might have changed, the practice of environmental protection continues to show that, from a naturalistic perspective, human beings are a problem. A contradictory and ambivalent process that allows for the enduring fiction of enclosed highly protected places within a global context of pillage, in which nature acquires a special value (as well as a price), just as the concept of lost nature does at an imaginary level in our interiority. Within this global context, various questions emerge that, paradoxically, hold true for the indigenous of El Manu and the settlers of the Galapagos Islands. Does the naturalized character of their human interiority legitimize them to decide about the protected area or does it make them beings that are in need of supervision? Does the naturalization of humans free them or subject them by also turning them into the object of protection?

The naturalization of the local inhabitants of protected areas—a phenomenon that greatly transcends the two cases analyzed here—traps them in a discursive circle that, while giving indigenous peoples and Galapagos islanders greater political visibility, also respond to the discourse of a nature made available to and for the benefit of external agents. On the one hand, this naturalization allows them to claim their legitimacy in using local resources. On the other, through tourism for example, it makes them a passive part of the natural setting. Naturalization, beyond its acceptance or otherwise by the different local populations, acts as a new framework for power relations (Ruiz-Ballesteros *et al.* 2009). This is a function of environmental conservation, which,

while potentially legitimizing the rights of local populations, also situates them within a permanent asymmetrical conflict.

7. Conclusion

Nature, as a signifier, as much as it can be questioned, holds a central position in the definition of the human; hence it leads to differential positions with regard to legitimacy and rights over the environment. The indigenous people of El Manu and the permanent inhabitants of Floreana (two very different human groups) are both 'trapped by nature', since they cannot seem to find a way out of their situation of domination outside of this discursive sphere. To escape from the domination to which they are subjected by the naturalization of their environment, they are subjected to or turn to the naturalization of their interiorities, which ultimately reinforces the naturalization of the environment, in which they are, therefore, trapped. Hence, nature is not truly contested; instead it is accepted, reproducing its hegemony and the inequalities it entails.

Through this article we have endeavored to show how —paradoxically— within the dominant discourse of western naturalism, there are clear discontinuities within the human interiority. A fact that is not exclusive of the process of environmental naturalization, and which is also manifested in racial (Wade 1993) and gender construction (Ortner 1972; Laqueur 1992), and even within the visualization of corporeal sexualities (Butler 1993; Llamas 1998; Preciado 2002). Identifying recurrent elements in apparently diverse processes can help us to understand the different ways of representing the human, but also to penetrate the dynamics of domination that find in 'the natural' an allegedly unquestionable argument. Processes of environmental naturalization illustrate a phenomenon that shows models of social domination that are nurtured performatively around nature as a discursive category to shape the human.

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