

## 2021 Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award

We are pleased to announce that **Dr. Maíra Irigaray** is the 2021 winner of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award from UF's Tropical Conservation and Development Program. Dr. Irigaray received her PhD in Geography in Fall 2020 under the supervision of Dr. Cynthia Simmons. The outstanding dissertation award was established in 2010 in recognition of Dr. Marianne Schmink, former Director of the TCD Program for her significant and transformative contributions to graduate education in the Center for Latin American Studies and in the TCD Program.



Dr. Irigaray's dissertation is entitled ***"Resistance, Global Justice and Protection of Indigenous Territories in the Amazon: The Ipereğ Ayũ Movement and the Munduruku Indigenous People"***. Her dissertation research exemplifies TCD's goals to bridge theory and practice as she examined indigenous resistance in the Amazon with a focus on the Munduruku as they struggle to protect their lands and ways of life. At the center of the story is the Munduruku Movement *Ipereğ Ayũ* (MMIA), the indigenous grassroots resistance movement formed in 2012 to fight the planned hydroelectric dams on the Tapajos River system, and the *Wakoborũn* Women's Movement (MWMW), which employed strategies of non-negotiation to foster autonomy for Munduruku peoples. She brought her past experiences as a human rights and environmental lawyer and as a social activist to the project. Yet, as in the words of the TCD Selection Committee, her dissertation has "tremendous integrity" as she did not put her own views first, but centered the story on the Munduruku, where their own voices, experiences, stories and struggle were documented in videos and other products belonging to the Munduruku. The work takes an interdisciplinary approach where she integrates geographic, anthropological and legal analytical approaches. Her theoretical framework draws from political ecology, while also incorporating social movement theory and contentious politics to advance

our understanding of indigenous resistance and environmental justice. Her methods include storytelling, participatory videography, and semi-structured interviews with key informants and Maíra emphasized that these were framed under a decolonizing and anti-oppressive philosophy. Her work fills an important gap in our understanding of indigenous movements, while it also gives "voice to these local communities" and supports their "self-empowerment to understand their rights, design their life plans and fight for their land and self-determination".

TCD Selection Committee felt that Dr. Irigaray's dissertation excelled on several levels and demonstrated a "mastery of multiple topics and perspectives and fluency of language and presentation".

Dr. Irigaray is currently working as Latin American Policy Research Analyst for the Environmental Investigation Agency. In this position, she supports research, data and information analysis, and assesses legal and policy landscape in relation to environmental protection, indigenous and customary land tenure and use rights, human rights, and corporate governance in commodity production sector in Brazil and broader Amazon region.

The Selection Committee was composed of TCD core faculty Dr. Robert Buschbacher (Center for Latin American Studies & School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences), and TCD affiliate faculty Dr. Christine Overdevest (Department of Sociology and Criminology & Law), and Dr. Vivian Zeidemann (TCD/UF Alum, Researcher at The Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazonia, Brazil).

The TCD program congratulates Dr. Irigaray on her selection as the 2021 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award.

