

Political-Cultural Formation and Food Sovereignty: Constituting the Indigenous Peasantry in Argentina

by

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2018

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Abstract

Under what conditions does social mobilization for food sovereignty (FS) lead to agrarian class formation (CF)? This question concerns the constitution of the indigenous peasantry into a social agent that gets organized to struggle beyond bread-and-butter demands. I address CF based on the case of Argentina's National Peasant and Indigenous Movement (MNCI). My aim is both to develop a class-analytical approach to FS and contribute to the theory of CF while advancing empirical knowledge on Argentina's FS movements. My integrative literature review identifies a total of five challenges on the conceptual ambiguities of FS, which mostly revolve around tensions between (a) state-movement relationships, (b) local-national interests, (c) rural-urban conflicts, (d) individual-collective choices, and (e) sporadic mobilization-organizational continuity. I conceptualize FS as a mobilization outcome that potentially leads to agrarian CF beyond class-reductionist, culturalist and state-centric approaches to collective action. Four determinants of CF are distilled from the literature on social movements and FS: economic-class structures, regional cultures, state intervention, and leadership. Drawing on fieldwork evidence and secondary sources, I argue that the class-structural context in which Argentina's FS struggles emerge is marked by the decline of small farming, deterioration of public health, destruction of native forests and violent land evictions under the state-promoted soy monoculture. Most agrarian mobilization instances do not result in CF, as the groupings may become coopted or dispersed by failing to sustain their collective position and unity. How grievances generated by class-structural processes become elevated to CF depends on the mediation of the three other factors. First, regional cultures speak to the creation of a unifying movement language organized around indigenous communitarianism and a broader claim to re-peasantization. Second, class agents' collective position and unity are mediated by MNCI's ability to interact with the state extracting popular-democratic policies without giving up its independence. Third is MNCI's close coordination of active, participatory leadership mechanisms from the ground-up. This unified and engaged leadership at the community, provincial and national level is further consolidated thanks to the presence of movement-institutionalized mechanisms of leader training and stronger alliances with the classes of labor extended towards urban slums and student mobilization.

Keywords: Argentina, class formation, class structures, food sovereignty, regional cultures, leadership, state intervention

Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Table of Figures.....	vi
Abbreviations.....	vii
Introduction: Questions, Concepts and Research Relevance.....	1
I. Theorizing Food Sovereignty from a Class-Analytical Lens: The Case of Agrarian Mobilization in Argentina.....	26
II. Contemporary Social Movement Theories, Agrarian Mobilization, and Political-Cultural (Class) Formation.....	49
III. Political Economy of Agrarian Class Restructuring: The Case of Argentina's "Soyization" from a Food Regime Perspective.....	68
IV. Social Myths and Agrarian Class Formation in Argentina: Reclaiming the Indigenous-Peasant Legacy.....	100
V. The Politics of Independence and Cooptation in Class Formation: Looking at MNCI's Extraction of Popular-Democratic Concessions from the State.....	134
VI. Leadership and Agrarian Class Formation (1): Participatory-Democratic Modes of Participation and Collective Decision-Making in MNCI.....	175
VII. Leadership and Agrarian Class Formation (2): The Making of Organic Intellectuals through Pedagogical Mobilization and Popular-Democratic Alliances.....	199
Conclusions.....	234
Bibliography.....	242

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Argentine Agriculture, value added (% of GDP)	76
Figure 2: Soybeans, Soybean Cake and Soybean Oil Production in Tonnes (1990-2011).....	77
Figure 3: Production Levels, in Tonnes (Soybeans versus crops that make up the largest percentage contributions to average daily per capita caloric food intake)	78
Figure 4: Soybeans Export Levels in Tonnes.....	79
Figure 5: Soybean Oilcake Exports (US\$ Thousands).....	79
Figure 6: Soy-Cultivated Land in Argentina (Hectares)	81
Figure 7: Soy-Cultivated Land in Santiago del Estero (Hectares)	81
Figure 8: Soy-Cultivated Land in Córdoba (Hectares)	82
Figure 9: Number of Agricultural Holdings in Argentina.....	83
Figure 10: Number of Small and Middle-Size Farms in Argentina.....	84
Figure 11: Export Tax Revenue (in 1000 Pesos)	86
Figure 12: Total Tax Revenue (in 1000 Pesos)	86

Abbreviations

AACREA, *Asociación de Empresarios Agropecuarios*, Agricultural Businessmen's Association

AAPRESID, *Asociación Argentina de Productores en Siembra Directa*, Direct Sowing Producers's Association of Argentina

ACSOJA, *Asociación de la Cadena de la Soja de Argentina*, Association of the Soybean Chain of Argentina

AFIP, *Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos*, Administration of Public Revenue

AFOA, *Asociación Forestal Argentina*, Forestry Association of Argentina

AMARC, *Association mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communautaires*, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters

APENOC, *Asociación de Pequeños Productores del Noreste de Córdoba*, Association of Northeast Córdoba's Small Producers

ASAGA, *Asociación Argentina de Grasas y Aceites*, Fats and Oils Association of Argentine

BAP, *Barrio Ampliación Pueyrredón*, Pueyrredón Neighborhood Development

CARBIO, *Cámara Argentina de Biocombustibles*, Argentine Chamber of Biofuels

CCC, *Corriente Clasista y Combativa*, Classist and Combative Current

CGT, *Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina*, General Confederation of Labor

CIA, *Confederación Intercooperativa Agropecuaria*, Intercooperative Agricultural Confederation

CLJ, *Campamento Latinoamericano de Jovenes*, Latin American Youth Camp

CLOC, *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo*, Coordination of Latin American Rural Organizations

CONAIE, *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

CONCLAEA, *Confederación Caribeña y Latinoamericana de Estudiantes de Agronomía*, Caribbean and Latin American Confederation of Agronomy Students

CPA, Communist Party of Argentina

CRA, Rural Confederations Argentina, *Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas*

CSUTCB, *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*, Sole Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia

CTA, *Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina*, Argentine Workers' Central Union

CTEP, *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular*, Confederation of Workers in Popular Economy

DC, *Diaguita Calchaquí*

EMH, *Escuela de la Memoria Histórica*, School of Historical Memory

EZLN, *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, Zapatista Army of National Liberation

FAA, *Federación Agraria Argentina*, Agrarian Federation Argentina

FAEA, *Federación Argentina de Estudiantes de Agronomía, Ambientales y Forestales*, the Argentine Federation of Agronomy, Environment and Forestry Student

FAO, Food and Agriculture Organisation

FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, Revolutionary Armed Forces

FARCO, *Foro Argentino de Radios Comunitarias*, Argentine Forum of Communitarian Radios

FARN, *Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*, Environment and Natural Resources Foundation

FAS, *Fondo Argentino Sectorial*, Sectorial Fund of Argentina

FEAB, *Federação dos Estudantes de Agronomia do Brasil*, Brazilian Federation of Agronomy Students

FONAF, *Federación de Organizaciones Nucleadas de la Agricultura Familiar*, Federation of Nuclear Organizations of Family Farming

FP, *Fundación Proteger*, Foundation Protecting

FTA, *Fondo Tecnológico Argentino*, Technological Fund of Argentina

FTV, *Federación de Tierra, Vivienda y Hábitat*, Federation for Land, Housing and Habitat

FUNDAPAZ, *Fundación para el Desarrollo en Justicia y Paz*, Foundation for Development in Justice and Peace

FVSA, *Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina*, Wildlife Foundation of Argentina

GCPGRs, Gini coefficient of the poverty gap ratios

GDP, Gross Domestic Product

GRR, *Grupo de Reflexion Rural*, Rural Reflection Group

IFAWA, International Fishermen and Allied Workers' of America

IMF, International Monetary Fund

INAI, *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas*, National Institute of Indigenous Affairs

INCUPO, *Instituto de Cultura Popular*, Popular Culture Institute

INTA, *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria*, National Agricultural Technology Institute

INTI, *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial*, National Institute of Industrial Technology

INV, *Instituto Nacional de Vitivinicultura*, National Institute of Viticulture

JDRAs, *Juzgados de Derecho Real y Ambiental*, Real and Environmental Law Courts

KSA, Kollas of San Andrés

MAIZAR, *Asociación Maíz Argentino*, Argentine Maize Association

MBI, *Madres de Barrio Ituzaingó*, Mothers of the Ituzaingó

MCC, *Movimiento Campesino de Córdoba*, Peasant Movement of Córdoba

MERCOSUR, *Mercado Común del Sur*, Common Market of the South

MG, *Mbya Guaraní*

MMAL, *Movimiento Mujeres Agropecuarias en Lucha*, Agricultural Women in Struggle Movement

MNCI Bs As, *Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena Buenos Aires*, National Peasant Indigenous Movement-Buenos Aires

MNCI, *Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena*, National Peasant Indigenous Movement

MoCaFoN, *Movimiento Campesino de Fontana*, Peasant Movement of Fontana

MoCaFor, *Movimiento Campesino de Formosa*, Peasant Movement of Formosa

MOCASE-VC, *Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero-VC*, Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero-Vía Campesina

MS, *Monotributo Social*, Simplified Scheme for Small Contributors

MST, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*, Landless Workers' Movement

MPA, *Movimento de Pequenos Agricultores*, Small Farmers' Movement,

MTL, *Movimiento Territorial de Liberación*, Territorial Movement of Liberation

NGOs, non-governmental organizations

NSMTs, new social movement theories

OCAPA, *Organización de Campesinos y Artesanos de Pampa de Achala*, Organization of Peasants and Artisans of Pampa de Achala

OCUNC, *Organización de Campesinos Unidos del Norte de Córdoba*, Organization of United Peasants of North Córdoba

ONCCA, *Oficina Nacional de Control Comercial Agropecuario*, National Office of Agricultural Trade Control

ONPIA, *Organización de Naciones y Pueblos Indígenas en Argentina*, Organization of Indigenous Nations and Peoples in Argentina

PAMI, *Programa de Atención Médica Integral*, Comprehensive Medical Attention Program

PEAA, *Plan Estratégico Agroalimentario y Agroindustrial 2010–2020*, Agri-Food and Agribusiness Strategic Plan

PNME, *Programa Nacional de Microcrédito para la Economía Social*, National Program of Microcredit for Social Economy

PO, *Partido Obrero*, Workers' Party

PPTs, political process theories

PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party

PROSOJA, *Profesionales Especializados en Cultivo de Soja*, Specialized Soybean Cultivation Professionals

PSA, *Programa Social Agropecuario*, Agricultural Social Program

RENATEA, *Registro Nacional de Trabajadores y Empleadores Agrarios*, National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers

RR, Roundup Ready

SAF, *Sub-Secretaría de Agricultura Familiar de la Nación*, Undersecretariat of Family Agriculture

SERCUPO, *Organización Servicio a la Cultura Popular*, the Organization of Service for the Popular Culture

SNCT, *Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, National Secretariat of Science and Technology

SoA, School of Agroecology

SRA, *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, Rural Society of Argentina

UBNI, Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index

UCAN, *Unión Campesina del Norte*, Peasant Union of the North

UCATRAS, *Unión de Campesinos de Traslasierra*, Peasants' Union of Traslasierra

UNICAM, *Universidad Campesina*, Peasant University

USFSA, US Food Sovereignty Alliance

UST, *Unión de Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra*, Landless Rural Workers' Movement

UTAMP, *Un techo a mi país*, A Roof for my Country

VAT, Value Added Tax

WITS, World Integrated Trade Solution Database

YPF, *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*, Fiscal Oilfields

Introduction: Questions, Concepts and Research Relevance

Latin America is widely known as the stronghold of popular resistance to neoliberal globalization (Barrett, Chavez & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2008; Lievesley & Ludlam, 2009; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2011). Even though the Latin American left is characterized by a multiplicity of social bases and political agendas (Rodríguez-Garavito, Barrett & Chavez, 2008), there is widespread recognition that the role of indigenous and peasant movements in Latin America's struggle against neoliberalism has been particularly pivotal. Such struggles have become one of the chief constituents of what came to be called as "new agrarian movements" (Borras Jr. & Franco, 2008; Guzmán & Martínez-Alier, 2006; McMichael, 2006, 2008; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2011; Teubal, 2010; Veltmeyer, 1997; Welch & Fernandes, 2009). Worthy of special mention in this regard is Mexico's Zapatista struggle led by *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, or EZLN), which was sparked in 1994 as the world's first major anti-neoliberal globalization struggle and focused on strengthening civil society by pushing for bottom-up democratization (Gilbreth & Otero, 2001; Hellman, 1995). Latin America's prominent peasant (and indigenous) movements include the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, or CONAIE), Brazil's *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (Landless Workers' Movement, MST), and the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (Sole Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia, or CSUTCB) (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2011; Veltmeyer, 1997).

It is important to specify that new agrarian movements initially started as isolated groups fighting for democratic production (Otero, 1989), which later turned into a more generalized struggle participated by indigenous peasantries demanding the self-governance of land and territory beyond a mere claim to control of the immediate production process. Broadly speaking, the "novelty" of these agrarian movements lies in that these movements constitute a reaction to neoliberal restructuring, hence their rise to eminence in a new form and content, mostly in the 1990s and 2000s (McMichael, 2006, 2008; Veltmeyer, 1997). These movements have thus extended their basic demand for land towards a more diversified agenda of resistance. First and foremost, the struggle of new agrarian movements is not strictly confined to targeting the landed oligarchy, but also global agribusiness and its activities. Second, new agrarian movements confront wider developmental issues related to the implications of agribusiness for the entire

society, concerning the problems of deregulation, land commodification, consumerism, autonomy, democratic participation, and health and environmental degradation. Third, this confrontation provides fertile ground for the forging of closer alliances between critical rural movements, the urban informal proletariat and other progressive urban movements that fight for ecological, racial/ethnic and gender justice (McMichael, 2006, 2008; Veltmeyer, 1997; See Otero, 1989: for an earlier prediction of new agrarian movements based on Mexico's case).

“Food sovereignty” as a mobilizing slogan and movement strategy epitomizes the novelty of new agrarian movements in terms of advancing a broader agenda of struggle combining popular claims with the regeneration of peasant production, indigenous lifestyles and bottom-up democracy (Shattuck, Schiavoni & VanGelder, 2015). Vía Campesina – an international alliance of peasant movements considered to be one of the world’s largest social movements (Desmarais, 2007) – defines food sovereignty as “the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments” (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 2). Meanwhile, it is possible to distinguish food sovereignty conceived of as a mobilizing slogan and strategy from food sovereignty deployed as an academic research framework. Faced with the rise of food sovereignty movements, agrarian studies testified to the emergence of a new topic of study known as food sovereignty in the 2000s. Therefore, whilst the object of study in this dissertation is food sovereignty movements, i.e. agrarian movements that have adopted food sovereignty as their mobilizing slogan and defining strategy, food sovereignty here is often referred to as a research framework.

“Research frameworks” express a basic structure of abstractions and relationships between the observed phenomena, which provides a guide to “the nature of the questions asked; the manner in which questions are formulated; the way the concepts, constructs, and processes of the research are defined; and the principles of discovery and justification [that] allow for creating new ‘knowledge’ about the topic under study” (Lester, 2005, p. 458). A case in point is how the term “precarity” was brought to the forefront by EuroMayDay protests led by Europe’s libertarian and syndicalist collectives in the early 2000s and “became a prevalent term in academic discourse” following these protests (Millar, 2017, p. 2). By taking the cue from the EuroMayDay movement, “precarity studies” (Lemke, 2016, p.16) emerged as a research framework that “see[s] precarity as a pressing issue” and deploys it as an analytical tool to

problematize the “relationship between forms of labor and fragile conditions of life” (Millar, 2017, p. 7; Millar, 2014, p. 35). A similar case applies to “communicative sovereignty” (Reilly, 2016), whose use as an analytical tool is expected to help illuminate how community and alternative media reclaims cultural autonomy, struggles to shift the locus of authority from market players to popular sectors, and transcends the sovereign state system through transnational organizing. In this dissertation, similarly, the food sovereignty framework in agrarian studies encourages a research agenda that questions the commodification of food and prioritizes the study of power dimensions in agri-food relations, driven by a deep concern with socio-environmental justice and bottom-up democracy. Here, the food sovereignty framework is employed based on a Marxist analysis concerned with the study of social classes with a strong emphasis on exploitation (i.e. appropriation of wealth), oppression (i.e. ideologically- and politically-based social exclusions and inequalities) and emancipation (i.e. the transcendence and abolition of class exploitation and oppression) (Wilson, 2013; Wright, 1997).

In this very context, the present dissertation addresses food sovereignty movements and their contribution to agrarian class formation. The research aim is not only to advance empirical knowledge on Argentina’s food sovereignty movements, but also to develop a class-informed approach to food sovereignty and contribute to the theory of class formation. As such, the dissertation revolves around the following question: Under what conditions social mobilization for food sovereignty leads to agrarian class formation? This question has to do with the constitution of small and landless farmers into a collective agent of an indigenous peasantry endowed with an organized political presence beyond bread-and-butter demands.

As pointed out by Lauren Q. Sneyd, “food sovereignty movements are gaining traction and ground most notably in Latin America” (2013, p. 140). Therefore, Latin America is seen to be the geographical origin and stronghold of the global food sovereignty movement as represented by *Vía Campesina* and *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (Coordination of Latin American Rural Organizations, or CLOC) (Altieri & Toledo, 2011; Rosset, 2009). *Vía Campesina* (2016) is constituted by 164 movements from 73 countries, and CLOC (2017) constitutes its Latin American chapter with over 80 member organizations from 22 countries.

Argentina’s case is of extreme practical relevance for food sovereignty given that this country is seen as one of the early strongholds of the neoliberal globalization of food and agriculture. This country is the “world’s top exporter of soymeal livestock feed and

third [largest] source of beans” (Reuters, 2015, par. 7). Due to Argentina’s top soy exporter status, Argentine soybeans are called “green gold”, which does not only constitute the main source of foreign currency, but also “accounts for 5.5 percent of GDP [gross domestic product] and 10 percent of tax revenue” (Frayssinet, 2015, par. 3). Therefore, Argentina constitutes an extreme case that shows other countries their possible futures if they adopted the neoliberal model in a similar way. It also exemplifies how the global problem of transgenic and monocultural agriculture is challenged by agrarian movements from a food sovereignty perspective. Here, monoculture is used to denote the cultivation of a single commodity produced for export markets over a large area on a continuous basis. Monoculture tends to be detrimental to the environment, food self-sufficiency and the survival of agrarian communities (Blanco-Canqui & Lal, 2010, pp. 169-170; DeLoughrey, 2011, p. 58; Frayssinet, 2015).

Other key terms that underlie this dissertation are as follows. Social mobilization can be defined as a series of collective actions that press demands on the state or other opponents as a result of common grievances or dissatisfactions (Menon & Spruyt, 1999). In turn, the term social class refers to large groups with a common standing as defined by the place they occupy in the social division of labor (Lenin, 1974, p. 421; Poulantzas, 1976, p. 14). For traditional interpretations of Marxism, social classes represent a frequent base of social mobilization, but here the question arises of how social mobilization can transcend its initial ephemerality, sporadicity and dispersion by asserting its deeper class character. Most social mobilization instances do not result in political-cultural class formation (henceforth “class formation”), as the groupings may become coopted or dispersed. Minimum criteria for what constitutes class formation are manifested in a stronger articulation of classes and movements that engage in sustained mobilization with limited (if not zero) compromise of original, especially long-term, demands. Social revolutions – as usually defined in Marxist discussions as “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures... accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below” (Skocpol, 1979, p. 4) – could be regarded as the maximum criteria for class formation within the practical limits of this dissertation, although even revolutions can experience interruptions.

The epithet of “political-cultural” is often used throughout the dissertation in order to highlight that social classes are constituted into a “class-for-itself” through a combination of objective (economic) and subjective factors. By class formation, I specifically refer to Karl Marx’s *Poverty of Philosophy* [1847], in which he distinguishes

between “class-in-itself” and “class-for-itself” (Marx, 1973, p. 173). The former notion refers to the objective existence of a class (i.e. class structures or social groups’ objective location in relations of production), but without necessarily having any awareness of itself and much less an organization to struggle for its interests. A “class-for-itself”, in contrast, emerges when a given class “becomes united” by overcoming its previous state of social differentiation, to a degree that “the interests it defends become class interests” beyond corporate, i.e. narrowly formulated, immediate, short-term, and bread-and-butter demands (Marx, 1973, p. 173). It is important to note that class formation – be it in an urban or rural setting – does not constitute a “once and for all” occurrence that can simply be measured in absolute terms. It expresses itself as a constantly evolving convolution of several advances and setbacks that are to be viewed as a matter of degree and process, in a given historical context, rather than a simple binary outcome. For the sake of simplicity, however, the general orientation of a class formation process may be described as leaning towards either class decomposition or class formation. The former implies the loss of “organized political presence” by a given social class (Eley & Nield, 2000, p. 1), whereas the latter is characterized by the consolidation of its collective strength.

Interestingly enough, Marxism has paid scant attention to theorizing class formation, even though social class is an essential part of its overarching frame of reference. The leading figures of Marxist class studies such as Nikos Poulantzas (1976), Guglielmo Carchedi (1977) and Erik Olin Wright (1997) devoted most of their efforts to understanding class structures (understood as the aggregation of relations of production) at the expense of overlooking the centrality of class formation in class analysis. The most highly acclaimed studies among a few attempts to understand class formation in a Marxist framework came from Edward Palmer Thompson (1966) and Ira Katznelson (1986), who have also deeply inspired the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Thompson’s cultural Marxism rejected the top-down interpretations of Marxism that reduce social classes to economically-determined structures. Thompson’s bottom-up approach to class analysis is primarily nourished by evidence from the actions and everyday experiences of the English working people with particular emphasis on their “norms, values, beliefs, practices, and choices... [where] he ... amass[ed] an impressive collection of local newspaper articles, court proceedings, historical writings, pamphlets, petitions, letters, memoirs, and even the odd diary and ballad (Millar, 2015, p. 4) ...” In order to acquaint himself with the lived experience of the working class,

Thompson even lived within working-class communities and taught adult education classes (Millar, 2015, p. 4).

Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* is an essential reference book in class formation studies. It opens with an introduction that presents a brief theoretical overview of his understanding of social class as "a social and cultural formation" that "happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interest as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different (and usually opposed to) theirs (Thompson, 1966, pp. 9, 11)." Thompson goes on to equate class formation with class consciousness. Following his introduction, the first part of the book examines the 18th century legacy of English radicalism expressed in the Methodist revival, mob justice, the tradition of the Englishman's birthright, and revolutionary Jacobins. The second part of the book shifts the focus from the rich legacy of radicalism in the formation of a working-class consciousness to the analysis of how the Industrial Revolution created class grievances through economic, political and religious oppression, which provided the material basis for working-class formation in England. The third part, finally, addresses the ways in which the working class responds to these grievances through political protests and cultural production. The book does not contain any concluding chapter.

Certainly, Thompson's crucial contributions to understanding class formation cannot be ignored quite easily, especially when it comes to the importance of historically shared cultures of collective resistance in shaping the course of class formation and the identification of class grievances as crucial political opportunities that can be exploited by class agents to generate class formation. These contributions are also conceptually systematized here and reflected in the analysis of how food sovereignty contributes to agrarian class formation. Furthermore, it is also worthwhile to discuss the limitations of Thompson's work, which can be constructively used to improve our understanding of class formation. According to J. Craig Jenkins and Kevin Leicht (1997), a fuller understanding of class formation requires a more systematic examination of multiple factors and various outcomes beyond a loosely defined and operationalized notion of "class consciousness", hence the need for deploying social movement theories to analyze the institutional context of class mobilization. As a cautionary note, however, Jenkins and Leicht's friendly suggestion to supplement the study of class formation with social movement theories does not conform with Thompson's emphasis on the bottom-up dynamics of class formation. These scholars fail to address the role of class agency

from the ground-up and limit their suggestion to systematically examining and conceptualizing the facilitative (or discouraging) effects of the external political environment on class mobilization, or simply “political opportunities” such as the radicalization of class agents in reaction to state repression and the transformation of class movements in a reformist direction thanks to the presence of open electoral institutions (Jenkins & Leicht, 1997, pp. 391-392). In a similar critical vein, Neil J. Smelser argues that Thompson’s analysis of class formation “omits detailed consideration of the vanguard of the proletariat” (1966, p. 214), which implies that Thompson’s narrative of class grievances and their manifestations in shared cultures can be supplemented with a closer examination of the organizational and leadership-related dynamics of social mobilization for a better understanding of class formation processes.

Despite these omissions, however, Thompson’s legacy shows that his under-theorized, but insightful framework is open to immense theoretical extension. This is clearly illustrated in Geoff Mann’s (2002) Thompsonian analysis of the history of the International Fishermen and Allied Workers’ of America (IFAWA), a Pacific North American trade union whose presence was felt most strongly in the 1940s. Mann develops a critique of Traditional Marxist accounts on class formation, which tend to condemn the fate of peripheral agrarian smallholders’ unionization attempts to failure with the pretext that they worked for themselves as opposed to workers who worked for somebody else and that they represented independent entrepreneurs competing with each other. Overall, this condemnation implies that “simple commodity production and working-class identity are incompatible” (Mann, 2002, p. 150).

Mann argues that class positions and consciousness are not merely determined by relations of production. Yet, relations of production might serve to trigger class consciousness among agrarian groups, as exemplified in fishers’ case, who “had neither the time nor capital to sell their catch directly” and were obligated to engage in a labor-intensive process to process their produce (Mann, 2002, p. 152). Mann goes on to reveal that external factors such as economic expansion and state regulation also serve as material opportunities to motivate class consciousness, particularly with reference to “the pressures of foreign fishing, stock depletion, and the changing productive and technical nature of the fisher” (2002, p. 150). According to Mann, meanwhile, relations of production could well explain the presence of organized initiatives to a certain extent, but they could not fully account for the reason why fishers chose to form workers’ unions

instead of entrepreneurial forms of organizations such as marketing associations. Therefore, several mediating factors seems to have led to this particular outcome despite fishers' socioeconomic peripherality, dispersion and so-called "independence". Relevant facilitative factors include fishers' proximity to coastal cities known as a stronghold of radical unionism and the fact that most fishers lived in the cities in the off-season. The IFAWA leadership mostly originated in coastal cities and "was substantially involved in national political conflicts that necessitated an urban emphasis" (Mann, 2002, p. 153). Certainly, the institutional, or organizational and leadership-related focus of Mann's insightful analysis of fishers' class formation reveals the strong potential of the Thompsonian school, which also guides this very dissertation. An important relevance of Mann's research for this dissertation is that he demonstrates the ways in which class formation takes on a higher meaning than social mobilization when agrarian class agents can transcend both ephemerality and the rural-urban divide at the national level. A major research task ahead is then to move towards a systematic engagement with the organizational dynamics of agrarian class formation.

Going back to Thompson's original work, the lack of conceptually systematic engagement with class formation seems to be an expression of his anthropologically-stimulated culturalism, which essentially consisted of a principled rejection of class-structuralist Marxism's abstract/ theoretic economic reductionism. However, one should note that anthropologically-inspired culturalism is only one of the many ways of making sense of the "real people" in a "real context", and theory-building is not the monopoly of class-structuralist Marxism. Worthy of note in this regard is that social movement theories have come a long way since Thompson's time, and in their present state, they can help capture class formation in a systematic and theoretical manner. Once seen as a "work in progress, never as a definitive solution to a problem" (Swedberg, 2017, p. 192), theories can respond to the complexities of the subjectivity of human society in line with Thompson's bottom-up approach, particularly if they are constructed in close dialogue with the relevant theoretical and empirical literature from various perspectives and rely on sociological interviews that engage what Thompson calls the "real people" from the ground-up.

Critically building on Thompson's work, in this direction, Katznelson (1986) argues that class formation can be systematically observed at four different conceptual levels. In fact, the first two levels (i.e. "economic structure" and "ways of life") concern class structures inscribed in the level of a given society's economic development and

social relations, including labor processes, market relations and home-workplace relations. These levels mostly correspond to the ways in which Thompson (1966) analyzes the destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution, albeit in an under-theorized manner. According to Katznelson (1986), class formation can also be observed at a third level (e.g. “dispositions”) where class agents develop similar cultural and political orientations that motivate class mobilization. In fact, here, Katznelson seems to theorize the political dynamics that were addressed by Thompson regarding the legacy of the 18th century’s shared cultures and workers’ cultural production. A fourth and final level of analysis emphasized by Katznelson is “collective action”, which is also explored in the third part of Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*.

In his edited volume, Katznelson’s (1986) conceptual framework is comparatively applied to the United States, France and Germany. The volume concludes that the most important factors that shaped the historical course of class formation in these countries relate to an external, or exogenous context that affected working-class ideologies and union organizing following the First World War and the Soviet Revolution in 1917 (Zolberg, 1986). Other exogenous factors that impacted class formation outcomes include the pace of industrialization and the character of political regimes. For example, Zolberg addresses the First World War-era Germany and argues that “the adoption by the SPD [Social Democratic Party of Germany] of a strict class strategy was ... a choice imposed upon the party from the outside, largely as a consequence” of the weakness of German liberalism, persistence of absolutism and dynamic expansion of capitalism (1986, p. 409).

Overall, Katznelson’s framework has the merit of conceptualizing Thompson’s under-theorized narrative of class formation based on social movement theories. However, a chief limitation of this framework lies in its failure to clarify the distinction between class mobilization and class formation. A much closer look at Katznelson’s framework, moreover, would reveal that the first three levels of class formation (i.e. “economic structure”, “ways of life” and “dispositions”) are nothing but the determinants of the fourth level of analysis (“collective action”). In other words, collective action is often portrayed as being contingent on the first three levels rather than presented as a separate variable. Equally important is that this fourth level of analysis seems to over-articulate the importance of external factors at the level of political opportunities, which diverts Katznelson’s framework away from Thompson’s bottom-up approach that centers on class agency. Unlike Mann’s (2002) work which also acknowledges the role of

external factors, the role of organizational and leadership-related factors – other than the influence of the state and political regimes on collective action – remains unaddressed.

In line with Marx, Thompson, Mann and Katznelson's work, my own understanding of class formation differs from traditional interpretations of Marxism on social classes. Such accounts would reduce class formation to an act of moving away from a so-called state of "false consciousness" understood as some form of "defective" cognition that creates artificial divisions among class agents along ethnic and religious lines (Bidet & Kouvelakis, 2008, p. 133; Bottomore, 2001, p. 457; Elster, 1999; Thompson, 2015). In Latin America's context, for example, the reduction of these cultural factors to "artificial divisions" would undervalue the first-hand contribution of indigenous and peasant movements to the advancement of the Latin American left since the 2000s. Similarly, excessive emphasis on ideological, cultural and socio-psychological factors would reduce class formation to mere acts of cognitive liberation at the expense of overlooking how class agents are materially organized as the authors of collective action (Augoustinos, 1999; Jost, 1995; Runciman, 1969; Thompson, 2015). Therefore, it seems to be more useful and accurate to define class formation, not in terms of class consciousness (i.e. self-awareness of one's own class interests), but rather as the formation of classes into collectively organized actors that struggle for their interests. An important task, however, is to conceptualize and systematically explain how class agents contribute to class formation process by organizing themselves and affecting state policies and other contextual elements beyond the limited scope of top-down explanations such as "political opportunities". Eventually, such conceptualization is expected to provide an encompassing definition that encapsulates both class consciousness and collective action (Wright, 1997, p. 2), while also retaining Thompson's emphasis on the bottom-up dynamics of class formation at the level of culture.

"Classes of labor" is another underlying term in this dissertation. By this term, I understand an objective class location that is represented by both the proletariat and semi-proletariat, including the urban and rural self-employed and informal workers who are subjected to various "forms of differentiation and oppression along intersecting lines of class, gender, generation, caste, and ethnicity" (Bernstein, 2006, p. 455). This term helps to depict the ways in which neoliberal globalization and the abolition of the full-employment Keynesian state have deeply transformed the structure of the working class

and created a large mass of precarious workers relegated to the informal sector and endowed with an economically, politically and culturally heterogeneous structure.

Throughout the entire dissertation, the epithet “indigenous” is used in the sense of self-identification with indigenous ethnic groups. Similarly, the notion of peasantry expresses a political-cultural self-identification rather than an objective class location. Most of the research thus refers to peasantry as a class formation outcome. Objectively, peasantry is used in a restricted sense, by referring only to small farmers who mainly produce for their own consumption with minimal contribution to local or regional markets and form part of the industrial reserve army. Other agrarian classes such as large and medium farmers who are involved in capitalist agriculture are excluded from this category (Otero, 2009; Wald, 2015a). In many cases, marginal peasants actually occupy a “semi-proletarian” location in capitalist relations of production – i.e. that of those who are represented by “poor landowners, [squatters,] renters, and sharecroppers who also work as seasonal or daily wage laborer” (Paige, 1996, p. 133). As such, they tend to oscillate between subsistence farming and wage-labor in the form of low paid contract, seasonal labor or other non-secure employment for economic survival (Friedland & Pugliese, 1989). Relatedly, the epithet “agrarian” indicates “both agriculture as a sector of the economy as well as the broad social structure that underlies it” (Kumar & Raha, 2016, p. xii). In this sense, agrarian classes of labor are represented by peasants defending their right to land and to higher prices for their goods as well as the landless semi-proletariat in both the countryside and the city (especially, the slums). This interwoven “social structure” mostly stems from the fact that the urban poor are recent migrants from rural areas and still have family there. Therefore, the epithet of “agrarian” has a more encompassing meaning than that of the “rural” and “agricultural”.

Finally, neoliberalism is understood here as a set of globally dominant institutional structures and policies that govern the rules of international production, trade and labor since the late 1970s. The underlying principles of neoliberalism include private property, free markets, free trade, privatization, financial capital mobility, macroeconomic austerity, and domestically, the weakening of institutions of social protection, labor unions and labor market protections. Neoliberalism is historically represented by the leadership of the United States and institutional hegemony of international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization, among others (Harvey, 2005, pp. 2, 19; Palley, 2005, p. 25). Indeed, the scope and extent to which neoliberal policies are implemented at the meso-level depend on the

(sub)national peculiarities of the given institutional settings, sociocultural background, and balance of class forces (Peck & Theodore 2012; Peck Theodore, & Brenner 2012; see Gürcan & Peker, 2015, Chapter 3, for an illustration of the peculiar forms of neoliberalism).

Case Study Focus

The analytic concerns and conceptual apparatus discussed above are deployed to understand the case of Argentina's National Peasant and Indigenous Movement (*Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena*, MNCI) and Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero-Vía Campesina (*Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero-VC*, MOCASE-VC) – MNCI's largest constituent (Leguizamón, 2016). The case study is also extended to the *Movimiento Campesino de Córdoba* (Peasant Movement of Córdoba, or MCC), a MNCI member that operates in the northern region of Córdoba province bordering Santiago del Estero; and MNCI Buenos Aires (MNCI Bs As), another MNCI constituent that operates in (peri-)urban parts of Buenos Aires province. The case of MNCI Bs As and MCC's urban branch is important in terms of understanding how Argentina's indigenous peasantry attempts to build a broader alliance of the classes of labor, which mostly concern the informal proletariat in Argentina's case. These movements are mobilized along the principles of horizontalism and food sovereignty. MNCI constituents claim to struggle against what they call the "agro-exporter model" (*modelo agroexportador*) of development in Latin America, which is believed to be the main cause for the dispossession and exclusion of peasant and indigenous communities. The ultimate aim is therefore to unite the countryside and the city against neoliberalism and the agribusiness model of agriculture under the banner of an "integral" agrarian reform that does not merely rely on land distribution, but also re-organizes the entire agrarian society through socialist transformations in areas such as land, production and marketing, health, education, communication, youth, and gender (LPMHECYG).

In turn, the relevance of Santiago del Estero comes from the fact that this province is home to MNCI's strongest and largest constituent (Leguizamón, 2016). With a population of over 874.000 habitants (as compared to Argentina's population of over 40 million habitants) and surface area of 136,351 km² (as compared to Argentina's

surface area of 2.78 million km²), furthermore, Santiago del Estero is an epitome of Argentina's deep-seated geographic inequalities. It was among the three provinces that had the lowest contribution to Argentina's GDP with a gross geographical product of 0.5% in 2008 (Arzeno et al., 2013, p. 28). The Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (UBNI) is a tool to assess poverty levels based on indicators related to housing, water access, education and income. Higher values indicate higher levels of poverty. Santiago del Estero was the fourth worst performer out of 23 provinces with a UBNI score of 17.6 in 2010. In comparison, La Pampa's UBNI score was only 3.8 in the same year (Arzeno et al., 2013, p. 169). Although Córdoba province belongs to Argentina's well-off Pampean region, North Córdoba bears close socioeconomic and environmental similarities to Santiago del Estero. This region is home to MNCI's Peasant University (*Universidad Campesina*, or UNICAM), which is a strategic venue of convention of MNCI constituents for important events at the national level. Additionally, the close interactions between MOCASE-VC and MCC as leading MNCI members alongside their geographical proximity and organizational similarities have allowed me to expand my case study to MCC.

MNCI was founded in 2003, the year Argentina's leftist Néstor Carlos Kirchner was elected President of Argentina. It soon became one of the country's largest agrarian movements with a membership base of over 20,000 peasant and peri-urban families, from more than 11 provinces (Leguizamón, 2016). MNCI held its first national congress in 2010 with the slogan of "*somos tierra para alimentar a los pueblos*". More than 1500 delegates from all around Argentina were hosted by the periurban residents of the *Barrio Esteban Echeverría* in Greater Buenos Aires. The congress re-asserted MNCI's ultimate aim to build a new society free of exploitation and oppression in harmony with *Pachamama* (Mother Nature). This socialistic and environmentally sustainable vision is hoped to be achieved through a program of food sovereignty that aims at a radical agrarian reform. Accordingly, the congress re-affirmed MNCI's alliance with other regional and international food sovereignty movements, namely CLOC and Vía Campesina

In MNCI's mobilization, the land question is prioritized in each and every instance of decision-making. As such, MNCI organizes protests and engages in critical dialogue with the state and other relevant actors in order to extract favorable policy concessions. It also builds solidarity networks to combat political and economic hardships through self-education in relevant areas. Decision-making and the formation of specialized area

groups to which movement members devote their organizing efforts (i.e. LPMHECYG) start at the community level. Community decisions and group activities are conveyed and discussed, first in provincial, then in national meetings. Movement meetings aim to forge a lasting sense of belonging to Argentina's indigenous and peasant classes, while also serving to identify common obstacles to the welfare of these classes, share useful relevant knowledge and common experiences of struggle, and discuss potential solutions to common problems. In these meetings, therefore, movement members get together to coordinate their available resources to improve their own livelihoods in the above-mentioned areas (LPMHECYG). Livelihood-related matters of this kind may include the collective purchase of agricultural inputs and machinery as well as the collective organization of marketing efforts, coordination of literacy classes and vocational training workshops in small scale production and communication (e.g. agroecology, apiculture, sustainable energy, community radio organizing, social media skills), recruitment of medical volunteers to address a health problem in a community, collective improvement of community infirmary or schools, confrontation of land grabbers, and provision of community security against threats and attacks by agribusinessmen. When faced with serious livelihood challenges, these meetings also discuss the possibility of such measures as organizing protests, pressuring opponents, and initiating a dialogue with the authorities, besides applying for government grants, and facilitating or improving the delivery of government-supported welfare services to remote areas.

Research Methodology

This research proposes a qualitative approach to how MNCI contributes to agrarian class formation as a food sovereignty movement. First, a few words are in order about research positionality. Even though positionality originates in the anthropological methodological tradition, it is increasingly used in other social disciplines where the researcher "considers the historical conditions that give rise" to its research and situates itself in the wider context of "knowledge production" (Reilly, 2017, p. 1). Typically, the positionality statement is made up of three major parts, where the researcher reveals (a) the academic reasons behind its research pursuit, (b) the influence of personal commitments on the choice of topic, and (c) its positioned voice as part of the research.

These three points also serve the researcher to show in what direction it desires to produce knowledge in creating change in the world (Reilly, 2017, p. 2).

Academically speaking, first of all, I became interested in food sovereignty when I was an undergraduate student in international relations (IR) at Koç University (2004-2009). These were the years when the Latin American left was gaining steam, and, as a young Marxist revolutionary, I was increasingly becoming fixated on the Latin American experience of socialism. After years of diplomatic isolation, moreover, the Cuban Revolution was taking on an increasing relevance during this period. Therefore, almost all of my term papers covered the rise of the Latin American left and the increasing relevance of the Cuban Revolution. My efforts at understanding this process led me to conduct my master's fieldwork on Cuba's food sovereignty policies, which were considered to be one of the Cuban Revolution's greatest achievements as the "world's largest conversion from conventional agriculture to organic and semiorganic agriculture" (Gürçan, 2014b, p. 131). Successively, my interest in Argentina's food sovereignty movement originated from my intention to expand my knowledge on the Latin American left beyond the Cuban context.

Regarding how my personal commitments have shaped my research trajectory, my activism during the undergraduate years was heavily inspired by Mao Zedong Thought (as differentiated from crude Maoist orthodoxy fixated on brutal collectivism and armed struggle), which was sympathetic to the Chinese experience of market socialism, but critical of its lack of attention to the bottom-up dynamics of socialist organizing and socioeconomic equality. Not only was I attracted to food sovereignty since it allowed me to shed new light on the new relevance of peasantry in the 21st century (given its centrality in Mao Zedong Thought), but I was also excited about the growth of Latin America's social movement left, which could generate invaluable insights into how market socialism could be innovated to incorporate bottom-up democracy and new forms of collectivism.

As far as my positioned voice is concerned, thirdly, I have made clear to my research participants that my identity as an emerging Canadian scholar is interwoven with my identity as a socialist organizer from Turkey. I have made – and will continue to make – sure that the potential benefits of my knowledge production reach my affiliated political organization in Turkey. Certainly, my political commitments do not have anything to do with my research methodology and data. This dissertation aligns with the general academic standards in conducting literature reviews, refining the research design based

on these reviews, collecting data and analyzing the fieldwork outcomes through standard procedures in North American academia.

I offer a sociological rather than ethnographic perspective into MNCI as an organization. Sociological research can be broadly associated with a primary focus on social institutions on a meso-to-macro-level and differs from the classic ethnographic focus on story-telling through personal narrative and micro-level analysis (Turner, 2006, p. 176). In turn, my research philosophy relies on classical Marxism. Broadly speaking, Marxist ontology recognizes that causalities underlying social processes and events are knowable. Furthermore, our approximate knowledge of the social reality can be perfected by generating empirically-based knowledge (Wilson, 2013; Little, 2007). Epistemologically, Marxism (i.e. dialectical and historical materialism) argues that our knowledge of the social reality can be best extracted from how social change is shaped in the first place by material social contexts, processes and networks of human activity surrounding the individual (Wilson, 2013). While Marxism's emphasis on material contexts reflects its materialist underpinnings, its historical and dialectical components are strongly manifested in the Marxist concern with the historical transience of social structures and salience of perpetual social change through conflicts. In this direction, Marxism postulates that the individual's lived experience can be best understood with respect to its positioning vis-à-vis social conflicts, primarily class conflicts. Certainly, a Marxism-inspired methodology would be open to studying various forms of exploitation and oppression by acknowledging the interdependency of social conflicts on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age, which are mainly conceived to operate under class conflicts. Therefore, the individual's activities are assessed as to whether and how they (dis)organize collectively to act upon their material conditions and reach their human potential as class agents (Wilson, 2013; Little, 2007) by shaping collective actions with other members of their class and allies.

This is a theoretically-driven and empirically-backed research. This being said, my attempts at theoretical refinement (i.e. that of the class formation theory and food sovereignty) do not derive from pure abstraction and rigid theoretical formulas. Acknowledging that social science develops essentially based on accumulated knowledge, my conceptual tools are all derived and refined in constant dialogue with the relevant *theoretical* and *empirical* literature. My exploration of the literature relies on the method of integrative review (Torraco, 2005). The integrative review is "a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in

an integrative way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated” (Torraco, 2005, p. 356). A major objective of integrative review is to re-conceptualize the synthesized knowledge with the aim of attaining a more diversified and systematic theoretical knowledge base on the topic in question (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2005). With this aim, integrative reviews generate a coherent conceptual restructuring of the topic and demonstrate how different “streams of research [come] together to create a new formulation of the topic” (Torraco, 2005, p. 362). Therefore, this method is particularly useful in building theories and refining research (and interview) questions on the basis of literature contributions.

As an example of how integrative review is used throughout this dissertation, Chapter 1 synthesizes the food-sovereignty literature and re-deploys this synthesis by refining the research agenda that guides the entire dissertation. In this chapter, for example, unsettled definitional and conceptual problems in the food-sovereignty literature are explored and re-visited in light of the empirical literature on Argentina. A synthesis of how the empirical findings of the literature on Argentina can help settle these definitional and conceptual problems is then deployed to understand the ways in which agrarian mobilization can lead to class formation, or the shaping of a class-for-itself. The controversies on the food-sovereignty theory and food-sovereignty movements in Argentina seem to revolve around peasant communities’ awareness of their material grievances and the sociocultural heterogeneity of the rural populace as well as agrarian movements’ leadership mechanisms, relationships with the state, and alliance strategies. These issues have become an integral part of my theoretical and empirical endeavors in this dissertation.

Similarly, Chapter 2 critically examines the two theoretical perspectives that have dominated research in social movements. A synthesis of this literature on social mobilization in Argentina reveals the explanatory merits of political process theories (PPTs) in emphasizing the role of the external political environment and those of new social movement theories (NSMTs) in acknowledging the role of culture in facilitating or inhibiting social mobilization. My critical appraisal also identifies a number of theoretical drawbacks regarding what I characterize as the top-down state-centrism of PPTs and culturalism of NSMTs. I propose to overcome these limitations based on a Gramscian framework. This framework is intended to achieve a more balanced theoretical synthesis of the social movement literature that accentuates the role of culture, state and leadership, while clearly rooted in class analysis.

Likewise, continuing with my integrative literature review, Chapter 4 discusses the three most dominant theoretical approaches in ethnic studies and the ways in which they apply to the Argentine context of indigeneity. An integrative synthesis is then offered to highlight the explanatory potential of “social myths”, a term that is commonly used in the literature in understanding how indigenous cultures are mobilized in a context marked by the lack of the so-called “primordial” markers of indigeneity. Certainly, these debates help me to theoretically and empirically contextualize indigenous-peasant mobilization in Santiago del Estero, which is also marked by a lack of primordial markers of indigeneity.

Chapter 5 shows that the literature debates on the leftism of the Kirchner governments in Argentina are locked in these governments’ cooptative dispositions and pro-soy advocacy, which lead me to focus on how these dynamics affect movement independence and agrarian class formation into an indigenous peasantry. Chapter 6 and 7 are not strictly based on a literature review, but they also reflect the integrative thrust of my literature review approach. These chapters draw on unresolved theoretical tensions within Marxism regarding the top-down/vanguardist vision of orthodox Leninism and the bottom-up/participatory approach to leadership. I provide a synthesis of these approaches by pointing to the fact that MNCI’s leadership draws its strength from the presence of vanguard leaders and their co-existence with participatory-democratic mechanisms. Overall, my integrative reviews give weight to English high- and medium-indexed publications, particularly academic journal articles and book publications that set certain research standards and steer the discussions in a particular direction. Spanish-language publications and dissertations are mostly excluded from the analysis, while on the other hand I engage with the work of leading Latin American scholars in their respective fields who published in the English language (e.g. Cáceres, 2014; Castorina 2014; Félix, 2012; García-López & Arizpe, 2012; Giarracca & Teubal, 2001; Gras & Hernández, 2014; Lapegna, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016; Leguizamón 2014, 2016; Teubal, 2004, 2008, 2010). As such, a potentially Eurocentric or even imperialistic vision of research is avoided.

My data collection methodology relies on unstructured observation, semi-structured interviews with activists affiliated with MNCI constituents and a document analysis of print movement material, particularly those belonging to MOCASE-VC, MCC and MNCI Bs As. The movement documents analyzed as part of this research include political and technical training manuals (MNCI, 2010, 2012; MNCI/MCC, 2012a, 2012b,

2012c; MNCI/MOCASE-VC/MCC, 2009; MOCASE-VC/MNCI, 2012; MOCASE-VC/CLOC, n.d.) as well as historical memory material that presents MOCASE-VC members' testimonies on their own historical experience of agrarian organizing (MOCASE-VC, 2010, 2012, 2016). The snowball technique is employed to recruit participants. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis are also combined with unstructured direct observations in MNCI meetings and communities. All data are analyzed via theory-driven qualitative content analysis, which suggests dividing the sample of texts into coding segments in light of the main theoretical framework. Data validation has been performed through academic conference attendance and exchanges with experts in this field. I have thus presented a preliminary version of my research to a working group on agrarian movements and food sovereignty led by Dr. Carla Gras and Dr. Valeria Hernández, who are faculty members at Argentina's Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento. More improved versions of this research have been presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Association for Humanist Sociology between 2015 and 2016.

My fieldwork was conducted between February and June 2014. MNCI was first contacted via email and Facebook through which an introductory meeting with MOCASE-VC representatives was scheduled at their Quimilí headquarters in Santiago del Estero province. The direct-observation data used in this dissertation were drawn from my visits to community assemblies near MCC's regional headquarters (*centrales*) of *Asociación de Pequeños Productores del Noreste de Córdoba* (Association of Northeast Córdoba's Small Producers, APENOC) in northwest Córdoba and *Unión Campesina del Norte* (Peasant Union of the North, or UCAN) in northeast Córdoba in April 2014. Data from my visits to MNCI's national assembly as well as MOCASE-VC and MCC's provincial assemblies (May-June 2014) were also included in my analysis. Additionally, I analyzed data from my visit to MOCASE-VC's School of Agroecology (SoA), where I attended several classes in March 2014. As a passive observer, I did not interfere in any of these events except that event coordinators allowed me to present myself to the public prior to each event. In total, my dissertation draws on over 35 audio interviews and field recordings that involve (a) local representatives (*referentes*) and community organizers (e.g. Ricardo, Carmen, Edy, Jorge, Orlando); (b) professional leaders who are devoted to provincial- and national-level organizing (e.g. Ángel, Adolfo, Flor, Diana, Deo); (c) youth activists (e.g. Gonzalo, Marcos); (d) expert activists including

movement-affiliated lawyers, agronomists, school organizers and facilitators, some of whom also work as professional leaders (e.g. Victoria, Eduardo, Andrea, Pablo); and (e) slum (*barrio*) activists and other allied urban activists including Members of Parliament (MPs) (e.g. Maneco, Santiago, Facundo, Pablo Montes, Andrés Guzmán), among others. Actual names, rather than pseudonyms, are used. References to audio data are presented in the form of parenthetical and dated in-text citations that do not however appear in the bibliography section.

Interview questions as part of Chapter 3's focus on the political economy of class structures concern the livelihood issues and economic hardships confronted by MNCI members in their communities, including those attributed to the effects of the expansion of soy monoculture. In Chapter 4, interview questions on regional cultures are geared to understanding how MNCI members relate themselves to peasantry and indigeneity and how these cultural orientations affect their organized capabilities as politically- and culturally-formed class agents. Interview questions in Chapter 5 inquire into the ways in which MNCI interacts with the state as a class movement with reference to channels of cooperation, cooptation attempts, instances of conflict, and their effects on social organizing and policy-making. Special attention is paid, not only to how and on what matters MNCI obtains governmental support, but also to how the organization expresses its contention with state institutions and shapes public policies. Finally, interview questions for Chapter 6 and 7 address the issue of leadership, and focus on how MNCI members make collective decisions about pivotal matters that affect the course of the class formation process. A second line of inquiry is how MNCI ensures the circulation of committed leaders and the role that they played in and what kind of political alliances it developed in order to advance its interests.

The originality of this research stems from its *empirical* and *theoretical* contributions, which are closely interlinked. Empirically speaking, the research reveals that indigenous-peasant movements have constituted a strong critique of and alternative to capitalism based on the food sovereignty program. Furthermore, this movement comes from the countryside rather than the cities, as widely expected by Marxist theory. This happens more than a century after Vladimir Illich Lenin's dismissal of populists, Russian revolutionary movements that advocated a return to the countryside. In the age of capitalist globalization marked by technological dynamism and unrestrained urbanization (Castells, 2010), moreover, it is striking to observe that indigenous-peasant movements defy the dispersing effects of capitalism and take the lead in creating an

anti-capitalist alternative. This alternative does not only rally the subordinate classes in the countryside, but also forges a strong rural-urban alliance around the demand for a return to the countryside for semi-proletarians in a time of precarious labor. It thus defies the myth that the informal proletariat is by definition incapable of asserting itself as a class movement, which is often stigmatized as a section of lumpenproletariat, i.e. an underclass that is often associated with social disorganization (Murray, 1999, p. 2). In the Argentine case, the literature has so far remained uncommitted to going beyond descriptive accounts of how the indigenous peasantry takes a center stage in radical left organizing, which testifies to the ways in which previously-marginalized and dispersed indigenous-peasant groups have organized to build a broad front of the classes of labor representing the informal proletariat on an (inter)national level beyond the rural-urban divide. Interestingly, MNCI has become Argentina's largest critical agrarian movement, despite the fact that indigenous-peasant groups are but a minority undermined by a myth of European whiteness.

Theoretically speaking, although social classes reside at the center of Marxist debates, the theory of class formation has remained significantly underdeveloped, and has usually emphasized only its economic aspect of class-in-itself. One of the few tangible alternatives to Thompsonian culturalism is Katznelson's collective action framework, which is however fixated on state-determined political opportunities rather than explain class agency and its political, organizational aspects. Aside from Thompson and Katznelson's important legacy, most Marxist theorizing on class seems to overemphasize class structures and the constraining effects of economy on agrarian mobilization, which is often discredited as "populism" or a form of "false consciousness". Relatedly, another unresolved problem is the question of leadership, which stands between two polar opposites: an orthodox interpretation of Lenin's legacy with excessive emphasis on vanguardism and "leadership from without" versus a civil society-centric form of libertarian and autonomous Marxism that rejects vanguard politics and the strategy of engaging the state (Hardt & Negri, 2017; Holloway, 2013; Zibechi, 2010). My presentation of Argentina's case constitutes an agency-centered account of class formation, while emphasizing the dialectics rather than dichotomy between vanguard forms of leadership and participatory-democracy. Besides contributing to class formation theory, this research also adds crucial theoretical knowledge on the conceptualization of food sovereignty as a research framework from a class-analytical perspective. This conceptualization goes beyond seeing food sovereignty merely as a political program,

and expands its scope as a research framework that proposes to remedy the conceptual ambiguities of food sovereignty by using social classes as an anchoring point in understanding how food sovereignty can approach its target base in its multi-scalar manifestations.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1 addresses the main research puzzle that underpins this dissertation, extracts a set of research sub-questions, and presents the main conceptual framework based on the literature on food sovereignty. The general research question is thus refined and put into the context of the literature. With these aims in mind, general debates on food sovereignty theorizing are extended to the sparse literature on agrarian mobilization in Argentina with the aim of not only presenting a fuller account of the state of this relatively young literature but also demonstrating how Argentina's case can contribute to resolving the problem of conceptual ambiguity in defining food sovereignty from a Gramscian-Marxist perspective. Accordingly, common critiques of the food sovereignty perspective point to a lack of conceptual clarity, and skeptics of this perspective frame food sovereignty as a mere sporadic, agitational and exclusionary movement premised on "populist" rhetoric (e.g. Bernstein, 2010, 2014). In the absence of a full definition, the populist rhetoric seems to be associated with "an ideology that glorifies the underclass as the repository of superior moral virtues, people whose poverty and suffering has rendered them noble" (Dorraj, 2014, p. 129).

My literature review suggests that a class-analytical approach can simultaneously capture social differentiation and homogenization in agrarian communities, while in the meantime setting tangible standards for the inclusivity of movement alliances, local-national tensions, and state-movement interactions in the food sovereignty struggle. Based on this review, Chapter 1 also advises against the use of fixed formulas to assess food sovereignty, profile its target population and regulate relationships with the state. Rather, excessive conceptual rigidity may obstruct a clear understanding of how the balance of class forces and historical conditions in a given geography configure the form and content of food sovereignty movements. Finally, I suggest conceptualizing food sovereignty as a social mobilization process that principally stems from social class cleavages and that potentially leads to class formation. Overall, my literature review on agrarian mobilization in Argentina

demonstrates that peasants' awareness of the unequal structure of class-structural processes is an important factor in food sovereignty mobilization. However, the literature also highlights that material grievances do not by themselves translate into agrarian mobilization. Agrarian mobilization is triggered when a number of mediating determinants come into play including class-cultural grievances, state-society relations, alliance-building, and movement-leadership dynamics. This calls for a comprehensive framework that can take into account the multi-scalar and multi-faceted character of food sovereignty movements in all their complexity.

Given that common issues identified in the literature on food sovereignty and Argentina speak to the dynamics of social mobilization, a systematic engagement with food sovereignty movements requires familiarity with contemporary social movement theories. A more simplified and operationalizable conceptual guideline – that does not however turn a blind eye to the complexities of human subjectivity – is distilled from these discussions. Therefore, Chapter 2 provides the main theoretical framework of this dissertation based on a critical but appreciative re-reading of the social movement literature in an agrarian context. In this chapter, the dissertation's theoretical preferences are justified with reference to the extent to which they can systematically address the common issues identified in the literature review presented in Chapter 1, particularly the question of social differentiation, the sporadic nature of social mobilization in the countryside, inclusivity of movement alliances, local-national/urban-rural tensions, and state-movement interactions. As will be argued in this chapter, the merit of Gerardo Otero's theory of political-cultural formation lies in that it transcends agrarian class-reductionism as critiqued in Chapter 1 and allows for a critical re-appreciation of social movement theorizing in an agrarian context by formulating a critique of state-centrism and culturalism.

Chapter 3 addresses the underlying political-economic grievances of the Argentine countryside, which serve as a contextual catalyst for agrarian class formation. This chapter thus addresses the neoliberalization of Argentina's agriculture and its implications for agrarian class structures from a food regime perspective. It combines a macro-level analysis of how the state-supported transgenic soy monoculture has been marginalizing rural communities with a bottom-up political economy approach that confirms the catalyzing role of soyization under forced evictions, the decline of peasant agriculture and the undermining of rural public health.

Chapter 4 focuses on how MNCI constituents reclaim their indigenous-peasant legacy by fostering a sense of re-appropriation of indigenous languages, communitarianism and native forests along with a re-assertion of the centrality of a peasant way of life. A distinguishing feature of MNCI's cultural mobilization speaks to its self-identification with the classes of labor in both the countryside and the city beyond local rural contexts. Therefore, MNCI efforts at the idealization of peasant community ties are interlaced with a national-level mobilization that also takes into account the well-being of the urban informal proletariat. Another distinguishing feature pertains to MNCI's program of the return to the countryside as an effort at indigenous re-peasantization, which embodies the movement's claim to communitarianism. I go on to conceptualize MNCI's idealization and glorification of peasant communitarianism as "social myths" in the absence of the so-called "primordial" markers of indigeneity. These myths contribute to agrarian class formation insofar as they help MNCI to formulate demands for reclaiming resources, consolidating group cohesion and conviction, and retaining its mobilizing dynamism. Finally, I argue that these myths find their most coherent formulation in MNCI's programme of food sovereignty.

Chapter 5 explores the Argentine peasant movement's interactions with the state and the ways in which they shape political-cultural class trajectories to the direction of agrarian class formation. MNCI's immersion in *kirchnerista* welfare networks has substantially helped the peasant movement to retain its mobilizing dynamism, articulate its strong presence in civil society and remain visible as a legitimate political actor in the eyes of public decision-makers. Meanwhile, MNCI seems to have resisted cooptation by refusing to allow its leaders to assume public offices offered by the government, maintaining its mobilizing dynamism through confrontational strategies and thanks to a relatively peaceful political environment that tolerates confrontation, and remaining faithful to its original claims to food sovereignty. MNCI's independence also appears to be encouraged thanks to its persisting skepticism about *kirchnerismo*, which is essentially rooted in the state's promotion of a capitalist-extractivist model of development, the limited scope of public assistance for agrarian communities, institutional discrimination and the poor functioning of newly created participatory mechanisms. In this context, MNCI has led to a series of important popular-democratic gains such as the removal from office of an infamous *caudillo* (i.e. political strongman), the signing into effect of bills on food sovereignty, semi-autonomous control of state

resources, continuation of disruptive strategies, and creation of legally recognized peasant schools for leadership formation.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine how a combination of MNCI's participatory-democratic leadership mechanisms, pedagogical mobilization and broader working-class alliances facilitates agrarian class formation. In Chapter 6, I posit that participatory-democratic practices assume a strategic role in bridging the local with provincial and national bases of militancy from the ground-up with reference to Gramsci's "theorem of fixed proportions" and an understanding of horizontalism (concepts defined in these chapters). Strong leadership coordination and the promotion of active mass initiative contribute at first hand to class formation. Moreover, I refer to MOCASE-VS's history as MNCI's largest constituent (Leguizamón, 2016) and re-visit the tensions between horizontalism and top-down practices embodied in charismatic-authoritarian and corrupt-opportunistic forms of leadership. Chapter 7 extends the scope of this discussion on horizontalism versus vanguardism by arguing that MNCI's contribution to agrarian class formation also stems from the co-existence of horizontalism with vanguard leadership elements whose continuity owes greatly to systematic endeavors in educating capable and devoted leaders through schooling and internships. This leadership element makes a profound contribution to class agents' collective position and unity in terms of transforming class mobilization into a sustained mobilizing dynamism with the help of capable and devoted leaders in favor of class formation. Although rural vanguard elements assume a key role in fostering agrarian class formation, the crucial contribution of student vanguards and slum (*barrio*) militants cannot be ignored, which also ascribes tremendous importance to the forging of national alliances with non-rural progressive movements that represent the classes of labor. I thus conclude that the potency of MNCI's leadership is also proportional to its strategy of political-cultural alliances that centers on (inter)national cooperation with indigenous-peasant movements, environmentalists, community radios and *barrio* movements, among others.

Chapter 1: Theorizing Food Sovereignty from a Class-Analytical Lens: The Case of Agrarian Mobilization in Argentina

As a newly flourishing research agenda, food sovereignty has generated heated discussions and controversies in agrarian studies. Only a few accounts have sparked skepticism about food sovereignty as a research framework (Agarwal, 2014; Bernstein, 2014; Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012; Hospes, 2014; Jansen, 2015). Much of the discussions have revolved around the possible ways in which the food sovereignty agenda can be extended and enriched (Edelman et al., 2014; Shattuck et al., 2015; Edelman, 2014; Alonso-Fradejasa et al., 2015; Desmarais & Wittman, 2015; Patel, 2009a; Trauger, 2014; Burnett & Murphy, 2014; Jansen, 2015; McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dilley, 2014; Akram-Lodhi, 2015; Borras Jr., Franco & Suárez, 2015; Godek, 2015; Thiemann, 2015). This chapter reviews the key debates on conceptualizing food sovereignty and inquires into the implications of these debates for research on agrarian mobilization in Argentina. The debate on Argentina includes both food sovereignty movements and other agrarian movements that fall within the field of interests of food sovereignty scholars. Therefore, my objective is also to demonstrate how Argentina's case can contribute to resolving the issue of conceptual ambiguity in defining food sovereignty and shedding light on its class dynamics. As will be discussed in the subsequent literature review, these ambiguities revolve around the question of whose interests are to be represented in the food sovereignty framework given the often-contentious nature of relationships between the state and agrarian movements, local communities and higher-level organizations, rural and urban movements or populations, and different intra-rural political and economic interests. Relatedly, the diversity of food sovereignty's popular base brings up the question of how these interests can be democratically represented under a permanent organizational structure.

Food sovereignty debates have been gaining momentum since 2010s, especially with the publication of special issues and individual articles in prominent journals including *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Third World Studies*, *Globalizations*, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, and *Journal of Agrarian Change*. The intensity of these discussions in such a short span of time not only highlights the relevance of food sovereignty, but also calls for an integrative evaluation of these contributions in order to set a systematic research agenda for the near future. A number of widely raised questions are thus addressed throughout the chapter: Where do the conceptual

ambiguities of food sovereignty lie, and how can they be overcome? What is the target group of food sovereignty? How can food sovereignty address the competing forms of sovereignties at the local, regional and national levels? How do scholars working in the food sovereignty framework evaluate the often-contradictory relationships between the state and agrarian communities? How does this framework tackle social and political differentiation among farmers of various sizes and with consumers, environmentalists and indigenous groups? What is the extent of consensus among scholars using the food sovereignty framework regarding these issues?

As will be shown in this chapter, the Argentine case suggests that a class-analytical approach to agrarian studies from a food sovereignty perspective can simultaneously capture social differentiation and homogenization in agrarian communities, while also setting tangible standards for the inclusivity of movement alliances, local-national tensions, and state-movement interactions. This chapter also advises against the use of fixed formulas to assess food sovereignty, profile its target population and regulate relationships with the state. It argues that excessive conceptual rigidity may obstruct a clear understanding of how the balance of class forces and historical conditions of a given geography configure the form and context of food sovereignty movements.

The chapter is organized as follows. The first two sections introduce the concept of food sovereignty and address controversies surrounding the above questions, whereas the third section deals with how food sovereignty scholars respond to these challenges. The final section seeks to explore the possible ways in which these challenges can be addressed in the relevant literature on Argentina.

Introducing Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty emerged as a social movement that also produced a counter-frame to the neoliberal conceptualization of “food security” by international organizations like the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Food security is popularly defined as the “physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food” (FAO, 2003, endnote 30). Beginning in the 1980s, the official emphasis on food security shifted from earlier notions of food self-sufficiency to attaining food security via trade liberalization and increasing productivity through high-tech approaches (e.g. the adoption of genetically modified seeds) (Otero, Pechlaner & Gürcan, 2013). In opposing

this paradigmatic shift in the mainstream, food sovereignty has increasingly gained currency among critical food scholars, especially following the global food crisis of 2007-2008 (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010; Patel, 2009b; Chappell et al., 2013; McMichael, 2009a, 2009b; Gürcan, 2014b; Andrée, Ayres & Massicotte, 2014;; Perfecto & Vandermeer, 2009; Claeys, 2015; Trauger, 2015; Holt-Giménez & Patel, 2009; Herrera & Lau, 2015; Edelman, 2015; Schanbacher, 2010; Holt-Gimenez, 2011; Otero et al., 2013; Desmarais, 2007; Rosset et al., 2006).

One of the earlier political definition of food sovereignty came from Vía Campesina, which defined the concept as “the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity (1996, p. 1)”. In 2002, the focus of this definition was shifted from “nations” to “peoples” with an additional emphasis on trade: “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources” (Peoples Food Sovereignty Network, 2002). The most widely accepted definition today is that provided in Vía Campesina’s 2007 Nyéléni Declaration, where food sovereignty is defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture system” (Vía Campesina, 2007).

Taking the cue from these political definitions, the proponents of food sovereignty in academia agree that food is not to be treated as a regular commodity, because it is essential to human reproduction. Unrestrained trade liberalization and technological expansion in food and agriculture are believed to severely undermine food security. Food sovereignty scholars rather emphasize the power dimensions in agri-food relations as they apply to class polarization, loss of cultural autonomy in rural communities and absence of democratic control over resources (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010). In light of these very concerns, food sovereignty scholars examine the convergence of economic with social and environmental resilience in agriculture. Therefore, they attach utmost importance to the role of agrarian mobilization, peasant solidarity and collective action in achieving food security (Desmarais, 2007; Holt-Gimenez, 2011; Borras Jr., Edelman & Kay, 2008). The ability of sustainable, diversified and associative small

farmer production to advance food security is juxtaposed to profit-driven large scale and monocultural practices that opt for transgenic and high-input technology (Pechlaner & Otero, 2008, 2010; Otero, 2008, 2012). Relatedly, there is broad consensus in the literature that food sovereignty is maximized through closer alliances between the urban and rural poor alongside an agrarian reform that promotes self-management, fosters small and diversified production, and ensures access to local markets and resources (Gürcan, 2014b, 2014a). Overall, food sovereignty does not constitute a contrasting concept to food security. Seen as the most fundamental condition for a food secure society, it rather challenges the neoliberal reinterpretation of food security by pointing to the urgency of addressing the socio-cultural and political barriers to “fair” and “sustainable” agriculture (Gürcan, 2011).

Theoretical Controversies on Food Sovereignty

Most critiques agree on the need to formulate carefully “operationalized” descriptions (Thiemann, 2015, pp. 544-546) that would ensure “conceptual clarity” (Godek, 2015, p. 528) in assessing food sovereignty. Definition-centered debates within the literature have been fueled by Raj Patel’s caution about the need to be more precise on whose interests are to be prioritized and harmonized by food sovereignty policies. Patel calls for greater lucidity as to the statement that the food sovereignty movement represents “those who produce, distribute and consume” (Quoted from Vía Campesina’s 2007 Nyéléni Declaration; Patel, 2009a, p. 666), since those who produce may also include large farm owners and agribusiness (Patel, 2009a, p. 667). Furthermore, Patel calls attention to the fact that sovereignty constitutes a multi-scalar construct that may involve municipal, regional, national and international sovereignties competing with each other. Therefore, one needs to be clear about which scale to be prioritized and the possible ways in which they can be harmonized with one another (Patel, 2009a, pp. 668-669).

Patel’s critiques find their counterpart in Marc Edelman’s question of “who is the sovereign in food sovereignty”, particularly with reference to the competing forms of sovereignty at the local, regional and national levels (Edelman, 2014, p. 967). Edelman raises policy-related concerns on how to address the regulation of long-distance trade, consumer tastes, firm sizes and, last but not least, different applications of food sovereignty policies that may vary whether one deals with a large country (like Canada) or a tiny country (Edelman, 2014, pp. 968-973). Edelman’s remarks on the multi-scalar

nature of sovereignty and the relationship of food sovereignty to international trade have found a strong echo in subsequent literature. Taking the cue from Edelman's question on who to include in food sovereignty, Ben McKay, Ryan Nehring and Marygold Walsh-Dilley acknowledge that "food sovereignty simultaneously accrues to both state and communities (broadly defined)" (McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dilley, 2014, p. 1177). However, they also bring up the issue that no consensus is reached as to the ideal form of state intervention to maximize food sovereignty (McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dilley, 2014, p. 1178). Regarding international trade, Edelman and his colleagues contend that long-distance trade does not necessarily contradict food sovereignty, mainly because food-deficit countries cannot achieve food self-sufficiency due to geographical, climatic or economic reasons, among others (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 917). For similar reasons, Kim Burnett and Sophia Murphy assert that food sovereignty scholarship should develop a clear agenda on how to envision and regulate international trade rather than merely condemn the World Trade Organization (Burnett & Murphy, 2014). They believe that over-simplifying formulas like dismissing international trade per se may create a misinterpretation that food sovereignty is by definition hostile to international trade (Burnett & Murphy, 2014, pp. 1068-1069). According to Burnett and Murphy, this situation is particularly evident in the Oakland Institute's branding of export crops such as coffee and cocoa as a "colonial legacy" that causes hunger and poverty (Burnett & Murphy, 2014, p. 1070).

Another concern raised by Burnett and Murphy is whether food sovereignty embraces export-driven small farming practices, or it is solely represented by farmers who stand for food self-sufficiency (Burnett & Murphy, 2014, pp. 1071-1072). A more rigorous critique of how food sovereignty approaches self-sufficiency comes from Bina Agarwal. She is not only skeptical about a uniformly imposed principle of food self-sufficiency that overlooks the import needs of food-deficit regions vulnerable to adverse climate change (Agarwal, 2014, p. 1251). By taking the cue from Raj Patel, Agarwal also points to Vía Campesina's changing definition of food sovereignty, in the 1996 version of which the emphasis was on a vague notion of "national food self-sufficiency – which is no less vague than "local food self-sufficiency", having replaced the original emphasis in 2007. According to Agarwal, "it is not clear how small 'local' may be – it could even be read as meaning household self-sufficiency" (Agarwal, 2014, p. 1248).

Besides the question of self-sufficiency, moreover, Agarwal takes issue with what she sees as contradictory to Vía Campesina's principle of "democratic choice" and

“respect for diversity”. Not only does she find the emphasis on collective decision-making and consensus somewhat vague in the Nyéléni definition of food sovereignty, she also problematizes Vía Campesina’s approach to dissenting voices. In her eyes, this approach is highly problematic, because it seems to deprive rural residents of the democratic right of not reclaiming the farming profession for reasons such as low profitability, riskiness and low social status (Agarwal, 2014, pp. 1248, 1256-1257). Agarwal points to similar a kind of potential clash between individual choices and collective attitudes when it comes to certain farmers’ insistence on engaging in individual production and practicing transgenic agriculture, contrary to Vía Campesina’s preference for cooperative and agroecological farming (Agarwal, 2014). She ends up claiming that Vía Campesina somewhat relies on what she calls a “cooperative” strategy of collective action, as a form of a so-called “agitational” and “sporadic” model that supposedly rules out “regular interaction, decision-making and monitoring” (Agarwal, 2014, p. 1264).

An equally skeptical appraisal of food sovereignty is offered by Otto Hospes, who believes that the food-sovereignty debate has ended up with nothing but a deadlock that cannot be resolved unless its common frame is re-conceptualized around liberal pluralism (Hospes, 2014). Hospes puts forward a strong dichotomy between a state-centrism that should be avoided at all costs and a heavenly pluralism that would drive food sovereignty toward a reformist strategy to productively cooperate with neoliberal institutions such as the World Trade Organization (Hospes, 2014, pp. 124-126). In parallel with Agarwal and Hospes, Tina D. Beuchelt and Detlef Virchow cast serious doubt on the explanatory potential of food sovereignty, which needs to be replaced by a more inclusive concept. According to them, a major flaw of food sovereignty is that it supposedly “neglects the urban population and unemployed workers, which together make up around 40% of hungry people worldwide” (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012, p. 265). Beuchelt and Virchow appear to believe that food sovereignty aims for food price increases to improve peasants’ livelihood, to an extent that would negatively affect consumers in urban areas. Other problems evoked by Beuchelt and Virchow regard the previously addressed issues related to ambiguities as to the target groups for food sovereignty policies, the specifics of global regulatory policies and the role of international trade for food deficit countries (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012, pp. 264-265).

In sum, however promising is the critical and explanatory potential of food sovereignty, this term is not immune to criticism. A chief criticism laid against food sovereignty is its continuing conceptual ambiguities regarding how to properly address

the tensions between states and food sovereignty movements, local movements and national interests, rural and urban populations, individual and collective choices, and intermitance and continuity. Accordingly, the next section addresses how social class approaches can help to resolve the ambiguities in the food-sovereignty discussion.

Recent Attempts to Resolve Theoretical Controversies: Class-Analytic Approaches

Henry Bernstein's remarks (2010, 2014) on the importance of class differentiations in understanding agrarian change have greatly encouraged the food sovereignty scholarship to address the class-related aspects of rural struggles. Class differentiations, however, do not suffice to be a pretext for labeling food sovereignty simply as a form of "agrarian populism" (Bernstein, 2014, pp. 1041, 1045) that is conceived to be irreconcilable with class analysis. On the contrary, as A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi asserts, "... food sovereignty requires challenging the class power that is expressed in and through the corporate food regime by constructing a broad democratic alliance of peasants, smallholders, fishers, indigenous peoples, urban workers and underserved food communities prepared to confront the power of capital in the food system by fostering alternative modes of organizing production and consumption" (Akram-Lodhi, 2015, p. 579). The target groups of food sovereignty, as identified by Akram-Lodhi, correspond to what Bernstein calls the "classes of labor", which are also part of the so-called "global informal working class" (Bernstein, 2010, pp. 110-111). Furthermore, it follows from Akram-Lodhi's arguments that food sovereign alliances do not embrace the entirety of the rural population but are exclusively built on those sections or strata that are explicitly willing to confront the global food regime and reverse the commodification of food.

Bernstein does not fail to acknowledge class formation as an important concept in agrarian studies, but in his analyses, he only partially deals with it, i.e. in terms of "class-in-itself" in its differentiated form (Bernstein, 2010, pp. 101-104). Ironically, the essential component of class formation, i.e. the constitution of classes into "class-for-itself" remains unexplained. This leads Bernstein to dismiss peasant communities as a potential anchoring point for the egalitarian restructuring of the countryside. He goes on to argue that "there are no 'peasants' in the world of contemporary capitalist globalization" (Bernstein, 2014, pp. 1044-1045). Ultimately, he ends up labeling the food-

sovereignty literature as “agrarian populism”, because food-sovereignty movements are presented as “peasant movements” (Bernstein, 2014, pp. 1041, 1045). He seems to neglect that the self-identification of certain sections of the agrarian population with “peasantry” does not spring from the imagination of food sovereignty scholars. Rather, it is concretely represented by Vía Campesina, i.e. one of the world’s largest social movements which deploys re-peasantization as part of a globalizing process of class formation. As depicted by Anthony O’Malley as well as Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras, “peasantry” is of crucial relevance particularly within the Latin American context, which is marked by anti-systemic social movements such as Brazil’s MST, Colombia’s *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces), Ecuador’s CONAIE, and Mexico’s EZLN (O’Malley, 2001, p. 218; Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000).

In short, Bernstein’s study of agrarian class structures retains its relevance for understanding agrarian change, as will be explored in the chapter on the political economy of Argentina’s agriculture. Yet, this does not change the fact that it needs to be complemented by a bottom-up study of how “class-in-itself” politically-culturally turns into “class-for-itself” (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986; Otero, 1999; see Introduction). Contrary to Bernstein’s postulates, the question of class formation in the countryside inevitably brings food sovereignty movements to the center of agrarian inquiry by shifting the focus from class differentiation to popular-democratic mobilization.

Bernstein’s economic-class reductionism finds echo in the work of William H. Friedland and Enrico Pugliese, who accentuate social differentiation and fragmentation in agrarian class formation. They seem to argue that class decomposition is the most likely outcome of class mobilization, mainly because of the “pluriactivity” of marginalized agrarian classes that oscillate between subsistence farming, contract labor and urban proletarianization for survival. Subsequently, at the expense of dismissing cultural and political motivations, Friedland and Pugliese advance the economic-deterministic argument that class formation is possible to the extent that peasants can pursue their “material” interests (Friedland & Pugliese, 1989, p. 161). The authors openly admit that in their conceptualization of agrarian class formation, “only a few references have been made to subjective aspects” (Friedland & Pugliese, 1989, p. 161). However, relatively speaking, class formation itself is less about economic class structures and more about subjective factors or political-cultural class constitution (Otero, 1999).

Contrary to agrarian class reductionism, Akram-Lodhi's emphasis on "being prepared to confront the global food regime" does not only seem to show that food sovereignty can be a class-aware framework, but it also provides clarification as to the popular inquiry on who the target group of food sovereignty should be (Edelman, 2014; Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012; Patel, 2009a). With regard to Bina Agarwal's assertion that food sovereignty contradicts its own principle of democratic choice and respecting diversity, Akram-Lodhi's criteria for building food sovereign alliances draw a clear boundary on whose interests are to be represented and included in the food sovereignty project: those sections of agrarian classes who reject to engage in collective action and practice farming for reasons of low profitability, riskiness and low social status are simply excluded from the alliance. In class analytical-terms, these divergences speak to differing material interests between peasant who are oriented to produce use values and settle for simple reproduction and capitalist farmers who focus on exchange values and seek expanded reproduction, i.e., profits (Otero, 2009, p. 311). In line with Akram-Lodhi, Gerardo Otero (2009) adds that a class-analytical food sovereignty agenda is vital to understanding the tensions between peasants and capitalist farmers as well as the ways in which they politically address the neoliberal character of global capitalism. According to Otero, it is equally important to study the political-cultural and economic dynamics of how former peasants have been reincarnated into an urban proletariat and expressing their position towards neoliberal capitalism (Otero, 2009).

Finally, concerning Agarwal's claim that food sovereignty is ambiguous about the significance of "local" struggles, a class-analytical lens such as Akram-Lodhi and Otero's would concur that the local is relevant as long as local movement claims pursue an adequate level of balance between the corporate interests of local communities and those of broader working classes so as not to undermine the livelihood of the constituents of food sovereignty alliances. Therefore, a class-analytical lens can greatly contribute to the resolution of the underlying ambiguities of food sovereignty, as far as political alliances and diversities are concerned. For example, as regards how to resolve potential conflicts between small producers and consumers (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012), price increase claims by agrarian producers cannot overlook the economic situation of allied popular sectors from the point of view of a class-analytical food sovereignty perspective. Similarly, when it comes to opposition to international trade (Burnett & Murphy, 2014; Edelman et al., 2014), agrarian producers simply cannot ignore the food necessities of working class populations, especially if these very necessities cannot be

produced locally. Food sovereignty as a research framework could therefore devote close attention to studying these kinds of contradictions and the ways in which food sovereignty movements attempt to mediate them.

Building on the above formulated inferences from Akram-Lodhi and Otero's account, class-centered limitations of "democratic choice" and "diversity" in assessing food sovereignty alliances can also help dissipate ambiguities arisen from the lack of a uniform definition of food sovereignty and a fixed profile of the targeted population (Agarwal, 2014; Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012). Rigid definitions and fixed profiles carry the risk of imposing a simplistic binary thinking that dichotomizes between "urban and rural, trade and localism, autonomy and engagement with the state" (Shattuck et al., 2015, p. 429). On the contrary, the form and content of food sovereignty movements seem to vary according to historical conditions such as the specificity of configurations of social forces (i.e. classes) within the state and society as well as the uneven impact of crises of accumulation and social reproduction in a given geography (McMichael, 2014, pp. 933-934; Borras Jr., Franco & Suárez, 2015, p. 614). In other words, the prevailing problems that may vary from energy and climate to urban food and human right crises leave a clear imprint on the character of agrarian mobilizations. Following a similar logic, Zoe Brent and her colleagues provide a descriptive account of how the U.S. food sovereignty movement unfolds based on the case of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015). They reveal that the cement of this alliance has been the will to confront the US institutional racism that condemns the poor black population to diet-related diseases, oppresses indigenous communities and enslaves the migrant labor represented by people of color (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015, pp. 626-627).

Contrary to Agarwal's claim that food sovereignty mobilizations tend to be "sporadic" (Agarwal, 2014, p. 1264), USFSA seems to offer a stable platform that brings together a vast array of food movements including Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, Friends of the Earth, Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative and National Family Farm Coalition. Echoing Henry Bernstein's suggestion to situate agrarian movements within the framework of "classes of labor" (Bernstein, 2010, pp. 110-111), USFSA represents an initiative of "severely exploited labor" (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015, p. 629) deployed at the intersection of food activism and anti-racism.

The case of USFSA, however, also invalidates another Bernsteinian argument that the so-called populist tendency of food sovereignty turns a blind eye to questions of social class. Brent and her colleagues refer to the fact that USFSA emerges as a firm advocate for migrant workers' rights (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015). Although a considerable number of US small farmers tend to oppose unionization at the expense of migrant workers' rights (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015, p. 628), USFSA's efforts mark a strategic phase in the class formation of those small farmers organized under its umbrella. Another crucial contribution of Brent and her colleagues has been to invalidate the unsubstantiated claim that food sovereignty "neglects the urban population and unemployed workers" (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012, p. 265). This invalidation is evidenced in USFSA's close cooperation with African-American movements, urban agriculture activists, trade unions and workers' centers, which has become a reason of existence for this alliance platform regrouping nearly 40 rural and urban organizations (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015).

Brent and her colleagues' appraisal of the USFSA experience evokes the theoretical discussions in defining food sovereignty with respect to the diversity of food sovereignty actors (Figueroa, 2015). The prevailing trend in earlier theorizing on food sovereignty and diversity was to highlight a "rights-based approach" that positioned against "privileges" (Patel, 2009a, p. 667) granted to agribusiness actors at the expense of the multitude of "classes of labor". According to Philip McMichael, rights are to be framed as "collective rights" in contradistinction to the liberal conceptualization of "individual rights" (McMichael, 2015, p. 440). The rights-based approach seems to have the merit of uniting movements of diverse ideological orientations thanks to its universalizing claim of the right to food, land and seeds. However, a major limitation of this approach is that these rights are permeated by liberal-hegemonic conceptions, which has the potential to "incorporate no imperative to look beyond rights to the social relations that make any particular set of rights appear as common moral sense" and render class agents "highly vulnerable to political co-option and the re-absorption of political protest into the goal of a reworked capitalism under the framework of existing liberal rights" (Neil Smith interviewed in Çelik, 2014, p. 425). This issue adds to the fact that the rights regimes in place "are built around the obligations of states, and fail to adequately address the responsibilities of private and transnational actors" (Claeys, 2014, p. 453). While not necessarily rejecting the rights-based approach as an essential component of food sovereignty, accordingly, Meleiza Figueroa proposes a "people-

centered approach” that is invested in understanding how food and agriculture relates to class exploitation, racism and sexism (Figueroa, 2015, p. 500).

Referring to the multi-scalar nature of food sovereignty (Patel, 2009a; Edelman, 2014), Alastair Iles and Maywa Montenegro de Wit provide insightful clues as to how various scales of food sovereignty can be addressed in relational terms that acknowledge the “spatial, temporal, epistemic and social infrastructure connections” (Iles & de Wit, 2015, p. 482). In simpler terms, a multi-scalar approach to food sovereignty would take into account the multiplicity of sovereignties and their relationships to each other. It recognizes that possible solutions to overcome the challenges of our current food system do not follow a pre-fixed blueprint. Instead, food sovereignty is preoccupied with how agrarian mobilization depends on the peculiarity of power configurations within local territories and in their relationship of interdependence with external institutions such as regional or national governments. Special attention is given to the ways in which the myriad forms of inequality such as classism, racism and sexism affect food sovereignty (Iles & de de Wit, 2015, pp. 488-489, 492). The real challenge of food sovereignty is then not just to unveil class tensions but also simultaneously point out convergences “between sedentary farmers and pastoralists, agriculturalists and indigenous peoples, and rich famers and poor farmers, among others” (Alonso-Fradejasa et al., 2015, pp. 436-437).

Worthy of mention in this regard is a research by Annette Aurélie Desmarais and Hannah Wittman who analyze points of divergence and convergence between farmers, consumers and indigenous communities in Canada (Desmarais & Wittman, 2015). Desmarais and Wittman draw attention to how Quebecois farmers’ movements advocate different interpretations of food sovereignty. For example, the *Union de Producteurs Agricole du Québec* (Agricultural Producers’ Union of Québec) promotes a state-led model of food sovereignty that opts for a supply-managed industry as the representative of large producer cooperatives. On the other hand, the *Union Paysanne* (Peasant Union) defends a bottom-up model of food sovereignty that prioritizes social and environmental sustainability, not rejecting the idea of a supply-managed industry and the state’s critical role in building stronger food systems (Desmarais & Wittman, 2015, pp.1160-1161). Beyond the domain of agricultural producers, the Canadian food sovereignty movement has converged with consumers’ and indigenous movements, which finds its strongest expression in the Indigenous Circle of Food Secure Canada and the British Columbia

Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (Desmarais & Wittman, 2015, pp. 1163, 1165).

To finish with this section, a social class approach to food sovereignty would suggest that the shared interests of the classes of labor concerning agricultural production, distribution and consumption serve as the cement for a conceptually sounder treatment of food sovereignty. This shared understanding could guide food sovereignty researchers who grapple with how to make sense of the tensions between states and social movements, local and national interests, individual and collective choices, rural and urban movements, and political intermittency and organizational continuity. However, two important issues require cautious examination. First, one should give due attention to the peculiarity of the broader political and economic context that shapes the shared interests of the classes of labor, as described in USFSA's case. This peculiarity also calls for caution against fixed and rigid definitions of food sovereignty, because these definitions may vary according to the political and economic environment in question. Second, the "shared" interests of the classes of labor – as broadly conceived by Traditional Marxist approaches – do not necessarily rule out the fact that the conflict of interests among the classes of labor is unavoidable. As such, class-informed food sovereignty analyses are urged to give due attention to understanding intra-class conflicts and possibilities of reconciliation. In this context, the next section on Argentina seeks to deepen the analysis of how the above-mentioned tensions of food sovereignty can be understood and resolved in view of the peculiarity of wider political-economic contexts and conflicts.

Food Sovereignty in Argentina: A Review of the Literature

Based on insights drawn from the above discussion into the social-class dynamics of food sovereignty, the present section seeks to apply this class-based approach to the case of Argentina in order to contribute to a more in-depth theoretical refinement of this model and a resolution of the conceptual ambiguities of food sovereignty. From a food sovereignty perspective, the literature on agrarian movements in Argentina is still glaringly sparse. Moreover, the economic and health implications of Argentina's increasing reliance on soy monoculture lie at the center of attention of this newly emerging literature. In Daniel M. Cáceres' research, for example, soy monoculture is portrayed as the mainstay of Argentina's extractivism. Cáceres argues that Argentina's

left-leaning governments (2003-2015) have adopted an extractivist strategy that surrendered the fate of the Argentine economic development to the extraction and exportation of natural resources, namely by the hands of agribusinesses through soy monoculture (Cáceres, 2014). Extractivism has had uneven consequences in the sense that the general macroeconomic situation has relatively benefited the poor peasantry thanks to the extractivist rent transferred to welfare programs such as the Plan for Unemployed Household Heads and Universal Child Allowance. On the other hand, the expansion of the agricultural frontier caused large-scale land evictions (Cáceres, 2014, pp. 121-122).

Focusing on the socio-environmental impact of soy expansion in the province of Córdoba, Cáceres establishes a close correlation between soy expansion and the increase in land conflicts since 2001. He relies on interview data that reveal the extent to which local peasants are being dispossessed of their land through all sorts of intimidation, fraud, or forced evictions (Cáceres, 2014, pp. 130-131). Peasant testimonies also demonstrate how soy expansion has been met with contested forces represented by a loose alliance of peasant food sovereignty organizations, neighborhood movements and environmentalists including MCC, *Madres de Barrio Ituzaingó* (Mothers of the Ituzaingó Neighbourhood, MBI) and *Paren de Fumigar* (Stop Spraying) (Cáceres, 2014, pp. 134-136). Contrary to the claim that food sovereignty overlooks the urban question (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012), the alliance of urban poor movements such as MBI with food sovereignty movements like MCC reveals the convergence of peasants with the working class. Similarly, this situation resonates with Zoe Brent and her colleagues' study on USFSA (Brent, Schiavonia, & Alonso-Fradejasa, 2015), which reveals that the food sovereignty agenda encompasses a vast array of social movements including environmentalists, anti-racists and the urban poor.

Overall, Cáceres' research presents a bird's eye view of how soy expansion creates opportunities, or class grievances to trigger agrarian mobilization led by food sovereignty movements and other allied organizations. Meanwhile, agrarian mobilization is described as being in its infancy, and no detailed information is presented as to the political and cultural factors underlying the development of agrarian conflicts (Cáceres, 2014, p. 142). A more detailed account of the *cordobés* case is presented by Florencia Arancibia, who examines how biotechnology is challenged by the bottom-up mobilization of intellectuals, experts, and scientists in Argentina (Arancibia, 2013).

Agrarian mobilization in Argentina does not automatically spring from the expansion of soy monoculture and the grievances that it generates on the part of agrarian populations. The literature points to the strategic presence of a number of mediating factors that help trigger or suppress collective action. These determinants manifest themselves as to agrarian movements' ability to culturally sustain collective action (Brent, 2015; Wald, 2015a), forge relatively strong leadership mechanisms (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001; Lapegna, 2014), deal with state intervention (Lapegna, 2014; Cáceres, 2014), and build broader alliances with the classes of labor beyond the boundaries of local communities (Arancibia, 2013; García-López & Arizpe, 2010; Giarracca & Teubal, 2001). The mediating factors are important in terms of reasserting that food sovereignty does not conform with a romanticized notion of "community-based development" that fetishizes a class-blind localism (Veltmeyer, 2001b, 2001a).

Starting with the issue of movement alliances, Arancibia's research elaborates on the role of alliance-building in agrarian mobilization based on the case of *Madres de Barrio Ituzaingó* (Arancibia, 2013). MBI is a movement of mothers who represent people suffering from illnesses associated with glyphosate in suburban neighborhoods near soybean farms. MBI's mobilization was initiated through struggles for regulatory changes and penal complaints with the help of human rights lawyers and activists (Arancibia, 2013, pp. 84-85). MBI also conducted surveys on the harmful impact of spraying on communities with the help of local physicians and critical scholars (social scientists, agronomists and economists) such as the *Grupo de Reflexion Rural* (Rural Reflection Group, or GRR) (Arancibia, 2013, pp. 85-86). Eventually, this alliance turned the local MBI mobilization with mere regulatory reform demands into a nation-wide counter-hegemonic front that united many other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), peasant food sovereignty movements, environmentalists and intellectuals around more radical demands geared toward systemic changes in the nation's agricultural system. Wider movement alliances helped not only to transform the transgenic soy monoculture issue into a national debate, but also to acquire crucial legal victories at the national level (Arancibia, 2013, pp. 87-89). Apparently, MBI's case— which can be categorized as an urban movement – invalidates the claim that food sovereignty neglects the urban poor (Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012). Of relevant note is that Via Campesina members have been a constituent of the pro-MBI counter-hegemonic initiative (Arancibia, 2013, p. 87). Meanwhile, this counter-hegemonic initiative is emblematic of how compatible the food

sovereignty vision can be with Bernstein's class-analytical account on "classes of labor" (Bernstein, 2010).

The role of alliance building in agrarian mobilization is also addressed by Gustavo A. García-López and Nancy Arizpe, whose research examines the power dynamics of roundtable and forum meetings in Paraguay and Argentina (García-López & Arizpe, 2010). Initiatives such as the Roundtables on Sustainable and Responsible Soy constitute discussion platforms joined by large agri-business companies, agribusiness associations and right-wing NGOs. Their discussion outcomes have greatly impacted the formulation of government regulations and the advancement of the pro-soy agenda. The hegemonic content of these roundtables is characterized by claims to corporate responsibility and green capitalism (García-López & Arizpe, 2010, pp. 200-201). On the other hand, critical organizations such as Vía Campesina-affiliated peasant food sovereignty movements are excluded from corporate roundtable discussions for their allegedly radical claims, which encouraged them to hold alternative roundtables to advance a counter-hegemonic agenda, as exemplified in the Paraguayan campaign of "No to Sustainable Soy" in 2005. In connection with previous discussions on the attitude of food sovereignty toward neoliberal institutions such as the World Trade Organization (Hospes, 2014; Burnett & Murphy, 2014), the exclusion of food sovereignty movements from global platforms demonstrates that class-blind cooperation with mainstream institutions may not even be an accessible option.

The Paraguayan experience achieved significant representation among small farmers united against soy producers who mostly happened to be *latifundistas* (large land owners). However, the Argentine experience failed to build a coherent opposition bloc due to unresolved regional tensions among producers, particularly between mostly soy growing middle-sized farmers of the Pampa region and the poor peasantry, with indigenous movements excluded from the platform (García-López & Arizpe, 2010, pp. 202-203). García-López and Arizpe make a case for the "empowering" potential of bottom-up alliance building, while on the other hand cautioning that this potential cannot be activated unless problems of representation and asymmetrical power relationships within grassroots initiatives are adequately addressed (García-López & Arizpe, 2010, p. 205). Ultimately, Argentina's case in comparison with Paraguay's brings to surface the importance of class uniformity and differentiation (Bernstein, 2010; Desmarais & Wittman, 2015) as well as the political conflicts within the food sovereignty movement,

as discussed in the previous section (Alonso-Fradejasa et al., 2015; Beuchelt & Virchow, 2012; Desmarais & Wittman, 2015).

Agrarian mobilization is also the central theme in Norma Giarracca and Miguel Teubal's research on the *Movimiento Mujeres Agropecuarias en Lucha* (Agricultural Women in Struggle Movement, or MMAL). MMAL was founded as an initiative of a "group of farmers against the banks' auctioning of their land and agricultural machinery to collect their debts" (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, p. 38). In essence, it is an Argentine rural women's movement emerged in the mid-1990s under the pressure of neoliberal restructuring in the agricultural sector, which had led to the disappearance of a large number of small- and medium-sized farms accompanied by the increase in production costs due to the cost of inputs and privatization of public services (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, pp. 41-43). Similar to the previously addressed body of research (García-López & Arizpe, 2010; Arancibia, 2013), Giarracca and Teubal highlight the importance of leadership in agrarian mobilization, hence the strategic role of resourceful leaders in building broader networks. Their research indicates that MMAL's mobilization was triggered by peasants' grievances from the expansion of capitalist farms and disappearance of small- and medium-sized farms, the growing pressure of taxation, and increasing rates of inputs and privatized public services and the concomitant indebtedness (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, pp. 39-43). In turn, MMAL owes its "empowerment" to the presence of knowledgeable leaders who are able to "secure, recognize and mobilize resources and initiate direct action" (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, p. 47). Such leadership abilities have been critical in the movement's success in getting some auctions cancelled through collective action. In terms of leadership strength, the research reveals that individual communicational skills such as the "ability to relate to others" and "calling others together" are equally empowering for agrarian movements (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, p. 47). This kind of leadership has proved to be crucial in engaging with mass and community media, which eventually led to the articulation of their presence at the national level by forging closer relationships with other agrarian movements, trade unions and human rights organizations (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001, pp. 50-52).

Unlike the previously addressed research (Giarracca & Teubal, 2001; García-López & Arizpe, 2010; Arancibia, 2013), Pablo Lapegna's study of the demobilization of the *Movimiento Campesino de Fontana* (Peasant Movement of Fontana, or MoCaFoN) in northern Argentina is exclusively invested in explaining internal movement dynamics,

i.e. discrepancies between leaders and rank-and-file members (Lapegna, 2014). Lapegna is interested in elucidating why in 2009 MoCaFoN failed to mobilize against a soy-related agrochemical drift with environmental and health consequences, differently from how they reacted to a similar situation back in 2003. Lapegna's interviews reveal that rank-and-file members did not only fall emotionally into despair and resignation due to stigmatization by the government, agribusiness and media. A key class-related factor in their demobilization in 2009 was also their empathizing with soy growers with the acknowledgement that transgenic soy monoculture is vital to their survival. Furthermore, many peasants choose to use transgenic seeds freely distributed by the Ministry of Production as an "insurance policy" to minimize the effects of spraying on their crops. Worthy of mention is how this brings up the complicated relationship between agrarian communities and the state (McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dilley, 2014), especially when state interventions that seemingly generate favorable effects on the reproduction of agrarian communities can undermine food sovereignty (see Gürcan, 2014b, for examples to positive state interventions with favorable effects on the reproduction of agrarian communities). Lapegna adds that the familiarity of the Monte Azul locality with high usage of agrochemicals in cotton production makes it easier for peasants to cope with harmful spraying practices necessitated by transgenic soy monoculture (Lapegna, 2014, pp. 16-18). With reference to the previously addressed discussion on the variation of the forms of food sovereignty according to historically peculiar conditions, the legacy of cotton production and its effects on agrarian mobilization illustrate the fact that "current structural and institutional situations [are] conditioned historically" (Borras Jr., Franco & Suárez, 2015, pp. 613-614).

Navé Wald's study of agrarian mobilization in the province of Santiago del Estero represents one of the first academic articles that exclusively study MOCASE-VC's case in the English-speaking literature (Wald, 2015b; see Lapegna, 2013b, for fieldnotes published on the MOCASE-VC). Wald's research is predominantly descriptive with its scope limited to understanding how MOCASE-VC as a food sovereignty movement organizes its production activities (Wald, 2015b). He argues that the greatest challenges to production by marginalized farmers are "insecure land tenure, scarcity of water, unavailability of credit, and land loss and exposure to agro-chemicals in connection with the advance of the agricultural frontier" (Wald, 2015b, p. 103). MOCASE-VC's emphasis on collective action does not seem to overshadow its activities in other crucial areas related to peasant production, which runs counter to Awargal's claim that food

sovereignty movements engaged in collective action tend to be merely “agitational” and “sporadic” (Agarwal, 2014).

A similar descriptive account of a few paragraphs on MNCI and its constituents including MOCASE-VC is presented in Zoe Brent’s research on land grabbing in Argentina (Brent, 2015, pp. 686-688). According to Brent, Argentina is undergoing a radical territorial restructuring process. This process is spearheaded by agribusiness and the mining industry. It is however administered via the state apparatus, which actively supports transgenic soy monoculture, privatizes land, and evicts the peasant population. All of this is sustained through the discursive legitimization of mainstream development strategies. Paradoxically, the strategy of exportation of primary commodities goes hand in hand with a firm rejection of neoliberalism, albeit only in appearance (Brent, 2015, pp. 676-682). Brent’s portrayal of how the Argentine state economically supports agribusiness despite an anti-neoliberal rhetoric evokes the complexity of relationships between the state and agrarian movements in struggling for food sovereignty (McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dille, 2014). Brent briefly describes how the material grievances of Argentina’s MNCI and MOCASE-VC are expressed through political identities centered on a strong claim to “territory” through a process that she calls “re-peasantization” and “re-indianization” (Brent, 2015, pp. 685-686).

As admitted by Wald (2015a, p. 325), “in spite of the importance of the agricultural sector to the Argentine economy and the recent proliferation of conflicts in the countryside, published English-language social research” is considerably scarce. As such, the rest of the literature on Argentina’s MOCASE-VC and MNCI only offers cursory insights into their mobilization, which makes the empirical contributions of this dissertation even more important. For example, Wald’s research (2015a) provides a bird’s eye view of the class structures of Argentina’s *campesino* sector, which represents the least capitalized section of small producers rather than entrepreneurial and middle-sized farmers. Wald argues that the marginalization of this sector constitutes a chief determinant leading to increasing mobilization in the countryside. According to him, another facilitating factor is the re-establishment of civil liberties in the 1980s, having led to the re-emergence of “marginalized and hidden *campesino* communities” (Wald, 2015a, p. 331). Based on interview data, subsequently, Wald describes that this re-emergence resulted in the constitution of a national movement that is also engaged in transnational organizing. Wald’s findings also complement Brent’s (2015) research on the mobilization of peasant and indigenous cultures in expressing class grievances and

conveying movement demands. He depicts how MOCASE-VC has developed a political identity of “peasantness” and devoted its efforts to turning their claim to peasant lifestyles and indigenous territory into a national agenda of recognition and incorporation (Wald, 2015a). An even briefer mention is made to MOCASE-VC and MNCI in Santiago Sarandon and Mariana Edith Marasas’ article on the practice of agroecology in Argentina with reference to these movements’ participation in agroecological networks (Sarandon & Marasas, 2017, pp. 241-242). Most of the remaining literature contains partial mentions of these movements, which mainly revolve around their participation in the state. These issues will be addressed in greater depth in Chapter 5 on state intervention (e.g. Leguizamón, 2016, pp. 687-688; Weinberg, 2017; Lapegna, 2016, pp. 47-48; Motta, 2017, pp. 177-183).

In sum, the Argentine case provides a more in-depth explanation of how social class approaches to food sovereignty can address its problem of conceptual ambiguity. In line with the previous section’s call to caution, the Argentine case attests to the ways in which the peculiarity of broader political and economic contexts shapes the form and content of food sovereignty struggles. Food sovereignty struggles in Argentina are thus heavily shaped by the expansion of extractive capitalism and soy monoculture. Similarly, the Argentine case validates the previous section’s call to caution regarding the need to understand and take account of intra-class conflicts, as demonstrated in the conflict between soy-producing medium-scale producers and poor peasantry as well as the exclusion of indigenous movements. Furthermore, the Argentine case reveals that food sovereignty draws its strength from the shared struggle of the classes of labor, whose understanding can help to resolve the conceptual ambiguity of food sovereignty regarding the tensions between local and national interests, rural and urban movements, and states and progressive movements. The literature on Argentina points to a minimum of four sets of conditions for the strength of institutional presence towards agrarian class formation, as opposed to political intermittency: the classes of labor’s level of awareness of the unequal structure of class-structural processes and cultural mobilization, leadership strength, alliance-building capacities, and state interventions that facilitate agrarian mobilization by intensifying agrarian grievances (besides the fact that it could also inhibit agrarian mobilization through cooptative or repressive methods).

Evaluation and Discussion

As discussed in this chapter, conceptual ambiguities reside at the center of major discussions on food sovereignty. A key point to derive from this “integrative” synthesis is that the form and content of struggles for food sovereignty are interlocked with social classes and class alliances. In most cases, food sovereignty alliances seem to be deployed at the intersection of struggles for peasant livelihood, anti-racism and environmentalism. It would be too simplistic to label these alliances as “agrarian populism”, because they rather point to tangible struggles waged by the classes of labor. Moreover, food sovereignty does not always overlook the potential effects of agrarian class differentiation on popular struggles. This crucial question was explicitly addressed when it comes to frictions between the poor peasantry and the entrepreneurial farmers of the relatively well-off Pampa region in Argentina. Yet, class differentiation or heterogeneity is not always the case, hence the possibility of agrarian “class formation”, which is evidenced in the constitution of the Paraguayan small farmers into “peasantry” to oppose the pro-soy *latifundistas* in unity. This class-analytical lens also has the potential to resolve controversies related to where the boundaries of inclusion and localism (or even the sovereignty of local communities) lie in struggles for food sovereignty. From the point of view of agrarian class formation, it is tenable to exclude those who refuse to reclaim small farming or confront the imposition of transgenic agriculture. Indeed, class formation is far from being a guaranteed outcome. Another possibility is class “de-formation” (rather than formation), as illustrated in MoCaFoN’s demobilization due to its members’ sympathizing with transgenic agriculture.

Such a class-centered approach – that is epistemologically irreconcilable with liberal pluralism – does not contradict the principle of diversity and democratic choice per se. A similar principle applies to the place of local sovereignty in the multi-scalar architecture of food sovereignty. In class-analytical terms, the boundaries of the “local” end where those of the “national” (i.e. nationally converging interests of the classes of labor) begin, although defining national class interests is not a straightforward task. Far from neglecting urban consumers or necessarily contradicting with their material interests, therefore, food sovereignty movements take on a greater relevance when they cease to insist on their narrow corporate interests and seek permanent alliances, based on their long-term, fundamental interests with other agrarian communities and urban movements through collective action. These alliances are concretely manifested in Argentina’s MOCASE-VC and other agrarian movements such as MMAL and MBI.

Judging from these experiences, it would be equally simplistic to brand collective action for food sovereignty as sporadic and agitational in a way to reduce it to a mere form of agrarian populism. Finally, the diversity of agrarian struggles in Argentina indicates that fixed formulas to assess food sovereignty, profile its target population and regulate relationship with the state would prove ineffective at best. Instead, movement priorities in each of these areas are expected to be shaped by the balance of social forces and historical conditions that are peculiar to the geography that hosts agrarian mobilization. Therefore, operationalization of food sovereignty assessments would need to be adjusted to the peculiarity of individual cases.

In the final analysis, based on the literature on food sovereignty and Argentina agrarian mobilization, it is possible to frame food sovereignty as a social mobilization outcome that potentially leads to class formation. Such outcomes can be best deciphered through a class-analytical lens that takes account of the multi-scalar and multi-faceted nature of agrarian struggles at the intersection of social conflicts around production and ethnicity. The literature on Argentina demonstrates that peasants' awareness of their own material hardships generated by soy extractivism is an important factor in agrarian mobilization in the name of food sovereignty. The crucial importance of such grievances was also acknowledged by the leading figures of the class formation theory (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986). However, the literature also highlights that material grievances do not directly translate into agrarian mobilization by themselves. Collective class action is fully activated when a number of mediating determinants come into play. State intervention appears as a key factor that shapes the course of agrarian mobilization, as observed in the state's promotion of transgenic agriculture among peasants. Agrarian agency is no less important than contextual mediating factors. Several accounts draw attention to how leadership mechanisms and alliance-building efforts determine the outcome of agrarian struggles in Argentina. Therefore, one could argue that the literature contributions seem to bring important advances in resolving the conceptual ambiguities of food sovereignty when it comes to the question of class differentiation, intermittency, democracy, state-movement relations, local-national tensions and urban alliances. An important theoretical challenge that remains to be addressed, however, is to formulate a comprehensive framework that can take into account the multi-scalar and multi-faceted character of food sovereignty movements, starting with class grievances and the cultural mobilization of these grievances through

re-peasantization and re-indigenization, state intervention, leadership formation and movement alliances, among others.

The next chapter takes up this theoretical challenge, takes the cue from the leading figures of the class formation theory (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986), uses Mann's crucial insights into the organizational dynamics of class formation beyond the rural-urban divide, and applies Gerardo Otero's Gramscian-Marxist theory of class formation to these movements by attempting to formulate a comprehensive theoretical model that can account for the multi-faceted character of food sovereignty. In light of these considerations, finally, the main research question presented in the introduction can thus be extended to the following set of sub-questions: What are the minimum criteria for class formation and how can critical agrarian movements (e.g. food sovereignty movements) meet these criteria? What are the political-economic factors that create material grievances paving the way for such class formation? What is the part played by indigenous-peasant groups in advancing the agenda of food sovereignty and initiating class formation processes beyond sociocultural and political differentiation? What kinds of leadership and alliance-building mechanisms are at play in class agents' success in articulating their presence at a national level beyond limited instances of social mobilization? How do food sovereignty movements' relationships with the state affect class formation outcomes? These questions will serve to elaborate on the theoretical underpinnings of the food sovereignty movement.

Chapter 2: Contemporary Social Movement Theories, Agrarian Mobilization, and Political-Cultural (Class) Formation

The theoretical challenges of food sovereignty were amply discussed in the previous chapter, raising the need for a systematic study of the multi-scalar and multi-faceted character of food sovereignty movements in view of their class dynamics. By proposing to study agrarian class formation in the context of food sovereignty (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986; Mann, 2002; Otero, 1999), my literature review on food sovereignty in the world and Argentina have pointed to a minimum of three mediating factors that underpin this process besides class-structural transformations: class agents' increasing awareness of the unequal structure of class-structural processes and capacity to transcend sociocultural and political fragmentation, state intervention and class agents' reaction to these interventions, and a class agency that makes up leadership mechanisms and directs alliance-building efforts to broaden the movement. Not surprisingly, these three factors are not peculiar to the struggle for food sovereignty alone. There is an ample literature of social movements that provides insightful hints for developing a multifactorial and systematic approach to engage the challenges presented in the food sovereignty literature.

Social movement theories can provide significant insights into class formation processes, because, as C. Wright Mills asserts, the "subjective attributes" of class formation are postulated on "a model of social movements and political dynamics" (1963, p. 318). In this chapter, therefore, I draw on the method of integrative review and provide a critical but appreciative reading of contemporary social movement theories in order to deploy them to understand food sovereignty and class formation in an agrarian context. Contemporary social movement theorizing can be said to be dominated by two strains of thought, namely PPTs and NSMTs (Staggenborg, 2011). This chapter's reliance on a synthesizing reading of PPTs and NSMTs is reasoned on the fact that contemporary scholarship on social movements does not necessarily reflect an inimical rivalry among different theoretical stances. Rather, these theories have evolved in mutual dialogue with the aim of understanding the multifaceted dimensions of social mobilization (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995). The scope of this review is thus restricted to theoretical applications to mainly indigenous-peasant mobilization and other relevant instances of social mobilization in Argentina given this dissertation's main focus.

This chapter is structured in three sections. The first section presents a review of PPTs, whereas the second reviews NSMTs in Argentina's context. The final section explores Gerardo Otero's theory of political-cultural (class) formation and attempts to transcend crude economic approaches to Marxist class analysis based on a critical reading of the contemporary social movement literature. This critical synthesis is hoped to go beyond PPTs' state-centrism and NSMTs' culturalism by offering a more balanced treatment of the determinants of social mobilization (culture, the state, and leadership) in understanding agrarian class formation.

Political Process Theories on Argentina

PPTs identify three sets of factors to explain mobilization: Political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and cognitive liberation (or framing) (McAdam, 1982, pp. 36, 40; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 2008, p. 2). Among all three factors, the most important is political opportunities. Political opportunities can be defined as "consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action" (Tarrow, 2011, pp. 19-20). This term is often used in a broad sense so as to include the openness or closure of the political system, the presence/absence and (in)stability of elite alliances, the state's capacity and propensity for repression, wars, industrialization, international political realignments, prolonged unemployment and wide-scale demographic changes (McAdam, 1982, pp. 40-41; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 2008, p. 10).

Second, mobilizing structures speak to the availability and successful coordination of movement resources, which would allow those movements to exploit emergent opportunities (McAdam, 1982, p. 43). They depend on a minimum of four major categories of movement resources: (a) member integration and involvement; (b) an established structure of solidary incentives (availability of interpersonal rewards and selective incentives to induce participation); (c) strong communication networks or infrastructure that would link the principal movement base with the targeted population (inter-organizational and inter-personal linkages); (d) leaders (the existence of a centralized direction and the successful coordination of a recognized leadership) (McAdam, 1982, pp. 44-47). McCarthy (2008, p. 141) adds a fifth dimension to the mobilizing structures, which is "tactical repertoires". These repertoires can be

understood as an accumulated knowledge of claim-making tactics and engagement techniques with movement opponents such as the use of military means, lobbying, sit-ins, hunger strikes, marches, occupations, etc.

Third, framing (or “cognitive liberation”) can be conceptualized as “the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (as quoted in Baud & Rutten, 2004, p. 1). It serves as a mediating factor between opportunities and mobilizing structures. The framing activity that potentially leads to collective action hinges on a shared awareness that people’s situation is unjust and needs to be changed through collective action, whilst the status-quo is illegitimate and vulnerable (McAdam, 1982, pp. 48, 51; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 2008, p. 8; Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 615).

In his critique of PPTs, Gerardo Otero (1999) maintains that these theories have the merit of acknowledging the role of the state and other structural factors in social mobilization. However, their excessive emphasis on over-determination by external factors risks leaning toward a top-down approach that trivializes agency and other bottom-up processes. As such, Otero recognizes that state intervention assumes a strategic role in class formation, but differently from PPTs, he focuses on class movements’ ability to preserve their independence, translate their self-managing potential into practice, survive repression, and successfully shape state policies in their favour.

Within the particular context of Argentina, PPT-inspired approaches have been widely used to understand *piquetero* movements, indigenous-peasant mobilization, and activism for human and reproductive rights. Elizabeth Borland examines why Argentina’s struggle for the legalization of abortion assumes a confrontational form against the church, whereas Chilean reproductive rights activism restrains from openly challenging the moral authority of the church and even prefers to employ religiously-motivated slogans to legitimize its claims (Borland, 2004). Findings from her fieldwork suggest that in Argentina, the church’s relationships with the state and political elites are stronger than with the people, mainly because of the decline in the popularity of Catholicism. This decline also stems from the church’s supportive attitude toward the military dictatorship (1976-1983), which severely undermined the church’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Argentine populace. Contrary to the Argentine case, the church’s relationships with the Chilean society are stronger, wherein those with the state are much weaker than in Argentina (Borland, 2004). In Borland’s research, collective action frames are taken as

more of a unit of analysis than a variable, whereas mobilizing structures are left unaddressed. Her over-emphasis on the so-called cultural opportunities and other contextual factors evokes Gerardo Otero's critique of PPTs as presenting a potentially top-down approach that trivializes the role of agency in determining the course of collective action.

The study of *piquetero* movements is particularly relevant for this research, because many of Argentina's peasant movements - including MNCI - are closely involved in *piquetero* organizing. The term *piquetero* is derived from picketing, as a form of protest that mainly consists of blocking roads. *Piquetero* movements emerged in 1996 by the spontaneous reaction of unemployed workers in the city of Cutral C6 (Neuqu6n) and Tartagal (Salta), who were mostly comprised by the former employees of *Yacimientos Petrol6feros Fiscales* (Fiscal Oilfields, or YPF). YPF was privatized in 1992, as a result of which hundreds of workers were laid off the Argentine economy had a generalized lack of re-employment prospects (Arzeno et al., 2013, p. 180). In this context, Edward C. Epstein attempts to understand the rise to eminence of Argentina's *piquetero* movements composed of unemployed workers who are known for their disruptive street protests and road blockages (Epstein, 2003). Epstein attributes the strength of *piqueteros* to the economic crisis of 2001 which increased government vulnerability and encouraged collective action. Another important opportunity that set the stage for the successful mobilization of *piqueteros* was the post-crisis environment marked by the successive governments' reluctance to employ violence in order to suppress the protests. Further encouragement for the *piqueteros* mobilization was provided by political parties and trade unions that already had resources to facilitate mobilization. These organizations include the Peronist *Confederaci6n General del Trabajo de la Rep6blica Argentina* (General Confederation of Labor of the Argentine Republic, or CGT) the leftist *Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina* (Argentine Workers' Central Union, or CTA), and the Trotskyist *Partido Obrero* (Workers' Party, or PO) (Epstein, 2003). Yet, Epstein seems to present mobilizing structures and framing as secondary factors that are heavily contingent on political opportunities. He seems to reduce the role of mobilizing structures to the provision of material solidarity incentives, conceived as subsidiary "opportunities" that set the so-called structural conditions for the formation of social movement organizations. In Argentina's case, mobilizing structures consist of obtaining access to flexible bargaining channels, expanding welfare programs and state offices. Similarly, *piquetero* framing stems from material grievances that

revolve around the lack of available work and degradation of the long-term unemployment (Epstein, 2003). Although Epstein's framework does not strictly reflect the original PPT model, it expresses PPTs' tendency to over-emphasize political opportunities.

Isabella Alcañiz and Melissa Scheier focus on the case of the *Movimiento Territorial de Liberación* (Territorial Movement of Liberation, or MTL), a radical *piquetero* movement (Alcañiz & Scheier, 2007). The authors divide Argentina's *piquetero* movement into three broad categories: a) moderate movements such as the *Federación de Tierra, Vivienda y Hábitat* (Federation for Land, Housing and Habitat, or FTV), which are open to collaboration with the state and trade unions like CTA, b) intermediate organizations like the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (Classist and Combative Current, or CCC), and c) radical *piqueteros* including MTL. Similar to Epstein's analysis of political opportunities, Alcañiz and Scheier maintain that the rise of the *piquetero* movement greatly owes to sharp increases in unemployment levels and the decentralization of the welfare regime which encouraged *piqueteros* to join clientelistic networks (Alcañiz & Scheier, 2007). Regarding the mobilizing structures that facilitated the *piquetero* mobilization, they assert that MTL's access to material resources was not confined to public welfare and subsidies, but that they also benefited from microcredits provided by the Communist Party of Argentina (CPA). Resource availability from various sources contributes to the financial and organizational independence of MTL's mobilizing structures, which allows the movement to adopt a more radical attitude (Alcañiz & Scheier, 2007).

Ayşe Serdar looks at what Alcañiz and Scheier categorize under "moderate" *piquetero* coalitions (Serdar, 2015). She is interested in understanding how the change in political opportunities strengthen and weaken CTA's ties with FTV. For example, the hostile political and economic environment during the crisis of Argentine neoliberalism encouraged dissident unionists like CTA to search for alternative alliances with new labor actors like *piqueteros* (Serdar, 2015). However, the rise to power of *kirchnerismo* transformed the configuration of political opportunities. The CTA-FTV alliance cracked in the abundance of public welfare programs and subsidies for *piqueteros*, especially when FTV became the *piquetero* movement that received the largest number of subsidies and gained access to state offices (Serdar, 2015). Clearly, an excessive focus on external resources by political process perspectives on Argentina (Serdar, 2015; Alcañiz &

Scheier, 2007) overshadow the proper understanding of the role of agency in social mobilization.

Matthias vom Hau and Guillermo Wilde inquire into how indigenous activism began to intensify since the 1980s based on the case of *Diaguita Calchaquí* (DC) in Tucumán and *Mbya Guaraní* in (MG) Misiones (Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010). The authors identify (inter)national and sub-national political opportunities that provoke indigenous mobilization. International opportunities emerged in the 1980s and 1990s with the onset of a continental wave of democratization and constitutional reforms that promoted multicultural notions of citizenship, combined with a proliferation of transnational networks of indigenous activism. In Argentina, the end of the military regime in 1983 and rise of human rights activism spearheaded by the *Madres del Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) led to a favorable political environment for indigenous mobilization (Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010). These developments went hand in hand with several legislative efforts to improve the indigenous rights, including the *Ley de Protección y Apoyo a las Comunidades Aborígenes*, the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, or INAI), and the incorporation of pluriculturalism in the 1994 constitutional reform. According to vom Hau and Wilde, variance in sub-national opportunities account for differences in the organization forms of DC and MG (Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010). In Misiones, indigenous mobilization assumes a fragmented and locally contained form, mainly because the governance of indigenous affairs is mediated by provincial institutions that impose clientelistic practices by exerting direct control over the legal register of indigenous communities. On the other hand, indigenous mobilization in Tucumán is characterized by province-wide coordination of resistance, mainly because the governance of indigenous affairs is centrally managed by INAI, which minimizes clientelistic practices (Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010).

Renata Motta (2017) scrutinizes how political opportunities enable agrarian mobilization in Argentina and Brazil. She particularly focuses on the effects of government changes and global primary commodity markets. Brazilian movements examined by Motta include MST and *Movimento de Pequenos Agricultores* (Small Farmers' Movement, or MPA), whereas the Argentine case engages with MNCI and *Organización Servicio a la Cultura Popular* (Organization of Service for the Popular Culture, or SERCUPO). Motta's analysis suggests that the ascension of left-leaning governments to power as well as their policy concession in livelihood matters contributed to the opening of a free space for social mobilization in both countries. In turn, both

governments' pro-agribusiness position, the continuation of land conflicts and criminalization of peasants served as mechanisms to foster agrarian mobilization (Motta, 2017).

Pablo Lapegna's study of how *Movimiento Campesino de Formosa* (MoCaFor) was demobilized employs a PPT-inspired approach that examines the distribution of political opportunities and resources (Lapegna, 2013a). Under *kirchnerismo*, MoCaFor became a "problem-solving network" that manages government-supported unemployment benefits, scholarships and technical equipment. On the one hand, movement leaders discursively reject clientelistic arrangements, and rank and file members resort to disruptive protest such as road blockades. On the other hand, movement leaders feel the necessity to intervene in disruptive protests in order not to jeopardize government-funded resources, and some rank and file members see the movement only as a means to access welfare (Lapegna, 2013a). However, in line with Otero's critique of the PPTs' top-down approach, MoCaFor's demobilization seems to be less about "resources [that] allow MoCaFor's continuity as a social movement" (Lapegna, 2013a, p. 858) and more about problems within the internal decision-making mechanisms and political-cultural formation. How do rank and file members participate in decision-making and interact with high-ranking leaders? What are the political and cultural barriers behind MoCaFor's inability to join a national peasant movement that transcends local and provincial corporate interests of communities? Lapegna and others excessive emphasis on political opportunities, however, leaves these kinds of questions poorly addressed at best.

New Social Movement Theories on Argentina

NSMTs emerged out of a critique of PPTs' top-down approach, which initially assigned a secondary role to cultural factors and agency (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001, p. 286; Buechler, 1995). The epithet "new" in NSMTs accentuates the shifting locus of social mobilization from claims over the distribution of material resources and class politics towards claims over life-styles and cultural recognition. Alain Touraine, a French sociologist, is considered to be one of the founding fathers of NSMTs (Melucci, 1989). Touraine contends that the so-called "postindustrial condition" increases the independence and differentiation of social actors insofar as the state ceases to be an agent of social integration (Touraine, 1988, pp. 32–33). Touraine's work defines social

movements as “actors, [who are] opposed to each other by relations of domination and conflict [and who] have the same cultural orientations and are in contention for the social management of this culture and of the activities it produces” (Touraine, 1988, p. 9).

Touraine’s actor-centered framework relies on a culturalist rejection of social actors’ determination by structural factors and social systems, which leads him to the conclusion that “the subject can no longer be defined in historical terms” (Touraine, 1988, p. 40). He goes on: “Societies are less and less ‘in’ history; they produce themselves their historical existence by their economic, political, and cultural capacity to act upon themselves and to produce their future and even their memory” (Touraine, 1988, p. 155).

Alberto Melucci is the first to coin the term “new social movements”. Building on Touraine’s work, he argues that we live in a so-called “postindustrial information society” (Melucci, 1996, p. 6), in which the development of communication technologies undermines the centrality of class-based social conflicts (Melucci, 1996, pp. 8–9). According to him, social movements’ capacity for autonomous action depends on their “collective identity” defined as “an interactive process through which several individuals or groups define the meaning of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints for such an action” (Melucci, 1996, p. 67). Social movements are then expected to forge their collective identity, acquire independence, and express themselves through symbolic resources and communicative networks (Melucci, 1996, pp. 79, 92, 113–114).

In tune with Touraine and Melucci, Manuel Castells portrays contemporary society as a “network society”, which is an outcome of the emergence of “informational capitalism” centered on new communication and media technologies (Castells, 2010, p. 1). Castells believes that the primary source of “purposive collective actions” is collective identity, i.e. “the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning” (Castells, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, NSMs rely on social networks, namely decentered forms of organizations that mobilize people by producing and distributing cultural codes (Castells, 2010, p. 362). According to Castells, the state’s role in representing a unitary identity is seriously challenged by globalization as it provides fertile ground for the proliferation of plural identities as autonomous constructs. In addition, globalization supposedly decentralizes power and develops empowering communication and media technologies (Castells, 2010, pp. 271–272, 300–308, 342–343).

The work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) exerted significant influence on the development of NSM theories with their critique of economic

reductionism in Marxism and conceptualization of identity centered on discourses. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that class struggle can no longer be seen as the main site of social conflict. Their belief is that the working class has given up its status as the main actor of the defining political struggles in contemporary capitalism. Therefore, they believe that the left's success depends on a new type of hegemonic struggle, which involves the creation of a broad and inclusive front of radical, pluralist democracy. Non-class-based political identities represented by a multitude of discourses lies at the center of this hegemonic vision of radical democracy. Aside from Laclau and Mouffe's highly theoretical language inspired by poststructuralism, however, it is not easy to operationalize and apply this theoretical framework to class formation analysis, since the reduction of social conflict and hegemony to mere discursive practices disconnected from class-analytical perspectives obstructs an adequate understanding of the political-economic and organizational dynamics of class mobilization beyond the linguistic domain.

All in one, as Gerardo Otero (1999) contends, NSMTs offer beneficial insights into the possible ways in which Traditional Marxism's economistic understanding of class formation can be replaced by a better alternative. Building on the emphasis of NSMTs on agency and independence, he stresses the importance of regional cultures in social mobilization. According to him, NSMTs have the benefit of acknowledging the centrality of cultural struggles in social mobilization, but their class- and state-blind perspective is flawed with an overly idealistic understanding of culture by failing to systematically address the political-economic context of social mobilization (Otero, 1999).

The NSM language on collective identities is commonly encountered in analyzing ethnic mobilization, human rights activism and gender movements in Argentina. Silvia María Hirsch investigates how indigenous mobilization in Argentina can overcome local differences and build a unified movement based on a generic notion of Guaraní and metaphorical allusions to a common language (Hirsch, 2003). According to her, a main challenge in indigenous mobilization is that not only are indigenous communities highly differentiated in terms of language use and self-identification with the Guaraní legacy, but also the majority of members does not speak Guaraní and this language has a pejorative connotation for many youngsters in urban communities (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 87, 93). Indigeneity is reinforced through transnational contacts among Guaraní groups, especially indigenous networks in Bolivia. Argentine delegates are often invited to political and cultural events in Bolivia, where the Guaraní culture is practiced "in a purer

form” with Guaraní widely spoken, traditional festivals popularly celebrated with distinctive clothing, shamans visibly powerful and chiefs highly respected (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 90-92, 98). Hirsch goes on to highlight that transnational contacts – combined with the state’s legislative efforts for indigenous rights since 1985 and bilingual education services – have greatly contributed to the revival of indigeneity in Argentina. However, Hirsch cautions that this revival cannot go beyond generic notions of indigeneity as compared to its so-called “purer” practice in Bolivia. Consequently, the pan-Guaraní movement organized in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy vindicate indigeneity predominantly as an element of “political identity”, which is often used to motivate mobilization within communities and obtain the support of government agencies and non-governmental institutions (Hirsch, 2003, p. 96). In this case, indigenous identity appears not only as a mobilizing tool, but also a means for achieving access to land and resources (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 87-89).

Anke Fleur Schwittay’s research explores how indigenous identities historically evolve and legitimize activism (Schwittay, 2003). Schwittay starts by providing a historical context of the *Málon de la Paz* (Raid of Peace), which was a march organized by indigenous movements who marched from the provinces of Salta and Jujuy to Buenos Aires in order to protest the faltering of land expropriations in 1946. After a one-month stay in Buenos Aires, indigenous activists were forcefully removed and sent back to Northwestern Argentina. Schwittay’s interviews with the members of the *Kollas of San Andrés* (KSA) suggest that the painful Málon events are ingrained in the indigenous historical memory and serve as a symbolic reminder that motivates social mobilization, which was especially evident in the second Málon march in 1993 (Schwittay, 2003). In comparing both marches, Schwittay concludes that land claims in 1946 were based on Perón’s ideology of social justice and the identity of rural workers, whereas the 1993 mobilization laid greater emphasis on the *Kolla* identity. This rather “instrumental” identity – as expressed in KSA’s land claims – was built on an attunement with the state’s legal recognition channels such as INAI. As such, KSA members seem to have developed a generic rather than a *Kollaist* discourse of self-identification, which is restricted to being born, being raised and earning a crust in San Andrés. Relatedly, land claims center more on being a rightful owner for having struggled for decades and less on being part of the *Kolla* ethnicity (Schwittay, 2003, pp. 145-148).

Marta Mercedes Maffia and Bernarda Zubrzycki analyze the role of collective identities in the mobilization of Afro descendants and Africans in Argentina (Maffia &

Zubrzycki, 2014). They maintain that the Afro-Argentine mobilization is shaped by the ways in which activists perceive of their environment in relation to their expectations. In Argentina, Agro-Argentine movements are part of a loose network of alliances that embrace Argentine citizens of African descent, recent migrants from Africa, and migrants from Latin American and Caribbean countries. These actors come together around the central theme of anti-racism and cultural visibilization, but there are also serious internal rifts due to varying expectations pertaining to disagreement such as whether to join the African diaspora or capitalize political mobilization (Maffia & Zubrzycki, 2014).

Marcelo Bergman and Monica Szurmuk address gender mobilization upon the murder of María Soledad, a young girl in San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca from a NSM perspective (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2001). The legal and media narrative victimized María for being raped and exposed naked as an “oversexed”, “poor” and “dark skinned” teenager. However, María’s victimization backfired when the public realized that the murder case turned into a cover-up operation to protect individuals affiliated with the Saadi family, a traditional *caudillo* family in the province. What came to be known as the Catamarca events erupted in 1990 with the involvement of middle class and working class citizens and Catholic leaders who confronted Saadi-related legal and political corruption in the province (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2001). According to Bergman and Szurmuk, these marches were substantially different from conventional protests with political slogans and public show of masculinity. Instead, the Catamarca events were mostly attended by women who marched in silence and displayed their bodies dressed in gray uniforms and wearing gold crosses. “By organizing and successfully raising local and national interest, the mobilization succeeded in breaking down the Saadi hegemony and in bringing about the incarceration of privileged suspects (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2001, p. 394).”

Alison Brysk sheds light on the identity dynamics of the internationalization of human rights activism based on the case of Argentina (Brysk, 1993). Brysk posits that Argentina’s human rights mobilization is internationalized through identity formation in three key areas, i.e. peer lobbies, exiles, and information dissemination. First, peer lobbies are represented by political dissidents and their supportive networks composed of mothers, lawyers, and religious communities. Second, there are also large numbers of Argentine exiles who live in countries such as France, Spain, Mexico and Venezuela. They provide the movement with both political and financial support. Third, the movement itself assumes the task of disseminating information about the past and

current situation of human rights in Argentina with the aim of impacting on the public perception. The public perception is also targeted through the mobilization of grieving mother whose children were lost during the military regime. Strongly charged with symbolism and political theater, mothers weekly mobilize at the Plaza de Mayo in silence and carry the portraits of their lost loved ones (Brysk, 1993, pp. 263-264). According to Brysk, this three-fold identity formation process led to the rising legitimacy of the human rights movement and mobilized the support of international NGOs and the US government against the military regime (Brysk, 1993).

As differently from the original theories of NSMs, the NSM-inspired literature on Argentine social movements displays a rather pragmatic and eclectic approach that explicitly or implicitly acknowledge PPTs' explanatory merits. This literature does not seem to capitalize the original emphasis of NSMTs on the allegedly declining influence of state actors, class conflicts and other structural factors. Regarding the Catamarca events, Bergman and Szurmuk point out that these protests could not have taken place in the pre-1976 Argentina and without the successful mobilization of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo who contributed to a favorable environment for peaceful protests (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2001, pp. 389-390). Similarly, Brysk asserts that the successful internationalization of Argentina's human rights movement also stems from the growing influence of international actors such as the Carter administration, United Nations and NGOs on human rights issues (Brysk, 1993, pp. 266-267). In turn, the emergence of a pan-African network in Argentina is greatly attributed to an improving human rights environment and closer cooperation with public institutions under *kirchnerismo* (Maffia & Zubrzycki, 2014, p. 182). The body of work on the increasing relevance of indigenous movements confirm that social mobilization was facilitated by a favorable legal and multiculturalist environment since 1985 in both Argentina and the world (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 90, 94, 96; Schwittay, 2003, pp. 137-138, 140-141, 146). Likewise, the fact that the mobilization of indigeneity is heavily contingent on the material demands for access to land and resources seems to invalidate the original NSMTs' over-emphasis on the declining relevance of class conflicts in favor of cultural conflicts and independence (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 87-89; Schwittay, 2003, pp. 137, 144).

Therefore, the NSM literature on Argentine provides useful insights into the centrality of cultural struggles and agency in social mobilization at the expense of the overly idealistic portrayal of contemporary social movements by the original NSMTs. Certainly, the accentuation of cultural mobilization and independence is important in

terms of placing the agency of social classes at the center of inquiry. As the political process literature suggests, however, cultural factors constitute only one determinant of collective action.

Despite the state-centric and class-blind approach of PPTs, and the excessive culturalism of NSMTs, this literature provides useful insights into the chief role of leadership mechanisms and state intervention in social mobilization. However, the assessment of leadership-related factors is to be extended from a mere analysis of movement resources to the actual ways in which decision-making is organized in a way to empower or constrain class agents. Similarly, taking class agents as the primary actors necessitates reversing the focus of PPTs from how the state affects class movements to how class movements can affect the state in order to empower themselves by pushing for state interventions in their favour. Last but not least, especially if the main research objective is to understand class formation, the state centric focus of PPTs is to be remedied by a Marxist focus on the political economy of class restructuring and grievances.

Gerardo Otero's Theory of Political-Cultural (Class) Formation

Critically adapting the insights of the contemporary social movement literature into how social classes constitute themselves as powerful class actors to an agrarian context, Otero's political-cultural formation theory identifies three sets of mediating determinants of agrarian class formation: regional cultures, state intervention, and leadership. As such, these factors are critically extracted from the contemporary social movement literature within a Marxist framework. Otero thus aims to offer a more balanced approach to the determinants of social mobilization free from PPTs' state-centrism and NSMTs culturalism, while social class is placed at the center of this critical inquiry. Yet, similar to NSMTs, this framework also presents a critical appraisal of Traditional Marxism, more particularly to its class reductionist, or economistic forms. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, an economistic interpretation of Marxism in line with Henry Bernstein's would argue that economic structures, or more precisely class polarization pressures working classes to get organized for their material interests. Unless workers suffer from a so-called "agrarian populist" false consciousness, they are expected to group with similarly deprived people that share resembling perceptions of living standards and deprivation. When it comes to laboring classes in the countryside, they would be expected to

politically behave like wage-earners, form trade unions to ally with urban workers, and fight for higher wages as well as better working conditions. However, a number of critical questions remain unresolved: How would such expectations explain the revival of peasant or indigenous cultures that reject proletarianization despite their potentially postcapitalist character? Why do they not reflect their proletarianizing condition, or economic position in their struggle? Pointing to “false consciousness” would be too simplistic to make sense of what could be going on with “new agrarian movements”.

Differently from this economistic scheme, Gerardo Otero’s framework proposes to give equal weight to the analysis of both structural and subjective factors in understanding class formation. Such understanding requires a fuller grasp of workers’ cultural dispositions, which are closely linked to relations of social reproduction, i.e. not merely to the relations of production, but also to the nature of peoples’ relationship with agrarian communities, the state and their leadership structures. Such a framework presents a more sophisticated and multivariate approach, rather than simply reducing class organization to “class differentiation” or “false consciousness” (Otero, 1999). In the agricultural sector, this perspective suggests that the growth of capitalism and proletarianization in the countryside do not automatically lead to de-peasantization insofar as rural populations manage to remain as “peasant producers” without moving along a unilinear trajectory toward a purely proletarian existence in a traditional sense (Otero, 1999). On the contrary, the political significance of an organized peasantry may even increase as an important component of left-leaning forces, as clearly observed in the strategic role of peasant mobilization in the rise to prominence of the Latin American left. Otero explains the persisting eminence of the peasantry in the face of sweeping proletarianization based on a set of political and cultural factors.

Of the three major factors that mediate class formation, regional cultures set the actual content of popular struggles, or more precisely movement demands to gain control of territory and natural resources. Theoretically, regional cultures are in accord with Thompson’s emphasis on the role of culture in advancing class formation. Regional cultures can be provisionally defined as the mobilization and politicization of communal relationships (kinship, ethnicity, family, religion, etc.) that are deployed by class agents to give qualitatively new meanings to their material grievances as direct producers. In other words, regional cultures speak to how relations of reproduction are instrumentalized to convey movement demands (Otero, 1999). In certain contexts, the dissolution of community relations may result in the primacy of struggling for individual

production in which communal solidarity relations take no part. In other contexts, partial dissolution of communal relations may lead to the predominance of peasant-entrepreneurship in which petty commodity production helps to maintain household subsistence. Finally, preservation of communal relations despite the expansion of capitalist agriculture and semi-proletarianization in a given region may generate certain forms of a postcapitalist culture in which the process of production is appropriated by self-managed cooperatives or other forms of collective management (Otero, 1989). Eventually, the ways in which these class structural process inscribed in relations of reproduction are instrumentalized and translated into movement demands determine the character of regional cultures in the process of agrarian class formation.

The postcapitalist demands of Mexico's EZLN and Ecuador's CONAIE exemplify the role of regional cultures in class formation. These movements articulate their ethnic status as Indians and seek to revive communitarian forms of production in agrarian communities, which help them advance relatively coherent class demands that represent their peasant constituency. In the case of EZLN and CONAIE, the indigenous struggle for independence, self-management and control over resources determine the form and content of class-based movement demands for land access (Otero & Jugenitz, 2003, pp. 514-516).

Besides regional cultures, another mediating factor that shapes class trajectories is state intervention. As discussed in the Introduction, the importance of the state was already acknowledged by Katznelson (1986), albeit in a top-down fashion that differs from Thompson's approach (1966). From the point of view of social movements, the state apparatus can be seen as a chief mechanism that potentially conducts the cooptation process (Otero, 1999). However, cooptation is not the sole outcome of social movement interactions with the state. Contrary to the Traditional Marxist approach to the state as the mere instrument of the ruling class, this dissertation portrays the state as a swirl of social relations, namely a site for hegemonic class struggle (Jessop, 2008, pp. 9, 11, 36). The state is not *simply* a coherent entity that is firmly controlled by the bourgeoisie, because it is characterized by an "uneven" representation of "mutually contradictory priorities and counter-priorities" (Jessop, 2008, p. 127). Moreover, state power can even be activated "through the agency of definite political forces in specific political conjunctures" (Jessop, 2008, p. 37). This definition also implies that the mobilization of subordinate classes may have a progressive effect on state policies, depending on the balance of class forces in a given political-economic conjuncture.

Indeed, the conceptualization of the state as a strategic field of social struggle rather than a *mere* instrument of capitalism is highly compatible with the class- and social movement-centered approach of this dissertation. In the social movement literature, for example, PPTs are more interested in understanding how the state enables or disables political opportunities for collective action. Additionally, Otero's bottom-up approach is also interested in assessing state intervention in terms of how social movements can affect public policies from the ground up. Here, the state-centered focus of PPTs is swapped with a class-centered focus that prioritizes the agency of class actors.

State intervention sets the external environment surrounding the context and character of popular struggles (Otero, 1999). It looks at the relationship of class movements with state actors, namely whether class movements can extract concessions without being coopted or whether they give up their independence at the expense of demobilization. Failure to obtain concessions favorable to the material reproduction of subordinate class agents may also stem from the movement's inability to address state repression (Otero, 2004). Otero identifies three ideal types of state intervention with different effects on class-formation trajectories. First, bourgeois-hegemonic state intervention results from the inability of class movements to retain their defining values, principles and strategies in return for favorable concessions with a potential outcome of cooptation and demobilization. This is illustrated in the success of corporatism by Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which imposed a corporatist structure on civil society. Bartra and Otero evoke the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) and its League of Agrarian Communities, which were all created from top to down by the Mexican state and came to ensure loyalty to and electoral victory of the PRI (Bartra & Otero, 2005, p. 389). The same goes for the creation of the Permanent Agrarian Congress and Indigenous Permanent Congress by Mexico's ex-President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994) as well as the transfer of millions of pesos to popular organizations to undermine independent oppositional movements (Bartra & Otero, 2005, p. 397). Second, oppositional state intervention arises from the failure of a class movement to deter the state from resorting to repression by employing the necessary amount of pressure through public opinion or armed struggle. Alternatively, a given movement's refusal to engage in a critical dialogue with the state and insistence on confrontational strategies may result in oppositional state intervention with no concessions extracted from the government. Finally, popular-democratic state intervention stems from the

success of class movements in pressurizing the state to give concessions with no or minimal cooptation (Otero, 2004).

Leadership is another key determinant that shapes the course of class formation processes. This determinant is one of Otero's most original contributions to the class formation theory considering Thompson's lack of attention to the organizational dynamics of class formation and Katznelson's top-down engagement with collective action. It echoes with Mann's (2002) emphasis on the organizational dynamics of class formation, albeit with a more systematical conceptual manner. Whereas regional cultures and state intervention express the *content* and *context* of popular struggles, the leadership determinant sets the *form* of popular struggles with respect to varying levels of political independence in decision-making and class alliances. In social organization, class agents assert their position and unity by participating in collective decision-making (Otero, 1999). Therefore, a study of the prevailing modes of grassroots participation in a given movement could provide a wealth of clues to understand the political behavior of class agents.

Otero goes on to identify three ideal-types of leadership that usually bear overlap with one another in the real world (Otero, 2004). In charismatic-authoritarian leadership, the political behavior of class agents is directed by the mobilizing authority of influential personalities who maintain the personal control of a social organization with limited accountability and deliberation by their grassroots constituency. Corrupt-opportunistic leadership represents the narrow and corporate interests of a clique of leaders who seek to gain short-term gains from the state or other dominant actors; it can be easily bought off with short-term concessions at the expense of organizational independence (Otero, 2004). Participatory-democratic leadership is characterized by deliberative practices, stronger representation, greater participation from the ground-up and stronger alliances to confront the state. It follows that the center of decision-making assumes a more diffuse character that potentially limits the arbitrariness of charismatic leaders and narrow cadres. Clearly, class agents' active participation in the management of their own problems from the ground up is a major contributor to social class formation. According to Otero, the EZLN is exemplary of participatory-democratic leadership, because it relies on a prefigurative style of decision-making in which "the main decisions have been made democratically among its support bases" (Otero, 2004, p. 338) with predominantly indigenous constituency. Grassroots constituency has even the power to exclude military leaders from collective decision-making and negotiations with the state (Otero, 2004, pp.

339-340). EZLN's participatory-democratic leadership finds its fullest expression in its "Councils of Good Government" with its own legislation, community programs and rotational structure in which each citizen serves in the Council for two weeks (Bartra & Otero, 2005, p. 404).

Evaluation and Discussion

The dominant schools of social movement thinking – PPTs and NSMTs – place emphasis on the multifaceted aspects of social mobilization. However, PPTs mostly draw on a state-centric approach that attributes a primordial role to the external political environment, which either facilitates or inhibits social mobilization. For example, the declining popularity of the Church is framed as cultural opportunities that generate confrontational forms of activism for the legalization of abortion in Argentina. The rise of *piquetero* movements is associated with economic crises and eroding government capacity, whereas the expansion of welfare networks in the post-crisis environment is portrayed as a chief factor in the cooptation and fragmentation of peasant and *piquetero* movements. Similarly, the rise of indigenous activism the 1980s and 1990s is largely attributed to the outbreak of a continental wave of democratization that facilitated constitutional reforms. In the case of NSMTs, the rise of indigenous movements in Argentina is ascribed to the historical memory of political repression and mobilization of a generic notion of indigeneity with the aim of building a unified movement. Likewise, the deployment of an anti-racist discourse that champions cultural visibilization is associated with the rise of an Afro-Argentine movement.

In view of the crucial merits and limitations of the social movement literature on Argentina, I suggest that a more balanced approach to the determinants of social mobilization can be constructed based on Gerardo Otero's theory of political-cultural formation. Equally important is that Otero's theory allows to redress these issues within a Marxist framework that gives due attention to the political-economic and class dynamics of social mobilization in Latin America's agrarian context. Therefore, regional cultures as a chief determinant of agrarian class mobilization is examined in its connection to political economy as it relates to socioeconomic (re)production and communal relationships beyond the culturalist lens of NSMTs and state-centrism of PPTs. Unlike the top-down focus of PPTs on the state, the state intervention determinant is interested in how social movements engage the state and what kind of outcomes they push for.

The role of leadership structures is widely acknowledged by PPTs, but most of the empirical work fails to systematically tackle this issue by over-emphasizing the primary role of political opportunity structures. Similarly, NSMTs fail to systematically demonstrate how identity discourses are forged and mobilized by leadership mechanisms. Therefore, Otero's theory allows for a closer study of leadership dynamics in agrarian class formation.

In the remainder of this dissertation, accordingly, I will contribute to Otero's theory by providing a Gramscian reading of the three determinants of class formation. I will do this by offering a systematic and operationalized explanation of regional cultures, state intervention and leadership with special reference to several crucial concepts in Antonio Gramsci's work. These concepts are: "social myths", "hegemony", "organic intellectuals", "national-popular" alliances and the "theorem of fixed proportions". Gramsci's thought can provide a valuable perspective into class formation given its critique of economic reductionism beyond crude materialism and appreciation of subjective factors in revolutionary struggle (Mann, 2009). As regards economic reductionism and subjective factors, Gramsci is famously known to have argued, "it is not the economic structure which directly determines political activity, but rather the way in which that structure and the so-called laws which govern its development are *interpreted*" (Gramsci, 1999, p. 46, emphasis added). This is also in line with Thompson's bottom-up approach (1966).

Additionally, Gramsci's concern with leadership can compensate for the lack of adequate attention to organizational factors in class formation theory (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986). In Gramsci's thinking, class formation depends on the deployment of such interpretations through bottom-up and autonomous organizing away from bureaucratic and charismatic forms of social control (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 129, 210; 1992, p. 211; 2009, p. 172), which is quite compatible with Otero's leadership typology. According to Gramsci, finally, revolutionary change encapsulates a political-cultural transformation whose agency is constituted by "developing new rules for common living, creating enterprise, getting people accustomed to responsibility, to disinterestedness and to initiative without immediate goals of personal enrichment" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 62). Such cultural transformations transcend the limited scope of social mobilization and pave the way for the constitution of a class-for-itself, or the political-cultural formation of subordinate classes.

Chapter 3: Political Economy of Agrarian Class Restructuring: The Case of Argentina's "Soyization" from a Food Regime Perspective

This chapter addresses the first of the four underlying factors that turn agrarian mobilization into class formation, i.e. the political-economic transformations that are rooted in polarizing class structures. There is an almost universal consensus in the relevant Marxist literature (e.g. Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986) and body of research on food sovereignty (e.g. Motta, 2017; Cáceres, 2014; Giarracca & Teubal, 2001; Wald, 2015a) that political-economic transformations act as the original stressors leading to class mobilization and formation. A primary objective of this chapter is therefore to understand how neoliberalism restructures Argentina's agriculture and shapes agrarian class structures. The analysis of agrarian class structures will help to assess the ways in which class grievances triggered by neoliberal restructuring set the contextual environment for social mobilization conducive to agrarian class formation.

The neoliberalization of agriculture is assessed based on food regime analysis. In agrarian studies, food regime analysis has consolidated its status as the most durable and systematic analytical tool for the study of the structural aspects of agrarian orders and mobilization (Buttel, 2001; Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Pechlaner & Gerardo, 2008). The term "food regime" is coined to denote relatively stable arrangements on temporally and geographically specific institutional structures, norms, and unwritten rules around agriculture and food in global political economy. Food regimes set the structural background for historically and geographically determined forms of capital accumulation, production and consumption in the agri-food sector (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989; Friedmann, 2005; McMichael, 1995, 2005, 2009). The current food regime (1980s onwards) is named as the corporate, or neoliberal food regime. It is characterized by the expansion of corporate power, further monopolization, and capitalist expansion in agriculture. This regime is consolidated via neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programs, free trade agreements, and the involvement of the World Trade Organization (Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; McMichael, 2005, 2009). As one of the founders of the school of food regime analysis, Philip McMichael contends that such paradigmatic change helped shift the focus of food security from the nation-state to the world market (McMichael, 2005, 2009).

Critiquing McMichael's over-emphasis on the role of corporations in the current food regime, Gerardo Otero and colleagues argue that the defining characteristic of the

contemporary food regime is its neoliberal character, hence the naming it “neoliberal” rather than “corporate” food regime” (Otero, 2012; Otero et al., 2015; Pechlaner & Otero, 2008, 2010). According to Otero, McMichael’s globalist portrayal of the current food regime centered on multinational corporations fails to deliver a sophisticated analysis of how regime integration is mediated by nation-states and class struggles from the ground-up (Otero, 2004, 2011). Within this framework, Otero goes on to argue that the neoliberal food regime rests on three dynamic pillars. Whereas biotechnology is its central technological form, agribusiness multinationals constitute the driving economic agents. States are the promoters of neoregulation rather than “deregulation” (Otero, Pechlaner & Gürcan, 2013, p. 272), i.e. “a series of international agreements and national legislation that impose the neoliberal agenda” (Otero, 2012, p. 284). This conceptualization allows us to pay equal attention to the role of the state in shaping institutional structures, norms, and unwritten rules of global agriculture that enable corporations to become preeminent economic actors. Consistent with their neoliberal content, the institutional components of the neoliberal food regime rely on geographically “variegated” (Peck & Theodore, 2012) strategies to liberalize agriculture, consolidate intellectual property rights and provide a legal framework that favors agribusiness multinationals.

Therefore, this theoretical framework is expected to provide a methodological guideline that shapes the research questions here: What is the geographically variegated, or peculiar character of Argentine agriculture, and how does it influence agrarian class structures? How do biotechnological restructuring and the state’s neoregulation of biotechnology and agribusinesses affect the agricultural sector and agrarian class structures in Argentina? Within this framework, I argue that the peculiarity of agrarian neoliberalism in Argentina lies in the state’s promotion and regulation of an export-oriented model of agrarian development centered on soy monoculture. What makes the Argentine case even more interesting is that neoregulatory practices and their effects on class structures both assume a paradoxical character. On the one hand, Argentina seems to defy the global intellectual property regime and prioritize pro-poor redistributive policies. On the other hand, state intervention results in the furthering of soy monoculture and rural dispossession. Overall, this paradoxical situation points to the nationally “variegated” (Peck & Theodore, 2012) nature of the neoliberal food regime within the confines of capitalist political economy. Furthermore, the centrality of the Argentine state’s regulation of the agricultural sector seems to invalidate the discourse

on the so-called “corporate globalization” and “deregulation”, which also applies to McMichael’s naming of “corporate food regime”. As regards agrarian class restructuring, the soy expansion in Santiago del Estero and north Córdoba seems to have generated social homogenization among a dispossessed majority of the peasantry, which has positively impacted structural class capacities conducive to social mobilization. This runs counter to Henry Bernstein’s portrayal of socioeconomic heterogeneity as the general rule for agrarian class structures. With reference to dispossessed peasantry, dispossession here does not only refer to the disappearance of small and medium size farming units, but it also includes agrarian communities’ inability to maintain self-subsistence and access natural resources such as land and native forests.

Special mention is to be made as to the fact that geographical peculiarities cannot be conceived outside the context of its interactions with global processes. Although Argentina shows its own peculiarities as to the state regulation of export-centered soy monoculture, the Argentine case itself cannot be conceived outside of a larger context that affects the entire Latin American political economy, namely the phenomenon of new extractivism. New extractivism has taken advantage of rising global primary commodity prices since the 2000s to the benefit of state taxation and multinational corporations and at the expense of intensifying social conflicts (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) data indicate that global primary commodity prices rose by over 83% in the period 2005-2013 alone. Worthy of notice is that soybeans, soybean meal and soybean oil exports amount to 6.8% of global exports between 2002 and 2004, which stands as the most exported single edible commodity after fish (IMF, 2014).

The first section of this chapter starts with an overview of the neoliberalization of the Argentine economy. Then, it shifts the focus to the implications of neoliberalism for the agri-food sector. The main focus is on Argentina’s integration into the neoliberal food regime with respect to the two of its three dynamic pillars, namely: how “neoregulation” applies to the “biotechnological” component of Argentina’s neoliberal regime insertion through transgenic soy monoculture. The second section deals with the state’s neoregulation of agribusiness activities as well as its implications for agrarian class structures and welfare policies. Finally, the third section deepens the analysis of how the neoliberal regime insertion affects class structures by enabling a favorable environment for agrarian mobilization with special reference to the destructive effects of transgenic soy monoculture on declining small-scale agriculture and rural public health.

Neoliberalism, Transgenic “Soyization” and State Neoregulation

Argentina is one of the first countries that initiated trade liberalization, from as early as the 1970s. However, large-scale liberalizations did not start until the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. By 1989 Argentina liberalized 60% of the tariff lines within the context of the emerging *Mercado Común del Sur* (Common Market of the South, or MERCOSUR) integration (Ernst, 2005). The multilateral integration of Argentina into the world economy officially started in 1991 with the signing of Deregulation Decree and the Law of Convertibility by the President Carlos Menem. The pegging of the Argentine peso to the US dollar to overcome hyperinflation encouraged foreign investment and cheapened imports, while increasing the price of Argentine goods (Cooney, 2007, p. 18). Imports “grew from 4 to 8 billion in the early 1990s to over 30 billion by 1997-1998” so as to generate a trade deficit of over \$18 billion (Cooney, 2007, p. 21). This situation went hand in hand with massive deindustrialization and the disappearance of the small and medium-size industry, which found its expression in a decline of 30.9% in the share of manufacturing to the GDP between 1989 and 1998 (Cooney, 2007; Teubal, 2004). By the end of 1998, the share of foreign banks in the total assets of the banking system reached 53%. Similarly, foreign firms bought 426 Argentine firms and came to control over half of the assets of the largest 1000 companies in Argentina (Teubal, 2004, p. 184).

In the meantime, the Menem administration abolished state subsidies and purchases for local industries, increased indirect taxes on consumption, and privatized more than 30 public enterprises:

Privatization reached such diverse areas as telephones and communications, airline companies, petrochemicals, petroleum, about 10,000 km of highways, railways and other transport systems, natural gas distribution, electricity, water, iron and steel industries, coal, a series of firms in the defense area, hydroelectric dams and other varied items such as television channels, hotels, port facilities, silos and horse-racing stadia (Teubal, 2004, p. 181).

The World Bank data – which only lists privatization transactions of at least US\$1 million – indicates that Argentina’s privatizations in the period 1988-2003 have generated a revenue of more than \$44 billion for a total of 177 sales in the area of finance, infrastructure, services, energy and manufacturing (World Bank, 2014).

Argentina was thus presented as the poster child of neoliberal reforms by the IMF and World Bank. However, Argentina's success in neoliberal transformation did not prevent its "economy [from shrinking] by 20 percent [between 1998 and 2002], taking real GDP to levels last recorded in 1992-1993" (Carranza, 2005, p. 66). As a result, unemployment levels rose from 6.5% in 1991 to 20% in 2002 along with 5.2 million people living under the poverty line, which corresponded to almost 14% of Argentina's population (Abeles, 2001; Carranza, 2005, p. 66).

Unemployment was not the only factor that deteriorated labor relations. Argentina's neoliberal restructuring also brought about a massive transformation through the flexibilization of labor-market relations and the partial privatization of social security in 1994. As a result, precarious/informal employment soared from 26.7% in 1990 to 40% of total employment by 2000 (Féliz, 2012; Patroni, 2011, p. 269). In 2003, informal employment had a prevalence of 49% (Bertranou, Casanova & Sarabia, 2013).

Indeed, all of these changes went hand in hand with increasing levels of poverty and inequality. There has been a record increase in poverty levels, which is reflected in the rise of Argentina's Gini coefficient of the poverty gap ratios (GCPGRs) from 0.67 to as high as 5.59 in the period 1991-2002 (CEPAL, 2018). Higher GCPGRs indicate increased levels of poverty for people with incomes below \$1.9 a day. Similarly, Argentina's GINI levels rose from 46.8 to 53.8 in the same period. This index is a measure of the extent to which the distribution of income is unequally distributed. Inequality increases from 0 to 100 in the spectrum of the Index, with zero indicating full equality and 100 total concentration of income (World Bank, 2017).

The neoliberalization of Argentina's economy has had severe ramifications for the agri-food sector. In particular, ex-President Carlos Menem's decision of "deregulation" and "convertibility" in 1991 represents a milestone in the globalization of Argentina's agriculture. Successively, Argentina abolished its key regulatory institutions that were responsible for supervising agricultural trade, guaranteeing minimum prices and providing price supports, including the National Grain Board (*Junta Nacional de Granos*) and National Meat Board (*Junta Nacional de Carnes*) and National Sugar Board (*Dirección Nacional del Azúcar*). This kind of decisions allowed for the removal of barriers to trade liberalization and the expansion of foreign agribusiness (Lence, 2010, p. 420). As such, neoliberal policy changes led to "the abolition of quantitative restrictions and the reduction of tariffs on imports of inputs (e.g., fertilizers, herbicides, machinery, and irrigation equipment), the removal of export taxes, the elimination of commodity

boards, a significant reduction of ... red tape in the marketing channel (e.g., transportation and ports), and the elimination of tax distortions in fuels” (Lence, 2010, p. 420). These changes added to the disappearance of 83 public agricultural holdings in the period 1988 to 2002 (INDEC, 1988, 2002).

As regards the integration of Argentina’s agriculture into the neoliberal food regime, the FAO data confirm the spectacular rise in the use of fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides. Between 1990 and 2002, fertilizer consumption skyrocketed from 165,500 to 739,526 tons, which points to an increase of about 347%. The nitrogen fertilizer consumption in nutrients soared from 534,592 to 973,217 tons between 2002 and 2012, with an increase of 82%. Insecticides and herbicides consumption has assumed a similar trend. It rose respectively from 3,503 and 17,533 tons in 1993 to 7,964 and 47,355 tons in 1998, to 23,240 and 2123,37 tons in 2011. This means that the increase in insecticide use amounts to 127% by 1998 and 563% by 2011, whereas the trends for herbicides are recorded as 170% and 1111% for the same period (FAO, 2014).

Under Menem’s rule, agribusiness focused its activities on export-oriented soy production and the vegetable oil industry. This focus was mostly due to the global importance of soy (and vegetable oils) as a key ingredient or raw material for processed food, animal feed and alternative, so-called, biofuel (Richardson, 2009, p. 236). Long-term demand for processed food, meat and fuel consumption led Menem’s administration to establish a policy environment that facilitated soy and vegetable oil exports. In Argentina, the increasing salience of soy monoculture throughout the 1990s and 2000s is branded as *sojización* (soyization). In Argentina’s vernacular terminology, moreover, soyization is closely associated with the *expansión de la frontera agropecuaria* (expansion of the agricultural frontier), which indicates the expansion of monocultural practices (of such crops as soy, sorghum and kidney beans) from the fertile Pampas to more arid northern regions (i.e. the process called *pampeanización*) thanks to recent biotechnological advances. In turn, the intensification of land and resource conflicts as well as the escalation of resource conflicts is strongly attributed to the re-appreciation of land value with the expansion of the agricultural frontier towards northern regions (Arzeno et al., 2013, p. 67).

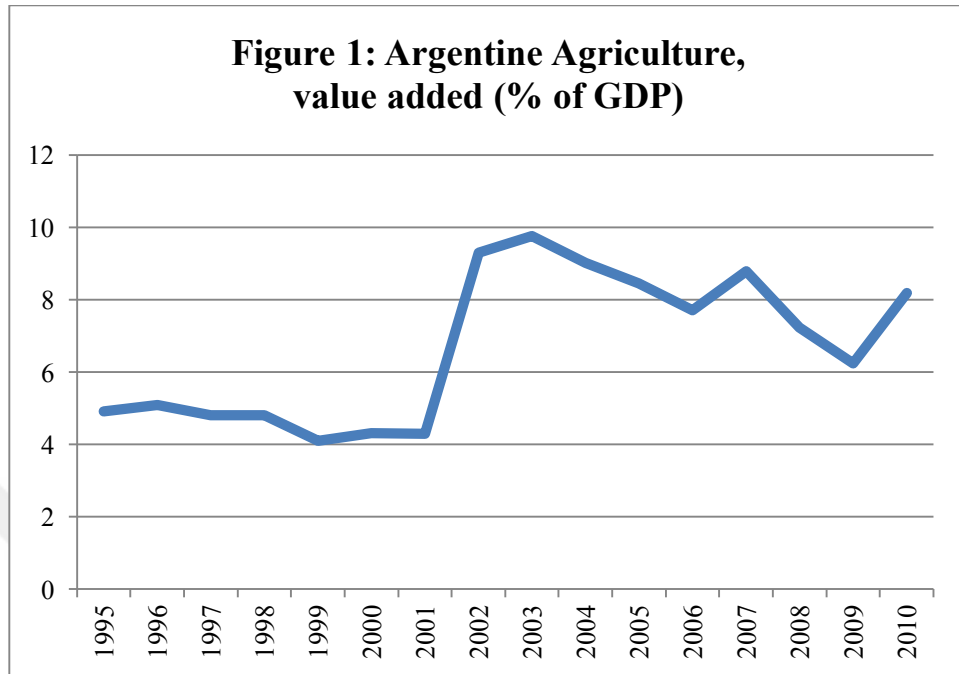
The government approval of the commercial use of Monsanto’s Roundup Ready (RR) soybeans in 1996 was a turning point of great importance in Argentina’s history of integration into the neoliberal food regime. Used with seeding machinery, RR soybeans

are genetically designed to resist the popular herbicide glyphosate with boosted productivity and cost reduction levels through mechanized agriculture. Normally, the RR soybean patent does not permit the use of transgenic seeds more than a year. Despite Monsanto's pressure, the Argentine legal environment encourages the non-patented use of transgenic seeds, having ratified UPOV 78 (1978 Convention of the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants), which allows farmers to save seeds to plant in the next season.

Argentina's biotechnological regulatory framework was further consolidated with the enactment of the Law 26.270 (Promotion of the Development and Production of Modern Biotechnology), which enables funding incentives in the area of biotechnology. Funds are provided by the government-led initiatives of the *Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* (National Secretariat of Science and Technology, or SNCT), *Fondo Tecnológico Argentino* (Technological Fund of Argentina, FTA), and *Fondo Argentino Sectorial* (Sectorial Fund of Argentina, or FAS). The state's incentives for agribusiness also extend to accelerated depreciation for income tax purposes and early reimbursement of VAT (PwC, 2011, p. 35; SDI, 2010, p. 3). Moreover, Argentina provides strong scientific support for agribusiness activities through a multitude of institutional bodies. Agribusiness-friendly institutions include more than 35 bioscience research institutes and associations, the leading representatives of which are comprised by the *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria* (National Agricultural Technology Institute, or INTA), *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial* (National Institute of Industrial Technology, or INTI), *Instituto Nacional de Vitivinicultura* (National Institute of Viticulture, or INV), *Asociación Argentina de Productores en Siembra Directa* (Direct Sowing Producers's Association of Argentina, or AAPRESID), *Asociación de la Cadena de la Soja de Argentina* (Association of the Soybean Chain of Argentina, or ACSOJA), *Asociación de Empresarios Agropecuarios* (Agricultural Businessmen's Association, AACREA), *Asociación Maíz Argentino* (Argentine Maize Association, or MAIZAR), *Asociación Argentina de Grasas y Aceites* (Fats and Oils Association of Argentine, ASAGA), *Profesionales Especializados en Cultivo de Soja* (Specialized Soybean Cultivation Professionals, or PROSOJA), and *Cámara Argentina de Biocombustibles* (Argentine Chamber of Biofuels, or CARBIO) (Hilbert & Galligani, 2014, p. 132; PwC, 2011; SDI, 2010). Besides contributing to research, these institutions assume an active role in encouraging and informing about the so-called benefits of soy monoculture through publications, workshops, and technical assistance. A study by the Price

Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) – the world’s second largest consulting firm – presents the availability of these institutions as the greatest opportunity for agribusiness investments, all despite the threat of increasing government intervention, high taxes, and strict land-use regulations (PwC, 2011). Indeed, such strong institutional and infrastructural support is complemented by state projects and strategies in the agri-food area. The policy document entitled Agri-Food and Agribusiness Strategic Plan (*Plan Estratégico Agroalimentario y Agroindustrial 2010–2020*, PEAA), for example, highlights the centrality of productivist and export-oriented agro-industrial practices. This goes parallel with the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Biotechnology, 2005-2015, prepared by the Office of Biotechnology of the Secretary of Agriculture (Gras & Hernández, 2014; Leguizamón, 2014; Newell, 2009).

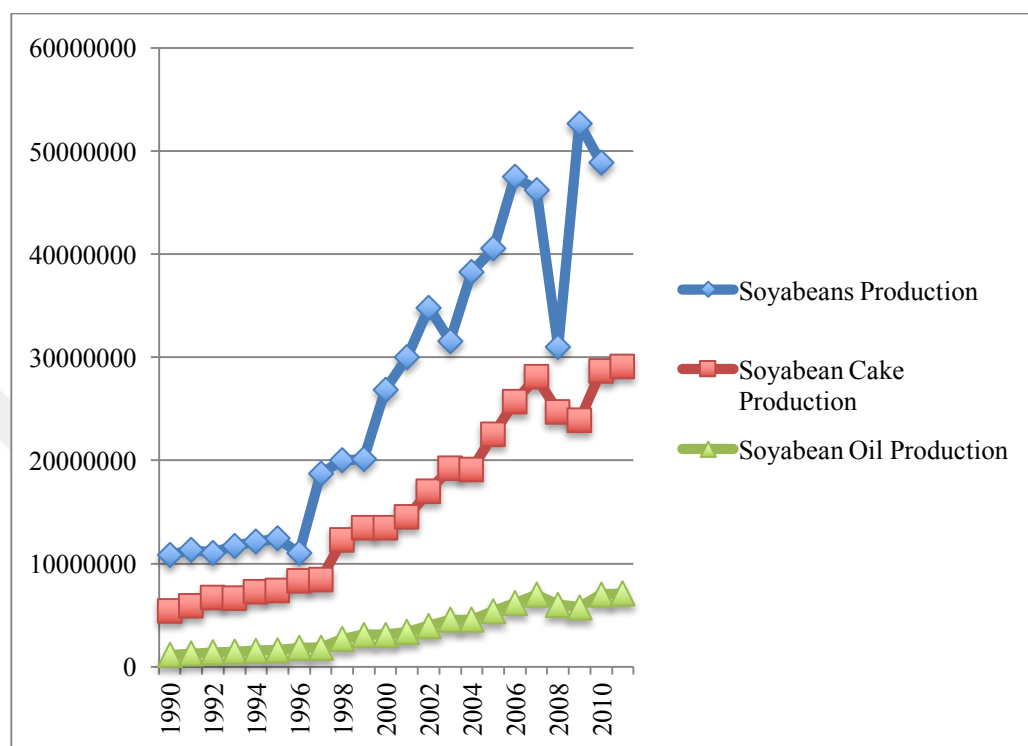
Thanks to this enabling environment, 95% of Argentina’s soy production shifted to transgenic agriculture by the end of the 1990s (Gras & Hernández, 2014, p. 343). This shift contributed to the sextupling of Argentina’s agricultural gross product, with soy crops absorbing half of the total cultivated area by 2011 (Gras & Hernández, 2014, pp. 342-43). Figure 1 below presents a more detailed picture of how the biotechnological revolution of the 1990s has helped boost the contribution of agriculture to Argentina’s GDP. In 1995, the contribution of agriculture to GDP was only 5.78%, which rose to almost 11% in 2002 (World Bank, 2017). Ultimately, Argentina has become the “second-largest grower of genetically modified crops” thanks to the expansion of transgenic production in soy and corn by 99% and 83% by 2010 (Cáceres, 2014, p. 9).



Source: World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS>

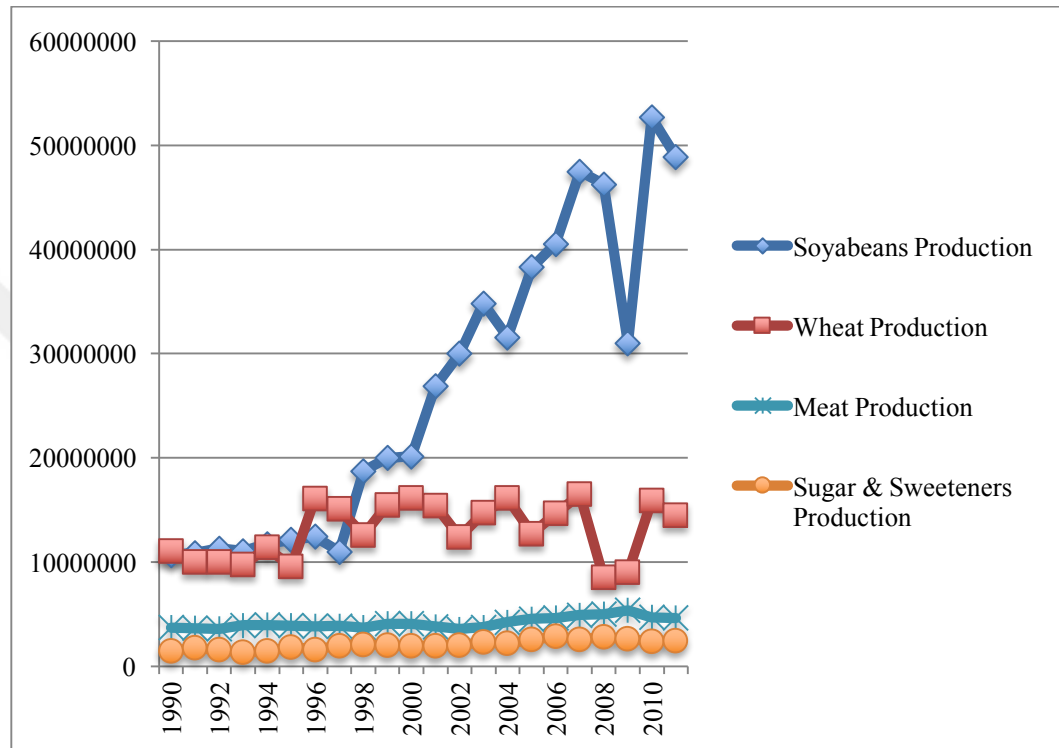
Significant upward trends in soy-related production and exports speak for themselves as to the contribution of Argentina's "transgenic revolution" to agricultural GDP. As for production levels, Figure 2 reveals that soybeans, soybean cake and soybean oil production were boosted by more than 356%, 441% and 521%, respectively (FAO, 2014):

Figure 2: Soybeans, Soybean Cake and Soybean Oil Production in Tonnes (1990-2011), <http://faostat.fao.org/site/291/default.aspx>



Argentina's soy boom can also be assessed by taking a comparative look at the extent to which soybeans production by far exceeds the production of the crops that make up the largest percentage contributions to average daily per capita caloric food intake in the country (FAO, 2014; Figure 3):

Figure 3: Production Levels, in Tonnes (Soybeans versus crops that make up the largest percentage contributions to average daily per capita caloric food intake), <http://faostat.fao.org/site/291/default.aspx>



As Neal P. Richardson points out, 94% of the soybean oil and 99% of the soy meal production between 1989 and 2006 were oriented toward exports. In the 2000s, the export of unprocessed soybean, soybean oil and soy meal accounted for over 20% of Argentina's total export revenue (Richardson, 2009, pp. 236-237). In 2010-2011, 94% of the soy output was exported with a return of US\$17.6 billions, which accounted for 25.4% of total exports (Leguizamón, 2014, p. 152). According to the World Integrated Trade Solution Database (WITS) of the World Bank, soybean oilcake has remained among Argentina's top five export items throughout the 1993-2013 period with an over 760% increase of value. Soybean and soybean oil exports have also occupied the top five-export items list between 2002 and 2013. Export levels for soybeans, soybean cake and soybean oil rose by over 236%, 415% and 340%, respectively, as depicted in Figure 4 (FAO, 2014). Figure 5 reveals the extent to which soybean oilcake exports have risen in value. By 2013, the value of soybeans, soybean oil and soybean oil cake exports accounted for over 24% of Argentina's total export value (WITS Database, 2014).

Figure 4: Export Levels in Tonnes, <http://faostat.fao.org/site/291/default.aspx>

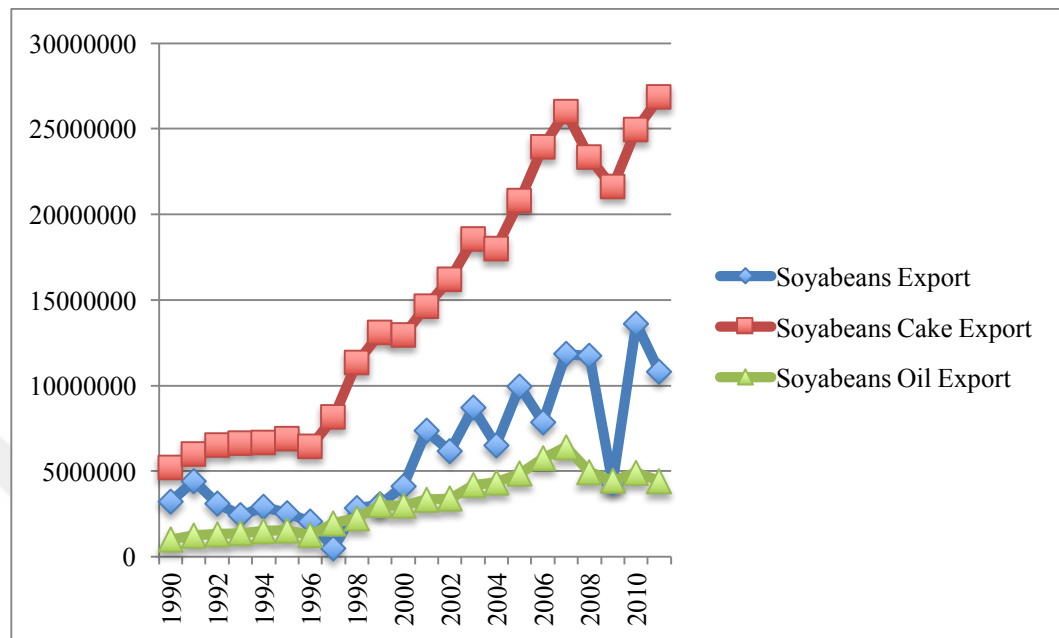
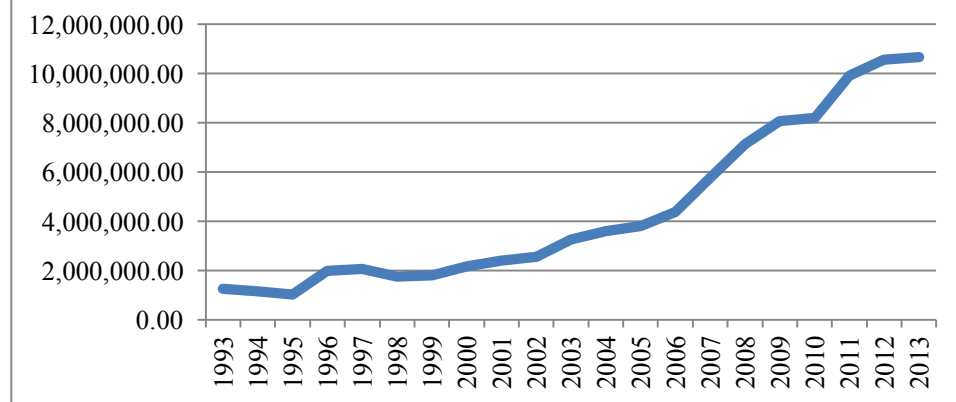


**Figure 5: Soybean Oilcake Exports
(US\$ Thousands)**

Source: The WITS Database



To conclude this section, the macro-level data reveal that the agri-food sector has taken its share from Argentina's neoliberal restructuring. This country's integration into the neoliberal agri-food regime appears to be characterized by a state-supported process towards transgenic soy monoculture. This radical transformation is strongly evidenced by Argentina's performance in agricultural production and trade. In turn, state neoregulation makes its determining effect felt in not only the provision of a strong

scientific infrastructure that supports the development of agribusinesses, but also in neoliberal institutional restructuring and neoregulation.

Agribusiness and Agrarian Class Restructuring under Neoregulation

The previous section mostly addressed neoregulation with respect to the biotechnology component of the neoliberal food regime. The present section explores neoregulatory processes as they apply to the agribusiness and class components of Argentina's neoliberal regime insertion. Overall, I argue that the globalization of Argentine agriculture has deeply altered class structures in the countryside. I thus examine agrarian class restructuring in terms of increasing capital concentration as well as rural unemployment and dispossession. Under a supportive policy regime, Argentina's land area occupied by soy increased from 6 million hectares in 1995-1996 to 18.9 million hectares in 2010-2011 with an output of 52.7 million tons (Leguizamón, 2014, pp. 152, 154). These data are indicative of how transgenic soy monoculture came to invade the central provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Córdoba and La Pampa. Argentina's central provinces are known for their productive land, in which 80% of soy production is concentrated. Meanwhile, soy monoculture soon expanded to the North of the country, and invaded Santiago del Estero, Chaco and Salta. The rapid expansion of the agricultural frontier ended up appreciating land values and further luring investors with the promise of big returns from speculative investments. As Figure 6 reveals, total soy cultivated land area grew by over 150% between 1988 and 2002. Expansion levels reached 548% in the Province of Santiago del Estero, whereas the Province of Córdoba's performance was closer to the national expansion rate with 148% (INDEC, 1988, 2002, 2008; Figure 7 and 8):

Figure 6

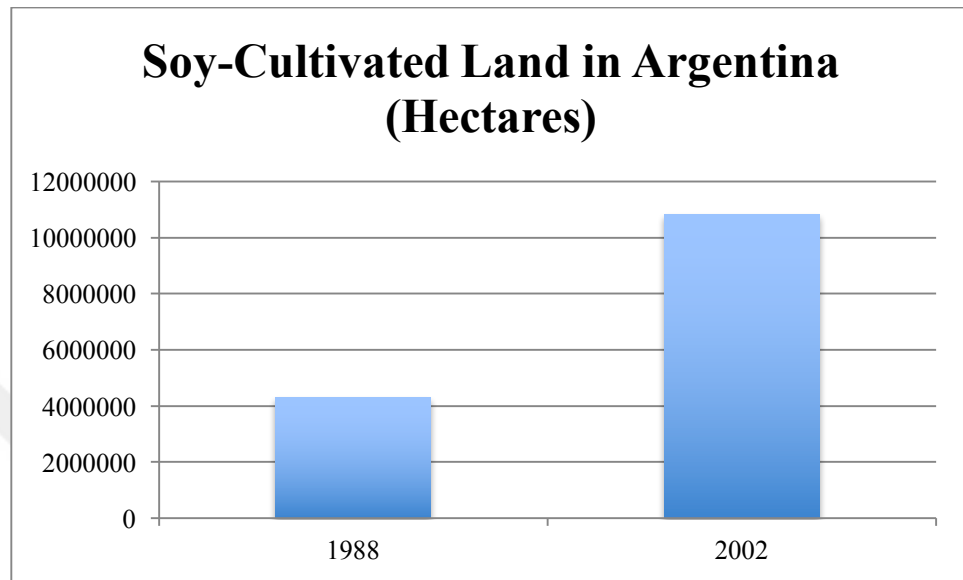


Figure 7

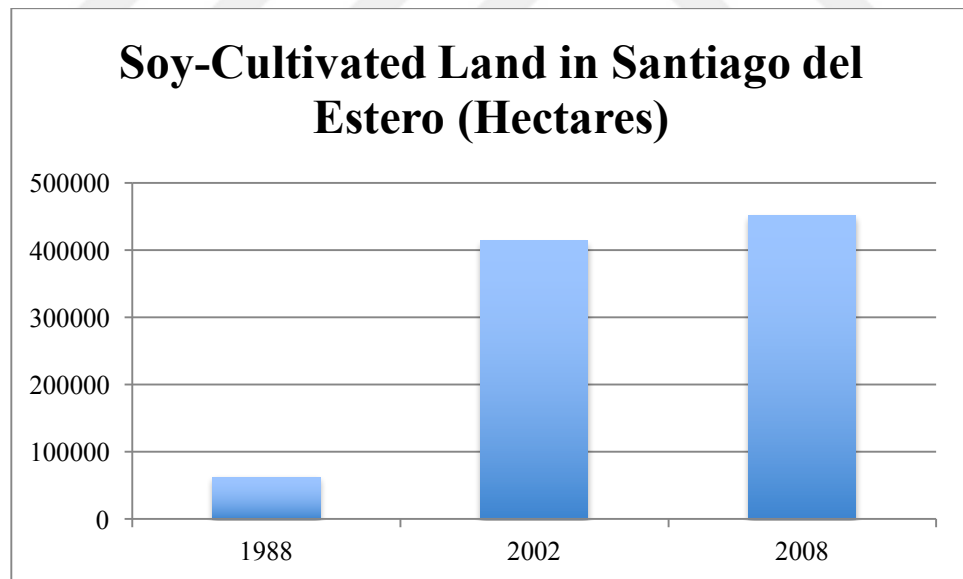
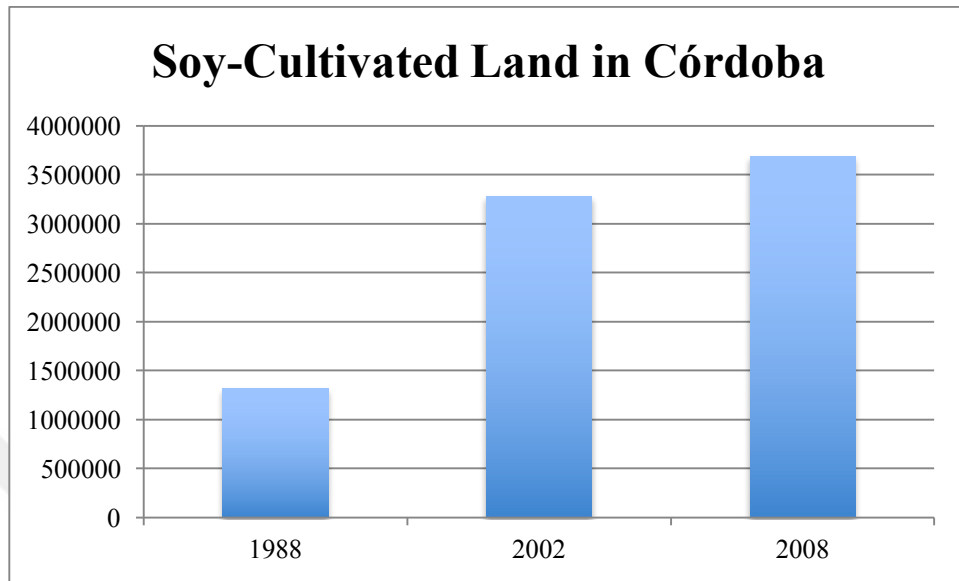


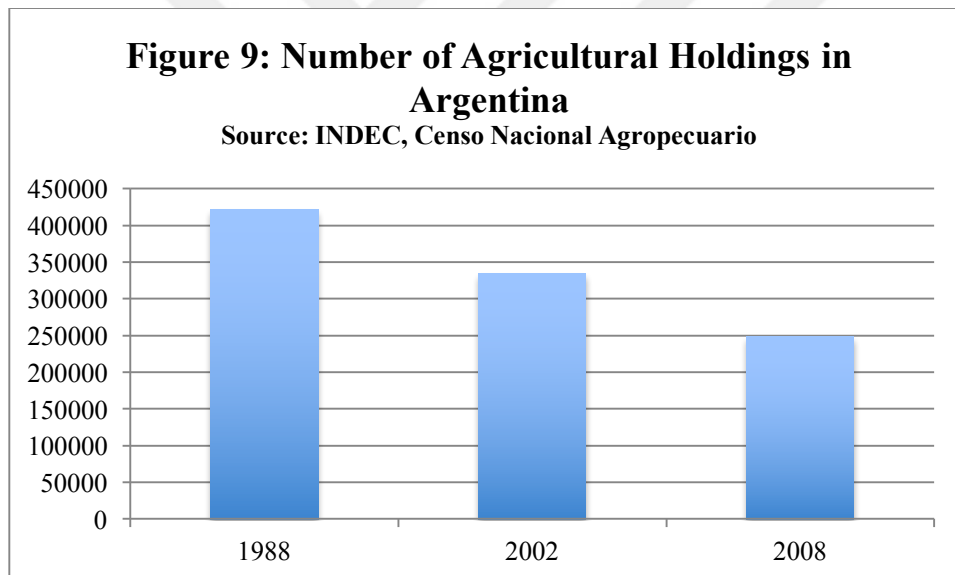
Figure 8



Indeed, the expansion of transgenic soy agriculture is not only a state-led phenomenon. It expanded from the ground-up thanks to strong initiatives by Argentina's local rural bourgeoisie, particularly the Argentine No Till Farmers Association (*Asociación Argentina de Productores en Siembra Directa*, or AAPRESID). For example, AAPRESID – which gathers large- and middle-scale farmers – forged close relationships with the media and academic world in order to promote biotechnology, and “established [strong partnerships]... with multinational firms, multilateral institutions, biotech associations, and international and national research centres” (Gras & Hernández, 2016, p. 679). Such organizations serve to develop networks of local and multinational firms, global financial institutions, dominant media actors and scholars and national and international institutions that do not only consolidate the hegemony of biotechnology, propagate a strong business model and allow for innovative technology transfer, but also create value chains (Gras & Hernández, 2016).

In the meantime, it is relevant to note that the territorial expansion of transgenic soy monoculture went hand in hand with sectoral concentration, as reflected in the fact that “out of around 73,000 soy farmers, 6 per cent are responsible for 54 per cent of the total soybean production” (Gras & Hernández, 2016, p. 678). There are also more specific data to support capital concentration in the agri-food sector. The five most important oilseed industries increased their share of exports from 38.7% to 57.9% between 1990 and 1998, whereas the share of top-five soy exporters skyrocketed to

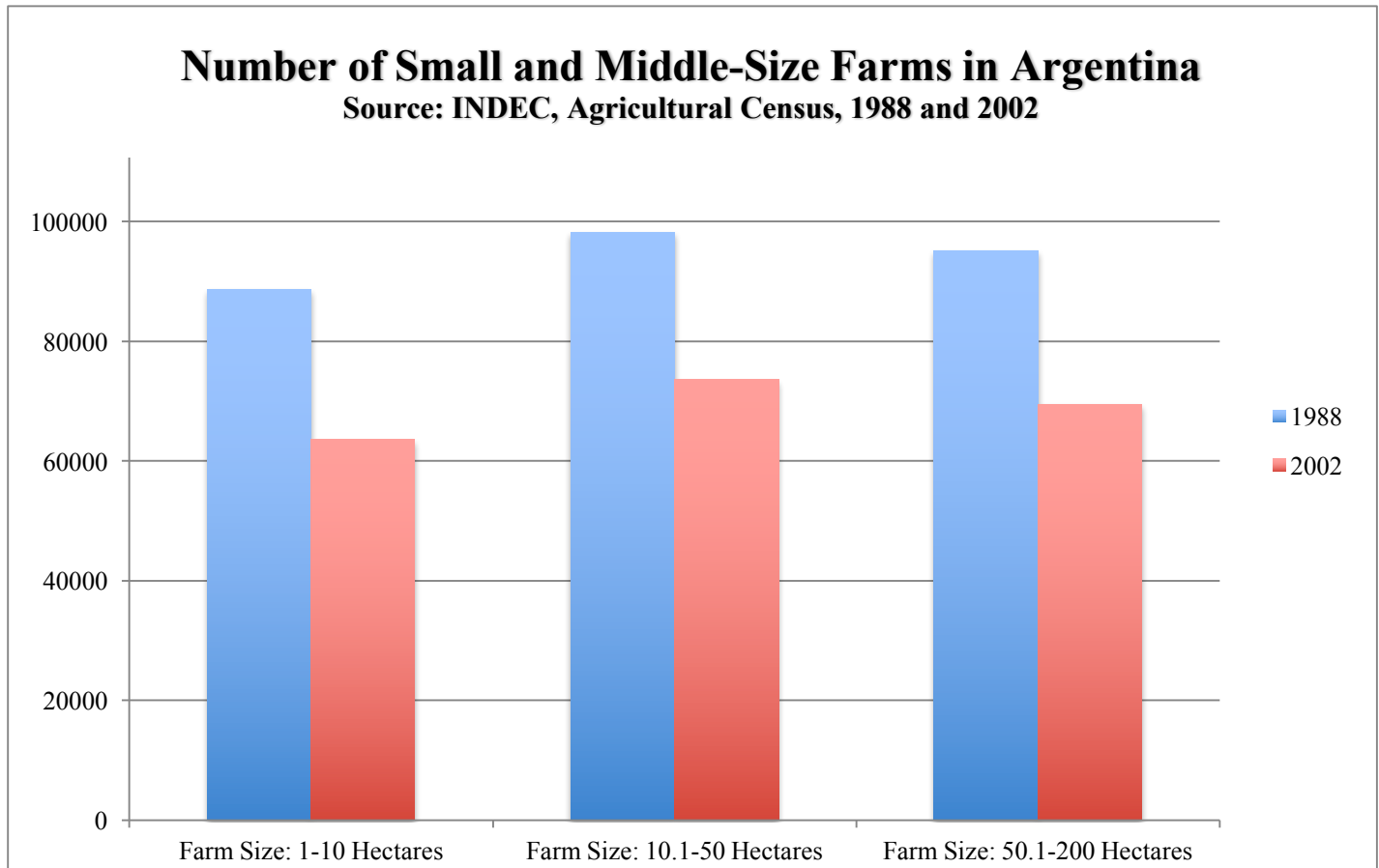
80% by 2002. Similarly, Cargill, Bunge, Nidera, Vicentín, Dreyfus, Pecom-Agra and ADM came to control 60% of cereal exports (Teubal, 2004, pp. 183-184). Capital concentration found its counterpart in the shrinking of the small farming sector, in consequence of which the average size of farms mounted by 25% between 1988 and 2002 (Gras & Hernández, 2014, p. 343). Not only did the rural population decrease by 16% between 1990 and 2013 (World Bank, 2017), but also the total number of agricultural holdings fell by more than 20% (a reduction of 87,688) in the period 1988 to 2002 and 25% (a reduction of 85,511) in the period 2002 to 2008 (See Figure 9). For the Province of Córdoba, a major soy center of the country, the same rate regarding the number of agricultural holdings went up to 36% between 1988 and 2002 (INDEC, 1988, 2002, 2008):



Not surprisingly, concentration of the agri-food sector struck a fatal blow to small and medium size farms (See Figure 10). Holdings of 1 to 10 hectares saw a decrease of over 28% throughout the country between 1988 and 2002. It is striking to observe that the provinces of Santiago del Estero –one of the poorest provinces– and Córdoba felt the effects of concentration with a decrease rate of over 42% and 41% in holdings of 1 to 5 hectares. The rate of decrease in holdings of 5.1 to 10 hectares is 28% and 45% for Santiago del Estero and Córdoba. On the other hand, agricultural holdings of 200 to 500 hectares registered a growth of over 12% in Santiago del Estero and 49% in Córdoba (INDEC, 1988, 2002). The nation-wide decline in holdings of 10.1 to 50 and 50.1 to 200 hectares was 25% and 27% for the same time period. Disappearance of small and

medium size farms went hand in hand with expanding rates of large size farms, which was recorded as 5%, 4% and 1.3% for holdings of 500.1 to 2500, 2500.1 to 10,000 and over 20,000 hectares, respectively (INDEC, 1988, 2002).

Figure 10



Certainly, the effects of the disappearance of agricultural holdings on rural class structures can also be observed in the decreasing number of persons who worked or resided in agricultural holdings between 1988 and 2002 – the national census years for the agri-food sector. A reduction of 24% in agricultural employment points to the expansion of capital- and technology-intensive agricultural practices and decreasing life chances in the countryside.

The reduction of native forests also contributes to decreasing life chances and polarizing class structures. Especially in Santiago del Estero, communities that associate themselves with indigeneity have developed a mythical sense of belonging to native forests (see Chapter 4), which are popularly known as *el monte*. Technically speaking,

monte indicates a particular geography of native forests that are concentrated in Salta, Catamarca, La Rioja, San Juan, Mendoza, San Luis, La Pampa, Buenos Aires, Neuquén, Río Negro and Chubut provinces. This geography is characterized by willow, locust, broom and creosote bush forests. Santiago del Estero's forests, however, belong to the *parque chaqueño* area, which is characterized by tall hardwoods known as *quebracho colorado* and *blanco* (Arzeno et al., 2013, pp. 112-113). Yet, *parque chaqueño* is often referred to as *monte* in the popular language.

In summary, neoliberal agricultural practices, particularly the soy boom target previously uncommodified areas like native forests to turn them into soy and maize fields, which in turn create popular discontent in the countryside. A vicious circle seems to have developed whereby Santiago del Estero's aridity, agricultural hardships and inherited socioeconomic disadvantages assume a more complicated form faced with the problems of deforestation and contamination due to monoculture, climate change, intensive exploitation for making firewood, and overgrazing due to the replacement of cattle by goat breeding (since goats can feed on any kind of available vegetation) (Busso & Fernández, 2018, pp. 266-267; Arzeno et al., 2013, pp. 112-113, 151).

Indeed, the land rush that eventually led to the destruction of native forests and eviction of peasants from their land was mainly due to biotechnological advances and heightening international soy prices by the end of the 1990s. Rising soy prices triggered the expansion of the soy border toward Santiago del Estero. In turn, innovations in genetic engineering along with further flexibilization of land management systems facilitated the practice of soy monoculture despite the unfavorable climate and soil conditions in Santiago del Estero (Goldfarb & Van der Haar, 2016, pp. 5-7). Consequently, between 1988 and 2002, Argentina's native forests were reduced by 7.6% (a reduction of more than 3 million hectares), whereas in Santiago del Estero this rate was as high as 16% (INDEC, 1988, 2002). Eventually, these developments had a profound effect on the class structure of dispossessed indigenous communities, the constituents of which chose either to migrate to urban areas or to stay and fight for their right to land. It would thus be fair to assume that soy-related rural dispossession contributed to the 116% growth in urban population between 1990 and 2010 (United Nations, 2014).

Paradoxically enough, the Argentine state's regulatory efforts that heavily promote soy exports and rural dispossession reflect a vested interest in maintaining and consolidating its welfare regime through export tax revenue. The same goes for

provincial and local governments, which greatly benefit from soy-related revenues and economic dynamism generated by agribusiness. The data obtained from the Federal Administration of Public Revenue (*Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos*, AFIP) help unveil the dramatic growth in the importance of total tax and export tax revenue under *kirchnerismo* (i.e. the political-economic orientation of the Kirchner governments, 2003-onwards) (AFIP, 2013; See Figure 11 and 12):

Figure 11

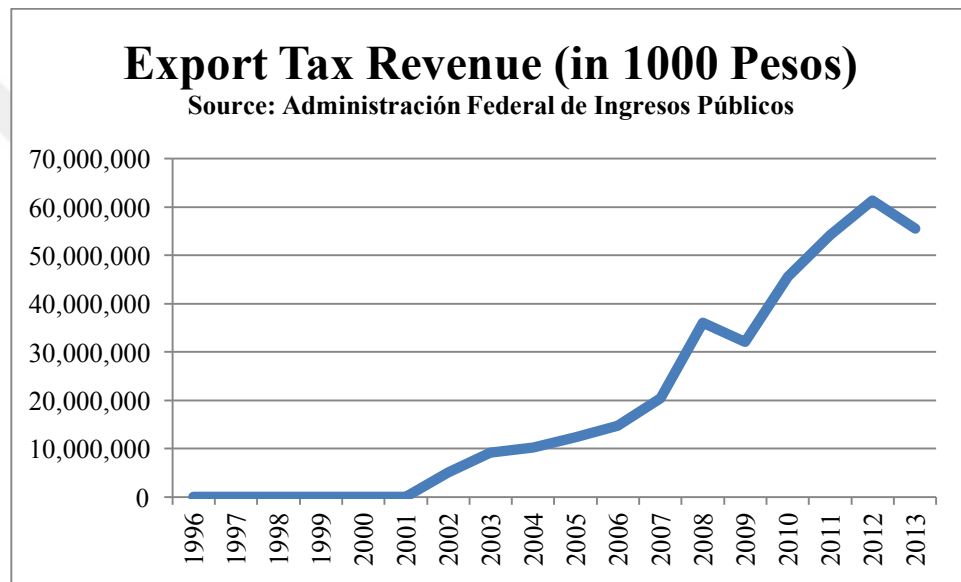
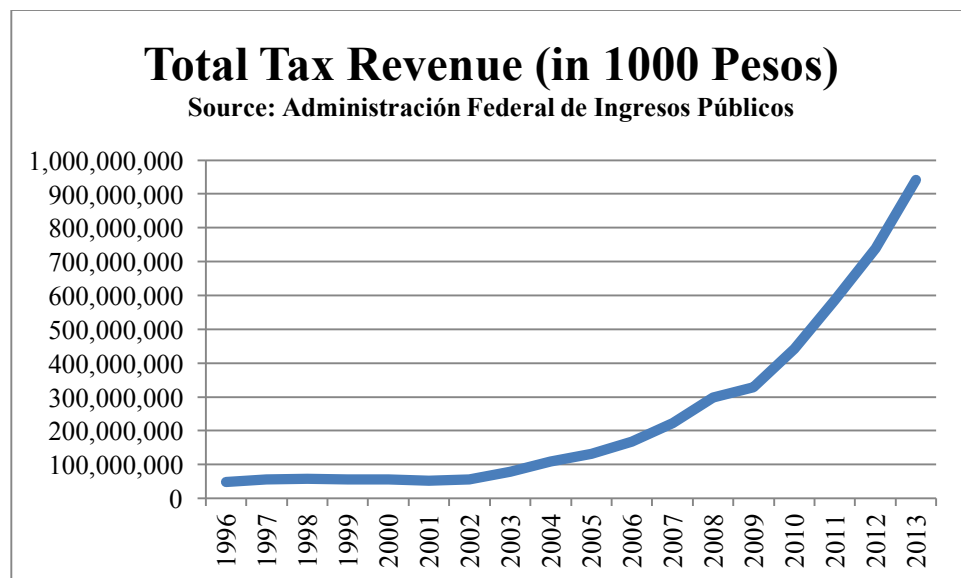


Figure 12



Agricultural – especially soy – trade accounts for a considerable proportion of Argentina's export tax revenue. It is estimated that taxes related to agricultural activities

constitute more than 40% of total collected taxes between 1997 and 2005 (Lence, 2010, p. 413). Tax revenues obtained from soy exports constitute a mainstay of Kirchners' redistributive welfare programs, which leads some observers to portray *kirchnerismo* as "export-oriented populism":

Export taxes comprised 8 to 11% of the Kirchner government's total tax receipts, and around two-thirds of this—nearly US\$2 billion in 2006—came from soy exports ... In January 2007, Kirchner increased export taxes on soy products to 24% on oil and meal and 27.5% on the export of the unprocessed oilseed. This additional soy-specific tax of 4% was forecast to generate an additional US\$400 million in fiscal revenue in 2007. The stated use of the new funds was the subsidy of food production for domestic consumption, including beef, dairy, chicken, and wheat flour, administered by ONCCA, the state's *Oficina Nacional de Control Comercial Agropecuario* [National Office of Agricultural Trade Control]. Through early October 2007, 30% of the funds released by ONCCA had gone to the poultry industry (Arg\$116 million), 30% to dairy, and 15% (Arg\$59 million) to wheat (Richardson, 2009, p. 242).

While maintaining a long-lasting alliance with key left-leaning peasant movements against large-scale soy producers, *kirchnerismo* paradoxically relied on soy-funded redistributive policies such as *Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados* (Program for Unemployed Male and Female Heads of Households), *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (Universal Child Allowance) and *Plan Familias* (Plan for Families) so as to further pacify rural protest (Leguizamón, 2014, p. 157; Newell, 2009, pp. 31-32). Indeed, from the point of view of the state, the expansion of the welfare apparatus was also intended to alleviate the negative effects of agrarian class polarization. Regarding the consequences of agrarian class polarization, however, it is no coincidence that MNCI – Argentina's largest peasant movement ever – appeared on the scene of history in the heat of the soy boom with an increasingly growing membership base. MNCI's size has already exceeded 20,000 peasant families with the escalation of local level struggles in more than 11 previously isolated provinces into national confrontations. However, it is noteworthy to point out that this movement does not articulate an *anti-kirchnerista* strategy despite confrontations with agribusiness and provincial governments. MNCI does not refrain from expressing its support to the government when it comes to the anti-*kirchnerismo* of agribusiness actors and many other Leftist organizations. In the meantime, provincial and local governments usually take the greatest share of rural protests against soy monoculture: they not only have vested interest in the continuation of this model of production, but also deal with protesters more closely – be it through dialogue or police repression – given the locality of most protests. On the other hand, in

most cases, the national government comes to maintain its appeal and good image thanks to national-level redistributive policies, even though it opts for export-oriented soy monoculture (See Chapter 5 for more details).

Finally, the contentious state of agrarian class structures has also spread to agribusiness. In response to the intensification of class polarization and mobilization among the Argentine peasantry through soyization, the Kirchner government sought to maintain popular support in the countryside by increasing export taxes in 2008. However, this decision was met with strong opposition on the part of large-scale soy producers organized in the *Sociedad Rural Argentina* (Rural Society of Argentina, or SRA), *Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas* (Rural Confederations Argentina, or CRA), *Federación Agraria Argentina* (Agrarian Federation Argentina, or FAA), and *Confederación Intercooperativa Agropecuaria* (Intercooperative Agricultural Confederation, or CIA). Although the four-months resistance of large producers could not reverse the export-led development model, it helped turn the soy issue into a pro-soy national debate by mobilizing private resources through the anti-*kirchnerista* corporate media and their Solidary Soy Fund (*Fondo Solidario de la Soja*) (Leguizamón, 2014; Richardson, 2009). The government's proposal to move the soy export taxation to 44% was ultimately reversed because of the successful mobilization of large-scale soy producers. However, the tax rate has remained as high as 35% as a major source of public revenue.

To finish with this section, the macro-level data indicate that state-supported transgenic agriculture has had serious implications for agrarian class structures in Argentina. The most visible implications of this phenomenon have been observed in the increase of capital concentration, rural unemployment and peasant dispossession. Despite the growth of the welfare apparatus in the Kirchners era, however, the advance of soy monoculture has been met with growing unrest in the countryside.

A Bottom-Up Approach to Argentina's Agrarian Class Restructuring: Peasant Voices from Santiago del Estero and Córdoba

An equally striking picture of how "soyization" impacts on agrarian class structures can be seen in changes to the livelihood of indigenous-peasant communities. Most rural

families affiliated with MOCASE-VC depend for their subsistence primarily on livestock breeding (mostly goat breeding) rather than farming. They generate small amounts of surplus by the sale of livestock and craft products such as goat cheese, regional marmalades, *empanadas* (salted or sweet pies made of flour, eggs, fat derived from pork, salt, water, and filled with onion and meat, or marmalade), etc. Rural subsistence economy and the reproduction of labor power in the countryside are undermined by heat and drought, combined with malnutrition-related health problems such as gout. These problems add to the commodification of land, evictions and the state's neglect of the primary needs of communities. To the extent that Argentina integrates with the global food regime and relies on soy exportation, land commodification is accelerating with increasing intensity and expands from the country's fertile Center Region (Córdoba, Santa Fe and Entre Ríos) to the North, even though the climate of northern provinces such as Santiago del Estero and north of Córdoba is not ideally suitable for soy production. Taking advantage of the poor land registration system and widespread illiteracy, agribusiness actors can easily seize the land with the support of local bureaucracy, politicians, and security forces. Many peasants choose not to resist this process and migrate to cities and small towns by selling their land for small sums in order to become a laborer in desperate pursuit of a "better life". On the one hand, land commodification leads to new forms of class solidarity among those who choose to remain in the countryside, sharing the same economic characteristics and cultural lifestyles. On the other hand, land commodification also breaks solidarity among certain rural residents and creates long lasting tensions between those who resist in the countryside and former rural residents who labor for agribusiness and local businesses, starting to see the resistance of the countryside as a potential threat to their livelihood in towns (MNCI/MCC, 2012b; MOCASE-VC/CLOC, n.d.; MNCI, 2012a).

Unlike the extra-provincial reach of MOCASE-VC as the founder and strongest constituent of MNCI, MCC's area of influence is limited to the northern area of the province, which bears significant similarities with the social and environmental fabric of Santiago del Estero. However, the *Cordobesa* class solidarity still assumes lower levels of intensity, partly because rural class structures are of a more differentiated composition due to the stronger domination of soy production and an improved, but differentiated access to resources including water, electricity, and brick houses (instead of traditional mud-made *ranchos*). To a certain extent, the divergent composition of class structures between the two provinces can provide a partial explanation as to why MOCASE-VC

preceded MCC as an emerging rural class organization. This difference is evocative of not only Henry Bernstein's argument on the heterogeneity of agrarian class structure, but also of García-López and Arizpe's research, which attributes Argentine peasant movements' inability to build a class alliance due to insurmountable differences between soy growing middle-sized farmers of the Pampa region and poor peasantry in other regions (García-López & Arizpe, 2010).

As depicted in the previous section, the disappearance of native forests and extensive use of chemicals for transgenic agriculture have not only badly affected the livelihood of peasant communities, but they also severely undermined their life space defined in terms of their self-identification with their indigenous past. Regarding the impact of the disappearance of native forests on peasant livelihoods in Santiago del Estero and north Córdoba, both areas share similar climatic and environmental traits, especially when it comes to their arid climate with no more than 400-500 mm of rainfall per year and semi-deserted soil covered with steppes. The Native forests of the region are categorized under "xerophilous forests", which means that their vegetation cover is adaptable to dry and hot environments. However, the replacement of native forests by extensively sprayed soy fields does nothing but exacerbate the natural inclination of the region's soil toward desertification and diminish soil productivity. Ultimately, this situation contributes to the marginalization of class structures among dispossessed indigenous-peasant communities, which mostly rely on subsistence economies sustained by native forests. Native forests are a natural source of animal feed (especially goat and cattle) and human sustenance obtained from fruits, vegetables, medicinal plants and uncontaminated water. The destruction of native forests and its impact on food sovereignty under the soy expansion are clearly depicted by Quico of MOCASE-VC's Lote 5 community:

Everywhere is [soy-]sown now. Our houses are encircled by sown fields.... I remember that here everywhere was *monte*, 20 years ago. Today, everywhere is *pampa* (desert)... They [agribusinesses] are only interested in sowing. Normally, if you sowed something, you would also sow some crops for food sovereignty. But no, they don't do that. What they do instead is to sow foreign products [*productos extranjeros* such as soy] (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Characteristically, rural populations of Santiago del Estero and north Córdoba rely on subsistence economy, which also included subsistence farming. However, soy monoculture and changing climate conditions have made agriculture impracticable because of extensive use of agrochemicals and drought, which destroyed the harvest

and contaminated soil and water resources. In the face of declining agriculture and other environmental stressors, indigenous-peasant populations increased their reliance on goat feeding, coal making and wood trade, all sustained thanks to their access to native forests. Goat breeding has become a primary activity in the countryside, also for its low-cost returns. Goats are mostly used for self-subsistence, but they are sold in the market place if they are fat. There seem to be two main reasons for the prevalence of goat breeding. First of all, goat feeding is not as demanding, time-consuming and risky as agriculture. Secondly, as compared to cattle species, goats are much easier to breed. For example, a cow consumes a daily average of 53 liters of water, consumes grass, breeds once a year, delivers 3 liters of milk, and is less resistant to the drought. On the other hand, a goat consumes a daily average of 48 liters of water, can only consume tender branches, breeds year-round, delivers 4 liters of milk, is more resistant to the drought, and its value is higher than that of a cow. As such, goat breeding stands as a more cost- and labor-effective activity for resource-poor peasants. Aside from goat breeding, indigenous-peasant populations engage in lower levels of cattle, sheep, chicken and pig breeding, mainly for self-consumption purposes (MNCI/MCC, 2012b, pp. 79-80; MOCASE-VC/CLOC, n.d.; MNCI/MCC, 2012a).

Jorge and Carmen of MCC's UCAN central observe that climate change and the decreasing frequency of rainfall events have dealt a devastating blow to agriculture and livestock breeding. Jorge points out that climate has considerably changed in the last 30 years to a point where farming became impossible:

We used to sow and harvest corn, squash, watermelon, and with that, we had enough to feed our animals over the year, because it used to rain from October until February... It used to rain every 10 days so that we were able to plant and harvest over 30 years ago, but we cannot do that anymore because the rains have disappeared, as the rain season has moved... It starts earlier sometimes, but mostly in the end of October and November, and afterwards it rains very little... And also, if the humidity does not stop you, the sun is much stronger now. You feel the sun, the heat, stronger than before, and ... the plants eventually dry. The climate has completely changed in 30 years (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Carmen confirms Jorge's observations with reference to 2013's drought during which her community lost several animals and faced enormous difficulties in feeding themselves while trying to feed their animals too:

For example, this past year there were many droughts. It only started to rain in the past 9 months... The animals were dying, because sometimes we had a little bit of food or we were able to buy food, but we did not have water; and other times, we had water, but we could not have food... How

could you buy ... corn, if it costs 50 pesos per bag, and sometimes 80 pesos or more. It's pretty ugly (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

The perceived effects of climate change are not the sole reason for increasing material grievances in the countryside. Pablo of MOCASE-VC complains:

Today, our peasant production is threatened by transgenic agriculture; as we cannot farm, we suffer economic losses (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Pablo's testimony also echoes with that of the MOCASE-VC community in Quimili's *Lote 5*. The *Lote 5* residents assert that the destruction of native forests and expansion of the soy monoculture have visibly affected their community. Community members indicate that they have not been able to grow fruits and vegetables for over five years due to increasing wind intensity associated with the destruction of native forests and the harmful effects of agrochemical spraying in the nearby soy fields (Quico, 28 March 2014). In his part, Quico cautions that soy monoculture constitutes one of the gravest dangers to rural public health due to excessive agrochemical use:

Soy is the biggest poison of the world, so to speak. From the moment soybeans are born, from where they start growing and until they finish growing, they are fumigated at least five times in a year (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Observing the environmental implications of soy monoculture around his house, Quico testifies:

The land is already without force and the earth is cooked with poison. That's why, it's no longer fertile, so to speak (Quico, 28 March 2014).

He goes on to complain that a major consequence of soy monoculture is rainwater contamination due to extensive agrochemical use and the increasing frequency of floods with contaminated water and allergies because of the destruction of native forests:

And now, the rainwater is contaminated... and these rains cause floods everywhere. In the past, native forests would block the rainwater... I do not know if you have noticed on the road: There are quantities of barrels of poison there. This is spread through water (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Quico's family has also experienced the health consequences of soy-related agrochemical contamination at first hand:

For example, there are comrades who are allergic [to agrochemicals] ... In my house, my partner cannot go out when there is wind. Her skin dries and peels off. So, she gets inside and that is it. I do not like to be inside, but if I ever go outside with all this wind, I come back with a peeled off skin (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Quico recalls having gone to see a doctor in Quimilí, who gave him an injection and prescribed a cream to suppress his allergic symptoms. However, he is convinced that the doctor's prescriptions could not provide a sustainable solution in the long run:

And looking at the way it [poisoning and allergic reactions] progresses, it will continue to advance and it could then reach the blood, how will it result? Today it is the skin, and tomorrow it is going to be another part [of your body] ... and it will end up killing you (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Similarly, Ramón of MOCASE-VC's Las Lomitas chapter evokes that his grandfathers used to sow onion and garlic, and as a community they used to go to towns to sell watermelons. Nowadays, only a few people know how to sow onion and garlic in the area, and they cannot sustain their self-subsistence due to the expansion of soy monoculture. Instead, Ramón says that they are forced to work as contract or seasonal workers elsewhere (MOCASE-VC, 2012, pp. 25, 95; Ramón, 5 March 2014). Similarly, Cariló, an agronomist militant of MOCASE-VC affirms that soy fumigation usually spreads to the area and makes it impossible for peasant communities to grow maize, watermelons and cotton. It is also commonplace for those who insist on growing these crops to burn their harvest affected by fumigation (MOCASE-VC, 2012, pp. 99-100). Eventually, Ramón and Cariló's testimonies are corroborated by Orlando Bustamento, who is affiliated with MCC's UCAN chapter:

Our neighbors and us are sprayed by [agrochemicals spraying] airplanes. With all the nasty smell, it gives us sore throat. They [planes] pass from here... One time, they killed my animals and I went to the police and they said to me: 'We cannot do anything unless you show us evidence of who did this to you'. But I saw it! So, I cannot make a complaint because I do not know who killed my animals (Orlando, 22 April 2014)!

Besides climate change, declining agriculture and deteriorating public health, the soy expansion in the region also has its implications in the form of violent land evictions. Pablo of MOCASE-VC acknowledges that land evictions are used by agribusiness as an intimidation tool, which fosters peasant mobilization in reaction to these conditions:

Sometimes persecutions, threats, incarceration, and arrests are to intimidate, to make us emigrate or move to *barrios*, which are over-populated and lack employment. They want us to join this train of lacking opportunities (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Pablo insists that the only way to overcome these hardships is to organize and resist:

It seems to me that it would be more dignifying for us to fight back, because our brothers cannot return to us, once they leave. There is plenty of land, so what we need is to distribute land where we have better opportunities. I think, this is one of the policies of the movement, [to

generate] opportunities for all. This is what we are demanding, to think and rethink the change that we must bring about (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Quico agrees with Pablo that violence and threats have been part of land evictions, which can only be countered through organizing. He affirms that he experienced forced evictions at first hand and that organizing was the only right response to resist:

When the evictions began, not only here, but in many other places, we never lowered our arms during the struggle. We have recovered what we wanted to defend. Once, I spent about fifteen days on the road with creatures like this child who walks around [pointing at his child and referring to his participation in agrarian mobilization]. They [the police] turned my house upside down and destroyed it. I had to come back and build it anew, but I never felt fear, not even once, even though they destroyed my house and everything else around it. They came and handcuffed me from behind. They threatened me with weapons on my neck... It is a pressure that they put on you so that you give up and leave. By seeing all this, I do not know what would happen if you were not organized (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Forced land evictions have always been part of rural struggles in Santiago del Estero and Córdoba, but these evictions have taken on an unprecedented scale and triggered the growth of peasant movements at a provincial and even national level due to the soy expansion throughout the 2000s. For example, Eduardo of MCC affirms that the first big wave of land evictions in Córdoba province started in 2003 and it provided great impetus to the development of the peasant movement (Eduardo, 29 April 2014). Prior to forced evictions, Córdoba's peasant movements were atomized into local and independent centrals such as APENOC, *Unión de Campesinos de Traslasierra* (Peasants' Union of Traslasierra, or UCATRAS), *Organización de Campesinos Unidos del Norte de Córdoba* (Organization of United Peasants of North Córdoba, or OCUNC) and *Organización de Campesinos y Artesanos de Pampa de Achala* (Organization of Peasants and Artisans of Pampa de Achala, or OCAPA):

In 2003, there occurred a very disturbing, very visible conflict. They wanted to evict Mrs. Ramona Bustamante, an old woman, and we stood up as a movement to give full support to her (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

The Bustamante family lives in a north Córdoba locality of Las Maravillas. Ramona Bustamante was borne from an extramarital affair, and her stepmother and stepsisters took possessions of the 230 hectare-wide field where Bustamante currently lives and sold it to another party following their father's death in 1983. In 1992, by taking advantage of Bustamante's illiteracy, the "legal" owners made Bustamante sign a legal document in which she would unwittingly waive her occupancy rights. They convinced

Bustamante that this document was to end the quarrel for land and would allow Bustamante to live at her place in peace. However, when the land market started to flourish under the influence of soy expansion, the “legal” owners came back at Bustamante’s door with the document that she signed in 1992 and attempted to evict her out of the land. The Scaramuzza brothers, i.e. the “legal” owners of Bustamante’s land, were soy producers from the city of Oncativo (Eduardo, 29 April 2014; Orlando, 22 April 2014). As strongly expressed by Eduardo, this injustice served to build a larger movement organized at the provincial level:

With this, we realized that it was not enough to achieve anything substantial as a local organization. So, we had to go provincial. We then convened all of the movement, stood guard at her door, repaired her place, but we got evicted once more. After that, we got back to retake the land and, well, we got engaged in a very violent conflict with the police. So, this [resistance] made us what we are today [i.e. a provincial peasant movement beyond local organizing] (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Orlando, Ramona’s son in his late 50s, resents that as a community they “live with fear since the day [they] were first evicted”. Not only did they keep receiving threats, but the same offenders also killed their animals for intimidation and the police destroyed their house during the evictions:

We were dumped [to the street]. We had to live under a nylon [when our house was destroyed]. We slept on the floor... and the government did not help us. No one helped us to have a dignified home, like we ought to have, like we used to have (Orlando, 22 April 2014).

However, Orlando also admits that his family feels more secure than before because they are organized:

I don’t know what to say on myself, but I can say that this is something that is painful for us the peasants. It’s like we don’t have any right to the land. But now here we are ... we joined [our forces] and well, we can raise this situation to the police as well as to the provincial and national government... so that we can recover the land (Orlando, 22 April 2014).

The Bustamante family’s case is no exception. For example, Jorge of MCC APENOC central explains that he personally suffered the expansion of soy monoculture and land evictors exploited his lack of education:

We did not go to university and were uneducated. So, we were unaware of the problems to come. All of these lands do not have a title, a deed, but we are the ancestral possessors of these lands where our grandparents, parents and us lived (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Jorge emphasizes that these ancestral lands were not as valuable as they are prior to the expansion of soy monoculture:

We were very much in peace and these places were very quiet before. These lands did not have much value. However, with the advance of the agricultural border and all that, the high business developed an interest in these areas. *Gringos* [outsiders] started to look at these places (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Another commonality of the case of Jorge and the Bustamante family is that they both experienced harassment by the police at first hand:

Just like politicians, lawyers and judges, the police played its role to get us scared (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Eventually, as observed in the Bustamante family's case, forced evictions served as the main trigger for the emergence of political organizing in Jorge's community when they were contacted by professional organizers:

... We started to work with them [professional organizers coming from outside of the community] and so it was a little bit how we started to organize ourselves. We got together in communities. We had ten to fifteen people who wanted to join us as a group, and well (Jorge, 27 April 2014) ...

Here, it is important to emphasize that the emergence of political organizing in these communities paved the way for a new process of agrarian class formation. Families who were not used to see each other even though they lived in the same area started to work together in reaction to eviction attempts:

So, this is how we first started to defend ourselves, to discuss how we can organize ourselves and how to work together, because in reality at that time we all used to work on our own, and we did not even see each other, almost... We started to get together as a community and as neighbors and began to discuss the problems we had in common... and then more communities were added... after we joined other farmers in Córdoba province and formed various centrals... We were all growing as an organization (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Jorge himself narrates his experience of class formation at the personal level with reference to educating himself through socializing with his fellow class members:

I thus educated myself by going out [participating in provincial, national and international events], knowing other realities and knowing other comrades (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

The case of the peasant movement in Santiago del Estero is no different from that of Córdoba province. Indeed, land evictions have always been a major source of

contention in Santiago del Estero, and prior to the 2000s, the main reason behind evictions was cotton monoculture. However, Pablo recalls that the first big wave of evictions around soy monoculture in Santiago del Estero started in the early 2000s and gradually intensified throughout the first decade of the 2000s (Pablo, 25 March 2014). MOCASE-VC's first encounter with forced evictions was the case of the Guevara family, who lived in the Vilelas locality of Santiago del Estero as MOCASE-VC affiliates. The police attempted to evict this family from the land where they have been living for 30 years, with the order of judge Susana Ahumada de Castellanos. The order was implemented by the then police chief Musa Azar and supported by former mayor Jorge Alberto D'Amico, who would face time in 2012 under several human rights abuse charges in the 1976 military coup period. The Guevaras experienced three attempts of eviction, in two of which they lost their house and all of their belongings. "But [despite all of the violence and material losses] I think, we were able to show our strength", continues Pablo (25 March 2014). Being organized was key to the resistance of the Guevaras and others throughout the 2000s, which eventually developed a sense of togetherness geared toward agrarian class formation:

[We were able to] fill the street, to show what was happening to us... this has to do with being organized, being an organized people. We have been held in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004; detained in 2005; evicted in 2006 and 2007.... So, we have been able to face it... Each time we held on to what we have, because we know that they do not come for one; when they come, they come for us all. They come for the land... They try to make us disappear, which is why they spray our houses, our schools... There is no distance that can protect us; it is everything [that is at stake] (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

In summary, this section provided fieldwork evidence that supports the macro-level food regime analysis of the previous sections. Our macro-level analysis pointed to the destructive implications of state-supported biotechnological and monocultural agriculture in terms of the decreasing life changes and rapid dispossession of indigenous-peasant communities. Fieldwork data show that these implications find their strongest expression in violent land evictions, declining small-scale agriculture and deteriorating public health. The destruction of native forests and the contamination of natural resources due to the expansion of transgenic soy monoculture appear to be a chief reason in the decline of small-scale agriculture. When it comes to the deterioration of public health, it is mostly observed in the agrochemical poisoning of both natural resources and community members. Additionally, the perceived effects of climate

change are seen as an important factor that amplifies the destructive effects of transgenic soy monoculture. Peasant testimonies also seem to validate the argument that the intensification of class grievances in the countryside due to the expansion of transgenic soy monoculture and land evictions has provided a favorable environment for the emergence of an agrarian resistance on a national level.

Evaluation and Discussion

My integrative literature review in Chapter 1 pointed out that food sovereignty cannot be confined to fixed definitions and rigid conceptualizations, because one also needs to take account of the geographical and political-economic specificities of the broader context in which food sovereignty struggles are configured. Moreover, my review of Argentina's critical agrarian movements from a food sovereignty perspective suggested that the translation of food sovereignty struggles into a permanent and institutional setting towards a stronger organized presence is attributable to a number of factors, whose first order factor is the development of a critical awareness of class agents' grievances and perception of the injustices that they feel being subjected to. Taking the cue from these literature-based inductions, this chapter presented a political-economy analysis of Argentina's peculiar context in which food sovereignty struggles take shape, i.e. the implications of the expansion of extractive capitalism and soy monoculture for agrarian class structures. I examined these implications from the perspective of food regime analysis, which is the preferred analytical tool in food sovereignty scholarship. In this framework, it is interesting to observe that extractive capitalism and soy monoculture are facilitated by the state through the provision of a strong scientific infrastructure and encouraging neoregulatory policies at the expense of increased capital concentration, rural unemployment and peasant dispossession. Meanwhile, the taxation of soy exports constitutes a main financial source of *kircherista* welfare policies. Additionally, peasant testimonies seem to confirm how the state-supported soy monoculture impacts class structures and helps to ignite food-sovereignty mobilization with special reference to land evictions, the decline of small farming, deterioration of public health through agrochemical contamination and destruction of native forests. These testimonies also capture the emergence of a critical awareness of injustices, which serves as the basis for agrarian class formation. Therefore, the following chapters will explore how social mobilization activated through these political-economic transformations translates into

agrarian class formation based on systematic attempts to mobilize the indigenous-peasant culture, confront the state, and build effective leadership mechanisms. Each of these instances of class formation are inductively derived from the food sovereignty literature in Chapter 1 and placed within a broader systematic framework based on insights from Chapter 2.



Chapter 4: Social Myths and Agrarian Class Formation in Argentina: Reclaiming the Indigenous-Peasant Legacy

A political-economic analysis of agrarian class structures under the neoliberal food regime cannot tell more than the objective location of semi-proletarianized peasants in the relations of production and reproduction. Put differently, the assessment of objective class structures presents only a preliminary overview of the way agrarian classes turn from a “class-in-itself” to a “class-for-itself”. This chapter thus takes the first step toward a more sophisticated analysis by focusing on one of the three mediating factors of agrarian class formation, i.e. regional cultures. In Gerardo Otero’s theoretical model (Otero, 1999), regional cultures refer to the politicization and mobilization of communal relationships that emanate from kinship, ethnicity, family and religion in a given geography. In a *similar* manner to how Thompson (1966) conceptualizes “culture” and Katznelson (1986) regards “ways of life”, regional cultures shape the range of demands that are raised by agrarian peoples, or how material and spiritual grievances are voiced via collective action. As such, they set the tone of movement demands over territory and natural resources (Otero, 1999).

In this context, the present chapter explores how MNCI culturally mobilizes the political-economic grievances of indigenous peasants by developing shared understandings of their material situation and collective solutions. In other words, it focuses on the ways in which regional cultures are reshaped and mobilized so as to foster agrarian class formation. Overall, I argue that MOCASE-VC’s mobilization efforts are embodied in MNCI’s attempts to revive Argentina’s pre-colonial past, regenerate indigenous communalism, re-appropriate the *Quichua* language, and reassert the centrality of a peasant way of live. By way of parentheses, MNCI as an indigenous-peasant movement is represented by a variety of indigenous groups that subscribe to different indigenous ethnicities. However, my study of indigeneity concentrates on the case of MOCASE-VC and its claim to the *Quichua* culture as MNCI’s largest constituent. Worthy of note in this regard is that Santiago del Estero is the mestizo province of Argentina, where the primordial markers of indigeneity are under-pronounced. Moreover, Argentina is a country whose predominant ethnic formation is characterized by the white-European ethos, which renders the situation of indigenous groups even more vulnerable. This being said, I also address MCC’s case, as a non-indigenous MNCI constituent that neighbors Santiago del Estero province.

This chapter is organized as follows. The first section is devoted to an overview of major theories on ethnicity and their relationship to the notion of social myths. By examining primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism, I offer a synthesis of instrumentalism and constructivism based on a Marxist ontological and epistemological framework. My synthesis suggests that instrumentalism, constructivism and their Marxist variants seem to concur on the explanatory potential of “social myths”, understood as the idealization and/or glorification of historico-cultural practices in formulating popular demands to reclaim resources, while also consolidating group cohesion and conviction. This explanatory potential is further validated based on the case of Argentine indigenous groups other than MNCI. Their case attests that a lack of distinctive and cohesive markers of indigeneity (e.g. certain racial traits, authority structures, language, religion, customs) cannot prevent indigenous groups from idealizing their history and mobilizing a collective memory of being oppressed and marginalized in advancing their demands. I revisit the notion of social myth as discussed by Antonio Gramsci by shifting the focus from indigenous formation to how this very process affects class formation in the countryside.

The second section presents background information on the historical and sociolinguistic legacy of *Quichua* for peasant mobilization in Santiago del Estero, Argentina. First, I discuss the white-European ethos that defines the predominant configuration of ethnic relations in Argentina, which is followed by a historical account of how indigeneity was politicized under the facilitative environment of the Perón era (1946-1955) and Argentina’s return to liberal democracy in the 1980s. The third section explores MNCI’s efforts at creating a collective imaginary of peasantry. I argue that this mythical imaginary fosters agrarian class formation insofar as it succeeds in creating a homogenous image of peasantry bonded by idealized community ties and national alliances with the classes of labor, including rural workers and *barrios*. Of particular importance for the national constitution of peasantry as a class seem to be MNCI’s strategy of “re-peasantization” through land grabs and the programme of the return to the countryside that confront capitalism. In turn, the fourth section shifts the focus from peasantry to indigeneity, which is pillared on a mythical re-appropriation of the indigenous notion of territory and attachment to native forests accompanied with a claim to the revival of indigenous languages and a combined critique of colonialism and capitalism. I go on to argue that communitarian forms of ownership and organization lie at the centre of MNCI’s claim to indigeneity. Finally, the fifth section provides a

condensed analysis of how MNCI's social myth of peasantry and indigeneity combine to create a political programme of food sovereignty. This programme expresses the fundamental movement claims and demands with special reference to anti-capitalism, peasantization and indigenous communitarianism.

From Ethnic to Class Formation: A Theoretical Synthesis based on the Case of Indigenous Formation in Argentina

The academic debates on ethnic formation are dominated by three broadly-defined positions: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. Primordialism (Geertz, 1973; Shils, 1957) is one of the three main theoretical approaches that are used to explain ethnic formation (Brown & Langer, 2010, 2012; Sokolovski & Tishkov, 2010; Varshney, 2009; Williams, 2015). It assumes that ethnicity is inherent in human beings, and hinges on natural divisions based on assumed blood ties, race, religion, language, customs and geographical location (Geertz, 1973, pp. 261-263): "By a primordial attachment [it] is meant one that stems from the 'givens' [a priori] ... from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices" (Geertz, 1973, p. 259). It follows that ethnicity assumes a fixed form and objective existence in the "primordial" sense that it can only exist in its purest and intact form. Here, the mobilization of social myths is not assessed through the lens of primordialist assumptions that would reduce the *Quichua* culture – as reclaimed by MOCASE-VC and other MNCI constituents – to a mythical, therefore unreal and fabricated formation because of the loss of most of its distinctive cultural traits, including the language, religion, clothing and customs.

The second general approach in ethnic studies is instrumentalism, which views ethnic mobilization as a strategic tool to build coalitions in search for economic or political power. According to instrumentalism, ethnicity is "a product of *political myths*, created and manipulated by cultural elites in their pursuit of advantages and power" (Sokolovski & Tishkov, 2010, p. 242) (Emphasis added by the author). Therefore, ethnic formation is seen as a result of social mobilization for the control of resources, since utilitarian priorities and ambitions are assumed to shape the cultural landscape (Brass, 1985; Glazer & Moynihan, 1976; Hardin, 1995). For example, Paul Brass presents ethnic formation as a process mediated by three factors. First, ethnic formation is shaped by a group intention to access and control material and symbolic resources. Second and

relatedly, ethnic formation is also mediated by competition among different ethnic groups to control the acquired privileges and resources. Third, ethnic formation is shaped by ethnic movements' interactions with the state and the general population surrounding their territory (Brass, 1985).

The third general approach in ethnic studies is constructivism, which has become the most influential approach since the 1980s (Brown & Langer, 2012, p. 59). The constructivist school (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013; Mamdani, 1996; Suny, 2001; Vail, 1989) conceptualizes ethnicity as a fluid and constantly evolving formation. This formation is argued to result from the changing self-perception of ethnic communities. Whereas instrumentalism explains ethnic formation mostly based on internal factors such as elite intentions to forge ethnic identities, constructivism lays greater emphasis on the influence of external and subjective factors articulated in social, economic and political interactions. Contemporary theorizing in ethnic studies encourages synthetic approaches that reconcile utilitarian and functionalist approaches with their agency-centered constructivist counterparts (Sokolovski & Tishkov, 2010, p. 243). Sergey Sokolovski and Valery Tishkov (2010, p. 243) argue that theoretical syntheses on ethnicity allow for a better understanding of how “ethnic” myths convert “mass emotions into programmes for socio-political [mobilization]”.

Indigenous studies in Argentina also seem to lean toward a synthesis approach that echoes with Sokolovski and Tishkov's description of the state of contemporary ethnicity studies (2010, p. 243). Away from primordialist biases, the literature points to the importance of cultural mobilization – i.e. conflict-generating social movement practices that are performed through cultural claims to knowledge, history, norms, values and ways of life. In her study of *Rodeo Colanzulí*, a *Kolla* village located in Northwestern Argentina, Laurie Occhipinti mentions how certain Argentineans disapprove the *Kollas'* land claims on a primordialist pretext that *Kolla* communities are predominantly marked by a lack of distinctive and cohesive cultural markers, i.e. “the absence of an indigenous language, the lack of traditional kinship arrangements such as the *ayllu*, the use of mass-produced clothing and industrial goods” (Occhipinti, 2003, p. 159). Occhipinti goes on to argue that “the *Kolla* have not been seen as ‘authentically’ indigenous” in the same way as the *Wichu* in Argentina's Chaco region, whose indigenous status are “taken for granted” by most locals (Occhipinti, 2002, p. 341). Furthermore, testimonies from *Kolla* communities confirm that community members were unaware of their indigeneity prior to

the government's efforts to recognize the indigenous rights and involvement of development NGOs.

According to Occhipinti, the most crucial requisite for being *Kolla* is simply to live in *Rodeo Colanzulí* and claim the land as part of this rural community. Another generic marker of being *Kolla* is subsistence farming. Occhipinti observes that one could deeply feel the community's emotional attachment to the land as an indirect continuation of Pachamama (Mother Earth) beliefs, but non-Christian practices – as one of the primordial markers of indigeneity – are branded by community residents as “superstitious” (Occhipinti, 2003, pp. 159-162). In her research, Occhipinti refers to an Iruyan's envy of Bolivian aboriginals who came to preserve much of their primordial traditions, because “[in the Iruyan's community] there is no collective memory of what it means to be Kolla, of a sense of peoplehood” (Occhipinti, 2002, p. 326). Although local communities have only “dispersed memories” of their history and traditions, in constructivist terms, they came to regenerate an awareness of indigeneity with reference to a collective memory of being oppressed and marginalized “rather than [to] language and material culture” (Occhipinti, 2002, pp. 326-327). Therefore, Occhipinti emphasizes that the objective existence of indigeneity cannot be neglected despite the lack of “material markers of identity” such as that of “a native language, styles of dress, many features of non-Catholic religion” (Occhipinti, 2002, pp. 328-329).

The politicization of indigeneity – despite the fragmented memory of primordial indigenous practices and lack of the so-called material cultural markers – is also addressed by Silvia María Hirsch, who examines Argentina's Guaraní mobilization based on a “generic Guaraní” identity (Hirsch, 2003). She emphasizes that the Guaraní mobilization draws its strength from a collective struggle for the symbolic re-appropriation of the Guaraní language and access to land and resources, no matter how its constituents display high levels of heterogeneity in socio-economic associations and language use (Hirsch, 2003, pp. 87, 89, 96). Hirsch goes on to argue that the Guaraní mobilization is facilitated by close interactions with Argentina's *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, or INAI) as well as Bolivian movements where “shamans are more powerful, the chiefs are respected, the Guaraní language is spoken in a ‘purer’ form” (Hirsch, 2003, p. 91). According to Gastón Gordillo and Silvia Hirsch, ultimately, the subsequent controversies that question the so-called “cultural authenticity” of new indigenous movements are characteristic of Argentine's cultural landscape, which is built on a false national imaginary of “Euro-whiteness” at the

expense of the wide-scale assimilation and invisibilization of indigenous peoples (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003).

A cautionary remark is to be made at this point: unlike the research of Occhipinti and others (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Hirsch, 2003; Occhipinti, 2002, 2003), my own research does not rely on an anthropological framework, but it is rather invested in the sociological study of class formation at the organizational level. In line with the literature findings on Argentina, meanwhile, my own conceptualization of social myths ontologically and epistemologically conforms with materialist constructivism, as represented by Eric Hobsbawm's framework of "invention of traditions" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013). Hobsbawm offers a comprehensive framework that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of cultural change with reference to the significance of culture and ideas in social change without losing sight of the centrality of social classes and their political-economic grounding. According to Hobsbawm, cultural formations are not necessarily primordially fixed and self-contained entities. However, the fluidity of cultural formations does not render these entities unreal on any account, because old traditions "have to be discovered before being exploited and shaped" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013, p. 307). Hobsbawm defines invention as a form of cultural mobilization, such as nation-building and religious revival movements. Inventions glorify, ritualize, formalize and institute the past in response to novel challenges confronted by social actors (Hobsbawm, 2013, pp. 1-4). Cultural mobilization through invention serves to establish social cohesion, legitimize institutions and socialize conventions of collective behaviors and values such as patriotism, loyalty, duty, etc. (Hobsbawm, 2013, pp. 9-10). In explaining how the Welsh scholars and patriots of the 18th century led to a Welsh renaissance by re-appropriating their long-lost ancient culture, for example, Prys Morgan uses Hobsbawm's Marxist constructivism to argue that the Welsh resorted to "Romantic *mythologizing*" in search for a "distinctive Welsh way of life" (Morgan, 2013, p. 44, emphasis added by the author). "The mythical and romantic Wales which they created allowed the Welsh to lose their immediate past, and to gain a version of it in the arts and literature" (Morgan, 2013, p. 100).

The context of Santiago del Estero and MOCASE-VC as addressed in my research reflects a similar trend to that encountered in the literature on Argentine indigenous groups. These groups are commonly marked by a lack of primordial markers and by generic references to indigeneity, which render them open to external influences from other indigenous-dominated countries and favorable state policies. This situation is

evocative of how contemporary theories of ethnicity and their Marxist variants associate ethnic formation with inventive “myths” (Sokolovski & Tishkov, 2010). The explanatory power of social myths may be useful in capturing the fluidity of ethnic formations as well as the ways in which indigenous groups mobilize their constituency by idealizing, glorifying and re-imagining their ethnicity (Sokolovski & Tishkov, 2010, p. 242).

Building on these literature findings, therefore, I suggest contributing to these conceptual debates by offering a Gramscian reading of social myths. Gramsci’s concept of social myth is expected to help explain how ethnic groups – vacillating between *mestizaje* and *indigeneity* – get together to struggle for their class interests in the face of rural isolation and cultural fragmentation. Indeed, Hobsbawm’s constructivist emphasis on “inventions” – along with its Marxist philosophical grounding and acknowledgement of the role of culture in social change – perfectly resonates with Gramsci’s Marxism, where myths are conceived as “artistic imaginations” (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 125) that serve to provide political passions with a more concrete form. Gramsci portrays social myths as a mobilizing movement language that triggers group conviction and appeals to mass emotions and aspirations. Worthy of cautionary note, however, is that my reading of social myths does not draw on a primordialist approach that synonymizes them with something that is not true or that is superficially fabricated.

In fact, Gramsci adapted the notion of social myths from Georges Sorel. Sorel saw political myths as a social imaginary that represents “the activity, the sentiments and the ideas of the masses as they prepare themselves to enter a decisive struggle” (Sorel, 2004, p. 28). As such, the notion of myths seems to lend considerable explanatory power for class mobilization. In Sorel’s language, this notion expresses a “group conviction” that permeates the “movement language” and springs from popular classes’ “historical descriptions” (Sorel, 2004, pp. 20, 29). Whereas Sorel’s analysis was confined to how trade unionism is mobilized through political myths, however, Gramsci employed social myths in a broader context. He stressed their mobilizing potential based on the case of African-American groups in the early 20th century (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 21). Referring to African-American intellectuals who could one day return to Africa and lead a revolutionary movement by taking advantage of the African people’s sense of “oppressed-ness”, Gramsci believed that they might “give a ‘national’ character to the present primitive sentiment of being a despised race, thus giving the African continent a mythical function as the common fatherland of all the negro peoples” (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 21). Thought separately from his unfortunate language on the so-called primitiveness

of African peoples, Gramsci also applied this concept to analyze political party mobilization, in which social myths may act as “the artistic imagination of those who have to be convinced, [which] gives political passions a more concrete form” (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 125). He was hopeful that the Sorelian myth could turn political ideologies from a “cold” theory or utopia into a mobilizing power that could turn political passions into flesh. In terms of “class formation”, he thus conceived of social myths as a tool to mobilize “a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will” (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 126). Therefore, my Gramscian reading of MNCI’s cultural mobilization suggests that this movement comes to articulate a claim for the regeneration of the region’s *Quichua* past as a social myth that mobilizes indigenous-peasant communities, despite the prevalence of *mestizaje* roots and disappearance of primordial indigenous practices. Moreover, the ideological reference to an indigenous legacy is not confined to the revival of the *Quichua* language. It also encapsulates the regeneration of communitarian forms of ownership through the re-envisioning of the right to land encapsulated in the paradigm of territory and *el Monte* (native forests).

The Historical and Sociolinguistic Background of the *Santiagoño* Peasantry

Argentina can well be considered as a *sui-generis* case in comparison with many Latin American countries, when it comes to the configuration of ethnicity and indigenous cultures (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p. 5). Most Latin American countries are built on the ethos of *mestizaje*, used as a hegemonic tool of modern nation-building to assert the “national sameness” in the face of pressures coming from the colonial Spain and the United States of America. This is perhaps best exemplified in Brazil’s national myth of “racial democracy”, which finds its counterpart at the regional level in various attempts to build some kind of “Latin American sameness” against what is perceived to be colonial enemies. Despite its varying uses and political connotations, *mestizaje* can be loosely defined as people of culturally and/or racially mixed European and Native-American descent (Miller, 2004).

In contrast to the Latin American majority, Argentina premised itself on an ethos of European whiteness that is now presumed to account for somewhere between 85% and 97% of the population (Gritzner, 2006, p. 80; Richaud, Lemos & Rubilar, 2014, p. 279; Simon & Gueorguieva, 2008, p. 21). It is most likely that the estimates exceeding 90% would include the *mestizo* population into the white-European category. Estimates

– independent from the general census – point to a percentage of 8 to 15 for the *mestizo* population (Pettit & Starbird, 2004, p. 42; Richaud, Lemos & Rubilar, 2014, p. 279; Simon & Brooks, 2009, p. 23). In Argentina, moreover, the share of those who see themselves as descending from or belonging to an indigenous people is estimated at between 1% and 6% of the entire population (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; IWGIA, 2013, par. 1; Koós, 2014, p. 110; Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010; Wessendorf, 2008, p. 206).

The overstatement of whiteness at the expense of condemning indigenous and *mestizo* populations to invisibility can be tied to the centuries-long hegemonic intention of Argentina's Euro-descent dominant classes to build a white country (Chamosa, 2008, pp. 71-72). Similarly, the lack of data and precision in population estimates are rightfully associated with the hegemonic invisibilization and marginalization of indigenous peoples in the national imaginary (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p. 6). Not surprisingly, therefore, indigenous peoples are considered to be one of the most marginalized sectors of the Argentine population, who are traditionally stigmatized as “negr@”, “lazy”, “dirty”, “stupid” and “inferior” (Cesilini, Tomadin & Eltz, 2004; Lozano, 2005; Schwittay, 2003).

According to Gordillo and Hirsch, Argentina's invisibilization of indigenous peoples goes back to the 19th and 20th centuries during which a combination of physical extermination and cultural assimilation strategies have been employed (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003). However, Juan Perón's leftward populist rule (1946-1955) constitutes a historical break with Argentina's tradition of indigenous repression, thanks to Perón's granting of citizenship and labor rights to indigenous communities. Peronism provided an encouraging environment for the emergence of a national indigenous movement, which gained steam during the military dictatorship period of 1955-1980 in the fight against brutal repression and the rollback of Peronist conquests (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Yashar, 2005, p. 287). Following the military dictatorship, Argentina's transition to liberal democracy provided free space for the further politicization of indigeneity upon the growing recognition of indigenous peoples by the state. Persistent pressures coming from indigenous mobilization ended up with INAI's creation as well as the incorporation of indigenous rights into the Constitution of 1994 (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003). Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 2, these developments were also facilitated by a continental wave of democratization and constitutional reforms that promoted multicultural notions of citizenship in the 1980s and 1990s (Vom Hau & Wilde, 2010).

The “new wave of indigenous activism” (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p.20) symbolized by the constitutional reform and creation of INAI made its strong presence

felt in the Province of Santiago del Estero with the emergence of MOCASE-VC in 1989. MOCASE-VC operates as an indigenous-peasant movement in the Province of Santiago del Estero, which is however designated as the land of the *mestizo* minority in Argentina. As affirmed by Ángel Strapazzón, a founder and one of the leading figures of MOCASE-VC, “MOCASE has its antecedents in the historical struggles of indigenous peoples since America’s conquest and colonization (Ángel, 18 March 2014).” He continues:

Let's not forget that here, all over this continent, there were indigenous peoples and nations, great peoples and nations called the Mayas, Aztecs, Incas. And here, in these territories, there still lives the great family of Diaguitas, Guaicurúes, Sanavirones, Comechingones. Many of our comrades in the movement are identified with their ancestral, millennial history, a history of thirteen thousand years in this mountain, in these forests (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Despite the prevailing *metizaje* context of the provincial ethnic configuration, therefore, MOCASE-VC has taken active part in the regeneration wave of indigeneity by stressing its indigenous roots with reference to the *Quichua* culture.

Quichua is derived from the term *Quechua* (*valle templado*, or “mild valley”), often used interchangeably with the former, despite the rarely mentioned difference between the two. *Quechua* is used to embrace a racially and ethnically heterogeneous sociolinguistic community of the Inca civilization. Keeping in mind high levels of dialectal diversity and mutual unintelligibility, *Quechua* is believed to be the most spoken indigenous language in South America, with 5 to 12.5 million speakers continent-wide. A majority of *Quechua* speakers concentrate in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, whereas areas with lower demographic *Quechua* concentration include Colombia, Chile and Argentina. Cultural assimilation and physical destruction constitute a chief reason for *Quechua*’s heterogeneity and “endangered language” status (Adelaar, 2004, p. 168; Ball, 2009, p. 43; Brown & Ogilvie, 2010, pp. 41, 252, 752; Campbell & Grondona, 2012, p. 168; Censabella, 2010, pp. 28, 30, 34-35; Coronel-Molina, 2011; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004, pp. 9-10; Kent, 2006, p. 16; Ricky & Gille, 2009, p. 618).

In Argentina, the number of *Quechua* speaking peoples ranges from 300,000 to 400,000, although the available estimates are believed to be highly unreliable. Argentina’s *Quechua* speaking peoples live mostly in the northwestern provinces, especially in Santiago del Estero, Jujuy and Salta. The *Quechua* dialect in Santiago del Estero – the home province of the MOCASE-VC – is named *Quichua*, and the number of *Quichua* speakers is estimated between 60,000 and 100,000 (Adelaar, 2004, p. 168; Alderetes & Albarracín, 2004, p. 84; Censabella, 2010, p. 40; Coronel-Molina, 2011, pp.

108-109; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004, pp. 19-20; Koós, 2014, p. 110). However, much of the *Quichua* indigenous identity in Santiago del Estero has been replaced by a folkloric sense of *mestizaje* in the popular memory. Indeed, a chief factor that helped erode indigeneity – aside from systematic extermination and forced assimilation – might have been the lack of a strong economic and industrialization base in the province. This lack of economic development denied local people the material resources for the survival and flourishing of regional cultures in competing with mainstream cultural constructs originating from more affluent areas. Economic underdevelopment also culminated into massive flows of out-migration since the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 2000s, more than 50% of those who were born in Santiago del Estero were living outside of their province of origin (Alderetes & Albarracín, 2004; Skutsch, 2005, pp. 991-992). Ultimately, most *Santiagoenses* have dropped the social and cultural values pertaining to *Quichua* indigeneity alongside the cult of the *Pachamama* and the Andean *cosmovisión*. Even though the *Quichua* has somehow survived, most *Quechua* people – more so in Argentina – tend to identify themselves as *campesinos*. In Santiago del Estero, the implicit existence of *Quichua* can be felt particularly in the usage of a few words in the daily language and the declining knowledge of a limited number of legends and mythological figures as well as popular folk songs (Alderetes & Albarracín, 2004; Skutsch, 2005, pp. 991-992). Given the centrality of *campesinado* in this province, the next section addresses the social myth of peasantry as mobilized by MOCASE-VC and MCC.

The Constitution of an Anti-Capitalist Peasantry as Part of the Classes of Labor: Understanding Agrarian Class Formation Beyond the Countryside

A distinctive feature of MNCI (and MOCASE-VC as its leading constituent) is that it claims to be primarily a class movement that re-appropriates indigeneity as part of its broader peasant subjectivity. This peasant subjectivity speaks to agrarian groups' aspiration to remain primarily as subsistence or small entrepreneurial producers rather than become wage laborers and reproduce community-based relations of production based on a model of self-management, solidarity and territorial autonomy (Otero, 1999). MNCI's peasant articulation does not only serve to magnify the movement's appeal to its non-indigenous constituents such as MCC, but it also allows MNCI constituents to transcend localist claims to isolated and fragmented indigenous ethnicities. Moreover,

MNCI uses peasantness as a common identifier to reach out the *barrios* and build a national class movement that embraces the classes of labor in the city. In Gramsci's terminology, therefore, peasantness is used by MNCI to give the movement a *national* class character that goes beyond the bread-and-butter demands and immediate corporate interests of local communities in the countryside by fostering an *agrarian* form of "class formation" in the broadest sense of the term.

In emphasizing the prevalence of peasantry over indigeneity, it is particularly important to note that an overwhelming majority of MOCASE-VC militants are not native *Quichua* speakers, and a minority of them speak only a few sentences and words in their language of ethnic affiliation. For example, Quico, from the indigenous Lote 5 community affiliated with MOCASE-VC, confirms that *Quichua* is not widely spoken in the countryside anymore, especially by those who are under the age of 50:

I understand some words when someone speaks, but I don't speak [*Quichua*]. For example, my mom and father are not alive, but they all spoke *Quichua*, and my older brothers can speak and understand *Quichua* as well. Those who are older than us, 50 years and older, can also speak and understand *Quichua* (Quico, 28 March 2014).

When it comes to the cult of *Pachamama*, Quico explains that it is still celebrated in other parts of the Argentine countryside, but that most rural communities in Santiago del Estero regard it as a notion that expresses some form of emotional attachment to the land as an indirect continuation of *Pachamama* beliefs:

The land, *Pachamama*, Mother Nature... In Jujuy, it is celebrated as a two-week-long festivity. So, for example, you leave your place and go to mine. There, you must eat all you can and the leftovers go to the well of *Pachamama*. Then you go on and go to the other house, until you go through all the houses... What you must do is to endure, nothing more. You must put up with sleeplessness. You must put up with the stomach ache, with all that you eat and drink, and you keep doing it every day (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Given the loss of much of the material markers of indigeneity, most movement members consciously lean toward a self-identification with peasant origins in the first place, which is clearly observable even in (peri-)urban communities affiliated with MOCASE-VC and other constituents of MNCI. To give a particular example, Victoria, a dedicated MCC lawyer who fights for peasant rights, believes that the peasant movement should innovate with new forms of political organizing by taking account of the peasantization of peri-urban spaces through a massive wave of rural-to-urban migration triggered by monocultural expansion in the agriculture:

It seems to me that there has arisen a need to conceive new forms of organization and member incorporation into our organization as of the second part of the 2000s. Our organization could not only be comprised by the peasantry, because a majority of our comrades have migrated to the city and this dignity [i.e. the dignity and culture of being a peasant] has also migrated to the city (Victoria, 22 April 2014).

Indeed, Victoria's proposal goes beyond simply expanding the peasant organization towards the cities. In her opinion, the peasant movement should do more than organizing in *barrios*, but it should also be invested in preserving community bonds in the city, encouraging land takeovers for social use and regenerating the peasant culture in order to promote the idea of moving back to the countryside. By "new forms of organizing", Victoria refers to MNCI's ambitious campaign of the return to the countryside, which was being prepared to enter into effect at the time of this research:

We want a more dignified life in the countryside. And for that we need that more comrades also go to the countryside, but they should go there with dignity. When we come to the city, we see that many people are already interested in sharing our land takeovers (Victoria, 22 April 2014) ...

Likewise, Facundo, a militant affiliated with the urban chapter of MCC affirms that peasantness is the defining identifier of his movement, which has to do with a three-fold task of propagating a sense of belonging to peasant communities, promoting people's return to the countryside and equipping them with a knowledge on sustainable and well-planned production models. According to him, the accomplishment of this task depends in the first place on the preservation of rural community bonds that strengthen solidarity within the movement:

Here, we have a beautiful community. People participate a lot [in community building and development]. Especially, our comrades who came from north of Bolivia, Peru and north of Argentina have a strong sense of community, a stronger sense of thinking of not only themselves, but also the community (Facundo, 22 April 2014) ...

As such, Facundo implies that peasantness generates a stronger sense of community, which in turn fosters class formation beyond boundaries:

We grew up as a community and as a movement by being part of this movement. This is what we want to show: overcoming the barriers [to community] makes you grow, which is why the theme of identity comes first (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

Regarding his point on the return to the countryside and the question of production, Facundo argues that peasantness can be further consolidated if the movement could

give a chance to its support base to choose to return to the countryside and pursue an alternative production system modeled on food sovereignty:

A second thing that is important to us is to return a person to their place of origin. This is a question of choosing the dignity that used to exist in the countryside. There is also a third element, which is the fact that our comrades should know how to produce... In other words, it is about discussing a production model... [in which] we will get our comrades to produce in a more sustainable and organized way (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

Facundo insists that militating in an urban environment does not contradict his movement's cultural claim to peasantry:

Well, we are from the city, but we feel ourselves like peasants and want to feel ourselves as part of this [peasant] movement... [In *Barrio Ampliación Pueyrredón*, or Pueyrredón Neighborhood Development] we reaffirm our peasant identity. Our comrades here in *Pueyrredón* come from the countryside, that is, they do not have much to say about here [the city]. It has not been so long since they left the countryside. They used to live in the countryside, and they want to go back there one day. Part of the idea in *Pueyrredón* is therefore to think of going back to the countryside (Facundo, 22 April 2014) ...

Similarly, Edy Masco, a *referente* (or representative) of MCC's collective of *Barrio Ampliación Pueyrredón* points out that he himself is a Bolivian migrant who has preserved his peasant identity even though he lives and organizes in an urban setting (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014). Edy strongly reasserts his background as a migrant peasant living in the city and affirms that the classes of labor in the countryside and the city share similar grievances. Indeed, this communion of grievances is by itself a clear indicator of class formation as far as cultural factors are concerned:

I belong to the peasant movement; I have a Bolivian nationality; and I can tell you what I have experienced: I was born in the countryside, but I know that there are lots of similar problems in the countryside and the city. You know that comrades are one. Here, for example, the peasants are subjected, not only to landlessness, but also to evictions (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014).

The movement's self-identification to peasantry is a concept that is highly fluid and changing throughout the context of an individual's life or a community's experience. For example, MCC's provincial meeting held in May 2014 witnessed a discussion on the meaning of peasantry and its relationship to the notion of working class on the occasion of a speech by an invited guest from the *Registro Nacional de Trabajadores y Empleadores Agrarios* (National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers, or

RENATEA), which gives permanent and temporary rural workers access to social security benefits (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014). The invited guest's speech provided an opportunity for the participants of MCC's provincial meeting to think about social class issues. "Can we be called rural workers?", asked someone in order to start the discussion session:

What kind of work do rural workers do?... What kind of organization do they have?... We should also talk about the experience of each zone [regions or communities]. What kind of experience does each zone have concerning rural workers?... What can we do to unite us, both peasants and rural workers?... What kind of rights do rural workers and peasants have (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014)?

The meeting participants split into five groups in order to discuss these questions for as long as 20 minutes, before holding a general discussion on this issue. During the general discussion, a woman intervened on behalf of her group to say that land concentration is detrimental both to peasants and rural workers, since it consolidates the power of agribusiness. The common interests of peasants and rural workers, therefore, calls for a peasant rather than trade union organization that could also be easily coopted by capitalists (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014). Someone from another group admitted that his group came to a similar conclusion, because they believe that both peasants and rural workers are separated from the means of production and that they are better off recuperating the means of production from the capitalists. Another discussant intervened to point out that there are a great number of peasants who also work as temporary rural workers, which renders the unified struggle of peasants and rural workers even more important (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014). Someone added to these comments that there are also peasants who cannot produce even though they have their own land, which forces them to work as rural workers. Another discussant expressed that peasants resemble self-employed workers, since they assume a dual role of producing and administering the production. However, due to deprived conditions, peasants are forced to work seven days a week like "slaves". Therefore, what brings peasants and rural workers together is that they both work as "slaves" (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014).

The fieldwork data indicate that the flexibility and fluidity of MNCI's self-identification with the peasantry go well beyond the rural context of the working class so as to embrace a multitude of the classes of labor in the city. One of the strongest affirmations of how MNCI is immersed in the classes of labor came from Marcos of

MCC, a youth organizer and MNCI's UNICAM coordinator from the UCAN central, who believes that indigenous peasantry can only become a class (for itself) if it comes to transcend its political isolation and constitute itself as a national movement beyond the rural-urban divide:

...As peasants, we could have closed ourselves to [narrow] indigenous communities, where we produce, where we have universities [i.e. UNICAM], peasant schools, where we have our own production and food, but that's not the life we want. No, we do not want to be alone. We want everyone to have a decent life, to have justice, first of all justice... And for that, we must make a huge path that must first include the most oppressed, because the most oppressed are those who are the most ignored: the poor, the Indians, the blacks, the *cholos* [*mestizos*] (Marcos, 18 March 2014) ...

Likewise, Adolfo of MOCASE-VC adds that his movement's belonging to the peasantry finds its fullest meaning when re-envisioned in tandem with other socially excluded, discriminated and stigmatized sectors representing the classes of labor. For Adolfo, these classes of labor – regardless of their urban and rural origin – can thus be re-envisioned as *negros* [blacks]:

We all are the *negros* of shit, the excluded of society, barbarians, bad people... drug addicts, and peasants, like the fools. You cannot imagine how many times we have been stopped [by the police] and asked for our documents. From whom do they ask for documents? From *gringos*?... No! From *negros*, right? Why do they ask for *negros*' documents? Well, it is because they are *boludos* [stupid people in Argentine slang]; because they are afraid of us; they know that we can react (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

What brings the various classes of labor together and make the peasantry join the ranks of the *negros*? According to Adolfo of MOCASE-VC, the *negros* of the classes of labor are brought together in a joint fight against social exclusion caused by the capitalist system itself:

So, this [capitalism] is what we need to dismantle, because the countryside, along with the barrios, *guachos* [orphans or street-rats in the Argentine slang] in the street or the square, cannot march on their own. First of all, they have to have the organizational power (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

Adolfo believes that the police is not the real enemy of the so-called *negros* or *guachos*. They are only used by capitalists as a tool to evict the classes of labor from their own territory. Therefore, the only way to confront capitalists is that "the peasantry and [its] movements generate the community", since "it is impossible to defend the territory

without power”. Adolfo believes that accumulating power by building communities is the greatest wealth that the peasantry possesses as a class:

The concept of poverty does not exist for the peasantry... because the peasantry possesses the vision of communities that will last forever as long as the world stands. The argument that we are poor is part of a global strategy of the World Bank along with other large financial and transnational companies. The peasantry is poor only if it remains without any reaction and productive capacity (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

As such, Adolfo’s testimonies make clear references to agrarian class formation, particularly when he argues that the peasantry is not a form of self-identification that is gained by birth and that one becomes a peasant when (s)he is organized as a class:

We are not born peasants; we make ourselves peasants. When one makes himself [a peasant], one learns and becomes involved in the struggle (Adolfo, 25 March 2014) ...

Therefore, class “power”, in Adolfo’s view, “has to do with organizational power and permanent struggle, which in this case lies in MOCASE-VC’s permanent struggle for the peoples’ rights” (Adolfo, 25 March 2014). Equally important is that organized and permanent struggle cannot be sustained without strategic allies equipped with a long-term vision of social transformation, which is reflected in MOCASE-VC’s efforts towards “the production of a peasant, indigenous, and also urban model of production” (Adolfo, 25 March 2014) to replace capitalism.

Adolfo is not alone in arguing that the common denominator of the classes of labor is the organized struggle against social exclusion imposed by capitalism.

According to Pablo:

Most of our uncles, elder brothers had to migrate [for cities] because of the lack of opportunities in the territory, and in certain cases because of their inability to defend the territory, because they [capitalists] put in our head the idea that those who have money control the justice, the security, and that they also control the politics. Many of us have fallen into this trap. Why do you think they have fallen into this trap? Because we were not organized. We now believe that we can discover our inner force within the organization and we have discovered that the real enemy is capitalism, not our neighbor. To us, it is really important to start seeing that the enemy is capitalism. Today, it is coming for land. Before, it was coming for natural resources. Today it is for land, tomorrow it will be for water (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

The anti-capitalist views of Andrea of MCC perfectly resonate with those of Adolfo and Pablo. She stresses that capitalism is against the peasantry by its very

nature (Andrea, 14 April 2014). It is not only responsible for evicting peasants out of their land, but also for undermining their health due to the extensive use of agrochemicals:

We don't have schools and we don't have doctors, because what capitalism wants is peasants to disappear: 'Peasants are backward. They don't exist. What we want is that they do not reproduce...' That is capitalism and it is individualistic. It does not think of the others' welfare, and it always wants more and more without caring for the rest. Therefore, this is what happens to us in the countryside. This is how they [capitalists] come to remove us from our land... They also come to spread poison to our gardens. This is all part of capitalism, and from an economic point of view, they do not care if we get sick, die from cancer [due to agrochemical contamination] (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

In the final analysis, the centrality of the myth of peasantness – namely MNCI's idealization and glorification of a peasant way of life so as to create a movement language that generates group cohesion and conviction – makes itself felt strongly in movement militants' perceived preservation and regeneration of community bonds regardless of provincial and (inter)national divides. The preservation and regeneration of peasant community bonds even in MNCI-affiliated urban communities contribute to the extension of the reach of class formation towards the classes of labor, or *negros* including rural workers and *barrios*. Interview data also reveal another dimension of peasantness that characterizes MNCI's cultural mobilization: the shared perception that the classes of labor suffer from similar problems (e.g. monoculture, migration and their separation from the means of production). MNCI's answer to these common problems is to advance agrarian class formation by reinforcing a peasant way of life centered on national-level organizing beyond the rural-urban divide and re-peasantization strategies. In turn, these strategies aim at *negros'* unification with the means of production for a more dignified life through land takeovers and the social use of land in the name of food sovereignty.

Re-Envisioning Indigeneity as a “Social Myth”: Anti-Capitalism, *Quichua* Revival, and Indigenous Territorialization of Space

MNCI's cultural mobilization appears to be amplifying the resonance of the myth of peasantry based on indigeneity. In MOCASE-VC's case, for example, the emphasis is placed on a combined critique of capitalism and colonialism, the revival of the *Quichua* language, and a mythical reconstruction of indigenous territory, which are all regarded as part of Santiago del Estero's indigenous legacy. As Gerardo Otero (2003) asserts,

indigenous territory carries a deeper connotation than that of simply land, which symbolizes more than the transferability and market value of plots. Conceived in tandem with *el Monte*, territory acquires an ecological as much as a cultural meaning that alludes to autonomy, self-governance and indigenous self-awareness (Otero, 2003, p. 250). In this sense, one could argue that MNCI's indigenous mobilization serves to re-establish its claim to peasantry on a different level.

Having become a movement language that advances political cohesion and conviction through "mythification", in the first place, indigeneity fosters a collective memory of historical oppression, which acts as a bridge to connect the lived experience of colonialism and physical extermination with the ravages of contemporary capitalism upon the peasantry. In this direction, Adolfo believes that reclaiming indigeneity can serve as a strategic reference point in the peasantry's struggle against the capitalist system (Adolfo, 25 March 2014). He goes on to add that indigeneity is also an integral part of the *negros* imaginary, and constitutes a chief identifier of Argentina's peasantry as a socially excluded sector:

The system was created such that indigenous peoples were portrayed as barbarians, bad peoples (Adolfo, 25 March 2014) ...

In her turn, Andrea points out the historical continuity between colonialism and capitalism, which mainly consists of the physical extermination of indigenous peasants:

So, when they [Europeans] came to America, they started to extract everything and assassinate, kill everyone and plunder everything, everything that the Mayas, Incas, Aztecs produced... We were forced to believe in the god that they believed in. We were forced to work for them. How did it work out for us?... Well, we are still not free... Even today, many indigenous people die and keep dying from hunger, from diseases that are not supposed to exist nowadays, from extreme poverty. People are forced to leave their land and they [capitalists] kill those people. Last time, they attempted to kill three of our indigenous comrades who were opposing an eviction. They made them leave their land (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

Similarly, the synthesis document of MNCI's first congress establishes a close relationship between the indigenous past and self-subsistence practices that are being threatened under the expansion of capitalist agriculture:

Our ancestors, the indigenous and native peoples used to grow their own food. They used to grow maize, squash and beans. They used to breed cow, goat and sheep. They used to make cheese and woolen threads that contained the tinctures of native forests. They used to collect forest fruits such as carob, mistol, tuna and medicinal herbs. They used to make mote (husked wheat), *chilcan* (drink made of corn flour), patay (cake

made with white flour and carob), *añapa* (alcoholic carob drink), *tulpo* (meal made with corn flour diluted in water), *arrope* (grape juice) and *bolanchao* (dessert made with mistol fruit) in the winter time... They were part of the land, the nature, and they used to take care of it, giving food and shelter (MNCI, 2012b, p. 193).

The physical extermination of indigenous peoples and destruction of subsistence economies were not the only outcome of colonialism and its current neocolonial manifestations under the advance of capitalism. Raimundo, one of the founders of MOCASE-VC, also adds that this process led to the disappearance of indigenous languages based on his own familial experience:

So, they [European settlers] fought and killed the Indians. I know this, because my father told me the story that was told by his father or grandfather. They killed the Indians. They were piling the Indians together, putting firewood on them, and setting them on fire... Also, when we were very young, my father, mother, they all used to speak *Quichua* with us... So, we grew up like that. It was so difficult for me to speak Spanish when I left home... Well, when I got back home in six months, I could not remember [my native language]: I was speaking Spanish and saying only some words in *Quichua*. And my father asked why I was not speaking *Quichua*. I replied: 'No, father, because I do not expect to stay here for long, I will go back and it will be difficult for me to get used [to Spanish] once more, if I started speaking *Quichua* and then switched to Spanish (MOCASE-VC, 2012, p. 19).

A similar testimony is offered by Beata Céspedes of Pinto locality in Santiago del Estero province. She confesses that she has even lost track of her family's ethnic origin, and she goes on to define herself as part of an indigenous community rather than as part of *mestizaje*. She evokes her grandparents as *Quichistas* (i.e. defenders of the *Quichua* language), but she also admits that she does not recall the distinctive traits of her *Quichua* origin. She acknowledges Cristina and Pocholo's knowledge of *Quichua*, the *referentes* of MOCASE-VC's Pinto chapter (MOCASE-VC, 2010, pp. 28-29).

Despite the lack of knowledge on ethnic origins and the details of the *Quichua* way of life, however, militants such as Paulo of Pinto express their determination in reviving the *Quichua* language (MOCASE-VC, 2012, pp. 158-159). Paulo goes on to mention how his community organized workshops and training sessions to learn *Quichua*. These workshops have not only provided general knowledge about *Quichua*, but also an awareness of how as members of the indigenous peoples they have been oppressed to forget the *Quichua* language and stigmatized as *negros* [black skinned] and "lazy bones" (MOCASE-VC, 2012, pp. 158-159). As will be explored in the coming sections, the *Quichua* education is not only limited to community-level initiatives, and

additionally, MOCASE-VC offers provincial-level *Quichua* courses at its School of Agroecology (SoA) in Quimilí (MOCASE-VC, 2012, pp. 158-159).

In the same way as the re-appropriation of the *Quichua*, MNCI's claim for indigenous "territory" represents another key pillar of its cultural mobilization that turns what Otero (1999) calls regional cultures into strategic tools that shape the demands and objects of struggle. In this context, Pablo emphasizes that territory has a deeper meaning than the individually-owned land:

Sometimes the concept of land which we have in our mind is that it belongs to us; that it is the space where we live, but the concept of territory is much more encompassing. The concept of territory derives from the practices we engage in, everyday customs, our ways of life by sharing the territory, sharing the water, by feeling part of the territory, of the whole family that we live (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

A similar portrayal of territory is offered by Adolfo of the Quimili chapter of MOCASE-VC (Adolfo, 25 March 2014). Similar to how Pablo portrays territory, Adolfo emphasizes that territory has a cultural meaning deeper than what land represents by itself:

When we speak of territory, we are talking about everything that surrounds us, not a piece of land, everything. Everything that surrounds us. Even the air, the wind... Very often, we think that the stones are dead, but actually, they are alive (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

As clarified in one of MNCI's training guides, the struggle for territory turns the land question into a cultural mobilization issue that concerns more than the problems of land access and production:

Territory is a space with its natural components (earth, mountains, trees sand dunes, flora, etc.) and social elements produced by men (houses, gardens, plants, fences, offices, silos, railroad lines, etc.), which are appropriated by a particular form of social relations (a tribe, family, business, cooperative, etc.) producing and maintaining it [territory] based on a particular form of power. Territories are not only physical spaces, but they are also social and cultural spaces in which social relations, ideas and words manifest themselves. Let's give a small example: my house is part of a territory, but there are also other territorial components that have existed before my time: the land, water streams, forest animals, wind. But I am also part of this space, because I am there and transforming it. In this space, I have constructed my house, farmyard, water well, furnace and kitchen. I sow plants and grew trees that were there and sown by others. I breed pigs, cultivate the garden, and even have a small football field. Besides, I am not alone. There are also people who live at the house and build the territory with me: my family, friends, neighbors... All those people relate to each other by forms of power (there are those who make decisions about some things, which... involve agreements and conflicts...). They also relate to the things inside the house through all

those activities that are carried out on a daily basis (feeding animals, cooking, cleaning, gardening, buying, selling, playing, studying, etc.). All this defines a way of living... in the territory (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, pp. 7-8).

In the above definition of territory, MNCI emphasizes the class nature of indigenous cultures and the way agrarian conflicts shape indigenous cultures embodied in the territory. Within this framework, the movement draws a clear line between indigenous peasants and agribusiness, which is portrayed as the principal threat against territorial autonomy:

The creation of territory is associated with relations of power and social control.... A social class does not fulfill itself in the territory of another social class. For that reason, the territories of agribusiness and peasants are different. The territories of agribusiness and peasants are organized in different ways based on different social relations. Agribusiness organizes its territory for commodity production, whereas peasant groups organize their territory primarily for their existence to improve their standard of living (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, pp. 9, 11).

It is therefore argued that a main cultural difference between the land colonized by agribusiness and territories occupied by indigenous peasants resides in the organization of space (i.e. "scenery"). Indigenous-peasant territories are depicted as having a culturally and economically diversified scenery that stands in contrast to capitalism's de-humanized zones marked by the uniformity of monocultural practices:

This difference is articulated in the scenery, which can be observed in the distinct forms of territorial organization. The scenery of agribusiness territories is homogenous, whereas the peasant territory is heterogeneous. The compulsion of monoculture practices toward uniformity and geometricality is characterized by low population levels, because the area is occupied by the commodities that dominate the scenery. The diversity of the elements that make up the scenery of the peasant territory is characterized by higher population levels, because this is where they [indigenous peasants] build their existence by producing food. Men, women, youth, children: they all live there and produce goods, culture and social infrastructure by building peasant territories (MNCI, 2012b, p. 10).

The passage above reveals how MNCI re-appropriates the concept of territory at the intersection of peasant production and indigenous reproduction. As such, MNCI maintains that indigenous peasants respect the land and territory, not only because their well-being depends on them, but they are also attached to each other via a sense of "mutual permanence":

[Territory] is not only a material, but also a symbolic and sacred place (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, p. 126).

For indigenous peoples and peasant families, the land is part of the life. It is part of the nature, which is also part of being human. Just as the land takes care of men, men should take care of her by establishing a relationship of mutual permanence. Moreover, the land is a means of subsistence and work (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, p. 44)

On the contrary, capitalism relegates land to a mere commodity, and it shows no interest in the well-being of land because of its lack of emotional attachment to the land that it exploits:

For large companies and producers, the land is but a thing, a commodity that can be bought and sold for whatever reason... This way of conceiving of the land makes them think that they are not obliged to take care of the land unless the law requires otherwise (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, p. 44).

In its mythical conceptualization of territory, MNCI does not conceal that it has drawn significant inspiration from Bolivian indigenous movements. In this regard, Adolfo suggests revisiting the Bolivian notion of indigenous territory in re-imagining community land as territory in Argentina (Adolfo, 25 March 2014). As such, territory is re-envisioned not just as part of private property relations and farming activity, but also an ideal of a “Well-Lived Life”:

Bolivia was one of the first countries that pointed towards a plurinational vision, and this has to do with a much broader question than nationalism. Now, all cultures are recognized and there is not a single culture imposed on the people. This is plurinational in the sense that they [indigenous communities] can all discuss and make proposals as the grassroots... They [Bolivians] call this form of peasant life as *buen vivir* [living well or good living]. They fight to live well in their territory. For better access to housing, health, electricity, production... This [struggle] comes with a cost, of course: much work, struggle and the people’s resistance (Adolfo, 25 March 2014) ...

Having discussed the broader significance of territory as a culturally constructed space that represents more than a piece of land, it would now be relevant to explain how MNCI organizes territory to reinforce the social myth of indigeneity. Overall, the organization of territory hinges on the regeneration of community organizing and communitarianism. To start with community organizing, Gonzalo of MOCASE-VC asserts that territory takes on a greater meaning and value when conceived in relation to the communities that inhabit and self-manage the space in question:

Territory is so important for us, because it *identifies* us... It is something that marks our identity also in that it is ours; we somehow have access to the territory, and also, the management of our territory is in our hands...

But, most of all, territory is territory when there are many families: the community (Gonzalo, 25 March 2014).

A MNCI training guide validates Gonzalo's remarks on the importance of community for making sense of the notion of territory and the ways in which territories identify the indigenous-peasantry in the course of agrarian class formation:

A community is an organization that is broader than family or kindred, and shares the vicinity on the territory, in a natural environment. They [communities] share the same language, culture and race.... Indigenous and rural communities possess a commonly shared vision integrated in the nature, because they are societies that have a direct and daily relationship with nature. The communitarian sense exists in many rural communities governed by reciprocity, participation in assemblies and other collective spaces for decision-making, collective labor, celebrations, including communitarian form of ownership on territories.... Therefore, community is not a project, a destination, a utopia, but rather a form of understanding and inhabiting the world (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, pp. 119, 122).

Adolfo believes that this historical awareness on indigenous communities is to be channeled to political organizing against private property in order to fully ensure the continuity of territorial building and defense:

Defending the territory has to do with the struggle against private property. But, what is private property? A piece of land, someone who owns it. Like those here, businessmen and soy producers. And they tell us that it is forbidden [in their land] to hunt and farm... No, we will show them [that they cannot forbid us from doing anything in our territory] ... If there is no organization, there is no struggle (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

It is therefore possible to maintain that being organized empowers movement participants by fostering a sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence. The empowering potential of indigenous organizing is vividly confirmed by Carmen of MCC, who admits that she overcame her fear and shyness by organizing:

The first thing that I recall [from my earlier years in the movement] – and I cannot get this [memory] out of my head – is that I went to this meeting [march] in Santiago del Estero... There was a comrade – she is no longer with us – asked me to go to the frontline and got me a flag, because everyone was carrying a flag. I said to myself: 'No, no way! There are lots of policemen here...' But I did it anyways and that's where I realized, 'if we can, we must give away the fear a little'... 'because we also have rights' (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

Certainly, gaining experience in organizing and realizing its benefits to the indigenous peasantry contribute to agrarian class formation at first hand. Here is how this contribution is demonstrated in Carmen's testimony on an individual level:

Being organized is a very big success, in the first place... [when we get organized] At least we know how we are going to defend ourselves or who to turn to if something [bad] happens... By organizing, we also know how to care for our animals... how to address animal diseases and many other things that can help us to do better (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

Carmen's testimony also shows that class formation is essentially an interactive process that is jointly constructed through mutual learning and teaching:

[By organizing] we learn and teach one another, because there are things that are not true and we get to know the truth through struggles and meetings. So, by being organized, we have learned many things, to be well, to live a little better... We are doing much better than before and we now know how we are going to present ourselves in front of someone (Carmen, 27 April 2014).

According to Carmen, knowledge gained through organizing is particularly important when confronting the agents of agribusiness and land evictors who used to exploit the under-education of most peasants. She shares her own experience in order to illustrate her point:

When we were unorganized, a well-spoken guy came and brought us a signed paper. We did not know the laws back then. He said, 'Look, you are the owner here and I am the owner of the lands there; but we have to sign this paper in order to get our pensions...' Well, I was not a pensioner and I wanted to get that pension, because I needed it, so I just signed it and soon it turned out that the paper I signed was not for a pension or anything like that, but they had come to take my house, but why did this happen to us after all? Because we were not organized, but now when they come here, we say 'no!' (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

The importance of being organized in the countryside is also vividly acknowledged by Quico from the indigenous Lote 5 community, which is affiliated with the Quimilí chapter of MOCASE-VC (Quico, 28 March 2014). In Quico's view, life in the countryside has a liberating potential, whose outcome depends on class solidarity through organizing:

What can you have in the town? Nothing! You are a slave for the rest of your life. You depend on others, for them to give you work, for you to become a peon of other. You depend on the clock for the rest of your life. If we were not organized, we would not have time for chatting with you now. We would not have known what happens to one another [in the countryside]. We would not have been like we are now (Quico, 28 March 2014).

As highlighted by Adolfo, communitarianism constitutes a distinguishing feature of indigenous community organizing:

We [as indigenous peoples] believe in communitarian property, not in private property. We also believe in the philosophy of indigenous peoples, which has to do with collectivity, collective work and the community in a strategic sense (Adolfo, 25 March 2014).

In MNCI's official definition of communitarianism, the communitarian form of ownership is associated with the notion of "*campos abiertos*" [open fields]:

Historically, we the indigenous peasants have possessed the land in a communitarian way, in *campos abiertos*. The communitarian use of the land is a custom rooted in our culture. That's the reason why we demand the state to recognize this. However, our juridical system does not recognize communitarian ownership (MNCI/MOCASE-VC/MCC, 2009, p. 10).

As will be explored in Chapter 5, the legal recognition of communitarian ownership constitutes a key element in MNCI's agenda of struggle, where it undertakes political campaigns and lobbying activities for a constitutional reform that would incorporate the communitarian rights into the constitution.

The notion of *campos abiertos* and its relationship with communitarian ownership are designated by Quico of MOCASE-VC as a collective space with shared resources and without fences (Quico, 28 March 2014). According to Quico, the commodification of land under the soy expansion has been the greatest threat to communitarian ownership. It has been obstructing rural communities' daily life, including children's access to the school:

Long ago, there were no fences. Now, children are forced to go around the fences, 5 to 10 km from here to the right, because there are fences and crops [blocking their way to the school]. Before, we had no fences, and we used to respect the 'norms', if you will. For example, 'this is here and I will do this work here or there', 'you will drive from here to there', but without any fences. If one's animals passed [to my personal space], I would say, 'go get your animals' or 'yours are there'. In other words, we would know [which animal] was whose, mine or even ours [i.e. collectively owned animals]. That is, we just used to manage the limits. And then, we used to go to the water place together and of course, the water was coming from one single well... for example, let's say animals come [to the well] to drink water. We all get together there, because I would be seeing what was mine, you would be seeing what was yours, he would be seeing what was his, and so we used to meet in the water place. If there were problems with the mill or the well, we were all there to help each other out and fix [the problem]" (Quico, 28 March 2014).

Even though the advance of capitalist agriculture has considerably constrained communitarianism, these communitarian practices have not been completely eradicated thanks to MNCI's efforts. In describing communitarian ownership as it is currently

practiced, Quico goes on to say that his community (Lote 5, located in 25 km from Quimilí) is comprised by nine families on 30,000 hectares of land:

The land belongs to the community. It is not individually-owned... The animals, for example: there are animals that belong to the community, to all of us. We manage the water wells together, which all belong to the community, too... Dams, mills, wells, corrals, and then small livestock: these are rather individually-owned (Quico, 28 March 2014) ...

Pablo of MOCASE-VC offers a similar depiction of communitarian ownership. He points out that territory is a shared space that encapsulates the sharing of not only material resources but also indigenous-peasant cultures and the responsibility of caring for nature:

The territory contains all those words that we have been practicing ancestrally, always on the basis that nature must be taken care of and that we must respect it, because otherwise nature itself will sooner or later punish us or harm us (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

In Pablo's view, communitarianism and the social function of land are key to a fuller understanding of territory as a political-cultural construct. As such, he goes on to assert that territory develops insofar as communities re-appropriate their ancestral culture as a collective good and collectively use the land with love and respect:

... Today the concept of land applies to us when you have tiny parcels of land, and we understand that it is 'mine', and we feel that it is ours. On the other hand, territories have to do with our customs, our culture, our way of life, where our grandparents, our parents have been developing ancestrally... Territory has to do with how we use, protect, and care for the nature, our way of life, and it seems to me that the concept of territory has to do with that... And, I think that we should start to see where we live and how we are developing today in a communitarian way (Pablo, 25 March 2014) ...

According to Pablo, the principle of the social function of land finds its expression in communities' efforts to commonly share and protect their ancestrally inherited space for a well lived life, which is to be bequeathed to future generations:

When we speak of the social function of the land, it is a social function for the use of the land for our communities, in order to take care of it, protect it, and in order for future generations to have a living space. Today it is under threat [for future generations]. As we say sometimes, it depends on us to ensure that future generations have a living space, a decent and uncontaminated place (Pablo, 25 March 2014) ...

Accordingly, Pablo offers a more encompassing definition of the social function of land, which also includes the duty to protect the land and indigenous-peasant cultures for future generations:

In territories, there is common grazing for the animals; there are shared watersheds, because if we parceled out our water, we would be [absurdly] selling water to our own brother, another member of our own community... Therefore, territory has a social function in that it is a living space where we can develop ourselves as peasant families, as peasant peoples, as indigenous peoples, as indigenous communities... And when we start thinking about a piece of land, it seems to me that we are losing the concept of community, of use of the territory, of our ways of life, of our customs, of our culture (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Finally, one should note that territory is not the only social space that makes up MNCI's indigenous spatial imaginary. This spatial imaginary is also extended to a larger social space formed by native forests (*el Monte*), which are under the threat of commodification due to the expansion of the agricultural frontier. In the popular usage, *el Monte* signifies remote lowland areas covered with bushes and sparse trees, different from its standard meaning as hills or mountains. Its historical and mythical significance comes from its status as the habitat of indigenous peoples and an object of respect for the Mother Earth (*Pachamama*). Tall hardwoods known as *quebracho colorado* and *blanco*, are frequently encountered in *el Monte*, and most communities appropriated them as an esthetical symbol of cultural identification with *el Monte*.

While the commodification of land destroys the natural environment and converts it into small towns and soy fields, the mythical image of *el Monte* and the symbol of *Quebracho* take on a greater cultural value as symbols of agrarian resistance. Indeed, *el Monte*'s significance is not confined to the cultural domain, since it also constitutes a vital source of economic subsistence for livestock breeding, hence a popular MOCASE-VC slogan that goes as "*el Monte es vida*" [native forests are life]. As re-asserted by Jorge of the APENOC central of MCC, *el Monte* provides not only food, shelter and the sustenance for animals, but it also serves as a safeguard against environmental stresses. He thus argues that *el Monte* is of a great value to the reproduction of the peasant way of life and livelihood:

El Monte is useful for many things, not only for feeding the animals, but it also serves us as an environmental benefit, for shade, and it also serves as a sponge so that the water stops and can be extracted from below... I know that the *el Monte* is good for many other things, too.... All our lives we have lived in *el Monte*... We make charcoal, we sell firewood (Jorge, 27 April 2014) ...

Moreover, Jorge thinks that *el Monte* should be treated as a legacy to be protected and cared for rather than a commodity used for profit. He draws a clear line between capitalist extractivism and the peasant's utilization of *el Monte* for livelihood (Jorge, 27 April 2014). According to him, agribusiness brings bulldozers to the countryside to extract as much natural wealth as possible without consideration of its destructive impact. These bulldozers are brought to destroy everything that was inherited from past generations at once:

There is a big difference between the bulldozer and us: the bulldozer comes and eradicates everything from the root. It burns everything on the soil and then leaves. By contrast, we have been working the soil all our life, [which is inherited] from our grandparents (Jorge, 27 April 2014) ...

Jorge also adds that being organized as a peasant movement has positively contributed to his growing awareness of the environmental and cultural significance of *el Monte*:

As soon as we got organized, we have understood that we should respect *el Monte* a little more and give it greater value... And also, when there is deforestation, the water flows and does not stop, so water levels get too low (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

As will be explored in Chapter 5, this growing awareness of the community-nature relation is also reflected in MNCI's demands to the legal protection of native forests.

In brief, MNCI's cultural mobilization efforts at agrarian class formation are patterned by a mythical reconstruction of indigenous legacy based on a minimum of four different but related themes. These themes contribute to group conviction and cohesion by creating a common language of indigeneity, and therefore shape MNCI's fundamental claims and demands regarding the abolition of capitalism, the constitutional recognition of the communitarian form of ownership and indigenous languages, and the protection of native forests. First, MNCI reclaims the indigenous history of oppression and reasserts the historical continuity of physical violence and land evictions under contemporary capitalism. Second, and more specifically, it draws attention to how these phenomena have contributed to the disappearance of indigenous languages and proposes to re-appropriate them by organizing alternative networks of language education. Third and fourth, land and native forests are re-envisioned as culturally constructed territorial spaces that re-assert an anti-capitalist indigeneity characterized by community organizing and communitarian ownership.

Political Organizing for Food Sovereignty: The Maximum Program of Indigenous-Peasant Mobilization towards Agrarian Class Formation

It seems that MNCI's appropriation of a social myth of indigenous peasantry ultimately defines its superordinate ideological programme of food sovereignty. Flor, of the Quimilí chapter of MOCASE-VC, argues that this programme does not consist of a mere demand for the creation of indigenous reserves or ecological protection of indigenous space (Flor, 10 April 2014). It is a question of re-organizing production, or that of re-constituting the indigenous peasantry as a producing class respected by society:

They [opponents of the movement] believe that the peasantry is poor, backward and that it does not contribute to the development of the province, that it does not bring wealth to the province, that it does not bring earnings to the province. They believe that what they need to do is to develop, go to the people and civilize them, because they believe that peasants are barbarian, that they live in a *rancho* made of shit, that they are dirty and poor... Our main struggle is for society to recognize that the comrades who live in the countryside produce food and that we do not want indigenous reserves, or territories as such, like living in a natural or forest reserve. No, we believe and we are convinced that the comrades produce food and that they play a role in this society. They play a productive function, and they are not there only for looking after the plants, do you get what I mean? And that is our main ideological fight, and somehow [this fight] has been [more or less successful] in some sectors, thanks to the extension of rights in recent years (Flor, 10 April 2014) ...

A similar line of argument comes from Pablo, who argues that the movement needs an alternative model of production that would reclaim the land and indigenous cultures:

If they [capitalists] get to take the land, we lose our identity as a people, our culture, our customs, our way of life. Our identity would change, and they would impose another model that is not the one we want to choose, and that would be very grave for us as a people (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Pablo makes himself clear that the land is but a class issue and that its defence necessitates indigenous peasantry to become a class-for-itself:

... because, if today they come for one, tomorrow they will come for the other, and then they will come for all. The expansion of industrial agriculture along with that of genetically modified crops and intensive production is incredible. A day could come when there is no work, poverty is everywhere and nothing is produced, because the land is in fewer hands (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

More importantly, however, Pablo emphasizes that the constitution of indigenous peasantry as a class cannot be realized unless it proposes an alternative model of development to capitalist agriculture in line with food sovereignty:

What is being produced today is only forage. That intensive agriculture would alleviate hunger is a huge lie, because it only enriches a few and produces nothing more than forage... In return, I believe that we also must produce a new model... Whoever says that we do not produce food is lying: we all produce food; we are food producers (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

In his turn, Ángel portrays food sovereignty in the broader terms of social class and a form of living a dignified life:

Food sovereignty has to do with our involvement in a form of living life, which is not the one proposed by consumerism and international capitalism, and it has to do with the dispute over the meaning of existence. It has to do with the dispute of happiness, that the conception of man's happiness is the one which will win in the end (Ángel, 18 March 2014) ...

In Ángel's definition, food sovereignty is presented as a class-based notion that expresses a revolutionary aspiration towards a better way of life defined in relation to happiness and dignity. According to Ángel, the revolutionary aspiration of food sovereignty necessitates an ambitious agenda of hegemonic struggle for moving the working class away from consumerism and international capitalism:

The worker could possess the wrong concept of happiness and dignity as [advocated by] the bourgeoisie or capitalism, but we should also dispute [and change this concept] through the means of communication that we have. We formed our own FM, our own radio stations, and I believe it is also necessary to work on TV broadcasting (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

A similar class-based definition of food sovereignty is given by Caldera of MOCASE-VC's Quimilí chapter, who argues that food sovereignty is more than simply practicing agroecological farming and involves a vision of society that transcends capitalism:

We must change. Otherwise, we will keep being screwed. So, this is where we must combine with science in order to see how the outcome [of this practice] can be improved based on the objective of acquiring the power, the power to change things, because otherwise we – and the people – will keep being screwed. This is food sovereignty! It is not only taking care of the animals, like our ancestors did. It is the power to change besides that, and without losing the [indigenous] essence and becoming a capitalist *garca* [a slang word used to describe a bad and dishonest person, which can be synonymized with "swindler"]. It is to impose conditions on the bad people. This is food sovereignty (Caldera, 24 March 2014).

The testimony of Victoria of MCC is in line with how Flor, Ángel and Caldera who associate food sovereignty with the struggle for a dignified life as a class-based notion beyond the rights discourse (Victoria, 22 April 2014). In Victoria's definition of food sovereignty, moreover, the class character of food sovereignty finds its fullest expression in the alliance of the urban and rural classes of labor. As such, food sovereignty consists of a radical transformation of society via an "integral" agrarian reform to the benefit of these classes. In Victoria's own words, food sovereignty does not only consist of "talking about the [alliance of the] countryside and the city" or "how we distribute the food between these two spaces":

It seems to me that [when it comes to food sovereignty] we are indeed talking about these issues, but we are also talking about dignity; a dignity of a particular subject; a certain type of dignity; a certain way of seeing the land... basically, not as a commodity or something that can be taken or allocated for trade purposes. Rather, it is about starting to discuss this: What is the land for? What is the land good for (Victoria, 22 April 2014)?

Victoria believes that the land should be used to sustain the livelihood of the classes of labor. In turn, this sustenance can only be assured through a stronger class alliance for ensuring their access to basic livelihood resources such as food, water, electricity and education (Victoria, 22 April 2014).

In Edy's view, likewise, food sovereignty is indeed a social-class issue where the peasantry resides at the centre of class conflicts, but its reach goes well beyond the rural-urban divide (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014). As regards the social class context of food sovereignty, Edy maintains that the well-being of small producers is threatened primarily by capitalist businessmen:

There are many obstacles to living a stable life, or to living on farming and breeding animals, because those who live in the countryside do not have the opportunities that a businessman has. They produce in small quantities, and cannot bring their produce to the city because they do not have the permission [license]. Why? Because only businessmen can have the license... The countryside and the city, they all work for the businessmen. Because power is always carried over by those who have money: entrepreneurs (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014).

As such, Edy advocates that the incapacitation of the classes of labor by capitalists helps to reproduce the existing inequalities and hinders food sovereignty:

Let's say, you live on ovine breeding in the countryside. What happens, let's say, if you produce milk and cannot sell it in the city because you don't have the license? The same authorities and businessmen are involved, as far as the license is concerned. They [the authorities] make it easier for businessmen [the middlemen] to get a sales authorization.

They [businessmen] have more earnings, so they can buy at bargain prices in the countryside and sell it in the city. The problem is huge, and I think that it will eventually end up uniting the countryside and the city (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014).

Therefore, Edy suggests that food sovereignty in the countryside is inextricably linked to food sovereignty in the city. The inability of direct producers to sell their own produce in the city and the reign of middlemen and other capitalist entrepreneurs result in higher-priced food in the city:

Let's say, if you go to a grocery store and buy a kilo of tomato, it will cost 18 pesos in the city. But did they buy from the producers at that price?... No, they should have paid no more than 10 pesos per kg. That is a big problem. Because we cannot help each other... in the countryside, the city, *barrios*, peasants. What is needed then? A separate political action (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014)!

By "separate political action", Edy refers to the joint struggle of the classes of labor independently from capitalists:

I know, it is not easy to do that, but I believe that here, that peasant organization and all other organizations are beginning to organize together and realize that we will get better if we get more organized. We can change, because much depends on our own organizations. The organization is us, and if we want to change, I believe, we must be organized and grow stronger. For that, however, we need the support of all our comrades, from all organizations [from both the countryside and the city] (Edy Masco, 22 April 2014).

To recapitulate, finally, the indigenous-peasant myth as advocated by MNCI is embodied in its ideological programme of food sovereignty insofar as the critique of capitalism and communitarianism are concerned. Another important point is the ways in which MNCI conceptualizes food sovereignty as a strategy that inevitably leads to class conflicts in the sense of fighting the capitalist model of intensive and monocultural agriculture, allying with the classes of labor beyond the rural-urban divide and carrying out an "integral" agrarian reform that touches on every aspect of peasants' life beyond food and agriculture. As such, MNCI's class-based conceptualization of food sovereignty could be said to contribute to agrarian class formation on an ideological level that helps bind the organizational level.

Conclusion

As proposed by NSMTs (See Chapter 2), culture assumes a pivotal role in justifying and motivating MNCI's mobilization. The fieldwork data suggest that MNCI's self-identification with indigenous peasantry does more than triggering collective action. In the longer term, it shapes the "content" of MNCI's struggle towards class formation. From an instrumentalist perspective, MNCI's cultural mobilization determines its claims to material and symbolic resources such as land, language and native forests. Combined with a constructivist approach, these claim-making acts take on a "mythical" meaning that turn the land question into a question of indigenous territory, the language question into a struggle for the re-appropriation of indigenous languages, and the question of native forests into a matter of reclaiming *el Monte*. This mythical "content" contributes to agrarian class formation insofar as it transcends the mere aim of social mobilization and sets "new rules for common living", to quote Gramsci (1975, p. 62), even though class agents are devoid of the so-called primordial markers of indigeneity and rather draw on generic references to a glorious past. MNCI members' testimonies also reveal that they are not interested in merely reclaiming indigeneity as rural communities, and that they aspire to create a national class unity by appealing to the rest of the classes of labor based on a re-peasantization claim, be it to rural workers or informal workers in the slums. As such, communitarianism and the programme of food sovereignty merge to become MNCI's organizational language that continuously triggers group conviction and keeps the mass emotions alive. In this sense, MNCI's cultural mobilization demonstrates how food sovereignty movements can transcend their initial state of social heterogeneity and go beyond the rural-urban divide to assume a national organized presence based on a higher awareness of their grievances. MNCI's mobilization of social myths thus cannot be fully understood with reference to its cognitive dimension alone. As will be discussed in the following chapters, it relies on material dynamics at the organizational level including state intervention and leadership structures.

Chapter 5: The Politics of Independence and Cooptation: Extracting Popular-Democratic Concessions from the State

An adequate assessment of agrarian class formation necessitates more than the mere analysis of class-structural processes and dispossession of agrarian communities. Additionally, a set of triggering factors needs to be considered in order to fully appreciate the process by which previously atomized and marginalized agrarian communities turn into a coherent class of indigenous peasantry. The previous chapter addressed only one of the three mediating factors leading to agrarian class formation, namely the cultural factors that are deployed through the mobilization of social myths around peasant communities, indigenous territory, anti-capitalist communitarianism, and food sovereignty. These factors were important in terms of their role in determining the content of popular struggles, which in turn allowed for the articulation of class grievances and political demands with a certain level of coherence (Otero, 1999).

Agrarian class formation concerns more than the self-identification of class actors as culturally coherent entities with similar aspirations, which points to the need for addressing other triggering factors beyond the cultural sphere. The present chapter aims to transcend the culturalist Thompsonian understanding of class formation by focusing on the contentious nature of state-social movement interactions and the way it shapes political-cultural class trajectories. The focus of attention is not on state policies in the agricultural sector per se, which was previously addressed in Chapter 3 regarding the political economy of Argentine agriculture. Transcending the political-opportunities approach of the Katznelsonian model, the emphasis here is rather placed on how Argentina's indigenous-peasant movement preserves its independence from the state and shapes state policies so as to constitute itself into an independent class agent with greater political engagement and mobilizing power (Otero, 1999). As a cautionary note, however, assessing the substantiality of the gains extracted from the state remains outside the boundaries of this chapter.

The research questions that frame this chapter are as follows: How can MNCI – and MOCASE-VC as its largest organizational constituent – obtain concessions from the state without giving up its independence? Has this organization been able to constitute itself politically as an independent class agent by preserving its original claims and mobilizing capacity with no or minimal cooptation? With these questions in mind, the present chapter is organized in three sections. This introductory section elaborates on

what I mean by movement independence and cooptation in order to set the tone for the rest of the chapter. In the next section, I provide a brief survey of the literature on the Argentine left and the Kirchner governments, whose conclusions shed light on the relevance of the question of independence and cooptation within the context of Argentina. The third section starts by exploring how Argentina's left turn under the Kirchner governments has facilitated class organizing through greater inclusion in welfare networks and mutual dialogue platforms as well as greater opportunities for peaceful mobilization. The fourth section looks at how the perceived limits of *kirchnerismo* and class character of the state in favor of extractive capitalism facilitate movement independence away from full cooptation by the state. Finally, the fifth section elaborates on what sorts of popular-democratic advances MNCI has achieved by carrying out an independent agenda of struggle that came to shape certain state policies. I have moved these sections into the past tense given that the post-fieldwork context has considerably changed with the demise of *kirchnerismo* and resurgence of Argentine neoliberalism in 2015.

Movement independence and cooptation – the two key concepts that underlie this chapter – require further clarification before I proceed to examine MNCI's experience. Independence, used interchangeably with self-determination, pertains to a movement's ability to hold on to its founding principles and values along with its peculiar way of interpreting events and giving course to its own actions without major compromise to external actors (as adapted from Schwartz, 2010, p. 588). In its own language, MNCI's founding principles and values find a powerful expression in food sovereignty (see Chapter 4 for more details), which is framed as the ultimate goal of carrying out an "integral agrarian reform", i.e. a reform that combines land distribution with sustainable agriculture and social inclusion in small-scale production, health, education, communication and gender, among other fundamental livelihood conditions (MNCI, 2010, pp. 11-13). Of all other issues, however, the movement prioritizes the struggle against Argentina's productivist and export-oriented agribusiness model of soy monoculture along with its immediate consequences such as land concentration, environmental degradation and forced evictions (MNCI, 2010, p. 8; MNCI, 2012b, pp. 12-13).

Movement independence can be associated with popular-democratic mobilization outcomes. As defined by Gerardo Otero (1999), popular-democratic mobilization speaks to a class movement's ability to shape state policies while

maintaining its independence. Popular-democratic outcomes stand in opposition to their bourgeois-democratic counterparts, which involve movement cooptation through material incentives offered by the state. In Gramsci's lexicon, hegemony refers to "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (2012b, p. 12). As such, in the case of bourgeois-hegemonic state intervention, the "dominant fundamental group" corresponds to the bourgeoisie and its cooptative power, whereas popular-democratic mobilization implies an outcome favorable of the classes of labor (or the "subaltern classes") vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie. In turn, oppositional outcomes refer more simply to cases in which the state does not yield to making concessions or engages in the repression of a mobilization.

As far as bourgeois-democratic outcomes are concerned, therefore, the loss of movement independence results in cooptation, i.e. compromises leading to absorption "into the policy structures that one has been fighting against" (Ferree & Hess, 2000, p. 141) at the expense of undermining the movement's defining political values or program. A potential outcome of cooptation is de-mobilization, i.e. the renunciation of the centrality of the struggle for land and avoidance of confrontation with soy agribusiness and the state in exchange for short-term material gains such as funding and access to public office. Theoretically, the desired mobilization outcomes for agrarian class formation are maximum levels of independence and minimal levels of cooptation. In case of cooptation, the fear of losing the state support and formerly granted privileges would deviate class movements from their original principles and contentious claims.

In light of these conceptual discussions, my main hypothesis suggests that MNCI and its constituents (particularly MOCASE-VC and MCC) have indeed established closer relationships with the state in the Kirchners era, and eventually come to obtain a number of favorable concessions from the state, although the cessation of land evictions and agrarian reform could not be definitively achieved. These concessions appear to have to do more with the organizational power of the indigenous peasantry as a class-for-itself than the leftist benevolence of the government. In turn, the expansion of the movement's material resources, participation in dialogue platforms with the state and greater opportunities for peaceful mobilization seem to have contributed to the growth of its constituency. In this favorable environment, MNCI has adopted a strategy of transforming the state from within without de-mobilizing. However, the continuation of capitalist-extractivist development policies as well as the limited character of state

assistance seems to have fostered a considerable amount of skepticism against the state on MNCI's part. This skepticism could be seen as a chief factor in inhibiting MNCI's full cooptation and fueling its autonomous and disruptive thrust in favor of a "popular-democratic" approach to interactions with the state. By disruptive, I refer to "the leverage that results from the breakdown of institutionally regulated cooperation", or "a power strategy that rests on withdrawing cooperation in social relations" (Piven, 2008, pp. 21, 23). Accordingly, MNCI's most striking popular-democratic achievements could be observed in an infamous *caudillo*'s removal from office through political and legal pressure, successful lobbying activities for bills on food sovereignty, alliance-building efforts for the control of state resources, sustenance of land conflicts, and creation of semi-autonomous peasant schools.

The Latin American Left and Argentina under the Kirchner Governments

The first decade of the 2000s witnessed a tremendous surge of the Latin American social-movement and political left, which was much heralded for its unparalleled strength and influence. The region-wide turn to the left became notorious with the rise to power of Hugo Chávez after the Venezuelan presidential election of 1998. Then other left-leaning leaders ascended to government office in countries such as Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua. By 2010, self-designated leftist figures accounted for more than 60% of the region's governments, gaining over 50% of Latin Americans' electoral favor (Arditi, 2010; Gürcan, 2013; Gürcan & Bakiner, 2015; Kaltwasser, 2011). Mostly geared to erode the ideological monopoly of neoliberalism and the regional influence of the United States, Latin America has ultimately grown to be the epicenter of political struggles worldwide despite a number of electoral setbacks since 2015 (Ballvé, 2006; Burbach, Fox & Fuentes, 2013; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2011; Rodríguez-Garavito, Barrett & Chavez, 2008; Saad-Filho, 2005; Singham, 2015).

As part of the new regional wave of leftism in the 2000s, the Kirchner governments in Argentina (2003-2015) faced massive controversy about their "leftist" orientation. From the point of view of their leftist critics, Argentina is just another example of the neostructuralist model of social liberalism, or a "reformed" and "humanized" articulation of neoliberal political economy (Leiva, 2008; Veltmeyer, 2012). For its rightward detractors, on the other hand, Argentina is but a twin sister of radical leftism à

la Chávez, which is permeated by irresponsible populism and economic interventionism (Castañeda, 2006). In either case, the prevailing opinion about the implications of *kirchnerismo* for progressive movements is that welfare concessions and the government's anti-imperialist and human rights discourse have ended up coopting the vast majority of movements in the direction of neoliberal policies (Castorina, 2014; Prevost, 2012; Robinson, 2008).

The scope of controversies is equally wide-ranging regarding Argentina's policy regime in the agri-food sector. From the standpoint of agribusiness¹, the Kirchner governments' interventionism, heavy tax policies and extended welfare programs reveal its radical populist essence. According to leftist critics, Argentina's increasing reliance on soy agribusiness is a chief indicator of the neoliberalization of its agri-food system (Teubal, 2008; Gras & Hernández, 2014, 2016). Indeed, this line of critique has strong empirical value. In reality, Argentina has emerged as one of the most important agents in the global "biotechnological revolution", known as the technological mainstay of the "neoliberal food regime" (Otero, 2012). Having become a leader in transgenic soy production, Argentina is thus known as the world's top soybean meal and oil exporter, and ranks third in soybean exportation (Bloomberg, 2014a, 2014b). On the one hand, public institutions provide soy growers with a strong technical and research infrastructure (Hilbert & Galligani, 2014). On the other hand, the taxation of soy exports has generated revenues that are a major source of funding for Kirchners' redistributive welfare programs (Richardson, 2009; Rivera-Quinones, 2014). Just like high levels of taxation for exports arouse the discontent of agribusiness circles, the government-supported transgenic soy monoculture is a major source of popular contention in the countryside, because a growing number of peasant communities lose access to natural resources and get evicted from their land. Several of those who manage to stay in the countryside are heavily affected by the heavy use of agrochemicals, which undermines land fertility, destroys the harvest, and causes serious health problems within communities. This is the reason why the advance of transgenic soy monoculture was met with widespread land conflicts despite the pacifying effects of social welfare programs under *kirchnerismo* (Cáceres, 2014). As such, the contradictory nature of state intervention in Argentina seems to have fostered continuing agrarian mobilization.

¹ Argentina's large agricultural producers are represented by *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, *Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas*, *Federación Agraria Argentina*, and *Confederación Intercooperativa Agropecuaria*.

Regarding the state of the literature on *kirchnerismo*, William I. Robinson's work is emblematic of the skeptical camp about the Kirchner governments' leftism. Robinson argues that the Argentine experience is characterized by the cooptation of progressive forces, namely their incorporation "into the dominant [neoliberal] project in an effort to prevent the formation of counter-hegemony" (Robinson, 2008, p. 290). Robinson goes so far as to assert that the Argentine experience has initiated "a new wave of capitalist globalization with greater credibility than their orthodox neoliberal predecessors" (Robinson, 2008), because it failed to bring about a significant redistribution of wealth, property and income by remaining content with mild redistributive reforms.

Robinson is not alone in his skepticism about the Argentine left, which is indeed made on a number of valid concerns. According to Gary Prevost, the rise to eminence of progressive movements under *kirchnerismo* could not have generated any genuine transformative outcomes other than their "incorporation into the mainstream... as non-governmental organizations operating within the Argentine system" (Prevost, 2012, p. 47 [in the Kindle edition]). The cooptation of progressive movements was not only achieved through populist actions such as the rapprochement with Cuba and Venezuela as well as and rupture with the Bush administration, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. *Kirchnerismo* also relied on hegemonic legal and symbolic initiatives to incorporate human rights movements through the punishment of human rights violators and the creation of museums and memorial sites. A majority of the *piquetero* movement along with recuperated workplaces and Peronist unionism – the prominent social movements actors of the post-2001 era – were coopted through government subsidies, social work projects and state offices. These concessions went hand in hand with neoliberal macroeconomic initiatives that favored an extractive and export-driven model of economic growth. Therefore, transgenic soy monoculture, open-pit mining and mega-dam projects have been the driving force behind Argentina's neoliberalism (Castorina, 2014; Prevost, 2012).

According to Castorina, moreover, the re-nationalization of the water company, postal services and the San Martín Railway can be better explained by unfavorable market conditions, namely the reluctance of foreign capital to purchase these services, rather than the government's leftist intention to expand its public services (Castorina, 2014). In any case, Castorina points to the fact that almost all of these re-nationalized companies have been re-privatized by being sold to local capitalists or turned into joint

ventures. Furthermore, the creation of *Energía Argentina Sociedad Anónima* with the aim of exercising state control over the oil ground rent does not really count as a genuine nationalization attempt, because it has become nothing more than “an office for adjudicating concessions to multinational corporations like Pan American, Repsol and Tecpetrol” (Castorina, 2014, p. 89).

Neal P. Richardson reframes the discussion on Argentina’s *kirchnerismo* as “export-oriented populism” (Richardson, 2009). According to him, the Néstor Kirchner era (2003-2007) was marked by significant attempts to build a populist coalition in expanding the government’s support base to organized labor and domestic business interests. In doing so, *kirchnerismo* relied on an active encouragement of soy exports. Soy exportation was not only facilitated by favorable conditions in the global marketplace, but also by technological improvements in agricultural machinery, farming techniques, seed technology, fertilizers and pesticides (Richardson, 2009). In turn, export taxes were used for nominal wage increases and populist subsidies such as those on consumption goods. Richardson argues that Argentina’s export-oriented populism is not sustainable in the long-term because of high levels of dependency on international markets. Additionally, heavier dependence on export taxation exerts an alienating influence on the capitalist rural sector, as evidenced in the 2008 rural conflict that erupted as a reaction to the government’s intention to increase the export tax burden and came to generate an unanticipated resistance (Richardson, 2009).

While acknowledging the neoliberal content of Argentina’s macroeconomy, Ernesto Vivares and colleagues offer a more nuanced approach to *kirchnerismo* (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009). Although Argentina’s center-left government claimed to offer a so-called “national-popular” restructuring of the economy, it initially relied on a broader coalition that does not only embrace popular classes, but also the central components of neoliberal capitalism including large companies such as *Perez Companc*, *Techint*, *Astra (Reposol)*, *CEI Citicorp Holdings*, *Loma Negra*, *Macri* and *Soldati* (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009, pp. 203-204). On the one hand, Argentina underwent a significant shift toward the left with the cancellation of the external debt and the reform of the pension system that eliminated the private pension scheme as a requirement for pension access. These advances helped *kirchnerismo* to build and consolidate its legitimacy in the eyes of popular classes while gaining independence from the main suprapstate neoliberal institutions. On the other hand, the fate of the

economy was entrusted to an export-led growth strategy centered on transgenic soy mono-cropping (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009, pp. 205-206). Ernesto Vivares and colleagues point out that these contradictory policies have been implemented at the expense of a sharp political polarization between popular classes and the conservative “white middle and upper classes with agro-export and finance sectors” who increasingly resented *kirchnerismo* (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009, p. 214). Although the authors recognize that Argentina’s center-left governments do not express a revolutionary thrust (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009), they refrain from painting a dichotomous, black or white picture, as presented by others (Castorina, 2014; Prevost, 2012; Robinson, 2008).

Sebastián Etchemendy and Candelaria Garay agree with Vivares and colleagues about not downplaying the importance of Argentina’s leftward advances in conflicting with the oil industry, resisting agro-exporters’ reluctance to accept higher export taxes, nationalizing the pension system, and allying with progressive movements by offering policy concessions, inclusionary citizenship rights and state appointments (Etchemendy & Garay, 2011). Similar to Vivares and colleagues (2009) who refrain from presenting a black or white picture of Argentina’s left turn as a purely neoliberal experience, Etchemendy and Garay assert that populist alliances with labor unions, unemployed workers and other left-wing Peronists have been more or less effective in countering “political factions and economic groups associated with neoliberalism” (Etchemendy & Garay, 2011, p. 303). Meanwhile, they also draw attention to the fact that the government’s clash with business interests mostly occurred in the area of social policies and regulatory policies of price control and taxation on public utilities and wage goods. On the other hand, failure to capitalize conflicts over macroeconomic policies and state ownership severely contradicts the government’s anti-neoliberal rhetoric (Etchemendy & Garay, 2011, pp. 283-284). In tune with Castorina, Etchemendy and Garay argue that the government’s approach to nationalization reflected a pragmatic orientation, because most state take-overs resulted from conflicts with the private sector on price rates and market conditions (Etchemendy & Garay, 2011). For example, *Aguas Argentinas* was re-nationalized only after the French company Suez’s departure. The take-over of the main company in electricity distribution (EDENOR) was the only case in which the government took the initiative for nationalization. However, EDENOR ended up being transferred

from the hands of the French firm EDF to the national business group Dolphin (Etchemendy & Garay, 2011, p. 293).

A similarly nuanced approach to the Argentine left is offered by Federico M. Rossi (2015b), who argues that the inclusion of progressive movements in policy making and welfare networks cannot be simply reduced to a mere instance of populist cooptation to advance the neoliberal-capitalist agenda, as addressed in others' research (Castorina, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009). Rossi prefers to depict the rise to eminence of progressive movements such as *piqueteros* as a struggle of recognition and re-incorporation into society. These movements have previously been ignored by neoliberal governments, and a so-called "postneoliberal" (2015b, p. 18) environment encourages them to mobilize as legitimate actors with legitimate claims related to access to employment, water, health, vocational training and education. In the meantime, they have turned into primary agents of social transformation rather than simply coopted subjects of the *kirchnerista* apparatus (Rossi, 2015b, pp. 3-4, 6, 16). As of 2005, a number of *piquetero* movements such as *Federación de Tierra, Vivienda y Hábitat*, *Movimiento Evita* (Evita Movement) and *Barrios de Pie* have started to assume secondary roles in the executive and legislative branches, including the ministries of Social Development, Federal Planning and International Relations. As of 2007, several *piquetero* leaders have taken office in federal and provincial governments. These "outcomes were the result not of co-optation of the movement but of an expansion of the number of legitimate actors" (Rossi, 2015b, p. 15).

Miguel A. Rivera-Quiñones maintains that the Argentine "postneoliberalism" experience is represented by the *kirchnerista* "national-popular" project. A defining characteristic of this project has been the paradigmatic shift of the locus of economy from unproductive financial activities towards productive economy (Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, pp. 69, 73). Another defining characteristic of the so-called national-popular project consists of the considerable growth in the export sector, especially in transgenic soy exportation. Indeed, this situation was heavily encouraged by high global commodity prices, which contributed to an annual average of 12 billion dollar-worth trade surplus in the period 2004-2010 (Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, pp. 67-68). Rivera-Quiñones emphasizes that revenues generated from the taxation of soy exports constitute the backbone of Kirchners' social programs. As such, Argentina's national capitalism obtained significant improvements including a 200% minimum wage increase between the period 2003-2010

and 34% real wage increase by 2009 (Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, p. 71). Rivera-Quiñones stresses that “industrial growth, debt reduction, trade surpluses, international reserves accumulation, the end of IMF's disciplinary power, and growing social expenditure all exemplify a very different process of capital accumulation from the one that was dominant before 2001 crisis” (Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, p. 83). On the other hand, there can be observed striking continuities with neoliberalism, particularly with the strategic importance of foreign exchange and tax revenues as well as the growing economic weight of multinational corporations such as Cargill, Nidera, Dreyfus, Bunge and ADM (Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, p. 83).

In his turn, finally, Christopher Wylde maintains that *kirchnerismo* is characterized by a turn to a state-centric neodevelopmentalist model (Wylde, 2016). The prefix “neo” in neodevelopmentalism indicates that Argentina has not simply returned to an import-substitution model consolidated with widespread social programs. Instead, it gives greater weight to export-led development and continues the neoliberal logic of safety-net welfare that is selectively geared toward families rather than systematically tackle poverty and inequality (Wylde, 2011). Meanwhile, the state consolidates its position as an agent of redistribution and market regulation with greater emphasis on tax collection in order to expand public expenditure. Wylde contends that the “deepening” of the postneoliberal model under Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has worsened political and economic unsustainability, as previously anticipated by Richardson (Richardson, 2009; Wylde, 2016). The deterioration of global markets, especially after 2012, has exposed Argentina’s excessive vulnerability to international demand and price fluctuations. Cristina Kirchner’s inability to control inflation rates coupled with the imposition of import restrictions further alienated Argentine middle classes. Tax impositions on the rural sector antagonized business interests and led to an unlikely coalition against *kirchnerismo*, which eventually resulted in political polarization and collapse of the multi-class alliance as originally foreseen by Néstor Kirchner (Wylde, 2016).

In conclusion, the skepticism against *kirchnerismo* (Castorina, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009) cannot be easily discarded as far as the continuities of the neoliberal model of development are concerned. Some of the most noticeable continuities speak to *kirchnerismo*’s failure to carry out a significant redistribution of wealth and overly pragmatic concessions to multinational corporations,

especially in transgenic soy monoculture and open-pit mining. On the other hand, it is equally not easy to nullify Argentina's radical transformations under *kirchnerismo*, which are perhaps best illustrated in the reduction of the Gini Index from 53.54 in 2003 to 42.7 in 2014, while social spending soared from 8.4 to 12.6 in the same period (World Bank, 2017; CEPAL 2018). Whilst a full-fledged study of *kirchnerismo*'s achievements is beyond the reach of this chapter, one relevant question that remains to be addressed is whether such reduction of inequality and increase in social spending fatalistically condemn progressive social movements to cooptation and a status of complicity with neoliberalism, especially if they are somewhat involved in *kirchnerista* welfare networks and other institutions that were created under *kirchnerismo*. Perhaps, a more nuanced and less reductionist approach (Vivares, Echenique & Ozorio, 2009; Etchemendy & Garay, 2011; Rossi, 2015b, p. 15; Rivera-Quiñones, 2014, pp. 69, 73; Wylde, 2016) is needed to address to what extent the classes of labor have been able to extract popular-democratic concessions by relying on their endogenous capacity without completely giving up their independence. The rest of this chapter is thus devoted to a closer examination of MNCI's individual organizational case as to how it has engaged the *kirchnerista* apparatus and whether it has completely lost or preserved its independence in the process.

Leftward Shift in Government Policy and MNCI's Participation

This section discusses how the leftist policy orientation of the *kirchnerista* era has affected MNCI's development as a national class movement. The first sub-section focuses on MNCI's engagement in the *kirchnerista* welfare apparatus along with a close examination of how the leftward policy shift contributed to the increasing availability of mutual dialogue channels between the state and progressive social movements. The second sub-section looks at the ways in which a peaceful political environment in general has encouraged social mobilization and a strategy of transforming the state from within by altering the balance of class forces in favor of the indigenous peasantry. It is suggested that policy concessions assume vital importance in terms of advancing the position of the classes of labor before the state by providing a political context that contributes to the organization of these very classes and providing greater access to material resources without major demobilization outcomes. In other words, political-

cultural formation requires favorable conditions from both the top-down and the bottom-up.

Greater Inclusion in Leftist Government Policies and Increasing Availability of Dialogue Channels with the State

The rise of the Latin American left has created a facilitative environment for the development and expansion of MNCI as a national peasant-indigenous movement. As described by Ángel, this environment provided a strong impetus for critical social movements insofar as the newly elected leftist governments of the 2000s rejected the neoliberal discourse and broke with the US-led globalization project:

A great opening came from Argentina, where Néstor Kirchner rose to power and new MPs who were young and had more of a leftist thinking elevated to the Parliament. Hugo Chávez was elected in Venezuela. A new wave began in Brazil, and in Bolivia with Evo Morales, Rafael Correa in Ecuador... The neoliberal configuration of the government started to change in the direction of greater economic independence and rupture with the International Monetary Fund, with North American imperialism on the part of our governments (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

The manifestations of this leftist resurgence in social movement organizing are also acknowledged by other MNCI members. Diana of MOCASE-VC refers to Argentina's recent advances in improving the social rights of agricultural workers and other forms of precarious labor:

This government has just introduced very important reforms regarding temporary workers, migrant workers (*trabajadores golondrinas*) who are subjected to very poor conditions when they go to work in harvests as slaves. Currently, the government is working on adding them to the registered labor force... So, yes, recognizing the social rights of agricultural workers, *monotributo* [*Monotributo Social*, Simplified Scheme for Small Contributors, or MS], retirement, greater access to health services; these are all important contributions to the rural population, the rural producer (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Therefore, one of the most crucial areas of cooperation in MOCASE-VC's relationships with the state is peasants' access to welfare and other public services. In this area, the peasant movement has acted like an informal network of welfare access.

Due to the lack of knowledge, education and other kinds of resources, not all peasants are informed about available welfare opportunities offered by the state. Furthermore, many peasants need technical guidance and financial assistance to sign

up for public services, especially if there are illiterate and unschooled members. In exchange for helping peasants to access welfare networks, concurrently, the peasant movement came to enhance its popular appeal and strengthen its membership base. This is clearly observed in the provision of state-funded microcredit, inclusion in the taxation system, implementation of the twenty-year prescription law (*Ley de Prescripción Veinteañal*), expansion of the national health insurance plan called *Plan Nacer*, and cash transfer programs like *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (Universal Child Allowance, or AU) (Diana, 13 March 2014).

In the area of state-funded microcredit, MOCASE-VC served as a mediator to facilitate access to rural microcredit provided by the *Comisión Nacional de Microcrédito* (National Commission of Microcredit, or CONAMI). CONAMI funded the *Programa Nacional de Microcrédito para la Economía Social* (National Program of Microcredit for Social Economy, or PNME). PNME appealed to small producers who can neither provide credit guarantors nor afford the down payment and interest rate requirements of traditional banks. Small loans that do not exceed the 12-month sum of the minimum wage were provided for up to a 6% of interest rates to purchase supplies, tools or materials. MOCASE-VC was generally choosing its rural microcredit applicants among its militants who demonstrate regular attendance to grassroots meetings. Militants who were knowledgeable about the application process provided applicants with necessary technical guidance. A similar mediation service was provided for enrollment in MS. MS was a single tax system designed by the Ministry of Social Development intended for socially vulnerable sectors including the unemployed and beneficiaries of social programs such as those in the informal sector or self-employed workers. The MS system was of vital importance for the prospects of peasants who engage in small-scale production and informal exchange, because it allows them to issue invoices and join the pension system (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Regarding the twenty-year prescription law, this law grants property rights to settlers who have lived on the same land for 20 years or more. Documentation is required from the applicants to prove not only that they satisfy the twenty-year criterion but also that they have made basic infrastructural improvements such as fencing the land or building dams and wells. In practice, however, this law does not prove to be as beneficial to peasants as it seems on paper. The legal process may end up with unfavorable conditions for applicants who could be forced to settle for much smaller land plots or inadequate housing arrangements at the end of this process. In the meantime,

the legal process itself is too complicated for resource-poor families. The completion of the process comes with its costs, especially to complete land surveys and legal assessments. This kind of complications discourages peasant families from benefiting from the twenty-year law and causes them to waive the right to re-appropriate the land and migrate to urban areas. In order to avoid unfavorable outcomes, MOCASE-VC provide peasant families with legal assistance with the help of its legal team (Diana, 13 March 2014).

In the area of health, MOCASE-VC helped its militancy base to register in *Plan Nacer* and coordinate the delivery of services by program officers. For example, MOCASE-VC members spread information about the place and time of visits by medical staff affiliated with *Plan Nacer* via community radio or other means. In remote rural communities, people were assembling at the community dispensary or the place of a community resident to facilitate doctor visits. Visits of greater scale were also organized in peasant *centrales*, the movement's regional headquarters in sub-provincial areas. Peasants were commuted to the hospital with the help of the medical staff or by the means of the peasant central, if they require further medical assistance at the hospital. Moreover, doctor visits were occasionally arranged by the Quimili Central where young students of the School of Agroecology (SoA) could be examined and vaccinated after or before class (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Peasant schools run by MNCI (See Chapter 6) were also used to register young militants to *Asignación Universal*. This program was one of the largest governmental cash transfer program that is often compared with Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and Mexico's *Oportunidades*. The program pays 180 pesos each for up to five children per family that belong to the informal sector. The only condition for children was that they should be aged under 18, provided with compulsory vaccination and medical examination, and registered in a public educational institution as from the age of five. At the time of this research, negotiations were still in progress to convert MOCASE-VC's SoA in Quimilí into a publicly accredited educational institution eligible for *Asignación Universal* (Diana, 13 March 2014). Meanwhile, MCC's Peasant Schools were publicly accredited, and their students fully benefited from *Asignación Universal*. Andrea, of MCC's UCAN chapter, is one of the instructors who teach at MCC's peasant schools. She observes that access to secondary education is considerably limited in rural areas (Andrea, 14 April 2014). The idea of peasant schools thus emerged in 2008 upon MCC's proposal to the provincial government for enhancing access to secondary education in the northern region of

Córdoba province bordering Santiago del Estero. Initially launched as an informal program with the approval of the Ministry of Education, the peasant schools soon turned into an officially-recognized platform that provides distance secondary education and tutoring for children, youth and adults. Andrea affirms that MCC's peasant schools were allowed to stretch the official curriculum in line with the peasant movement's requirements. In her courses, Andrea herself promotes the notion of "popular education" and teaches social sciences with strong references to capitalism, socialism, colonialism, imperialism, the problem of agribusiness, and the indigenous-peasant right to defend the territory (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

To close this sub-section, one should note that immersion in *kirchnerista* welfare networks is not the sole incentive for the peasant movement's closer engagement with the state. In its training pamphlet on popular participation in public policy, MNCI reasserts the crucial necessity for negotiating with and making claims to the state in order to extract favorable policy gains as an institutionally-recognized class agent (MNCI/MCC, 2012a). Negotiation and claim-making opportunities may vary from participation in referenda, public hearings and mere recognition of rights to participatory planning, advisory boards, crisis management tables and local councils. In this regard, Enrique, of the Las Lomitas chapter of MOCASE-VC, evokes his movement's attempt to contribute to the draft bill for creating the "*Juzgados de Derecho Real y Ambiental*" (Real and Environmental Law Courts, or JDRAs) (Enrique, 7 March 2014). As Enrique explained, JDRAs took their initial form during the negotiations that started in 2012 between the provincial government and over 30 indigenous-peasant organizations including MOCASE-VC. JDRAs were intended to consolidate the peasant's movement efforts to capitalize the grievances of indigenous-peasant communities within a stronger legal and institutional framework. Although the provincial legislature in Santiago del Estero approved JDRA in the name of Law N° 7.155, technical discussions were still ongoing to finalize the regulatory framework of JDRAs in 2014. Enrique goes on to affirm that the growing influence of the peasant movement enabled the opening of other permanent dialogue channels with the provincial government, including the Table of Dialogue for Land and Production (*Mesa de Diálogo por la Tierra y la Producción*), Crisis Committee (*Comité de Emergencia*) and Registry of Possessors (*Registro de Poseedores*). These platforms aimed to move land conflicts to the center of the legal agenda and public policies. Furthermore, they intervened in land conflicts via the pre-

existing institutional channels in order to prevent the arbitrary disarticulation of land problems by corrupt or ideologically motivated officials (Enrique, 7 March 2014).

*The Availability of a Peaceful and Participatory Political Environment for Mobilization:
Towards a Strategy of Transforming the State from Within*

The expansion of welfare networks and availability mutual dialogue platforms can be conceived in a broader context concerning the impact of Argentina's leftward shift on agrarian class formation. In this sub-section, I observe that this shift also creates an encouraging environment for being organized and joining protests based on a strategy of transforming the state from within. In this regard, Facundo of MCC admits that the political environment favoring leftist movement provided a "peaceful" and "participatory" environment for social organizing:

Today we have the peace of mind that they [agribusinessmen] are not going to take us out of the land that easily, because we participate in these spaces [i.e. mutual dialogue mechanisms and other participatory institutions]. The whole world knows us; the state knows that they should not intrude with us (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

In a similar vein, Pablo of MOCASE-VC also affirms that the political environment represented by Latin America and Argentina's leftist governments fostered greater respect to citizens' rights, but he does not refrain from pointing out that this situation have led to new challenges as far as the complexities of collective organizing and creating a better society are concerned:

I believe that today the rights are more recognized than before, because perhaps the peoples are better organized. They bring to light all the problems that the corporate media really turns a blind eye to. And it seems to me that, the society has greater challenges as well, but we can put on the table what we want and what represents us as a people, as citizens, as natives of the land. And I think that this is our main challenge: the collective construction of what we are doing. From a meter ahead, we will surely find new problems of a different nature (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

This peaceful environment did not automatically lead to peasant de-mobilization. For example, Carmen admits that the pace of violent evictions has been slower than 6 to 7 years before (Carmen, 27 April 2014). Yet, she urges caution on the apparent setback of land evictions and points to the persisting relevance of being organized:

... We must always be attentive, because the enemy does not sleep. So, [it is still important] to have a working area on territory and we keep working there. We also come together once a month as MNCl. And I believe, this is a better way of working: first, we address each central's problems [provincially], and then all the centrals [nation-wide] get together (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

Relatedly, the enabling environment created by the rise of leftwing governments in Latin America seems to have affected MNCl's modes of engagement with the state. To give a particular example, one of the group presentations during the social class debate at one of MCC's provincial meetings (See Chapter 4; MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014) drew attention to the need for struggling to get hold of state resources that are no longer fully monopolized by capitalist classes under the current political conjuncture:

We [as a discussion group] were saying that the only way to unite the workers is to keep uniting and organizing. By doing so, we must control state resources so that they are used for peasant production and tilt the balance more in favor of us. The same businessmen who exploit us have all of the resources of production, roads, electric power, all of the resources, and we as communities have no roads, schools or health access. We also believe that the state should assume a stronger role and regulate the prices. So, what we were saying was that all of this comes from what we saw this year and a couple of years ago: The economic situation of families has changed and today there are many families that have a salary and more reproduction rights, including the granting of basic family needs to send our children to school (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014) ...

In other words, the group spokesperson's intervention indicates that the peasant movement has stood in favor of transforming the state from within by taking advantage of the leftist resurgence and slowly changing the balance of class forces (MCC's Provincial Meeting, 10 May 2014). For her part, Flor agrees that the use of state resources could eventually help strengthen the peasant movement:

... The resources that come from the state are directed to communities, but they also promote the organization (Flor, 5 June 2014) ...

Flor's opinion also resonates with the testimony of Andrea of MCC, which indicates that the peasant movement should not be indifferent to the increasing availability of resources and other inclusionary policies of the Kirchner governments for fear of cooptation and accusation of clientelism (Andrea, 14 April 2014). Andrea's main reasoning implies that the peasant movement's abstention from participation in state intervention would inevitably lead to the control of state resources by capitalists and

larger-scale producers. In any case, she thinks that access to state resources can only be obtained through political pressure and conflict generated by a class rather than a clientelistic and cooptative organizing:

Here, we are an organization that works to transform and claim our rights, and one of our fundamental rights has to do with the question of production. For example, we have been fighting for this microcredit for years, in order for microcredits to be able to reach and be managed by small producers and peasants, not large-scale farmers, to whom the money always gets. When there is a drought, who gets the money? Always those who have more. To whom do they [the state] give more corn? To those who have more... That is why I am telling you that we must organize ourselves... We must go out and fight. That is why, I am saying, it is not that they throw us projects so that we share everything we get among ourselves! We fight for it (Andrea, 14 April 2014)!

A case in point regarding the importance of being organized in order to pressure the government is when the previously approved funds of the *Sub-Secretaría de Agricultura Familiar de la Nación* (Undersecretariat of Family Agriculture, or SAF) did not get released as promised, in reaction to which MCC invited its militants to organize a massive march, as discussed in a MCC community meeting on April 15, 2014.

In sum, as Ángel confirms, the Kirchner governments have provided the peasant movement with limited funding and technical assistance for projects related to energy and water infrastructure, windmills, channeling, building construction, entrepreneurship in food industry (marketization, packaging, cheese-making, beekeeping, agricultural equipment and machinery, textile machinery), travel to meetings and training, community radio development, publications, computer training, among others (Ángel, 18 March 2014). Ángel also refers to government funding and technical assistance provided for the movement's popular medicine schools, infirmary, health promoters and contracting community doctors. All of this adds to the support of the Ministry of Education for the movement's SoA and the official recognition of peasant schools in Córdoba and Mendoza. State repression was constrained by the national government's emphasis on human rights, and violent evictions lost steam. When combined with greater inclusion in the welfare apparatus and dialogue mechanisms, one could conclude that this situation has stimulated MNCI to rely on a strategy of transforming the state power from within (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

MNCI and the Fear of Cooptation in the Face of Limited Government Support and Capitalist-Extractivism

Despite the relatively favorable environment of left-wing politics in Argentina, the fieldwork and document-analysis data indicate that MNCI has restrained itself from giving up its independence and refused to build organic links with the Kirchner government in order to avoid full cooptation. This section is thus devoted to the underlying factors that lead MNCI to apply conditionality in its support for *kirchnerismo* and stay away from cooptation.

The cooptation danger is firmly acknowledged in one of the movement's training pamphlets:

It does not suffice to value spaces, practices and projects that claim to be 'participatory'. Let's not forget that neoliberalism has been quite participatory. Mere participation is not enough, although it is a first step. You need to ask what kind of participation the route for the conquest of rights may be, so that there occurs [genuinely] collective decision-making and transformation (MNCI/MCC, 2012a, p. 83).

In view of cooptation possibilities, Ángel makes sure to draw a clear line between social movements that were directly involved in the Kirchner government and those that provided conditional support to this government without building direct links:

There are organizations that have an organic link and are principal actors together with the Kirchners. They are direct actors, together with the national government. We, on the other hand, would like to have an autonomy, although this national government has given the possibility of benefiting from the spaces provided by the newly created state agencies such as the *Dirección de Tierras y Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas* [Land Directorate and National Registry of Indigenous Communities], *Secretaría de Derechos Humanos y Pluralismo* [Secretariat of Human Rights and Pluralism], and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. These agencies have granted places to assemble teams for the implementation of public policies of rural, agrarian and peasant development (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Meanwhile, Ángel also believes that the danger of cooptation or being rejected should not stop the peasant movement from engaging in open dialogue with the state in order to assert the organized presence of peasantry and pressure the state (Ángel, 18 March 2014). He highlights that the Argentine state, especially the provincial governments have a propensity to act arbitrarily. They may initially agree to negotiate and then unilaterally decide to call off the negotiations. However, Ángel insists on preserving a dialoguing mood without showing any sign of contempt about the

importance of negotiations with the state. He particularly values keeping the dialogue for resolving land conflicts by pointing out the fact that the national peasant movement has presented over 300 cases of land conflict to the state (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Overall, the conditionality of MNCI's support for the Kirchner governments and MNCI's insistence on preserving its independence seem to be grounded on two sets of factors that have to do with (a) the limits of capitalist development and the agro-export model pursued by the Kirchner governments; (b) the limited support for agrarian development along with continuing institutional discrimination and poor functioning of newly created mechanisms. Regarding the first point, Pablo of MOCASE-VC urges that no significant progress on agrarian development can be made unless capitalism is fundamentally transformed:

...The control organisms [of the state] are the accomplices of the economic power, because all the politicians are married with the big multinationals, and they respond to the economic power (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Indeed, as elaborated in Chapter 3, contemporary Argentine capitalism goes hand in hand with an agro-export model of development, which also makes MNCI question the long-term viability of *kirchnerismo*. For example, Eduardo of MCC argues that the Kirchner governments have fallen short of MNCI's expectations regarding the question of agrarian reform, even though they have recorded several advances in social development:

Today, as I told you earlier, the state has generated more tools in health, education, production, [and other development] projects... but the agro-export model in soy and mining model continues in force. As well, the government has not done an agrarian reform, and therefore, the slogans of our peasant path continue in force, more than ever. They continue in force, as before, which requires the people to produce healthy food, something that the agribusiness cannot do (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Regarding the second point, Facundo of MCC objects that the scope of most development projects offered by the Kirchner and local governments was too limited to bring about meaningful social change in the countryside:

We are looking for larger [assistance] programs, because the microcredit program is very small. It is for one or two persons... This theme is very complicated, but well, for example, now we are struggling to get access to electricity. We obtained access to water in 2011, now we go for electricity. Another thing is the street repair: the access roads are very shattered... And ambulances cannot access the neighborhood... The governor does not get much money for our projects. He does not want to do it (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

Similarly, Deo of MOCASE-VC admits that competition for funding programs also suffered from institutional discrimination and tended to favor organizations that were directly linked to the government to the detriment of independent movements with a more radical orientation, which is exemplified by the case of AMARC (*Association mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communautaires*/World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, or AMARC) and the peasant movement's community radios²:

... So, we don't get anything [from funding competitions]. Last year there was a grant fund that had to do with radio equipment. So, each radio [each AMARC member] applied for this grant, but the grant management's decision was political... They discriminated us for our [radical political] origin (Deo, 10 April 2014).

As such, Deo admits that her movement has not benefited from as many resources as other movements that exhibited an *officialista* [officialist] attitude, i.e. unquestionable allegiance to the Kirchner government. Particularly, she refers to "*Foro Argentino de Radios Comunitarias* (FARCO, or Argentine Forum of Communitarian Radios) [which] is a thousand times more *officialista* and has way more resources than any other" organization (Deo, 10 April 2014).

Besides the limited nature of state support and institutional discrimination, another important factor that has rendered MNCI skeptical of the state is the poor functioning of newly created mechanisms. A case in point is the committee of crisis and other similar platforms of mutual dialogue, which, according to Diana, have failed to fulfill the initial expectations:

There are different tables and work proposals [with the provincial government]. At some point, we were part of what the government called the Crisis Committee... That crisis committee was supposed to act quickly in the face of a land conflict, but it did not work much. Then the land tables were created, which also accomplished so little, given that their original purpose was to be attentive to land conflicts. As well, there is no budget, so they could not advance as previously expected. There is a structure, but it does not work (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Diana says that the poor functioning of cooperation mechanisms and limited gains obtained through political pressure have not discouraged the peasant movement from continuing its dialogue with the state in order to achieve popular-democratic outcomes:

As a movement [MOCASE-VC] we have presented several projects to the province... in some cases, progress has been made. But most do not advance. As well, dialogue with the government has been permanent in

² Peasant radios affiliated with MOCASE-VC are part of AMARC Argentine chapter. See Chapter 6 for more details on AMARC.

order for the armed bands to leave, so that the situations with the indigenous communities are resolved, so that the communitarian status of the land is recognized. Just today there was an audience with the government of Santiago and our education team. Our territory team also got together with the government to push for different land issues. Then, as the national movement [MNCI], we made a proposal to reform the Civil Code where the social role of the land is recognized. This is about recognizing the communal property, not just about private property (Diana, 10 April 2014).

The poor functioning of participatory mechanisms at the state level was also observable at INAI. This institute was established in 1985 in order to ensure the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous communities. One of its main functions is to administer the National Register of Aboriginal Communities, which ensures the possession and property of the communal lands within the framework of the Twenty-Year Law (*Ley Veinteañal*) as specified in Article 4015 of the Civil Code (ACC, 1871). The *Ley Veinteañal* (Article 4015 of the Civil Code) enables ownership if the possessor exercises intention of ownership and possession acts by having resided on the land in question for more than 20 years. This law is supported by Articles 2351 and 2470 of the Civil Code, which regulate possessors' rights. According to the law, the possessors are expected to present proofs of possession including photographs, birth, marriage, school and death records, sales invoice and receipts for agricultural produce, etc. This should be accompanied by a cadastral plan prepared by an official inspector and approved by the General Directorate of Cadastre (*Dirección General de Catastro*) (MNCI, 2006, pp. 11-19).

As one of the *referentes* of the Lule Vilela community, Ricardo admits that his community was unaware of its own legal rights and privileges before being involved in peasant mobilization (MOCASE-VS, 2016. pp. 146-147). The community became aware of INAI's existence when its members faced a land conflict situation in the early 2000s, after which MOCASE-VC members of the Tintina chapter came to their help and referred the Lule Vilela community to INAI. In fact, militants from Tintina did more than mentioning the potential benefits of being recognized as an indigenous community through INAI's channel. Thanks to the intervention of the Tintina chapter, the peasant movement also provided legal support by mobilizing its team of lawyers. In the meantime, Ramón's community organized workshops to be informed about *indigenismo*, starting with the study of their legal rights and indigenous legacy. Eventually, Ricardo's community acquired its indigenous status in 2005, which was followed by two more

communities nearby, Tusca and Retiro. In order to gain an indigenous status, communities provided documentation on the death certificate of descendant elders along with a historical memory of their inherited cultural and physical traits (MOCASE-VS, 2016. pp. 146-147).

Ricardo identifies serious challenges to the INAI structure, however, which stemmed from the lack of coordination between the Institute and provincial government as well as deficient attention to the daily struggle of indigenous communities on the part of INAI officers in certain cases (MOCASE-VS, 2016. pp. 146-147). Being aware of INAI's limitations, Diana admits that "we as MOCASE-VC have used INAI as a tool rather than a claim for indigenous peoples" (Diana, 10 April 2014). Regardless of serious complications within INAI, however, the indigenous status seems to have functioned as a source of national and international recognition for the movement that motivates and legitimizes social mobilization. It also fostered a stronger spirit of community and collective belonging to an indigenous-peasant movement (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Given the constraints of what a MNCI textbook calls the "administrative path", i.e. MNCI's involvement in public arrangements such as INAI, the peasant movement strongly urged for combining administrative struggles with political organizing:

... if the community is not organized to defend its rights, the legal path becomes illusory. We should not only rely on the system's justice, because we think that the laws are meant for private property and business corporations, although we can occasionally use the laws for our own good (MNCI, 2006, p. 33).

Hence the crucial importance of the "political path" understood as the realization of "actions toward making [peasants'] rights known publicly and pressure the authorities":

We organize at communities to defend our land [in alliance] with other organizations through rallies and [other means of] struggle. We denounce [our opponents] over at the police and media, and present reports to state agencies. We systematize our recommendations in the form of law proposals. We require the suspension of evictions and auctions of peasants from their land (MNCI, 2006, p. 32).

It is interesting to note that the limits of the "administrative path" also ties back to the first point regarding the limits of extractivist capitalism and the perceived class nature of the state. For example, Orlando Bustamante, a MCC militant who has suffered several instances of eviction and repression, expresses a profound resentment towards the police and local government authorities, whose power is described as intertwined with that of agribusiness:

The police are complicit in the problems of the peasants, in what happens there, I mean the evictions. There have been many evictions; mine is not the only one. There have been several evictions caused by the father of a policeman, for example. [When he confronted me with a weapon by counting on the authority of his son,] I disarmed him, and the policemen did not do anything ... As well, the intendents, the presidents of communes are accomplices, because an entrepreneur arrives and says, 'I want a seven-hectare field' ... Then he goes to Córdoba [the capital city], he gets the title with some tricky papers and a photocopy. When it is all settled, [the businessman] pays the mayor, or the president of the commune, and comes with trucks and bulldozers to evict people (Orlando, 22 April 2014).

Indeed, Kirchners' pro-human rights agenda created a favorable environment for protest activities by constraining police violence, which also adds to their close dialogue with progressive social movements. On the other hand, many of the municipal or provincial authorities did not fully subscribe the *kirchnerista* discourse on social inclusion. Yet, despite the lacking commitment of local authorities, protest activities by progressive social movements such as MNCI were enabled by the encouraging environment of national politics. The local tensions that motivated social mobilization and the enabling environment of national politics were thus combined to trigger agrarian class formation at the national level, as strongly confirmed by Victoria of MCC. She rhetorically asks, "what is happening with the provincial state and the national state?" (Victoria, 22 April 2014). According to her, the provincial government did not conform with the national government's relatively stronger commitment to land rights, which found its expression in the signing of the bill of native forests into law and failure of the provincial government in Córdoba to put this bill into practice. This relative difference of commitment on the governmental level might have served as one of the leading factors that enable the creation and outgrowth of a provincial and national peasant movement in the direction of class formation:

The justice system does nothing until the political power dedicates itself to do something, and that is serious. And the political power in the province today defines itself in terms of what it has been doing for 30 years. Then, faced with that, we, as an organization and organizations from other provinces, began to think, not only those of Córdoba province, but also those at the national level. We are [therefore] part of a peasant indigenous organization that was recently elevated to the level of the entire country (Victoria, 22 April 2014).

A similar situation applies to Santiago del Estero, particularly the case of Cristian Ferreyra, who was murdered in 2011 by armed gangs allegedly associated with an

agribusinessman named Jorge Ciccioli. According to Ricardo of the Las Lomitas chapter of MOCASE-VC, Cristian Ferreyra's murder was not an isolated event (Ricardo, 5 March 2014). Deadly assaults aside, agribusiness threats have become part of the daily life in peasant and indigenous communities. Threats have intensified in parallel with the expansion of the soy border towards the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Salta in the initiative of agribusiness firms including Grupo Macri – owned by Franco Macri, the father of Mauricio Macri, Argentina's current President since 2015 –, Olmedo Agropecuaria, Vidizzoni S.A. and Tabacal Agroindustria. Ricardo himself had experienced an unlawful arrest in August 2011 as the representative of the indigenous Lule Vilela community. The reason for his arrest was having demanded for the arrest of Roque Gonzáles and Juan Luna, the authors of the armed assault that was committed in September 2011 against the operators of MOCASE-VC's community radio FM Pajsachama, the 16-year-old Cristian and the 18-year olds Victoria and Poli. This attack – which also resulted in the destruction of the radio equipment and material – had been preceded by a Molotov cocktail attack against the same building in 2009 (Ricardo, 5 March 2014).

Ricardo also evokes the murder of Miguel Galván, a 40-year old MOCASE-VC militant who was stabbed to death by Paulino Riso Patrón in the Simbol locality in October 2012. Before Miguel's murder, Galván's family – who had been charged for land usurpation by the agribusiness firm LAPAZ S.A. – had filed several complaints to the police, the Directorate of Forests (*Dirección de Bosques*), the Judge Torrelio in Monte Quemado and the Crisis Committee. These institutions had all remained indifferent to the threats that the Galván family received from agribusiness mercenaries. The authorities' attitude during the trial process had also been disappointing for the peasant movement. No trial date had been announced after almost three years of the murder, and eventually the trial resulted in a sentence of only nine years in prison for Riso Patrón (Ricardo, 5 March 2014).

Drawing attention to these events, MOCASE-VC contests the fact that the judicial arm of the state has not been not neutral towards *santiagueños* peasants, because it tended to side with corporate interests. In the case of Cristian Ferreyra's murder, six armed attackers and the agribusinessman Jorge Ciccioli faced trial for the first time in Argentina's history, mostly thanks to massive protests. The trial took place in as late as 2014, three years after the murder, as a result of sustained protests. Javier Juárez, the hitman who shot Cristian, was sentenced to ten years in prison, although Jorge Ciccioli

was released by the court. Apparently, the failure of dialogue platforms such as that of the Crisis Committee reveals the urgency of putting into practice a strong regulatory framework such as JDRAs. Meanwhile, this situation leaves peasant militants with a deep sense of distrust in the state apparatus (Ricardo, 5 March 2014).

Another case in point is the experience of MOCASE-VC's Lote 5 community in Quimili (Quico, 28 March 2014). This community has faced several police raids in the 2000s. In 2003, for example, the community was attacked by 30 armed policemen. The Lote 5 residents confirm that the attackers killed all the pigs, set the ranchos on fire, crushed watermelons, and destroyed all the squash harvest with a truck and bulldozer. In days prior to the raid, shots were fired at night to intimidate the community. Eventually, evictions were ended in two months after the raid thanks to the active involvement of MOCASE-VC with the backing of around 80 militants (Quico, 28 March 2014).

The video footage of the eviction in 2003 was presented to the judge by MOCASE-VC, and this proof alone sufficed to retake the territory. The attackers, however, were not charged despite solid evidence. Even worse, in years to come, when the entire region surrounding the same community became soy fields, the community started to suffer from spraying aircrafts that destroyed all of the harvest (Quico, 28 March 2014). Five years after the forced eviction in 2003, not only did the community soil become uncultivable, but also some community members developed allergies with rash, cough and vomiting symptoms because of the toxic effects of agrochemicals. Indeed, complaints to the Agency of Development resulted in a dead end, even though they were backed by picture proofs (Quico, 28 March 2014).

To finish with this section, MNCI has continued to approach *kirchnerismo* with outmost skepticism despite its continuing conditional support, which led the movement to refuse to take part in public office and avoid establishing organic links with the government. MNCI's skepticism was grounded on, not only the continuation of extractivist capitalism, but also the poor availability of larger funds that could help generate radical transformations, continued institutional discrimination, and the ill-functioning of dialogue channels and legal processes. In particular, the poor functionality of inclusive policy arrangements has encouraged MNCI to combine administrative strategies (i.e. participation in inclusive spaces) with political organizing, which in turn prevented de-mobilization and full cooptation by the state.

MNCI's Struggle for Popular-Democratic State Concessions

MNCI's skepticism of *kirchnerismo* and the conditionality of its support for the government do not fully account for its popular-democratic character that centers on independent organizing and policy change rather than passive cooptation. In what follows, therefore, I address MNCI's (a) denouncing, lobbying and alliance-building efforts that have made meaningful contributions to agrarian class formation, (b) disruptive activities that have targeted the state, and (c) crucial political conquests in the area of education.

Popular-Democratic Achievements through Denouncing, Lobbying and Alliance-Building

The removal of Santiago del Estero's ex-governor Mercedes Aragonés de Juárez from office and her arrest with her husband Carlos Arturo Juárez are one of the popular-democratic achievements which MOCASE-VC feels the proudest of (Ángel, 18 March 2014). Carlos Arturo Juárez was a *caudillo*, whose nepotistic, clientelistic and repressive rule in Santiago del Estero lasted for more than 55 years. Juárez's wife, Mercedes Aragonés de Juárez took over his governor position and ruled for only two years until her removal from office due to murder and corruption allegations in 2004. Carlos Arturo Juárez had built a vast network of espionage and police repression that committed countless human right violations including political persecutions, torture and murders, even after the restoration of formal democracy in 1983. Social movements, especially MOCASE-VC played a major role in the end of what came to be called as *juarismo* thanks to their numerous complaints and denunciation of illegal acts and human rights violations (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Indeed, MOCASE-VC as Argentina's first indigenous-peasant movement in the post-dictatorship era and one of the first critical movements of the post-dictatorship era has been a direct target of *juarismo*. Ángel confirms MOCASE-VC's part in liquidating *juarismo* by taking advantage of the rise to power of the leftist Néstor Kirchner government and pressing for bringing Juárez's family to justice:

Therefore, provincial governments such as that of Arturo Juárez or other provinces remained as conservative or undemocratic arrangements [in the early 2000s despite the rise to power of a leftist national government], but we filed legal complaints with lots of reports of violations of peasants' rights, including documentation, photographs of Carlos Arturo Juárez's relationship with *mafiosi* businessmen. We gathered intelligence and our

comrades infiltrated into state agencies through political engineering. We provided documentary evidence that [Juárez and his circle] falsified land deeds. We brought these documents to the National Parliament in 2003 and they [the national government] intervened in the province and expelled [Juárez] as the governor, but it was a product of tremendous efforts that... reflected a positioning of our legitimacy. And we succeeded in expelling a corrupt government, an accomplice, a partner of speculative land entrepreneurs and landowners, businesses that falsified land deeds in front of notaries (Ángel, 18 March 2014) ...

Lobbying combined with protests and other mobilization activities has thus become an important tool for MNCI's popular-democratic efforts. For example, MNCI allied with other peasant and environmentalist organizations such as Greenpeace, *Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina* (Wildlife Foundation of Argentina, or FVSA), *Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales* (Environment and Natural Resources Foundation, or FARN), *Fundación Proteger* (Foundation Protecting, or FP), *Organización de Naciones y Pueblos Indígenas en Argentina* (Organization of Indigenous Nations and Peoples in Argentina, or ONPIA) and *Asociación Forestal Argentina* (Forestry Association of Argentina, or AFOA) in order to pass a bill on native forests. The allied efforts of these movements resulted in the signing of the bill of native forests into law (*Ley de bosques nativos*, Nº 26.331) in 2008, which encouraged the promotion of ecological conservation and restoration (Meli et al. 2017; Greenpeace, 2007; Motta, 2017). Román of MOCASE-VC recalls:

We, as the national movement [MNCI], have struggled much for this law to come out. This law says that each province should draw a map of its [native forests], mark where the forests are and use three colors to classify the forests: green, red and yellow. The red means that in that part you cannot touch the forests; you should keep them... The yellow means that one could transform the forest, that is, certain plants can be cut, but not all of them. And the green category means that the entire forest can be cut down. So, each province discussed this... Here, in Santiago del Estero, for example, they [the provincial government] organized many workshops, worked with organizations. A public hearing took place in which we participated with 100 comrades in order to voice our opinion. Some of our opinions were respected, and others not, but a map was drawn (Román, 24 March 2014).

MNCI and its allies expected that this law would reverse the process of soy expansion, but provincial governments failed to apply the law despite the organized reaction of peasant and environmentalist organizations (Delvenne, Vasen & Vara, 2013; Motta, 2017). A case in point to this reaction is the “peasant march for the native forests” organized by MCC in 2010 with the aim of demanding the immediate enforcement of the

law of native forests. Eduardo recalls that over 300 MCC militants marched for more than 200 kilometers to Córdoba city, the provincial capital, with the slogan, “land and native forests in many hands, healthy food for all!” (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Another case in point regarding how MNCI has struggled to extract popular-democratic gains by proposing new legislation is the presentation of a draft bill for the protection of native seeds and cessation of land evictions to the Chamber of Deputies in December 2012. The draft bill was named after Cristian Ferreyra. In order to promote the Cristian Ferreyra draft bill, MNCI representatives met with the congresswoman Diana Conti, other leaders of the *kirchnerista* front *Frente para la Victoria*, and SAF administrators. Similar events and marches were organized by MNCI and its allies to advertise this draft bill throughout 2013 (Ricardo, 5 March 2014; Diana, 13 March 2014).

The independent agenda of indigenous-peasant mobilizing despite close interactions with the state is also evidenced by MNCI's struggle for the enactment of a law for family agriculture (Ley 27.118), which has been designed and presented to the public by a vast array of popular movements and institutions including the *Federación de Organizaciones Nucleadas de la Agricultura Familiar* (Federation of Nuclear Organizations of Family Farming, or FONAF), *Foro de Universidades para la Agricultura Familiar*, INTA, SAF, MNCI, *Frente Nacional Campesino* and constituents of the *Mesa de Agricultura Familiar* and *Federación Agraria*. In 2014's May Day, moreover, MNCI organized marches with its allies to the ministries of Labor, Social Development and Agriculture in order to denounce the lack of funding for SAF and articulate the need for a law that would guarantee the rights of peasant producers. Eventually sanctioned in December 2014, this law acknowledges the “family, peasant and indigenous farming” to be of “public interest”. Government support is guaranteed in a number of crucial areas such as food sovereignty, sustainability and biodiversity, infrastructural development, technology transfer and technical training, and access to markets, credits and social services (Deo, 1 May 2014; Ricardo, 5 March 2014; Diana, 13 March 2014).

As previously mentioned by Ángel, MNCI has deliberately restrained from establishing direct links with the national government in order to preserve its independence (Ángel, 18 March 2014). However, it has attached a great deal of importance to establishing closer links with radical Peronist movements allied with *kirchnerismo* who were represented in the parliament and who assumed office in public agencies operating in the agricultural sector. A case in point is the Evita Movement, which was part of Kirchners' *Frente para la Victoria* (Front for Victory, or FPV). This

movement is a left-wing *piquetero* organization that represents groups with lineage to the *Montoneros* guerrilla movement of the 1970s. *Montoneros* – and the Evita Movement – reinterprets the legacy of Peronism from the vantage point of socialism and anti-imperialism (Ranis, 1992). In the present day, the Evita Movement is involved in land struggles and grassroots development in *barrios* and managed state-supported cooperative programs as a pro-government organization that used to have the largest share of cooperatives (approximating to a total of 14,000 cooperatives) (Kaese & Wolff, 2016). It is represented by MPs in the parliament. Emilio Pérsico known as the historical leader of the Evita Movement ran SAF, whereas Javier Ruiz, another Evita leader was the head of the *Secretaría de Participación Ciudadana* (Secretariat of Citizen Participation) in the provincial government of Buenos Aires, which supervised the province's cooperatives. As compared to mainstream FPV constituents, however, the Evita Movement was a semi-autonomous ally of *kirchnerismo* distinguished from mayor-controlled FPV organizations. Accordingly, “the Movimiento ‘Evita’ has its own leader with no electoral goals for himself, and thus works under the logic of agreements rather than obedience in its quest for colonizing political spaces inside the PJ” (Rossi, 2015a, p. 125). Certainly, the semi-autonomy of the Evita Movement along with its influence in the state's agrarian development policies rendered it a desirable ally of MNCI, which itself happened to be one of the largest SAF beneficiaries, a public institution controlled by the Evita Movement itself (Andrés Guzmán, 22 April 2014; Pablo Montes, 22 April 2014).

Pablo Montes, an Evita leader from its Córdoba branch and former national MP describes his movement as a left-nationalist, anti-imperialist and socialist organization that aims to deepen the leftward process initiated by *kirchnerismo* and represented by Hugo Chávez on a Latin American level. As such, the radicalism of the Evita Movement makes its political stance closer to *Chavismo*:

So, every nationalist movement that institutionalized this process [the rise of left-wing governments in Latin America] had experienced a constituent process, and now in this last decade, we have a process in which several popular governments rise to power, which is headed by Chávez, more or less (Pablo Montes, 22 April 2014).

The Chavista undertones of the Evita Movement thus point to a radical, revolutionary-nationalist re-envisioning of Peronism beyond *kirchnerismo*: “We are talking about the 21st century Peronism; a creole socialism that has to do with experiences and struggles in Latin America” (Pablo Montes, 22 April 2014).

In this context, Andrés Guzmán, another Evita leader and national MP from Córdoba affirms that in participating in FPV, the Evita Movement has insisted on preserving its semi-autonomous status, seeing its own participation in the state “as a struggle of correlation of forces and efforts” from within (Andrés Guzmán, 22 April 2014). Guzmán continues:

The national and popular camp, as we call it, has a government [i.e. the Kirchner governments], but we also have a range of social, territorial, and political organizations that expand that national camp even further. Each one of us occupies a role or shares a historical moment as part of a broad national popular camp. What we are addressing here is a propositional issue that has to do with the ‘popular economy’, which consists of dismantling the monopolies or oligopolies and strengthening the growth of this popular movement (Andrés Guzmán, 22 April 2014).

Indeed, MNCI’s relationships with MPs who represented the Evita Movement were also important for its lobbying activities against agribusiness and land evictions. As an illustration of the close relationship between MNCI and the Evita Movement, Facundo refers to increasing opportunities that arose from leftist alliances with political groups represented in the parliament, particularly the Evita Movement and its participatory local side-organizations known as land commissions:

We also have this space called the land commission of the Evita movement. There are spaces that we have been generating as a strategy to expand the front, gather all the groups that were there ... before, they were all separated, disunited, dispersed. We created what we call the Land Commission, or Commission for the land struggle, to bring them all together and the majority of that group are part of the Evita Movement or the peasant movement [MNCI]. Then, it goes on growing and growing ... also with its own difficulties, but there it goes, like everything (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

Certainly, in Facundo’s own words, the unification of local resistance groups through broader alliances points to a class formation process. As such, it is possible to argue that closer interactions with public offices or movements that held government positions have not necessarily led to full cooptation from above. Cooptation may be avoided if social movements can preserve their independence from the state, which expresses itself in the preservation of an independent movement agenda to pressure the state via broader and less dispersed alliances. In Argentina, for example, MNCI is part of an alliance of social movements that militate in the informal sector and popular economy, namely the *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular* (Confederation of Workers in Popular Economy, or CTEP). Founded with the initiative of

the Evita Movement, CTEP claims the labor rights and welfare for informal economy workers. It brings together social and political movements such as the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos*, *Asociación Mutual Senderos*, *Movimiento Popular Patria Grande*, and *Movimiento Patriótico Revolucionario Quebracho*. Despite its critical support for the deepening of social reforms led by *kirchnerismo*, CTEP has been organizing massive protests since its foundation in 2010 in order to be recognized as a formal trade union. The peasant movement has actively taken part of these protests to pressurize the government (Deo, 1 May 2014). In December 2015, after five years of ceaseless massive protests, the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security finally granted CTEP with official recognition as a trade union entitled to defend the rights of workers and the self-employed in cooperatives, self-managed workplaces and social programs.

Thanks to the weight of the Evita Movement in cooperative organizing, MNCI has also benefited from this movement's experience and networks at the Ministry of Labor, which used to offer assistance programs to promote cooperatives such as the *Programa Trabajo Autogestionado*. As expressed by Hernán of MNCI Bs As, cooperative organizing has been crucial for translating into practice the popular-democratic aim of communitarian class formation (see Chapter 4 regarding the cultural dynamics of agrarian class formation). Hernán testifies that his movement has also been working with the Ministry of Labor for expanding its own cooperative arm, partly because cooperatives were "tools that can allow us [MNCI] to grow more and more" by mobilizing a greater number of people in the area of production (Hernán, 17 May 2014).

In the meantime, Hernán argues that the growth of the peasant movement cannot be reduced to quantitative advances as far as the increasing access to material resources and number of movement participants are concerned (Hernán, 17 May 2014). He also believes that cooperative organizing could enhance the communitarian spirit of the movement in favor of agrarian class formation:

Now, this [creation of cooperatives] must have a communitarian and cooperative significance, because ... we must make this effort to get the job and this will allow us to grow and be better (Hernán, 17 May 2014).

According to Hernán, the communitarian spirit originates as much in participatory and bottom-up leadership as in collective labor:

We need to make sure that we are strong and that the grassroots are mobilized, that there is no boss, in making decisions... We are all aware

of what we must do and the importance of participation (Hernán, 17 May 2014).

SAF programs constituted another backbone of the alliance between the Evita Movement and MNCI. Regarding the importance SAF for MNCI, Pablo Montes of the Evita Movement points out that SAF's development has been crucial in the democratization of peasant production:

We oversee an undersecretary of family agriculture [i.e. SAF]. And from there, if you will, what we are proposing along with peasant movements is to restructure and concentrate on food production, try to democratize peasant production, encourage people's return to the countryside and counter soy monoculture policies (Pablo Montes, 22 April 2014).

In contrast to conventional neoliberal development projects that impose standardized projects controlled by field experts and technicians, SAF re-envisioned agrarian development as a participatory and bottom-up process led by an interdisciplinary working group that embraced indigenous and peasant leaders, cooperatives, agronomists, sociologists and veterinarians. Group members were chosen among those who were inclined to empower grassroots organizations by including them in the design and control of productive projects and direct funding (Weinberg, 2017).

SAF was founded in 2006 as an under-secretariat, which was elevated to the rank of secretariat thanks to consistent and coordinated mobilization by the Evita Movement and MNCI by 2014. Its origins can be traced back to PSA, a rural welfare program coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture. After internal debates on whether to build organic links with the government at the risk of cooptation, MNCI accepted the government's offer to manage PSA. These debates originated from the concern that MNCI would have renounced its principle of avoiding building organic links with the government by accepting this proposal. Rather than passively manage PSA, however, MNCI insisted on its popular-democratic ideals to actively shape state policies and transform the state power from within by completely redesigning PSA. As such, MNCI started to distribute funds directly to organizations rather than small groups of individuals in order to strengthen the grassroots constituency vis-à-vis provincial governments. Additionally, MNCI also sought to transcend the neoliberal emphasis of welfarism on entrepreneurialism and individuals, consolidate collective organizing, and financially contribute to organizations engaging in contentious politics. However, such radical transformations could not be tolerated in a political environment shaped by the increasing angst of agribusinesses that were already unhappy about *kirchnerista* tax

policies. The successful agribusiness protests against taxation led to the replacement of the national minister of economy and agriculture. Eventually, MNCI was forced out of PSA in 2007 (Lapegna, 2016, pp. 49-50; Leguizamón, 2016, pp. 321, 323; Weinberg, 2017).

In alliance with *piqueteros*, MNCI organized massive marches against agribusinesses as a counter-reaction to its ousting from PSA, which forced the government to make a series of concessions resulting in SAF's creation (Lapegna, 2016). In Argentina, each ministry has one or more secretariats that have both advisory and executive functions in a particular area of interest, whereas sub-secretariats are comprised by auxiliary functionaries. Certainly, SAF's expansion as a secretariat meant that family farming and bottom-up/participatory agrarian development took on a greater relevance at a national level. Indeed, MNCI saw this transformation as a valuable popular-democratic gain on its part given its active participation in several marches and protests to pressure the national government (Deo, 1 May 2014).

According to Ricardo of MOCASE-VC, a chief importance of SAF and its transformation into a secretariat is that SAF "would open new spaces of work within the state and perhaps lead to a major accumulation of power to bend or redefine certain things [problems] that pertain to our territories" (Ricardo, 30 May 2014). As such, Ricardo also believes that social movement participation in SAF could "generate struggle and the conflicts that are necessary for [building] power within territories, having the coordination of forces". In this direction, SAF resources "could be oriented such that they could help increase the popular organization, the peasant organization" (Ricardo, 30 May 2014).

As discussed in a MCC community meeting that took place on April 15, 2014, part of the funding provided by SAF as well as other entities such as the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Labor was channeled through MNCI, and in turn, MNCI was allowed to use its initiative to prioritize project approval for the communities that experience land conflict at the time of the funding application. This sort of positive discrimination is believed to have greatly contributed to the consolidation of the popular-democratic will of communities. Certainly, the availability of funds mediated by MNCI also offered an important material incentive for the participation of community members in movement meetings. Moreover, project-based applications were favored by MNCI itself, because they encouraged communitarianism within communities insofar as community members assume shared responsibilities. As one of the meeting participants

expressed, this situation thus “strengthens the organization, while one also assumes a commitment to participate in these spaces by energizing [the spirit of] militancy” (15 April 2014).

As a conclusion to this section, one could argue that MNCI’s conquest of the bill on native forests and SAF as well as its mobilization for communitarianism and the Cristian Ferreyra bill has reflected a strong popular-democratic commitment. MNCI’s insistence on its popular-democratic independence while engaging with the state is particularly evident in how it has avoided establishing direct links with the government and allied itself with semi-autonomous progressive movements. Last but not least, this alliance has proved itself to be fruitful from a popular-democratic perspective since it has come to impose its own independent agenda of transformation in policy-making arrangements.

Popular-Democratic Achievements through Disruptive Politics

Legal struggles, peaceful lobbying and alliance-building constitute only one aspect of popular-democratic organizing. Oppositional strategies that are invested in creating disruptive situations are also part of popular-democratic organizing insofar as they co-exist with other peaceful forms of class mobilization for more strongly influencing policy-making. Accordingly, this sub-section reveals that MNCI has not lost sight of disruptive strategies in class mobilization including the occupation of public places, road-blocking and police confrontation.

As admitted by Adolfo of MOCASE-VC, MNCI has adopted a strategy of “using state policies in order to make [the movement] grow” (Adolfo, 5 June 2014), but it has also paid particular attention to maintaining its founding principles while seeking government support:

Politics [should] not deviate us from our principles of struggle: to make trouble, to generate conflict. However, we should also attend to our other task, which is to show the others that we are able to administer state resources with greater justice than the *punteros* [political brokers who distribute material favor to gain votes] and mayor (Adolfo, 5 June 2014).

Adolfo admits that the movement should keep creating new instruments of struggle and insist on communitarian forms of property ownership backed by a vision of integral agrarian reform (Adolfo, 5 June 2014). While cautioning about cooptation possibilities in participating in state policies, Adolfo argues that cooptation can only be averted if one

insists on disruptive strategies and political pressure. For example, regarding MOCASE-VC's struggle to create a formally recognized secondary school that offers a communitarian and agroecological education, he insists that peaceful dialogue with the Ministry of Education would not get the peasant movement anywhere unless MOCASE-VC proposed a well-conceived school project and brought it to the attention of the ministry by mobilizing thousands of peasants:

I believe that if we simply went to the Ministry of Education of the province, we would not have altered any fucking relationship of forces, ... unless we gathered 3,000 peasants and go there... Only the struggle can change things. We must go with a strong project, us with three thousand peasants, which is the only way. We will not win anything by discussing policies with assholes who have a bourgeois conception of the European colonial state... Let's take over [occupy] the Ministry of Education if necessary (Adolfo, 5 June 2014) ...

In a similar vein, the popular-democratic interweaving of conflict generation and state-resource control is also expressed by Maneco of MNCI Bs As. He gives the example of how the MNCI community of the *Barrio Sarmiento* in Buenos Aires came to obtain distribution transformers for its neighborhood (Maneco, 14 May 2014). Maneco's testimony shows that state resources were not simply offered by the state either through clientelistic cooptation or some form of leftist benevolence:

The municipality installed the transformers, because we fought for them. Do you [the interviewer] see the street there? We blocked the street from where you [the interviewer] entered, and then they [municipal authorities] installed the transformer. When they put the transformer for us to get electricity, we lifted our camp that was blocking the street... So this is how we get things... You generate lots of chaos and the *barrio* takes forceful measures in order to get electricity, water and other things (Maneco, 14 May 2014).

Maneco goes on to say that road blockages were generally complemented with protests marches in front of the municipality, where the chosen delegates (i.e. *referentes*) negotiated with authorities:

We go to the municipality to do marches. We get together in one place and march in a row so that everything looks orderly. Then, we arrive at the municipality until they see us. When we arrive, the delegates, *referentes* go up and talk to people at the municipality (Maneco, 14 May 2014).

Another important indicator of how MNCI relies on disruptive strategies to achieve popular-democratic outcomes is MOCASE-VC's mobilization event that took place on June 5, 2014 in Campo Gallo town of Santiago del Estero. Over 200 peasants

came to Campo Gallo to convene for MOCASE-VC's provincial meeting and marched in the town's main streets to protest the arrest of César Navarro, a peasant leader affiliated with the Ashpa Sumaj central of MOCASE-VC. César Navarro was arrested for standing up against the armed bands led by Majín Ruíz and hired by an agribusinessman who was seeking to intimidate peasant communities. The protestors marched the street by chanting slogans with the aim of demonstrating their power to Campo Gallo's inhabitants:

Liberty!... The people united will never be defeated!... Peasants united will never be defeated!... We will overcome! (5 June 2014) ...

The protestors also passed by the house of Joselo Vittar, the provincial deputy who was accused of corruption and co-conspiracy with agribusinessmen. Then, they surrounded the town's police station and forced José Luis Cejas, the station commissary to release César Navarro. MOCASE-VC spokesmen gave megaphone speeches, while others blocked the main road and set tires on fire by chanting slogans. The police were accused of unlawfully assisting the bad intentions of agribusinessmen, and it was outnumbered by the protestors. After a 30-minute negotiation, the police eventually accepted MOCASE-VC's demands to file a complaint against the armed bands after releasing César Navarro (5 June 2014).

To conclude, Adolfo's emphasis on confronting the state through disruptive mobilization seems to have found echo in MNCI's road-blocking actions and police-station siege. The fieldwork data demonstrate that both actions have generated popular-democratic outcomes in favor of agrarian class formation. Consequently, MNCI's Barrio Sarmiento obtained distributive transformation via road blocking, while the Campo Gallo siege resulted in the liberation of MNCI militants who were unlawfully arrested.

Popular-Democratic Achievements in Education

Another popular-democratic achievement that MNCI takes pride in concerns the area of education. Most importantly, MCC as a MNCI constituent succeeded in elevating the status of its peasant schools to an officially recognized secondary education institution as a result of intense mobilization and debates with the provincial government in close alliance with the National University of Córdoba. Upon the official recognition of peasant schools in 2008, MCC started to offer weekly classes for adults as well as minors who suffer from the lack of conventional secondary schools in remote rural areas. These

classes combine the universal curriculum with political-ideological training and technical knowledge on small-scale peasant production. As such, they also help MCC to expand and consolidate its militancy base (Andrea, 14 April 2014; Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

In fact, MCC's peasant schools are largely modeled on MOCASE-VC's SoA initiated in 2007. However, SoA is not officially recognized by Santiago del Estero province and only has a status of non-formal education. Diana complains that the province's insistence on not recognizing SoA even though MOCASE-VC has fully adapted its curriculum to provincial requirements stems from a political decision:

We have fought for recognition and been given a title of non-formal school for adult education, but the same schools in other provinces are recognized as secondary education venues without problems. We have changed the curriculum, adapted it so as to include everything they asked us, but no, we got rejected again, partly because the education legislation in Santiago del Estero is very backward. There is a national legislation, but each province is free to decide how to adapt it. In Santiago del Estero, there is much missing, and in part, we believe that the non-recognition of our school is a political decision (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Likewise, Flor confirms that SoA's ambiguous status stems from both the inconsistent approach of the provincial government and provincial legal framework:

The school has been recognized as a non-formal school for adults by the Ministry of Education since its beginning in 2007... When the negotiations [to elevate the school to the status of a formal institution of secondary education] started several years ago, back in 2009, I believe, the provincial Ministry of Education had told us, 'No, it was impossible for the SoA to be a secondary school!' That is, from the beginning we had been told that this was impossible (Flor, 5 June 2014).

However, at the time of this research, Flor said that the negotiations have resumed when the ministry's attitude seemed to change in favor of MOCASE-VC:

Now, when we met with the minister [recently], the minister has expressed positive political intentions. He said, 'Yes, the school was a very good experience'. He said, 'Yes, you could become a secondary school'. After that, we have had two more meetings, with people from the planning office and those from the office of private school management, because our school is managed by an organization, I mean us, MOCASE, so it is not managed by the state (Flor, 5 June 2014).

However, Flor added that the movement must decide whether they want the school to stay as an institution that offers accelerated secondary education for adults or a formal secondary school that offers full time studies for five years only with minor students and a tenured faculty. Indeed, if MOCASE-VC opts for becoming a formal secondary school, member families would also be able to benefit from the national government's Universal

Child Allowance. Therefore, such status would provide material benefits that could further motivate militancy and expand MOCASE-VC popular base (Flor, 5 June 2014).

MNCI's popular-democratic advances in the area of education is not only limited to rural secondary education. It is also interested in contributing to the multiplication of rural primary schools and creation of a peasant university whose curriculum is intended to be suited to the cultural and technical needs of rural communities. Regarding the question of primary schools, Flor and Diana of MOCASE-VC remind us that there are still places deprived of private schools in Santiago del Estero. At the time of this research, MOCASE-VC had started negotiations for expanding the network of rural primary schools, primary education completion programs and literacy classes. During these meetings, furthermore, MOCASE-VC had delivered a list of places that lack primary schools based on information gathered from affiliated local communities, while also reporting the schools that are located dangerously close to agrochemical spraying areas (Flor, 5 June 2014; Diana, 10 April 2014).

Another crucial moment of MNCI's popular-democratic struggle is the creation of UNICAM (See Chapter 6 for more details). According to Ángel, UNICAM constitutes a defining advance in the history of MNCI, even though it has not officially started to function as a formal university:

We are still in the phase of construction and negotiations [with the government] regarding UNICAM, but we say that it has already started because all of our training programs [in MNCI] are done at UNICAM and all the youth that participates in the return to the countryside program is currently accommodated at UNICAM (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Ángel goes on to affirm that MNCI has recorded significant progress in designing the UNICAM curriculum and establishing a concrete partnership with universities:

We have signed agreements with national universities. We already have some approved diplomas and technical agreements with national universities, so for us it [UNICAM] has already started, but many resources are lacking to be able to finish the [building] structure, to be able to guarantee mobility, food (Ángel, 18 March 2014) ...

Both UNICAM's partnership with universities and MNCI's project of peasant schools can thus be seen as crucial popular-democratic outcomes insofar as they express an independent agenda for autonomous education reflecting the class interests of the indigenous peasantry.

Evaluation and Discussion

As revealed by the literature review in Chapter 1, a complete understanding of food sovereignty is not possible without addressing state-movement interactions, particularly how the state facilitates or inhibits food sovereignty and what agrarian movements can do to push for food sovereignty policies. Chapter 2 proposed a more systematic conceptual framework to address what Gerardo Otero calls “state intervention”. Accordingly, agrarian class formation was attributed to class agents’ capacity to preserve their original political-cultural claims and agenda in their relationships with the state. As opposed to PPTs’ state-centric view of the state, careful attention was urged to not only how the state affects agrarian mobilization, but also how agrarian mobilization affects the state through popular-democratic advances. In Argentina’s case, MNCI’s original claims and defining agenda were addressed in Chapter 3 and 4 as part of a wider programme of food sovereignty that draws its cultural-ideological value parameters from agrarian agents’ class grievances. In view of Chapter 1’s argument that food sovereignty can only be understood in the peculiar historical context in which agrarian struggles emerge, this chapter started with a literature review on the Latin American left and *kirchnerismo*. This literature review brought forth a crucial question that guided the focus of the present chapter: whether the leftist discourse of *kirchnerismo* combined with the continuation of neoliberal practices would inevitably result in progressive class movements’ cooptation or if the movements could preserve their independence. By examining MNCI’s relationships with the state, this chapter revealed that this movement was certainly immersed in *kirchnerista* welfare networks, particularly in the area of health, education and production. The leftist discourse of *kirchnerismo* and the increasing availability of dialogue and cooperation channels with the government seem to have encouraged MNCI to adopt a strategy of accumulating power and transforming the state from within without however building organic ties with the state unlike other *oficialista* organizations who offer full allegiance in exchange of office positions. PSA’s case was the only notable instance in which MNCI contradicted its principle of avoiding organic links with the state. Yet, not only was this experience short-lived and did it contribute to MNCI’s disillusionment with the state, but also MNCI’s management of PSA led to a popular-democratic transformation of the state power by challenging the neoliberal vision of development politics centered in individuals and entrepreneurialism. Subsequently, MNCI’s distancing from the state is greatly attributable to the continuation

of extractivist capitalism, the limited scope and availability of government assistance, and the poor and arbitrary functioning of inclusionary institutions of *kirchnerismo*. Faced with these challenges, MNCI accentuates the struggle for popular-democratic gains by pressuring the state without however fully terminating mutual dialogue. MNCI members' testimonies suggest that tangible popular-democratic gains have been obtained so as to advance the MNCI's original claims and defining agenda of food sovereignty. These gains are perhaps the most significant as to the end of *Juarismo*, the struggle for the signing into effect of draft bills on food sovereignty, the elevation of SAF's status to an autonomous secretariat, the continuation of land resistance at the expense of confronting the police and other government officials, and the creation of semi-autonomous schools that promote food sovereignty.

Chapter 6: Leadership and Agrarian Class Formation (1): Participatory-Democratic Modes of Participation and Collective Decision-Making in MNCI

What does Argentina's case tell us about the ways in which leadership can contribute to agrarian class formation? What mechanisms do MNCI and its constituents bring into action to create coherent, coordinated and self-sustaining leadership autonomy and political alliances? This chapter and the next one focus on the formation of collective participation mechanisms and national-popular alliances, which are perhaps the least systematically explored areas of the class formation theory as largely omitted in the Thompsonian-Katznelsonian framework and insightfully pointed out by Mann (2002). In doing so, these two chapters further elaborate on Gerardo Otero's (1999) conceptualization of leadership as modes of participation in collective decision-making and alliance-building. My elaboration is based on Antonio Gramsci's notions of "theorem of fixed proportions", "organic intellectuals" and "national-popular" alliances. The present chapter is thus devoted to the collective decision-making and participation component of leadership, whereas the next one explores the organic intellectual and political alliances components.

Here, the central argument is that MNCI's success in agrarian class formation as Argentina's largest indigenous-peasant movement is greatly attributable to the presence of an adequate mechanism of coordination between different levels of leadership. Decision-making starts at the community level, and grows to a provincial and national scale through voluntary delegates. The synthesis of grassroots demands coming from various communities throughout the country is then conveyed back to lower level structures after hours and days of open deliberation. Deliberative assembly structures allow for an enabling environment that promotes a better practice of bottom-up democracy and accountability at all levels. Here, Gramsci's theorem of fixed proportions (i.e. a general proposition that strong leadership stems from close coordination of devoted leaders at various levels) provides a useful lens to decipher various levels of participation, starting with the "mass element" (local representatives and frequent participants in community assemblies) and ascending to the "intermediate element" (provincial representatives and frequent participants in provincial meetings) and "national/cohesive element" (national representatives and frequent participants in national meetings). Balanced coordination among leadership structures is ensured thanks to the existence of mutual communication channels between local communities

and provincial-national assemblies. The absence of presidential status and ranked leaders is another important enabler that helps maximize deliberation and democratic decision-making. Moreover, deliberative decision-making is mediated by a cohesive cadre of vanguard elements and grassroots initiatives.

The arguments are presented in three sections. This first section presents the Gramscian conceptual framework used for leadership analysis. Gramsci's theory is not simply used here to conform with the Gramscian framework used in the previous empirical chapters. A main reasoning for the use of Gramsci's theory of leadership is that it offers a practical method susceptible of operationalization to analyzing vanguard leadership mechanisms in tandem with their bottom-up counterparts, while also allowing for a study of alliance-building mechanisms as part of class formation processes.

The second section scrutinizes the history of MOCASE-VC leadership as MNCI's largest constituent. It starts with the movement's emergence in the 1980s with the initiative of vanguardist NGO leaders who adhered to the Theology of Liberation, and continues with MOCASE's rupture with top-down NGOism, presidentialism and the delegate system of representation in favor of horizontal decision-making mechanisms and deliberation. Finally, the third section sheds light on the articulation of MNCI's leadership practices at the community, provincial and national level based on data obtained from direct observation, interviews and document analysis.

Gramsci's Theorem of Fixed Proportions and Horizontalism: Bottom-Up, Participatory-Democratic Leadership

Gerardo Otero conceives of leadership as a collective class agent's capacity for autonomous decision-making and alliance-building (Otero, 1999). This capacity can be conceptually operationalized based on Gramsci's theory of leadership. According to Gramsci (2012b), a capable leadership hinges on a close coordination of decision-making between a strongly committed group of leadership and the membership base in the grassroots. Put differently, successful leadership relies on the co-existence of vertical (vanguard) and horizontal (bottom-up) leadership mechanisms. In Gramsci's terms, this kind of coordination is ensured thanks to a balanced relationship of a movement's "mass element, composed of ordinary, average men" (i.e. rank-and-file members) with the "intermediate" elements, which articulates the first with the second and maintains contact between them, and a "cohesive" element, "which centralizes

nationally and renders effective and powerful [the class movement or party]" (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 152-153). In Argentina's case, the constituents of three "fundamental elements (three groups of elements)" (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 152-153) would be expected to be formed by representatives and frequent participants in steering meetings.

In the context of this research, the national-level of leadership (i.e. MNCI) represents the highest cohesive and most committed level of organization as the representative of the collective will and common aims of the indigenous peasantry as a class. In turn, the "intermediate element" establishes a bridge between the membership base and national leadership in terms of strengthening physical/material, moral/cultural and intellectual/ideological relationships (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 152-53). The intermediate element accounts for MOCASE-VC (Santiago del Estero) or MCC (Córdoba) at the level of provinces as well as regional *centrales* (e.g. the Quimilí Central in Santiago del Estero or UCAN in Córdoba, among others), whereas grassroots communities at the local level represent the mass element. In MNCI constituents, individual affiliation with the movement is open to anyone who can contribute to community assemblies. Participation in provincial and national meetings as well as protests and demonstrations are highly encouraged, though not imposed. Community participants are grouped into the area of work of their choosing, and assume responsibilities set during grassroots meetings. In Gramsci's language, regular participants in provincial meetings can simply be seen as part of the "intermediate element", whereas those who regularly take part in national conventions can be included in the "national/cohesive element" that represents the most politically motivated and aware cadres. Area groups are also continued in provincial and national meetings.

Gramsci is not known to have rejected Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's idea of the vanguard party and professional revolutionaries. Lenin argues that class consciousness is to be brought to the working classes primarily – but not only – "from without" by "a committee of [well-disciplined] professional revolutionaries" (Lenin, 1977, pp. 422, 462):

The more we confine the membership of such an organization to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity... the greater will be the number of people from the working class... who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it (Lenin, 1977, p. 464).

In his turn, Gramsci re-asserts the classic Leninist belief in "a vanguard that pushes ahead and draws the mass of the people after it" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 333), or "a vanguard of devoted and disciplined militants [who are connected to] a centralized power" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 188). This acknowledgement, however, does not withhold

Gramsci from despising top-down leadership practices that subjugate class movements to the will of an elite of professional vanguardist politicians (Gramsci, 2012b). He explicitly refutes the individualization of leadership mechanisms in a revolutionary organization: “Marxists and revolutionaries say they want the dictatorship of the proletariat but not the dictatorship of leaders; say they do not want command to be individualized and personalized.... (Gramsci, 1990, p. 209)”. Gramsci thus cautions about the potential danger that vanguardism could turn into an oppressive form of social control subjugating the working class to bureaucratic-centralism. Therefore, he emphasizes the importance of creating vanguards of working class backgrounds (i.e. organic intellectuals) who would be equipped with an intellectual capacity and confidence for democratic self-management. By way of parentheses, it is worth noting that Gramsci uses the term “organic” in two related contexts on leadership: (a) as leaders who come from a working-class background and (b) as leadership practices that are deeply immersed in the vernacular culture of the working class so as to forge an organic, or national-popular unity between the revolutionary movement (which can also include “leaders from without” who become engaged intellectuals such as students) and its bases of popular support.

In MNCI’s language, what Gramsci would have called “organic” vanguards correspond to militancy. Mirta Quiroga, a MOCASE-VC militant defines the militant as “a person who is able to commit to and achieve something with responsibility” (MOCASE-VC/MNCI, 2012, p. 3). In turn, Leti Luna, another MOCASE-VC militant portrays militancy as “breaking off with selfishness, individualism”, “knowing how to understand and trying to understand”, “being convinced of what we are doing and of what we are struggling for” (MOCASE-VC/MNCI, 2012, pp. 4). Militancy is also a module that is taught in MOCASE-VC’s SoA. “No one is born already-made; we become ourselves step by step, through social practice in which we participate”, is a guiding aphorism of the School’s militancy module (MNCI 2012c, p. 1), which brings together the themes of participation in decision-making and class formation.

MOCASE-VC textbook on militancy identifies a set of eleven principles of indigenous-peasant militancy, which also form the foundation of the leadership traits conducive to class formation (as summarized from MOCASE-VC/MNCI, 2012, pp. 6-11). The contribution of militant leadership to class formation is particularly noticeable when it comes to the principles of cultural attachment, solidarity, collectivity and comradeship, whereas the principle of democratic participation reflects MOCASE-VC’s Gramscian

leanings regarding vanguardism:

- 1- Cultural Attachment: Militants are attached to indigenous-peasant cultures.
- 2- Indignation: Militants are sensitive toward injustices.
- 3- Defiance: Militants respond to injustices by mobilizing their community.
- 4- Solidarity: Militants feel affected by each other's hardships and support each other by organizing.
- 5- Joy: Militants are determined to celebrate the joy of life in confronting the sadness of injustices through music, dance, feasts, etc.
- 6- Respect for diversity: Militants adhere to the belief that diversity is the one and only wealth of peasant communities, but they also seek democratic consensus in order to avoid political fragmentation at all times.
- 7- Collectivity: Militants coexist with the collectivity and respect collective decisions.
- 8- Voluntary work: Militants are ready to lend a hand to the movement at all times.
- 9- Study: Militants believe that social reality cannot be transformed without studying it.
- 10- Comradeship: Militants respect and defend their comrades with a sense of responsibility and commitment.
- 11- Democratic Participation: Militants adhere to the ideals of participatory-democracy.

The textbook cautions that those who participate in decision-making should not see themselves as "leaders". According to the textbook, one should also remember that listening to the others and reaching a synthesis through collective discussions is part of militant participatory-democracy (MOCASE-VC/MNCI, 2012, pp. 6-11).

Going back to Gramsci's leadership theory, in the absence of participatory-democratic structures, Gramsci would thus argue that a movement's leadership autonomy is crippled by either "charismatic-authoritarian" or bureaucratic, "corrupt-opportunistic" practices (Otero, 2004). Caesarism is Gramsci's term for charismatic-authoritarianism, a form of personalistic rule characterized "idolatry", "fanaticism" and a growing rift between the "represented and representatives" (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 129, 210; 1999, p. 159; 2012a, p. 22). Similarly, bureaucratic leadership – the kind of leadership that relies on the top-down rule by a narrow elite – reduces social and political movements to an executive mechanism devoid of mass initiative and disconnected from popular demands (Gramsci, 1992, p. 153; 2012b, pp. 189, 211; 2009, pp. 123-124) open to opportunistic cooptation. In Argentina, Gramsci's critique of personalistic rule applies to MOCASE's rupture with the presidential leadership style,

whereas bureaucratic leadership finds its expression in MOCASE's former system of closed "executive commission".

In his writings, Gramsci's critique of charismatic-authoritarian and bureaucratic leadership leads him to attribute primacy to genuine grassroots participation and self-management, which constitute the ideal conditions for class formation:

It is not necessary to believe that the party can lead the working class through an external imposition of authority (Gramsci, 1999, p. 159).

Elsewhere, Gramsci stresses the importance of autonomous organizing through self-management:

The working masses must take adequate measures to acquire complete self-government, and the first step along this road consists in disciplining themselves, inside the workshops, in the strictest possible, yet autonomous, spontaneous and unconstrained manner (Gramsci, 1977, p. 95).

In autonomous organizing, he explicitly favors participatory and bottom-up practices:

The dictatorship of the proletariat is expansive, not repressive. A continuous movement takes place from the base upwards, a continuous replacement through all the capillaries of society, a continuous circulation of men (Gramsci, 1990, p. 212).

In MNCI's case, Gramsci's description of participatory-democratic leadership that is performed on a continuous basis corresponds to regularly held community assemblies and their extension to provincial- and national-level organizing in lack of official leadership ranks.

All in one, the Gramscian theoretical focus of this chapter is expected to allow for a closer evaluation of MOCASE-VC's struggle against charismatic-authoritarian and bureaucratic, corrupt-opportunistic forms of leadership. This evaluation is to be accompanied with a thorough examination of the ways in which participatory-democratic decision-making mechanisms contribute to class formation at the community, provincial and national levels. Besides collective decision-making mechanisms, special attention is to be devoted to the role of vanguard leaders who emerge from indigenous-peasant communities, hence their importance for agrarian class formation.

MOCASE-VC's Rupture with Presidentialism and NGOism: A Historical Account

MOCASE emerged in 1989 as "an entity that represents small producers in the province" (MOCASE-VC, 2010, p. 50). Its official foundation was declared in August 1990 with the

motto of “finding solutions to common problems, representing peasants before the authorities, supporting the demands of each member community in its autonomy, promoting training in cooperative and union formation, and bettering the life quality of small producers” (MOCASE-VC, 2012, p. 10). Earlier MOCASE mobilizations revolved around the question of land in Santiago del Estero. Community discussions to mobilize peasant communities later revealed other problems that were confronted by community members, especially the problem of access to education and health. This is confirmed by Ñato of MOCASE-VC’s Quimilí chapter, who argues that the movement emerged in response to the land question, lacking basic necessities and the need to improve the life quality of rural communities (MOCASE-VC, 2012, p. 38). He cites difficulties in marketing the peasant produce as another key challenge that mobilized the movement. Infrastructure problems such as the lack of paved roads were only one side of the problems related to marketing. Another problem was communities’ reliance on intermediary buyers against whom peasants had no leverage for price negotiation. The movement nowadays uses its own facilities and resources to strengthen productive and marketing capacities (MOCASE-VC, 2012, p. 38). As Emilio from MNCI’s *Unión de Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra* (UST, or Landless Rural Workers’ Movement) explains, the movement has established small facilities for agriculture, apiculture, livestock production, and cheese, salsa and caramelized milk production in provinces such as Córdoba, Mendoza and Santiago del Estero (Emilio, 30 May 2014). Member communities can use tools, machinery and tractors that the movement possesses. Regarding marketization, in rural areas, the movement mobilizes its resources to ensure the participation of its communities to local fairs. In town centers, it opens convenience stores that sell the peasant produce at lower prices than those of supermarkets and other stores (Emilio, 30 May 2014). University students allied with the movement help to informally distribute the peasant produce in urban centers (except for MCC, which opened a store in the city of Córdoba). The movement transports the peasant produce to urban centers when they collectively travel to urban centers for protests and negotiations. Moreover, MNCI operates butchers and meat storage facilities that offer affordable prices in the name of food sovereignty. According to Diana, the low pricing policy in movement-led facilities benefits both farmers and buyers, in which “the slogan ‘we are the land for feeding the peoples’ is concretized” (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Organizing the first communities under MOCASE’s umbrella was a great challenge for militants. Ñato goes on to mention how as the core militants of the

movements they used to bike 60 kilometers to go to a community and organize a meeting that was sometimes attended by no more than two locals (MOCASE-VC, 2012, p. 45). Therefore, the determination of the core leadership was of primordial importance for the expansion of the movement. MOCASE's core leadership was comprised by activist priests like Roberto (Bob) Killmeate (1947-2015) and former students like Ángel Strapazzón.

The nucleus of the early MOCASE leadership fits with Lenin's vanguard framework of "consciousness from without", which was fueled by an ideology of liberation theology *à la* Enrique Dussel combined with NGO activism. For example, Killmeate was a former Irish priest who was exiled to a remote village in Argentina's Los Juríes by the Catholic Church for his "radical" activities. Killmeate started to organize a local peasant movement in Los Juríes, Santiago del Estero, and came to regroup a number of Christian NGOs, including the *Instituto de Cultura Popular* (Popular Culture Institute, or INCUPO) and *Fundación para el Desarrollo en Justicia y Paz* (Foundation for Development in Justice and Peace, or FUNDAPAZ), which operated in other *Santiagueño* localities like Añatuya. Christian NGOs were linked to INTA's local branch. Created in 1956, INTA operates as an autonomous federal agency that is responsible for diffusing technologies and knowledge in the agri-food sector. In the 1980s, many progressive NGO agronomists like Fernando Kraft – who were exiled to Santiago del Estero during the dictatorship – also served as part of the INTA staff to improve peasant production in Santiago del Estero (Ángel, 18 March 2014; MOCASE-VC, 2012).

Another leadership initiative that flourished under Killmeate's influence was the one led by Ángel Strapazzón of Córdoba province. Before settling in Quimilí, which was to become MOCASE-VC's main headquarters in the 2000s, Ángel was a student in musicology and philosophy, until he quit his degree in 1976 at the age of 19 to become a militant organizer in Santiago del Estero. His initial intention was to interview indigenous elders to recover popular knowledge in the region. He fully devoted his time to militancy, after he met "Third Worldist priests" who were operating in the area as the exiles of the military dictatorship:

Well, we began to exchange ideological or methodological views of struggle and organization because it was foreseen that the dictatorship was going to give way to large landownership and entrepreneurship. Landowners were going to start throwing peasants, indigenous peoples out of their land (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Ángel's testimony suggests that vanguard elements were essential in igniting popular struggles in the countryside and expanding the movement by going to peasants and engaging them through various forms of organizing:

Then we began with many years of preparation, by visiting families in the *monte*, gathering with them, holding meetings of self-consciousness, workshops, through popular education... We visited people ranch by ranch, house by house, and traveled thousands of kilometers... In turn, many entrepreneurs hired armed groups, paid the police, hired judges and attacked us, either through violence or they came with police cars and arrested our comrades... So, we organized, we gained consciousness, we educated ourselves on peasant rights, and we also organized intelligent defense mechanisms (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

As implied in Ángel's testimonies, the development of the peasant struggle in the 1980s progressed into a class formation process in which new methods of struggles were invented, the peasant self-esteem was promoted and peasants from various places were linked to each other by ending their prior state of political isolation:

They [agribusinessmen and their forces] came with large equipment, but we learned how to break the engines, stop the machines... We attacked them at night, we set their place on fire... Yes, everything was a process that took many stages of organizational methodology, methodology of adding colleagues, methodology of internally recreating self-esteem for one's own culture, for one's own rights... Then, we started to expand to different areas and created peasant *centrales* [regional headquarters in the province] ... We started to link them with other peasants, and after three or four years of success, of conquests, of rejection, of the advancement of the landowners, we decided to have a large assembly and form MOCASE, which was on August 4, 1990, but we had already fought for 7 or 8 years. We led a series of mobilization events and MOCASE became the first agrarian movement that reappeared in the Argentine history after the military dictatorship (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Heavily inspired by the teachings of Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, the Argentine *indigenista* Marxist Mario Santucho and the Argentine philosopher and anthropologist Rodolfo Kusch, Ángel started to question the top-down approach of NGO leaders and increasingly opted for peasant mobilization and self-government. As a founder of MOCASE and currently UNICAM's coordinator, he believed in a leadership style that includes both leadership from without and leadership from below. His vanguard intervention was directed toward creating the organic intellectuals of the countryside, or the leaders of the peasantry's own class who would invest in self-governing (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Elsewhere, I addressed the co-optation of progressive social movements from various countries through the adoption of an NGO model of mobilization, which has the potential to generate excessive bureaucratization, top-down decision-making, and donor-dependency (Gürcan, 2015). A similar situation applies to MOCASE's case. A lack of emphasis on peasant self-government created growing tensions with Killmeate's leadership and other NGOs, which remind of Gramsci's critique of bureaucratic centralism and charismatic-authoritarian forms of leadership. Ángel acknowledges that the roots of MOCASE go back to Killmeate's Juries initiative, which emerged as a coordination of rural NGOs that were regrouping small producers under the pretext of improving production and marketing. Ángel goes on to affirm that initiating the peasant mobilization with a confrontational motto centered on land struggle sounded ideologically alienating to many previously non-politicized peasants. Meanwhile, Ángel did not necessarily adhere to Killmeate's conception of leadership, which promoted a formal delegate model of representation and subjugating the peasant movement to INTA's technical agenda of development. The by-passing of direct representation had fueled artificial divisions between the leader and the led. Ángel's concerns were deeply shared by other peasant militants, who opposed Killmeate's idea of institutionalizing MOCASE as a formal development NGO. There was a growing rift between grassroots militancy and what peasants came to call *técnicos*, i.e. those technical experts such as agronomists and social workers (e.g. INTA officials) who had unilaterally assumed the role of "introducing consciousness from outside" regardless of peasants' sensitivity for autonomy (Ángel, 18 March 2014; MOCASE-VC, 2012). Based on this critique, a militant training book by MNCI cautions against *técnicos*' over-confidence in their technical knowledge and ability to improve rural conditions disregarding peasants' genuine needs and preferences:

The projects are born from our communities, not only based on our own problems, but also our own solutions. We are tired of seeing how some "development" institutions or state agencies impose projects on us to resolve our problems, the solutions that, they believe, are appropriate. We are tired of these *técnicos* who impose on the countryside what they design in some office in the city, without considering the possibility that what is proposed is not adequate to the specific problems to the place... Some think that there is a universally effective technological module, and they try to impose it as the only solution for each and every case (MNCI/MOCASE-VC/MCC, 2009, p. 19).

The ideological rifts between the proponents of participatory-democratic organizing and those of an NGO style of top-down leadership was just a first step in

building peasant autonomy and self-government. Discussions within MOCASE reached a point of acute crisis on three important issues in the 1999 congress, namely (a) cooperation with the state, (b) controversies over presidentialism and the delegate system of representation, and (c) the question of alliances. Regarding the first point, MOCASE's Quimilí chapter objected to the movement's inability to maintain its autonomy from the state, INTA and development NGOs. The Menem government had launched agrarian development programs that involved partnership between NGOs and rural communities such as the Agricultural Social Program (*Programa Social Agropecuario*, PSA). Albeit not rejecting the idea of collaborating with the state *per se*, the Quimilí chapter contested that the structure of *Menemista* programs imposed a top-down relationship between *técnicos* and rural communities at the expense of rolling back the peasant autonomy and self-government. Not surprisingly, after the organization split following the Congress in 1999, those who broke up with the Quimilí chapter were named as "MOCASE-PSA", or "MOCASE *Institucional*", with an emphasis on its organic relationship with the state as a cooptative peasant movement (MOCASE-VC, 2012; Ángel, 18 March 2014). Interestingly enough, this reminds of Gramsci's critique of trade union leadership and his notion of "economic corporatism", i.e. awareness of a narrow group's corporate/material and immediate self-interests that are not articulated along with the longer-term interests of wider groups or classes (Gramsci, 1999, pp. 204-206).

A second issue of contention was related to MOCASE's internal decision-making structure. Before the 1999 Congress, MOCASE leadership rested on a presidential structure that headed what the movement called the "executive commission" [*Comisión Directiva*]. The commission was made of the president, vice-president, secretary, vice-secretary, and a number of elected delegates. The PSA proponents had opted for the continuation of MOCASE's presidential structure, which was contested by the Quimilí chapter in the name of further horizontalism. The idea was to abolish the personalistic leadership style (or Caesarism, as Gramsci would call it) that permeated the executive commission and to diffuse the leadership powers through secretariats by maximizing grassroots participation in decision-making (MOCASE-VC, 2012; Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Not all *técnicos* sided with MOCASE-PSA. Juan, a MCC militant with an agronomist background acknowledges that the *personalismo* tendency in the former MOCASE used to inhibit the participatory and deliberative potential of the movement when movement meetings were closed to regular militants with no formal leadership status. The highest expression of *personalismo* was the presidential structure of the

former MOCASE. Regarding the delegate model of representation, Doña Mirta – a peasant MOCASE-VC militant – asserts that delegates used to silence regular members by using their authority. In countering this presidential and delegate system, therefore, the Quimilí chapter proposed to abolish the executive commission and launch a secretariat in which all members can participate and make their contribution regardless of rank or status. The adoption of a non-delegated and open discussion model was also crucial in terms of ensuring accountability and transparency. In particular, this arrangement helped to eliminate concerns about those who may seek to join the delegate commission for personal material gains (MOCASE-VC, 2012).

A third issue of contention that marked the 1999 Congress was the question of movement alliances (See Chapter 7 for more details on class alliances). The Quimilí chapter aspired to go beyond the framework of a local development NGO to become an (inter)national class movement. Clearly, this contradicted the interests of those who opted for a closed and corporatist leadership structure that allies only with local development NGOs and public state agencies. The idea of launching a national class organization that was soon to assume MNCL's name emerged out of the discussions that took place during the 1999 Congress. This idea was taken further by deciding to join *Vía Campesina*, an international peasant organization that is considered as one of the world's largest social movement (Desmarais, 2007). Therefore, the organizational split in 2001 after the 1999 Congress resulted in the emergence of two distinct organizations: the "MOCASE *Institucional*" and "MOCASE-*Vía Campesina* (VC)" (MOCASE-VC, 2012).

Following the 1999 Congress, MOCASE-VC's leadership structure was reorganized into community assemblies, provincial assemblies, and general assemblies (or national meetings). According to Deo of MOCASE-VC, the rise of the political and social movement left in Latin America since the 2000s has made MOCASE-VC's transformation towards horizontalism more relevant than ever. However, leftist movements are still subjected to serious challenges and difficulties in overcoming verticalist and top-down forms of leadership. Deo points out that the challenge of progressing from verticalism towards horizontalism is still an ongoing process, which started with the split of MOCASE into MOCASE and MOCASE-VC:

The truth is that we are still undergoing a process of breaking with certain traditional, verticalist dynamics [of leadership] ... It is one of the things that weighs heavily [on leftist social movements] and is a challenge that the organizations themselves find hard to break with, because on the one hand it involves many more colleagues participating, while on the other hand it is a process that is delayed when the leader does not authorize

[the change towards horizontalism] ... This has also happened to us. We have also tried to break with that tradition, and we are still trying to strengthen it [horizontalism] even more (Deo, 10 April 2014).

Participatory-Democratic Leadership in MNCI's Practice: Community Assemblies, Provincial Assemblies, and National Meetings

Interestingly enough, MOCASE-VC's current horizontalist style of leadership conforms with Gramsci's theorem of fixed proportions, which conceives of successful class organizations to rely on the balanced coordination—the fixed proportions—of three distinct moments of leadership (the mass element, the intermediate element, and the cohesive element). This section addresses each of these three moments with reference to MOCASE-VC and MCC's community, provincial and national assemblies, respectively.

Community Assemblies as the Mass Element

Usually, local communities assemble at least once a week, and the duration of meetings depend on the agenda and course of discussions. Once the discussions are finalized, the decisions and proposals that concern the peasant movement are taken to provincial meetings attended by volunteering community delegates.

Essentially, community assemblies serve as the first level of decision-making in the peasant movement. Local community residents socialize with themselves, discuss their problems, and share alternative solutions and proposals. As observed in a community assembly of MNCI Bs As on May 17, 2014, community assemblies are particularly important in determining the problems and needs of communities. During this meeting, community members voiced their need for machinery, wired poles, feed, marketization of peasant produce, advice from agricultural engineers and veterinary assistance.

Regarding how the peasant movement responds to community needs, for example, MCC possesses a number of tractors at its disposition to help out its members. MCC also coordinates the collective purchase of inputs and livestock. Agricultural engineers and agronomists affiliated with the peasant movement assist movement members in improving their solar energy and water access. Professional leaders who have a background in law may attend community meetings to offer expert advice when

faced with situations such as evictions and contamination caused by agricultural spraying. The same goes for veterinarians who militate or sympathize with the peasant movement and offer their help to resolve community issues. In cases where experts cannot attend the community assembly, professional leaders coming from the Centrals (administrative centres of the peasant movement) and attending the assembly can convey community demands and coordinate the resolution process of community problems. In a MCC community meeting on April 28, 2014 in Río Seco, for example, community members discussed irrigation and drought problems, particularly affecting tangerines, pears and lemons. Discussions for finding solution to these problems focused on renovating the orchards by using the movement's tractor and performing "historical memory work" with elders in order to formulate a permanent strategy of production. Aside from these discussions, representatives from MCC's APENOC central informed the community members of government-supported certificate programs in caregiving, which was to be jointly organized by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health's *Programa de Atención Médica Integral* (Comprehensive Medical Attention Program, or PAMI). Moreover, central representatives also made an announcement of MCC's preventive health control activities for local communities on May 9. These activities include school visits by movement doctors and health volunteers, health check-up at community dispensaries, public health workshops for community members, and food offerings. They reminded community members of the benefits and inclusion procedures of MS, a tax category for socially vulnerable individuals and cooperative members that allow them to invoice and include in social security schemes.

Another Río Seco meeting that took place on April 29 included a similar discussion on MS and community health. Furthermore, community members considered the possibility of installing a new water pump for irrigation and organizing a "flour campaign", which consists of a wholesale flour purchase on a reasonable price and administering its logistics. Similarly, the discussions during another MCC community meeting that took place on April 15 centered around MS, microcredits, SAF project assistance and an approved project for bee-keeping development that was worth 10,000 pesos. Then, the community discussed plans for participating in a march to demand the immediate release of the previously approved SAF funds, a solidarity event with Ramona Bustamante and a meeting with anti-Monsanto environmentalists. Moreover, the discussions included coordination plans for an upcoming *pasantía* (See Chapter 7 for *pasantías*) on how to accommodate and feed the visiting students. Regarding the

health rubric, the community considered the community doctors' request to organize a workshop on medicinal items, and the community proposal was to participate in this workshop and later share the workshop knowledge with other communities. In return, certain community members expressed their interest in learning how to make soap to treat dry skin from another community.

Area work is essential to community assemblies. For example, Carmen of MCC is a community health promoter who assumes leading roles in the area of health (Carmen, 27 April 2014). Her role as a promoter consists of assisting doctors; ensuring doctors' coordination with nearby communities; helping communities with disease detection, vaccination and drug provision; promoting greater health awareness and hygiene practices; and attending training courses in order to perform the above-mentioned duties. In her work, Carmen also feels committed to the protection and revival of ancestral knowledge on the usage of natural herbs [*yuyos*] for medicinal purposes:

... [in doing our work as health promoters] We are also fighting to [preserve] the life that our grandparents, great-grandparents have lived by preparing and using *yuyos*... and this is what we are doing on health: we struggle [to teach] about the *yuyos* that we are familiar with (Carmen, 27 April 2014) ...

Certainly, the practice of using medicinal herbs is not only a practical response to the unavailability of drugs in the countryside, but it also concerns a cultural reclamation of Argentina's indigenous-peasant legacy. These vital responsibilities lead health promoting leaders such as Carmen to actively participate in community meetings alongside other movement meetings on provincial and national levels.

The production area has a no less important place in community meetings than health. As far as production is concerned, Jorge of MCC affirms that water access is at the top of the list of relevant problems that communities are struggling with:

Actually, all the waters here are bad: some are salty, and others have arsenic. They have different components that are not suitable for health, so one of the areas that we have been working on is drinking water. We have installed tanks and water collecting roofs here for many families, so the quality of the water for human consumption has also been improving (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Jorge goes on to explain that collective purchase of goods is also equally important for the production area given that most communities in north Córdoba cannot farm due to climate conditions and lack of water:

Besides other things that we have been doing as an organization, there are communitarian purchases of corn, well because we live in a dry area

that cannot be farmed, and we stopped sowing because it does not rain, which is why we buy corn (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

According to Jorge, energy access is also a center of focus for the production area. He mentions that his community has used loans to purchase a solar system for 30 families, besides 30,000 liter-capacity water tanks. In such decisions, therefore, community meetings play a significant role (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Relatedly, another function of community assemblies (which also applies to provincial and national meetings) is that rank-and-file members can gain acquaintance with available government programs and their application procedures through mutual exchange or participation of professional leaders and representatives coming from peasant centrals. Not every movement member is aware of available assistance programs provided by the self-proclaimed leftist government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015). Therefore, certain leftward movements including MNCI provide their constituency with alternative access points to government welfare programs.

Usually, professional leaders facilitate community discussions and promote the active participation of the rank-and-file. Professional leaders' technical knowledge comes in handy in keeping the focus of discussions and offering alternative solutions to the practical problems of communities. For example, leaders such as MCC's Eduardo who majored in agronomy assume an important role in dealing with questions of peasant production (Eduardo, 29 April 2014). In contrast to the top-down attitude of mainstream development NGOs and development technocrats, however, professional leaders have no decision-making power by themselves. Instead, decisions are made by community members through deliberation. Yet, the decision-making power of communities does not nullify the crucial influence of professional leaders on agenda-setting. Santiago from MNCI Bs As, a leader who is originally affiliated with SERCUPO, admits that professional leaders see each other on a regular basis and might even meet prior to community meetings. He affirms:

Let's say, we meet beforehand and make decisions with a group of militants, but this is followed by community [*barrio*] meetings participated by comrades from SERCUPO, too. All of this makes up the peasant movement in Buenos Aires. All of this is constituted by the comrades who participate in these meetings. All that is like a larger space, which is why it is called MNCI Bs As (Santiago, 08 May 2014).

The community meeting procedures do not always assume the same modalities, depending on community dynamics. For example, Facundo of MCC acknowledges that

community meetings do not follow a regular routine, but that instead they are organized when needed (Facundo, 22 April 2014). Direct participation is replaced by delegate meetings in his own community:

Previously, decision-making used to rely on assemblies where everyone would participate, but now it is just the delegates, to speak the truth. Then we participate in other delegate meetings in the countryside and go to *plenarios*, which take place at the provincial level. [As for community assemblies] We do not convene very often. We used to hold assemblies each 15 days and then, we lost the habit of holding assemblies, so to say. Now, we organize assemblies when there is an important issue to be discussed with the whole community, because people are not always available. Many times before, we had gone to the meetings and had no topics to discuss, which complicated things for us. This is why now we make delegate meetings (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

Facundo adds that, although the peasant movement has no official hierarchy of leadership, what is known in the movement as *referentes* (representatives) assume a decisive role in agenda-setting and decision-making (Facundo, 22 April 2014). In his research on Argentine clientelism, Javier Auyero is known to equate *referentes* with “political patrons” who manage Peronist problem-solving networks through resource control and information-hoarding (Auyero, 2000). In this particular research, the term *referentes* is used in a different context to define militants who reside in communities, prioritize their responsibilities in the peasant movement by attending almost every important event beyond local participation and assume key administrative tasks including delegation and spokespersonship. In Gramscian terms, they could be regarded as part of the intermediary element of movement leadership. Active participation in the first ranks of the peasant movement enables these leaders to accumulate a higher level of ideological awareness, self-confidence, political knowledge and organizing know-how. Facundo cites *referentes* in his own organization:

There are various *referentes*. Alex is one. There is Peter, whom you have not met yet. There is Edy... *Referentes* are like those with high standing in the organization, because they have been part of this organization for a long time and they put greater effort on the organization, the peasant movement (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

In line with Facundo’s testimony, Maneco of MNCI Bs As also confirms that not every MNCI community meeting follows direct democracy without delegation (Maneco, 14 May 2014). He gives an example from his own experience in the Sarmiento *barrio* of Buenos Aires where *referentes* control the decision-making and regular community meetings play a less significant role:

... What we do is that we have delegates. Each neighborhood has a delegate, one or two *referentes*. They meet, discuss, and then there are people in charge who go and talk to the municipality.”

However, the power of *referentes* is constrained by area groups where the community’s needs are identified. Maneco stresses that only “those of us who leave in the barrio know what is missing and what is not (Maneco, 14 May 2014). As such, community work is divided into several working areas on which *referentes* do not have any formal authority. “For example”, continues Maneco;

... the health area convenes on Saturdays, and the education area also works with the children on Saturdays. Those who come to work for the community kitchen also work as a group... Let’s say, if I work in the health area, I would say: what do we need in the neighborhood? What do we need as the health team? We need a first aid kit. Well, there is also what already exists in the municipality, but we might not know what it is like to work there. Whose door are we to knock on? To whom do we have to make a claim? Let’s say, we need a health center for vaccination, among a whole lot of other things. The same goes for education... So all those issues are to be thought about and worked on in groups and then we can work here and contribute to all our defining areas and issues (Maneco, 14 May 2014).

Regardless of different meeting procedures, however, *referentes* seem to dominate movement discussions even more than rank-and-file members, mostly thanks to their commitment and confidence as militants rather than their organic relationship to the state as implied in Javier Auyero’s research (2000). For example, Ricardo of MOCASE-VC’s Las Lomitas Central is known as the representative of the Lule Vilela indigenous community, and his presence in provincial and national meetings do not go unnoticed. His presence is particularly strong as a keynote speaker in important events and active member of the working group on territory.

In sum, direct observations and interview data indicate that MOCASE-VC and MCC’s decision-making starts at the level of communities where community members freely share their daily problems and try to find collective solutions through deliberation on fundamental problems such as health and production. As the mass element, in a Gramscian sense of the term, community assemblies also serve as a strategic venue for class formation where community members develop a stronger sense of belonging to their community and the peasant movement. Last but not least, while community assemblies allow for open participation with no formal authority in decision-making, they allow for the emergence of “organic” leaders or *referentes*, i.e. committed and self-confident leaders who belong to the community, as Gramsci would have argued. Indeed,

the part played by professional leaders in a Leninist sense cannot also be neglected in terms of how they facilitate assembly discussions, contribute to agenda-making, and share their expertise (See Chapter 7 for more details on professional leaders).

Provincial and National Assemblies

Community assemblies (or local delegate meetings) are followed by provincial and national meetings. As Diana of the Quimilí Central describes:

Every two months we hold [provincial] assemblies. We go there and break into working groups on a particular area such as production, training and education, communication, health, and territory. We also have an operational secretariat, where we discuss political relations with other organizations. Everything is discussed and decided in provincial assemblies... [In national meetings] one group, or a delegation from each province is assembled every three months, but of course, we may gather more frequently depending on the conjuncture (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Provincial meetings serve a triple purpose: to carry out decision-making on important matters that concern provincial organizing; to foster exchange of information and experience between members (e.g. land evictions throughout Argentina and the outcome of resistance activities); and to stimulate capacity-development related to matters such as small-scale production workshops and information sessions on governmental welfare programs. Indeed, each of these purposes can be regarded as sub-goals that assist the peasant movement to attain its superordinate goal, which is agrarian class formation (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Provincial meetings are usually followed by MNCI's national meetings that involve a similar methodology to that used in provincial meetings. Each level of participation is open to all movement members with no rank differentiation and privileged representatives. Group work is essential to deliberative decision-making. This requires participants to divide into discussion groups in the areas of health, education, territory, communication, youth, women, and production and marketing. Matters of territory and land conflict have primacy in deliberation and decision-making. Group work is then synthesized in a concluding general assembly.

The provincial and national assemblies' super-ordinate goal of class formation is explicitly voiced in the opening remarks of MCC's assembly between May 30-June 1, 2014 by a presenter:

Very well, what we are going to do... is what we have been doing for the last 15 years. What we are going to keep doing is to try to unite those who are sadly separated: the producers who have been separated from the means of production. For those who are still united with their means of production, we will continue to be united, and for those of us who continue being separated from the means of production, we will try to unite them so that they do not get separated ever again (30 May 2014).

Usually, national meeting discussions revolve around the national and provincial movements' achievements, failures, challenges and aspirations in each area over the past 3 months. Given the national character of the meetings, discussions also touch on matters that concern international alliances and projects (See Chapter 7 for more details on class alliances). In MNCI meetings that took place in May-June 2014, for example, a discussion was held on the proposal of examining Cuba's experience of agroecological development and agrarian cooperatives and the possibility of organizing a workshop on agroecology with the participation of Cuban experts and farmers. Another discussion of interest was the coordination of CLOC's then-upcoming congress to be held and that of CTEP in Buenos Aires.

I have observed that the first day of national meetings (May-June 2014) opened with a general delegate discussion on the ordering of the entire meeting agenda, which was to be refined through working group discussions by provincial delegates. The second day was reserved to group discussions in each working area, whereas the third and final day passed with a general assembly and group presentations area by area in order to assess the work accomplished over the last two days. Delegates were allowed to voice their concerns if they disagreed with any opinions presented by groups.

As observed in MNCI's meeting, Juan of MCC opened the first general discussions, where he invited all of the delegates to brainstorming for agenda-making:

A lot has happened in the last three months [since the last national meeting] ... So, we need to concentrate a bit on making an agenda of what seem to us to be the most important things. Now the idea is to slowly start with the meetings. We hope to come up with a list of the tasks to be carried out by this afternoon. As always, we form our groups, and each group can develop their own tasks too (Juan, 30 May 2014) ...

Following Juan's opening, Marta of the UST took the stage and proposed to start working group discussions before initiating a general deliberative discussion attended by the national delegates:

The proposal is: since we have started a little bit late, let's start working as groups representing each territory, and analyze a little bit how we are doing, and summarize up to two or three projects, actions or instruments

that have been strengthening our struggle and our organizational process. This may take up to 1.5 hours. Let's concentrate and take advantage of the time we have so that afterwards we can start meetings and hold a general inquiry in which we can contribute to preceding group analyses, assess the [movement's] national coordination and make a review of our relationships and links with the state at the institutional level (Marta, 30 May 2014).

Marta affirms that the general meeting discussions involve an evaluation of provincial and national struggles at the level of working groups and general discussions. She goes on to say that this evaluation is to be followed by another session of area groups discussions where groups can discuss future projects and actions:

[In our general discussion] We will also share and discuss the outcome of our national effort and territorial struggle... After that, the proposal is also to summarize our work regarding the national coordination [of the peasant movement] ... How are we doing in our areas of work [i.e. production, training and education, communication, health, and territory]? What do we aspire to do? What kind of challenges do we face? Let's also do a simple summary of this in common, so that we can reserve Saturday [tomorrow] to the group work in areas. We will keep track of time so that we can start the concluding discussions on Sunday at 5pm. Now, let's divide into territory [provincial] groups (Marta, 30 May 2014).

During MNCI's concluding general assembly on June 1, 2014, the education area group opened its presentation with how group members discussed the idea of replicating MOCASE-VC's SoA experience in other provinces than Santiago del Estero and creating teacher training mechanisms. Then, group members said that they have discussed about how to coordinate MNCI's upcoming schools of historical memory and political training as well as a sexuality workshop, and made an announcement of the time and place chosen for these events. They have mentioned their efforts to organize a national youth assembly as well as the preparations that have been undertaken for a Latin American youth camp to be organized by CLOC in Brazil. Other projects that were discussed by group members included a possibility of creating a peasant university in Mendoza, cooperation with Cuba's Centro Martin Luther King, coordination of the *pasantías* to come, and participation in CLOC's annual Andean School of Political Training, which offers courses on political economy, philosophy, socialism theory, Latin American thinking, agrarian reform, peasant economy, popular media, peasant feminism and rural youth (See Chapter 7 for more details on MNCI's pedagogical mobilization).

There was a minimum of three main agendas that stood out in the presentation of the production area group. First, group members shared their activities as part of

MNCI's "Peasant Plan", which seeks to promote and coordinate agroecological production and its commercialization in areas such as livestock, wine, caramelized milk and jam, and textiles, among others. Second, and relatedly, group members referred to their SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis: results that they compiled in order to evaluate the productive performance of affiliated communities as it related to the quantity of crops and items produced as well as the available commercialization mechanisms at hand. Third, they informed about a database under construction, which involves a list of the *ferias* (fairs or informal markets) and barter markets that can improve the visibility of produce marketed by affiliated communities (1 June 2014).

The communication area group discussed its efforts to improve MNCI's web and social media content as well as the coordination of various provinces in the circulation of the news content. Another important issue discussed was to the creation of a map where group members listed national media actors along with an assessment of how their relationships with MNCI have been developing. Group members also identified priority areas to be articulated in their relationship with the media, including the legal case of Cristian Ferreyra's murder, GM foods, family agriculture, the indigenous peasantry, the question of evictions and de-forestation, the gender question and violence against women, the right to education, food prices, agroecology, and MNCI's upcoming events. Then, group members said that they compiled the name of the media actors which seem the most receptive to MNCI's political campaigns and projects such as its bill for the reform of the civil code in order to include the right to communitarian ownership (See Chapter 5). Finally, they reported on their publishing activities, which target the publication of a book on the oral memory of young women militants and preparation of banners on Cristian Ferreyra's murder. They also made an announcement on MNCI's upcoming media workshop, which welcomes one person per province who would be interested in banner design (1 June 2014).

To finish with this section, the breaking up of the decision-making process into three levels and national-level organizing seems to be serving as a catalyst for class formation. It encourages committed militants to travel constantly, meet fellow militants in other places, and forge a spirit of community.

Evaluation and Discussion

As seen in Chapter 1's integrative discussion of the food sovereignty literature, a fuller understanding of food sovereignty requires a more detailed knowledge of how critical agrarian movements can address the question of democratic decision-making, overcome the sporadic nature of mere agitational mobilization, transcend local struggles so as to reconcile national-level interests, and build a lasting alliance of the classes of labor beyond the rural-urban divide. The review of the literature on Argentina's agrarian mobilization pointed to a set of two important factors in acquiring this knowledge: stronger leadership mechanisms and alliance-building capacities. Chapter 2's theoretical discussions served to formulate a more systematic conceptual framework to address these issues in a Gramscian context that draws on Gerardo Otero's theory of class formation. Responding to the conceptual and empirical challenges raised by the literature reviews in Chapter 1 and 2, Otero's systematic model allowed me to operationalize leadership as being comprised by two essential components: modes of grassroots participation and political alliances. Leadership mechanisms contribute to class formation insofar as they help class agents to assert their autonomous position toward the outside and unity at the organizational level inside. Unlike the culturalist position of NSMTs that overemphasizes the contribution of collective identities to the autonomous position and unity at the discursive level (See Chapter 2), the study of leadership mechanisms thus reveals the organizational aspects of class formation.

This chapter examined specifically how MOCASE-VC struggles organizationally to transcend charismatic-authoritarian and corrupt-opportunistic forms of leadership that find their expression in presidentialism and NGOism. This struggle provided the basis for the formation of MOCASE-VC's bottom-up leadership model that maximizes deliberative and participatory practices avoiding formal leadership ranks. Going beyond Otero's outline formulation of the role of leadership, I relied on Gramsci's theorem of fixed proportions in order to reveal how MOCASE-VC and MCC coordinate the various levels of collective leadership to form an autonomous and unified movement. MNCI members' testimonies demonstrate that professional leaders and *referentes* act as catalysts to maintain leadership unity and vitality, whilst the grassroots initiative preserves its decisive significance. It will be the object of the next chapter to portray the mechanisms by which agrarian class agents ensure the continuous creation of professional leaders

and *referentes*, who in turn contribute to the forging of a lasting political alliance of the classes of labor.



Chapter 7: Leadership in the Making of Organic Intellectuals: Pedagogical Mobilization and Popular-Democratic Alliances

The previous chapter addressed the decision-making component of leadership as it relates to class formation. It showed that a democratic-participatory type of leadership helps a movement strengthen its coordination and maintain its autonomy while fortifying its internal unity. In this chapter, the focus is shifted from practical modalities and procedures of bottom-up participation to the broader political-cultural context of leadership, as related to both the creation of organic intellectuals and popular-democratic alliances. This chapter aims to further develop Gramsci's theory of leadership by elaborating the analysis of the previous chapter about what one could call "organic vanguards" based on a closer examination of how these leaders emerge in the first place. Another objective of this chapter is to address how class alliances can contribute to class formation by building a common front that draws its power not only from the political, but also from the cultural bonds among the classes of labor. I will argue that the role of "organic vanguards" is crucial in creating and consolidating these political-cultural bonds, which once again, strengthen the class internally and externally.

What mechanisms does MNCI use to ensure the creation of indigenous-peasant leaders who are highly committed and motivated toward increasing their community's sociopolitical and economic awareness (i.e. "organic intellectuals" in Gramsci's language)? How does MNCI contribute to agrarian class formation by building a broader front of the classes of labor based on political and cultural contiguity? To answer these questions, the first section engages in a conceptual discussion of Gramsci's organic intellectuals and popular-democratic alliances. The second brings the discussion to an empirical focus by examining MNCI's own profile of "organic intellectuals", particularly student militants who act as "professional revolutionaries" at the forefront of struggles. The focus here is also on how the formation of student professionals is systematized through what MNCI calls *pasantías* (internships), which contribute to agrarian class formation in the first place by facilitating a popular-democratic alliance of the classes of labor at the level of (inter)national, rural-rural and rural-urban cooperation. In fact, *pasantías* appeared as university student internships that provide companies with cheap labor under the cloak of an alleged "professional training" in the 1990s during which the World Bank's pro-business reforms started to gain steam in Argentina. However, left-leaning faculties – mostly from social science disciplines – adapted the *pasantía* system

to their progressive agenda for *pasantías* to serve social goals, which allowed for the opportunity to organize internships at progressive social movements. MNCI seems to have adopted this progressive vision of *pasantías* and be using this term to refer not only to internship arrangements with university students, but also self-arranged visits and planned stays between different popular organizations (e.g. MNCI and Brazil's MST).

The third section continues the discussion on organic intellectuals, and explores the creation of MNCI's organic intellectuals through what I call pedagogical mobilization, or the organization of educational mechanisms by a class movement geared toward training the indigenous peasantry's organic intellectuals. I argue that MNCI has come to build stable educational mechanisms to ensure the continual creation of organic leaders, circulation of vanguard elements and vitalization of grassroots initiatives. These mechanisms in which indigenous-peasant militants re-generate a popular-democratic culture and become acquainted with self-management are exemplified in SoA, Peasant Schools, UNICAM, Schools of Political Training and Historical Memory and international youth camps. The fourth and final section tackles the alliance-building component of leadership regarding MNCI's relationships with international organizations, environmentalists and community radios, and progressive urban movements that reclaim the rights of the classes of labor. In popular-democratic terms, the importance of these alliances lies in the re-vitalization of indigenous-peasant cultures through urban re-peasantization strategies, recruitment of professional leaders from *barrios*, and constitution of agrarian communities into self-aware classes of labor organized at a national level.

Organic Intellectuals, Pedagogical Mobilization, and Popular-Democratic Alliances

Gramsci defines organic intellectuals as the “strata of intellectuals which give [a class movement] homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (Gramsci, 2012b, p. 5). According to Gramsci, “organic intellectuals” – vanguard militants who mostly come from a working-class background – are to assume the defining leadership roles in class movements:

If social classes do not exercise power directly but through political and cultural intermediaries, then the role of these intermediaries – the intellectuals – in maintaining and reproducing a given economic and social order (in the exercise of hegemony), is of decisive importance. In order for the working class to challenge that existing order, and become hegemonic in its turn without becoming dependent on intellectuals from

another class, it must create 'organic' intellectuals of its own (Gramsci, 1999, p. 300).

Gramsci attributes central importance to pedagogical mobilization in the creation of organic intellectuals (Borg, Buttigieg & Mayo, 2002). In his 1919 article entitled "Workers' Democracy," Gramsci complains that the Socialist Party as the representative of the working-class movement was content to expand its power in a top-down fashion, "indirectly, by prestige and enthusiasm, authoritarian pressure and even inertia" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 65). In his view, the working-class support for the revolution cannot take on a permanent form unless "the proletarian and semi-proletarian class [is] transformed into an organized society that can educate itself, gain experience and acquire a responsible consciousness" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 66). Therefore, Gramsci argues that revolutionary organizations need to devote systematic and comprehensive efforts to organizing educational mechanisms in which workers can mutually educate themselves from the ground-up. These efforts undertaken through "meetings, congresses, discussions, mutual education" are crucial in terms of "unifying the feelings and aspirations of the broad masses in an understanding of the communist programme" and gaining acquaintance with self-management (Gramsci, 1977, pp. 149, 171). In MNCI's case, a crucial Gramscian moment of pedagogical mobilization is encountered in the organization of self-operated schools for agroecological and technical education and political-cultural training.

Finally, a few words on what I mean by "popular-democratic" (Otero, 1999) are in order. This term is derived from Gramsci's notion of "national-popular" alliances. Gramsci defines the term "national-popular" as a sense of "being organically tied to the large national masses", or "a deep-seated bond of democratic solidarity between directing intellectuals and popular masses" (Gramsci, 2012a, p. 325). In plain language, this term expresses the presence of a common set of references that render vernacular culture more permeable to revolutionary leaders (Cohen, 2017). Therefore, Gramsci addresses the alliance-building component of leadership from the perspective of a "national-popular" strategy of alliances that seeks to forge an organic unity among "popular forces" (Gramsci, 1990, p. 410; Gürcan, 2013), or what Harry Bernstein called the classes of labor. This unity can bolster class formation to the extent that it goes beyond mere political alliances and tactical maneuvers. In Gramsci's thinking, one also needs to build a longer lasting and deep-rooted alliance of values, morality, beliefs and emotions (Gramsci, 2012a, pp. 121-123; Gürcan, 2013). As such, successful alliance-

building mechanisms are to appeal to commonly shared political-cultural passions and aspirations as part of “homogenous, compact social blocs” (Gramsci, 2012b, pp. 204-205) constituted by workers and the peasantry. In this chapter, I follow Gerardo Otero’s (1999) interpretation of Gramsci’s “national-popular” as “popular-democratic”, which lays greater emphasis on the bottom-up dynamics of class mobilization and culturally organic relationships between the classes of labor democratic participation than on national organizing.

MNCI’s Professional Revolutionary Leaders and (Inter)National Class Alliances

Despite MNCI’s distancing from top-down leadership styles including NGOism and *técnicos*, its core leadership continues to rely on the active participation of professional leaders. For example, the Quimilí headquarters – the administrative centre of MOCASE-VC – are home to the movement’s top professional leaders who spend most of their time, including sleeping hours, at the headquarters. These headquarters offer private accommodation facilities, i.e. private *ranchos* where MOCASE-VS’s professional leaders can live with their family.

The role of professional leaders who get involved in land conflicts from without and ignite the process of agrarian organizing is heavily articulated in MCC. For example, Jorge of MCC admits that his initiation into peasant organizing was facilitated by professional organizers:

Well, the first ones who came here were Leslie, Andrea and Juan. They came here and got to know us. We started to work with them, and this is how we got to organize ourselves, more or less (Jorge, 27 April 2014).

Orlando Bustamente, a MCC militant who was also recruited by professional organizers, acknowledges the importance of their contribution to igniting popular resistance for land:

In 2003 and 2004, I experienced an eviction and on that day, we had no one, we were alone. But then, two guys appeared; two guys in whom nobody believed in. They... looked like university students. Mariana... and German were the ones who arrived at the beginning. Thanks to them, that is where I started at the peasant movement and so here I am. Well, I’m still with them and always fighting for the land (Orlando, 22 April 2014).

Interestingly, many professional organizers come from a student background. The case of Diana from MOCASE-VC’s Quimilí Central and Eduardo as a leading figure of MCC exemplifies the primary role of students in igniting and leading the peasant

movement as professional leaders. Before joining the movement, Diana and her husband (who is also part of MOCASE-VC) were studying agronomy in Buenos Aires. At that time, they visited Santiago del Estero province in 2001 in order to get to know the peasant movement more closely. Diana says:

I grew up in the city and had no idea that there existed a [peasant] organization, that there existed a peasant life, and that there existed a whole group in Buenos Aires called MOCASE, which we would want to help and collaborate with. They [MOCASE] told us: 'You need to travel 1000 km away from your home in Buenos Aires. You can go and work in the *barrios* and you would be contributing to what we want to build now as a society (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Diana affirms that the peasant movement [i.e. MNCI and MOCASE-VC] has always been organically linked to (peri-)urban organizing as part of Argentina's *piquetero* movement. This interlinked struggle seems to have provided a strategic opportunity for the creation of organic intellectuals based on a rural-urban class alliance:

[After joining the movement,] This is how we started to do *barrio* work as part of SERCUPO [a progressive NGO and MOCASE's ally in (peri-)urban areas] and then we started to be part of the *piquetero* movement, but always in liaison with MOCASE, while maintaining various relationships [i.e. relationships with various movements], but without losing this liaison with MOCASE. We were in a student group working in an inter-neighborhood [*interbarrial*] space as part of the *piquetero* movement, until MNCI's formation. And then, 4 years ago [in 2010], we came [to Santiago del Estero] for MOCASE. We were part of the national [peasant] movement in Buenos Aires, and then, we came to live in Quimilí (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Diana asserts that the peasant movement has always been aware of the importance of student participation and keeps encouraging students to engage with peasant organizing in *barrios* during their studies:

Many students also feel the desire to collaborate with the movement and contribute to the struggle, but we always insist that they can work together, especially by doing territorial work in their *barrios*. MOCASE's initiative here in Santiago del Estero capital is quite new [as compared to MNCI Bs As] (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Similar to Diana, Eduardo became involved in peasant organizing in his university years as part of a radical movement of young agronomists. His background in agronomy and interest in social matters helped him to be involved in the peasant movement:

As student activists, we became acquainted with the reality of Córdoba, discovering that there were, as everywhere, things that they did not teach

you at the university. I am a graduate of agronomy, and then, motivated by these sensibilities of getting to know and learning what was going on [in the countryside], we met each other [with other leading activists in MCC] (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

As one of MCC's founders, Eduardo thus settled in the Paso Viejo locality of Córdoba province in 1999 with the accompaniment of a nucleus of fellow militants from various backgrounds including agronomy, journalism, pedagogy, psychology and social work. Over time, this nucleus of dedicated and professionalized leaders expanded in numbers upon invitation (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Eduardo narrates the first years when the movement started to form its nucleus of university-educated professionalized militants:

When we first arrived, the great wave of land evictions had already been started silently. Many people had gone to big cities. Large [monoculture] fields had been further extended thanks to the facilitation of certain politicians... We started by forming discussion groups to know more about the area and devise a proper method of work. At that time, in building the organization [and attracting the peasants], popular education was a very important tool, especially its participatory content... As such, we started to meet in various places as the group of agronomists as well as that of social work and communication (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Eduardo's narrative centered on student activism and popular education thus points to the co-existence of quasi-Leninist vanguardism and Gramscian horizontalism invested in activating grassroots participation from without. As such, he acknowledges that his expertise has greatly contributed to MNCI's pedagogical mobilization with reference to a training book that his friends and he have prepared for MNCI militants:

Something that is very important: we wrote a manual... on peasant production. Then, our comrades wrote another manual, this time on participation. It was mostly written by our sociologist comrades. So, we wrote our own material by using our own content. This is very small, very incipient, but it has been transformative at the local level (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

MNCI has created stable mechanisms to maintain student circulation into their organization. Whereas university activism serves as the initial space for the socialization of future professional leaders of the peasant movement with each other, what MNCI calls *pasantías* [internships] can be regarded as a strategic arrangement for the creation of "organic intellectuals" through the recruitment and education of professional leaders. These events consist of organized stays in the countryside for a definite period. *Pasantía* participants are hosted in the *ranchos* of peasant families affiliated with MNCI.

Pasantías are modeled on the Brazilian experience of agrarian organizing, which also shows the importance of international alliances for class formation. For example, Eduardo admits that the Brazilian experience of student organizing and *pasantías* has served as a model in the development of the Argentine peasant movement, particularly that of MCC:

The Brazilians have taught us a lot! Just as the Brazilians created the *Federação dos Estudantes de Agronomia do Brasil* (FEAB, or the Brazilian Federation of Agronomy Students, founded in 1950), we created and participated in the *Federación Argentina de Estudiantes de Agronomía, Ambientales y Forestales* (FAEA, or the Argentine Federation of Agronomy, Environment and Forestry Students), at the beginning of the year 1992. I myself was FAEA's *pasantía* delegate, secretary of FAEA's *pasantía* agency. We organized the first *pasantías* in Córdoba, and then in the northwest Inquilino and Tucumán. *Pasantías* in Brazil's MST and among sugar cane workers provided students with proper context and much discussion, without which we had no possibility of studying and seeing this reality (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Brazil's importance as a main source of inspiration for MNCI – and class formation insofar as intra-class exchange of experience and learning are improved – is also acknowledged by Hernán of MNCI Bs As, who affirms that “we have always been saying that knowing [others] is good” (Hernán, 17 May 2014). Relatedly, during a MNCI Bs As meeting in a peri-urban community with Hernán's participation on May 17, 2014, one of the facilitators pointed to the importance of sustaining close ties with other organizations beyond local boundaries, including Brazil's MST:

We [MNCI] have been lacking a bit of experience in the organization of production, which is why we should not only go and get to know other barrios in Monte Grande, but also see how other comrades in Brazil get organized. In Brazil, there are peasant organizations, that have been working successfully for many years... So, we will organize a one-week *pasantía* in Brazil's Paraná state, with MST (Hernán, 17 May 2014) ...

Besides MST, another source of influence on the emergence and development of MCC has been MOCASE-VC. In fact, students who participated in *pasantías* in Santiago del Estero province took the lead in building MCC's nucleus of leadership. Eduardo acknowledges:

... we heavily drew on the experience of the peasant movement of Santiago del Estero, the struggle that this movement has been waging. In many ways, militants from there [i.e. Santiago del Estero] helped us to build what we have today as a movement. They came from there for *pasantías* in order to spend a few days with us to discuss, chat and fraternize with us. The interesting thing [that we took from this exchange] was to feel that the struggle was the same (Eduardo, 29 April 2014) ...

Therefore, the importance of political exchange via *pasantías* in the creation of MCC indicates that *pasantías* as an instrument of class formation are not limited to the participation and education of university students and professional leaders. In addition, peasant militants belonging to the movement participate in these events in order to maximize the exchange of technical and political experience as well as to build friendship networks and gain acquaintance with each other's way of life, which automatically has a positive impact on class formation into peasantry. Indeed, these events greatly contribute to agrarian class formation at the inter-provincial (i.e. national) and international levels. Moreover, *pasantías* also serve to establish closer ties between the rural militancy base and urban militants who are sent to *el monte* with the aim of building a bridge between cities and the countryside (Marcos, 18 March 2014).

Eduardo's *pasantía* initiative is nowadays continued by MNCI. For example, MNCI Bs As promotes *pasantías* through SERCUPO's active support (Facundo, 22 April 2014). Facundo, a former university student and leading militant of an urban chapter of MCC admits that the *pasantía* experience has been influential in his own active involvement in peasant organizing:

Here, in Córdoba, at the university, we organize *pasantías*, where one goes to the house of a peasant comrade for a week. We had gone to the house of someone named Orlando... We went to his house and we fell in love with the movement, and we started in Barrio Pueyrredón and we said, 'we should do this in the city!'. It was like doing that same thing that they have been doing in the countryside, doing it in the city. That was how I started. Of course, then, we started to work with other students (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

In sum, the interview data reflect the extent to which professional leaders – especially those who come from a student background in relevant disciplines such as agronomy, psychology and pedagogy – play a key role in leading the indigenous-peasant movement. Particularly interesting is how the formation of professional leaders is closely related to class formation processes encapsulated in popular-democratic alliances. Systematized through *pasantías*, these alliances do not only take place at the national level (as embodied in the ways in which MCC's development drew on MOCASE-VC experience), but they are also extended to an international level.

MNCI's Pedagogical Mobilization and the Making of Organic Intellectuals

MNCI's systematic attempts at creating organic leaders who could lead the indigenous-peasant movement at the forefront are not confined to student recruitment and *pasantías*. MNCI has also institutionalized its pedagogical mobilization by creating its own SoA and Peasant Schools. General education efforts have been combined with political and ideological goals of education, as reflected in the creation of a peasant university (i.e. UNICAM) as well as the School of Historical Memory, the School of Political Training and youth camps. Overall, MNCI's pedagogical education serves as a strategic venue for the creation of organic intellectuals who emerge from indigenous-peasant communities endowed with a stronger sense of commitment and awareness in favor of agrarian class formation. This section is thus organized into three sub-sections that address the philosophical and historical groundings of MNCI's pedagogical mobilization, popular schools, and political training instruments, respectively.

MNCI's Philosophy of Popular Education and Historical Landmarks in its Development

MNCI's pedagogical mobilization heavily draws on the Brazilian MST's Freireian philosophy of popular education (MNCI, 2012c, p. 35). In MST's understanding, popular education is a form of education that relates to "working the land; develop[ing] the spirit of co-operation; encompass[ing] all dimensions of human need; be[ing] for and carried out with humanist and socialist values; and be[ing part of] a lifelong process of training and social transformation" (Lane, 2000). It promotes the agro-ecological knowledge of production based on the ideals of self-learning and democratic self-management. Group work and fieldwork in the form of community visits are highly encouraged by MST (Lane, 2000; Meek, 2011). As described by Flaca of MOCASE-VC, Freireian popular education centers on the critical study of society to understand the root causes of social injustices and devise feasible solutions to overcome them:

Popular education is a process in which the people know the reality, learn and develop their capacity to transform the world. However, this definition is not entirely satisfactory... Popular education also seeks the liberation of oppressed peoples, to supersede injustices... Succeeding in liberating the people means to supersede injustices in order to achieve a quality of life for all... Therefore, we can say that popular education is also a process in which we learn to... organize... in order to transform the world (Flaca, 25 March 2014).

According to Flaca, who is herself an instructor at MOCASE-VC's SoA, popular education is premised on a set of distinguishing values that find their expression in "[mutual] respect, sharing, [setting a good] example, honesty, [openly] expressing opinions, sincerity, organization, solidarity, learning together, valuing each other's knowledge (Flaca, 25 March 2014)."

MNCI's understanding of popular education derives its strength from the critique of what Paulo Freire calls the "banking model of education", in which the teacher is the sole authority who controls the content and flow of information (Freire, 2011). Flaca asks:

What is it that the banking model of education does? The teacher puts the knowledge into the head of those who seek knowledge. It is like a bank, when one goes to the bank to deposit money. Well, if you have money to deposit. So, the reasoning of the banking model of education is this: it puts knowledge into the head of the student who [presumably] knows nothing (Flaca, 25 March 2014) ...

Flaca argues that the teacher's authority in the banking model of education is a direct reflection of social injustices and power relations in the actual world. In illustrating her point, she refers to the case of schools in Santiago del Estero where teachers do not risk confronting extractivist capitalism even though it engages in harmful activities that undermine students' health:

The knowledge of children, poor people, old people, all of those who go to the school, is not valued. It is desired that the world remains as it is, in the hands of the powerful... Here, in Santiago [del Estero province], what happens to us is that they spray [our communities] with *agrotóxicos* [pesticide spraying] near the school area. The teachers and parents are able to file a complaint with the police, but the complaint would carry much weight, let's say, if only the school director files a complaint too. No, nobody risks that. Nobody risks changing the world. Perhaps, not because they are bad, but maybe because they have lived like that. They have trained teachers to support the powerful and keep everything unchanged (Flaca, 25 March 2014).

Contrary to the banking model of education, Flaca maintains that popular education as practiced by MOCASE-VC is invested in challenging the authority and transforming the social reality:

In this school [SoA] and all of the national movement's training centres, the School of Political Formation, the School of Historical Memory, we intend to... practice, transform the reality, carry out popular education (Flaca, 25 March 2014) ...

She adds that the task of transforming the social reality cannot be accomplished by individual effort, because collective problems (e.g. improving the quality of life) require collective solutions and group solidarity, which can be learned through popular education:

Here, our school belongs to everyone. They have to do with participation and responsibility on everyone's part... In popular education, everyone's contribution is respected, whereas in the banking model of education, each other's opinions are not respected. In popular education, everyone works in groups, whereas in the banking model of education everyone works individually. In popular education, one learns how to improve the quality of life, whereas in the banking model of education one learns to be an individual... In popular education, education is a collective, group process of knowledge... exchanging experiences (Flaca, 25 March 2014)
...

Therefore, MNCI's popular education seeks to build a horizontal relationship among all of the actors in education by encouraging a permanent exchange of knowledge and experience. The collective and participatory character of popular education is articulated in MNCI's motto of *todos enseñamos, todos aprendemos* [we all teach, we all learn]:

Education and training [*formación*] are tools for our militancy... Education is a process for the collective construction of knowledge (MNCI, 2012c, pp. 5, 7) ... [We want] a school for talking, not only listening. The central task in most of the activities at the peasant school is to recognize ourselves as being capable of having our own say (MNCI, 2012c, p. 100).

Certainly, this participatory form of knowledge creation requires indigenous-peasant communities' development of self-esteem, which is undermined by economic hardships, lack of formal education, geographical isolation and cultural segregation:

We have experienced that participation in the peasant school increases self-esteem, overcomes powerlessness. It awakens indignation, generates rebellion, and promotes the struggle and organization.... We think that education encourages and inspires, or retrieves self-esteem, identity and dignity. It renders us as protagonists. It mobilizes us, and breaks our drowsiness, fatalism and powerlessness. It capacitates us for grassroots work through experience and makes us the multipliers of experience (MNCI, 2012c, p. 102).

As a final note regarding MNCI's philosophy of popular education, MNCI distinguishes between education and political training (*formación*). Political training specifically focuses on the development of ideological and cultural awareness of MNCI militants, whereas education has a more encompassing context geared towards

developing human capabilities. In MNCI's textbook on education, formation is defined as:

... a process of *conscientization* by which men and women as the subjects of knowledge reach a growing consciousness of both the sociopolitical and cultural reality that shape their mode of life and their capacity to transform this reality (MNCI, 2012c, p. 73).

The main rationale of *formación* is thus to provide MNCI militants with the tools to explore the "indigenous-peasant reality and problematics" and to forge alternative strategies and proposals with particular emphasis on priority areas such as the practice of grassroots democracy, agrarian reform, food sovereignty, territory, gender and human rights (MNCI, 2012c, pp. 72, 74-75).

The formulation of MNCI's philosophy of popular education and creation of an institutional structure for its execution originate in exchanges between peasant movements, *barrio* residents and university scholars at the end of the first decade of the 2000s. The First Forum of Rural Education – a historical milestone in the translation into practice of "popular education" in MNCI's development – was held in 2009 in the city of Córdoba with the participation of MNCI, the *barrio* movement *Bachilleratos Populares de Buenos Aires* and affiliates of the National University of Córdoba. By re-asserting its aim to provide a diagnosis for the problems of rural education, the Forum concluded that the countryside suffers from the lack and long distance of schools, problems of transportation, and agrochemical fumigation affecting the school area, and teacher absenteeism. An important limitation of rural education is that the curriculum neglects to mention Argentina's indigenous legacy (MNCI, 2012c, pp. 18-19).

The idea of building alternative indigenous-peasant schools was borne out of the proposals formulated as an outcome of these meetings. New rural schools were designed to extend the curriculum in line with the daily needs of rural communities and the political objectives of peasant militancy. Courses on agroecology, indigenous history, territory defense, indigenous health practices, and community media were intended to be included in the curriculum in order to revive the indigenous-peasant legacy. The movement proposals also stressed the intertwining of cultural and vocational training with reference to courses on rural production (animal breeding, apiculture, organic food processing, sewing, carpentry, serigraphy, etc.), office and cooperative management, and fair trade. The course on forests, for example, combines cultural and vocational training by having students acquainted with local flora in several provinces so that they develop a cultural attachment to *el Monte* and class consciousness at a national level,

while also contributing to knowledge on how to derive livelihood from forest resources with an environment-aware outlook. Therefore, the epithet “popular” in popular education indicates an intertwining of peasants’ economic needs, political aspirations, and the revaluing of ancestral wisdom and cultures (MNCI, 2012c, pp. 6, 35).

In sum, popular education seems to be particularly important in reproducing MNCI’s practice of participatory-democracy and agenda of improving the peasant livelihood without losing sight of the importance of fighting social injustices. Remarkably, MNCI’s popular education model was devised drawing on (inter)national inspirations and alliances. Brazil’s Freireian influences are easily noticeable. Equally important is how MNCI prepared its popular-democratic curriculum based on mutual exchanges with progressive faculty and urban movements.

The School of Agroecology and Peasant Schools as Strategic Venues for the Formation of Organic Leaders

Forum discussions with allied movements and university faculty ultimately shaped SoA’s curriculum in Santiago del Estero and Peasant Schools in Córdoba. SoA was founded by MOCASE-VC in 2007 with the aim of promoting sustainable agriculture and communitarianism. The school was also designed to serve as a venue of exchange between rural and periurban/*barrio* youth in order to consolidate militancy and encourage the return of *barrio* residents to the countryside. Presently, SoA offers a three-year cohort program of around 70 students from throughout the country, and is recognized as an adult education service by the Ministry of Education at the provincial level (Diana, 10 April 2014).

The curriculum is designed based on MNCI’s philosophy of popular education. Most importantly, course designs reflect the daily and vocational needs of rural youth such as lessons on how to practice agroecological farming, prepare dairy products in a sanitary environment and slaughter goats. Daily and vocational needs are addressed in tandem with political and ideological training. More specifically, SoA offers a variety of technical and political courses including biodiversity, animal breeding (particularly goat breeding), human and animal health, renewable energy, apiculture (or beekeeping), and food processing (particularly cheese and *dulce de leche* production). These courses are accompanied by cultural training as to the basics of the *Quichua* language, Spanish, native forests, popular education, territorial defense, community media (especially radio

and Internet communication) alongside workshops on health, sexuality, folklore, ancestral knowledge, etc. Heavy emphasis is placed upon practice-centered learning, hence the scheduling of three out of four weeks in a month for fieldwork activities entirely outside of classroom. Freireian methodology also finds its application in the School's emphasis on the horizontality of relations between teachers and students. Active learning is ensured thanks to permanent change of roles and group work. Group work is essential for providing an enabling environment to encourage open discussion, critical thinking, autonomy and self-esteem in a safer and more intimate environment (Diana, 10 April 2014).

To give a particular example for how MNCI combines technical with political training, the module on biodiversity combines basic biological knowledge with an aim of increasing awareness about food sovereignty and the diversity of life forms in *el monte*. Therefore, this course presents the biodiversity of *el monte* as a historico-cultural heritage of indigenous peasantry, and addresses the destructive effects of industrial agriculture and soyization. As such, the course seeks to promote students' attachment to nature and political commitment. These issues are then tied to wider issues including the environmental threat of capitalism and climate change. All of these theoretical issues discussed in the classroom environment are complemented with field trips in which students get the chance of meeting peasant communities affiliated with MOCASE-VC and take a guided tour of *el monte* in order to observe the biodiversity at first hand. The field trip also includes seminar sessions in an "open-space" setting. In the field trip that took place on March 28, 2014, for example, students were assigned to read and discuss a text on the limits of development, resource sovereignty and significance of a sustainable, human development. Moreover, the class meeting with members of the peasant community to which the field trip was organized was especially instructive for young students who came from *barrios* and were eager to learn about life in the countryside.

Besides the module on biodiversity, another example that illustrates SoA's aspiration to go beyond conventional and technical training is the course on agroecology. Similar to how the course on biodiversity combines biology with socio-environmental issues, this course offers an overview of sustainable farming techniques from the perspective of food sovereignty. In line with MNCI's principles of popular education, the course on agroecology uses group discussions to promote participatory and mutual learning. Particularly, the course content is centered on socio-environmental

justice issues. For example, during the class that was held on March 25, 2014, here is how the instructor summarized a group discussion on common problems shared by the indigenous peasantry conceived as a class that lives in both the countryside and cities. Although the discussion is not directly related to agroecology, the discussion of such matters in an agroecology class demonstrates how MNCI's popular education seeks to bolster agrarian class formation by combining technical with political matters:

Some of the [commonly shared] problems... are unemployment, poor roads, instructors' abuse of students, school distance... there are also few schools... Then, on the subject of youth, you found that there is a big drug problem in cities... that the youth [of the countryside and barrios] cannot integrate in society... We also have a problem of alcohol... On the subject of health, in certain places, dispensaries lack resources and are too distant from communities. The same goes for hospitals... In production, we are affected by agricultural spraying [by agribusiness], which also affects our production. In certain cases, we produce well, but marketing is difficult. On the subject of territory, we have problems with spraying. We have problems with de-forestation... [Land] Evictions still continue (25 March 2014) ...

Based on this list, the instructor elevated the class discussion to the level of political organization with reference to MNCI's major areas of work:

Organizationally speaking, this [all we have been discussing earlier] was actually a description of how we [as MNCI] organize in areas [e.g. youth, health, production, territory, etc.] (25 March 2014) ...

The module on territory defense conveys a politically-engaged content in the most extensive way. Accordingly, a group exercise during the session that was held on March 26, 2014 is particularly illustrative of how SoA contributes to class formation. This exercise started with students splitting into groups that represent their own provincial organization. Each group was asked to draw a map of their own province where regional peasant centrals were to be marked. The groups were also asked to prepare a list of local livelihood activities (such as livestock and crop production), cultural practices (such as popular music, including *Chacarera*, *Cumbia* and *Chamame*) and provincial activities that seek to contribute to food sovereignty (such as movement-operated butcher shops, *dulce de leche* and cheese workshops, apicultural activities, etc., offering fair prices to the urban poor). A separate list was formed to present current conflicts and the major conflicts that have marked the history of provincial movements in the past (26 March 2014). The main theme was forced land evictions for rural students, whereas that for urban students was discrimination and police violence. The outcome of group work was then collectively presented in order to foster a general group discussion. Certainly, these

mutual exchanges enable students to reinforce their awareness that they share similar cultural tastes, discriminatory experiences and livelihood challenges in favor of class formation. Particularly revealing in this regard were empowering remarks that were made throughout the exchanges. One of the most striking moments throughout these exchanges occurred when a student spoke up about how different is the music taste of the poor and the rich from one another. He remarked that the rich cannot stand listening to popular music, because it makes them remember how much they fear the poor. He says:

They are afraid of us. Why are they afraid of us? They are afraid of us because we are powerful and that makes them afraid of us. Because they know that we will not remain silent; they know that we will not let them break us; they know that we know our rights; they know that we know how to fight; and they know that we also know how to die in the struggle (26 March 2014).

SoA's contribution is also acknowledged by Paulo of MOCASE-VC, who argues that the school helps students to develop a stronger sense of political-cultural collectivity:

[This school is] a space where we can *form* ourselves, share our experience in each territory, how we now live and what our grandparents has been telling how we [as a people] used to live before... We can also share our problems... so that we do not feel isolated (Paulo, 24 March 2014) ...

Therefore, SoA seeks to achieve more than teaching farming and providing basic education, but also to revitalize and politicize the historical memory of oppression among indigenous-peasant communities as well as to demonstrate that distinct communities from different provinces share similar problems when it comes to territorial conflicts and lack of resources. In this regard, Adolfo of MOCASE-VC adds that one should "build a lot of power in order to defeat businessmen [and] those who work in the government": "We do not have any rights, if we are not organized", he says (Pablo, 25 March 2014). According to Adolfo, similarly, SoA serves to build a class power by teaching peasant communities how to organize and stand up against capitalism (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

SoA's contribution to agrarian class formation is explicitly acknowledged by MOCASE-VC's Gonzalo, one of the instructors at the school, who affirms that his attendance in the school as a student has intensified its militancy:

I joined the movement in the place where I live. I first started to attend the community meetings, and then I got [politically] firmer when I attended SoA in 2007. There, I started with the school and continued working in Quimilí [MOCASE-VC's administrative centre] ... and then I ended up teaching at the school (Gonzalo, 13 March 2014).

A similar initiative of autonomous peasant schools came from MCC. Peasant schools started to operate at the sub-provincial headquarters [*centrales*] of MCC in 2008. The school project emerged upon the demand of grassroots communities, and was designed in partnership with the National University of Córdoba. MCC struck an agreement with the *Dirección General de Enseñanza de Jóvenes y Adultos* for the opening of semi-autonomous schools directed at minors under the age of 18. The semi-autonomous status of these schools implies that MCC's militant teachers are obliged to teach the provincial curriculum, but they are also free to teach additional material based on critical pedagogy, especially from the standpoint of the peasant movement (Andrea, 14 April 2014). Andrea of MCC, who is a teacher at MCC's peasant schools herself, agrees with Adolfo's above-discussed points regarding the importance of popular education for accumulating power as an indigenous-peasant movement:

We know that we should keep organizing and studying which rights we have... Therefore, we want our peasant school to also teach Quichua, which is the indigenous language (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

As such, Andrea confirms that MCC's curriculum combines secondary education with a critical perspective into capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and popular struggles (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

To finish with this sub-section, MNCI's pedagogical mobilization in popular education contributes to the making of organic intellectuals of the indigenous peasantry by acquainting them with horizontalism avoiding classroom hierarchy and through open discussions and group collaboration. The course content delivers the technical skills and knowledge needed for improving the community livelihood, while also increasing students' political awareness on social injustices. As such, students gain familiarity with their rights, and develop a shared sense of togetherness and solidarity. Students coming from both the countryside and the city can realize that they all suffer similar material hardships. Indeed, these schools provide students with a socializing environment, which contributes to class formation through friendship and network-building at first hand.

MNCI's Mechanisms for Political Training: UNICAM, School of Historical Memory, School of Political Formation, and Youth Camps

MNCI's adult-educational mobilization comprises the creation of a peasant university and periodic organization of schools for historical memory, political training and youth camps. Regarding UNICAM, negotiations are still ongoing with the provincial government to obtain an official status for university, while construction work – sustained by volunteers and young militants – has not been completed yet. Ángel says that the idea of a peasant university was borne following MNCI's creation, but the construction started in the second decade of the 2000s. UNICAM buildings were designed based on indigenous art and ecological architecture. The movement mobilized its resources – including 100 of its militants and trucks – in order to collect local rocks, or what Ángel calls “millennial” rocks that will be used to build UNICAM (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

MNCI has already signed an agreement with the University of Córdoba for the recognition of UNICAM's curriculum by the university and coordination of university faculty visits to UNICAM. Supported by progressive university faculty, therefore, this ambitious project aims to build a nationally recognized and autonomous university that offers a Freireian curriculum in line with the needs and aspirations of indigenous-peasant communities. In Ángel's words, UNICAM is conceived as a venue for popular education “where knowledge and power are [simultaneously] built” based on a synthesis of the Western academic tradition and millenary indigenous knowledge (Ángel, 18 March 2014). Curriculum is expected to concentrate on four main areas, which are agroecology and rural development, human rights and territory, music and culture, and popular journalism and community media. The University is located on the National Route 9 (in the City of Ojo de Agua, at the border of the Provinces of Santiago del Estero and Córdoba), which is one of the most strategic routes that tie major provinces such as Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Salta and Jujuy. Given the University's convenient location, many MNCI meetings and workshops are held at UNICAM facilities (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

A key instance in MNCI's militant training is the School of Historical Memory [*Escuela de la Memoria Histórica*, EMH]. This school assumes the role of maintaining and consolidating MNCI's collective memory of resistance as an open platform of exchange of experiences. The school program consists of an annual seven-day event in which around 250 militants coming from different parts of the country exchange the problems they face in their communities and their experiences in grappling with these problems. As explained by Gonzalo, a coordinator of SoA and the youth section of Vía Campesina's Latin America chapter, this school hosts provincial delegates and invitees

from Argentina and the world (Gonzalo, 13 March 2014). School sessions revolve around such topics as indigeneity, gender, land conflicts and territory defense.

As depicted by Diana, the School of Historical Memory is made of three levels of exchange that facilitate class formation:

First of all, it [the School of Historical Memory] starts with each of the participant's personal history. Then, that history of the community, and after that of the organization, but the organization's history is treated in the context of the country and that of Latin America, because looking at personal histories is a little bit isolating. In reality, [personal histories] have to do with wider historical, national, regional and global processes. When many people tell their story, how their parents or grandparents left the countryside, this was not an individual decision made by this family, but it was related to a broader context marked by migration from the countryside to the city, the expulsion of peasants from the countryside, and well, [it is also related to] knowing about different facts, strong and historical, which marked the history of indigenous peoples, the history of the composition of Latin America, and Argentina too, particularly the [military] dictatorships. [To understand] how those things marked us as a people, and as an organization too. So, this is a bit like a journey that involves all of that in three moments: in an individual moment, a community moment, and a moment of the organization (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Therefore, the "personal moment" involves exchange of personal testimonies of struggle and conflict in small groups, in which the group members are also asked to name three of Argentina's historical events (e.g. the dictatorship era and the 1998-2002 economic crisis period) and the ways they may have been personally affected by them. In groups of three to ten people, personal experiences are tied to the Argentine and Latin American context. The "communitarian moment" allows for an exchange of community life, struggles and problems. Besides the economic and cultural life of local communities, discussion groups also touch on local mobilization processes as well as difficulties and weaknesses faced throughout mobilization. The School encourages interactive exchange, which implies theatrical performance and the sharing of photos, videos and written documents on regional cultures and local conflicts. Participants devote an entire day to community visits in the surroundings of the School's locality to exchange information and experiences. The "third moment" is to collect the "organizational moment", where a greater focus is placed on militancy at the national level in order to evaluate MNCI's successes and challenges. The School is finalized with a general discussion and evaluation of group work, during which group representatives outline the

outcomes of their discussions through poster presentations (Diana, 10 April 2014; MNCI, 2012b, pp. 79-80).

A similar methodological framework to that described above is employed at the School of Political Formation, which is organized annually for a seven-day period. Founded in 2005, this school takes on the role of providing militant training as an open forum to promote analysis on the political and economic situation in Argentina, Latin America and the world. The school assumes the task of consolidating the national militancy base and raising awareness on the main challenges confronted by MNCI. Discussions mostly revolve around agrarian reform and food sovereignty, the state of social movements in Latin America, media democracy and the indigenous-peasant thinking. This mutual and participatory education process is divided into three levels, namely group discussions on the political struggle of peasant communities, general discussions on the outcomes of group work by putting practical experience into a theoretical perspective, and a final group work to deepen theoretical and practical achievements gained during general discussions. Special sessions are held for (peri)urban and rural exchanges about alternative forms of resistance, production and the peasant way of life. Various urban sectors and even university students can also take part in these discussions to maximize exchange between city and countryside (MNCI, 2012c, p. 82; Diana, 10 April 2014).

Finally, MNCI draws its dynamism from the young generation of militants, hence its efforts around building and improving peasant schools and the university. As affirmed by Gonzalo Galván, a young coordinator of MOCASE-VC's SoA and founder of the Latin American Youth Camp (*Campamento Latinoamericano de Jovenes*, CLJ), CLJ represents an ambitious effort to enable the political-cultural formation of young militants by providing an open environment of mutual exchange among youth of various Latin American social movements. The idea is to share experiences of struggle from different sectors and countries. Participants voice their own analyses of the political and economic situation and articulate current challenges in Latin America. Small group work, workshops and general discussions on the outcome of these activities constitute a routine part of the Youth Camp. Priority is given to discussions on the problems of agrarian reform and food sovereignty. This camping experience also serves MNCI to deepen its ties with the Latin American continent. The first camp was held in 2001 within the territory of MOCASE-VC, and since then it has become an annual event that gathers

almost 1500 Latin American young militants for seven days (MNCI, 2012c, pp. 76-77, 116) (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Therefore, MNCI's political training mechanisms seem to have adopted the same philosophy of popular education as SoA and peasant schools given their emphasis on open discussions and group work. Certainly, class formation is fostered through the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience on the situation of not only individual communities but also other national and Latin American movements. Historical memory work contributes to the re-vitalization of indigenous-peasant cultures (i.e. communitarianism), whereas political training allows for the formation of organic intellectuals who are readied for the conflicts to come. Considering the importance of the youth in energizing agrarian mobilization, youth camps serve as strategic venues of class formation by gathering youth from all over Latin America and various sectors beyond the countryside.

The Building of Popular-Democratic Alliances between the Countryside and the City

As revealed in the previous sections, many of MNCI's pedagogical efforts at organic intellectual formation bring up the question of alliances on the part of the classes of labor and these alliances assume a political as much as a cultural dimension. Most importantly, peasant schools themselves seem to have emerged from mutual exchanges with progressive urban movements and faculty members. Likewise, MNCI's educational institutions act as a joint platform that allow *barrio* youth and activists to forge political-cultural ties and friendship with the indigenous peasantry. Popular culture is also promoted in MNCI's curriculum. Equally important is that *barrios* serve as a strategic source for the recruitment of professional leaders, and that MNCI's alliance with progressive urban movements has proved to be useful in these recruitment efforts.

MNCI's mobilization strategy relies on broad alliances with the classes of labor. The fieldwork data point to a minimum of three key instances where MNCI seem to focus its efforts the most: international alliances that aim at indigenous-peasant class formation at the international level, individual alliances with environmentalists and community radios, and strategic alliances with the classes of labor in *barrios* that seek a rural-urban alliance.

International Alliances

International alliances play a crucial role in MNCI's efforts at agrarian class formation by contributing to the development of organic intellectuals. As explained by Ángel, the broadening of class alliances to Brazil and Bolivia constitutes the most important step in this strategy, since both countries provide a model for MNCI:

We established closer relationships with Brazil's MST, and sent our comrades there for political and ideological training, for them to strengthen themselves, to learn and exchange methods of resistance, struggle and conquest of land... In some cases, we sent them to Brazil, and in others, we sent them to Bolivia. It depended on whether they have a more *indigenista* tendency – in that case we would send them to Bolivia – or a more peasant and agrarian tendency – and we sent those people to Brazil – (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

MNCI's closest international ally is Vía Campesina, an international peasant movement seen as one of the world's largest transnational social movements. MNCI's agenda of food sovereignty is heavily influenced by Vía Campesina and the Brazilian MST as its largest member. MNCI's most popular slogans chanted in organizational meetings and protests such as "globalizing hope, globalizing the struggle!", mobilizing concepts such as the "integral agrarian reform" and political campaigns such as the "Campaign for Agrarian Reform" and the "Campaign against Agrochemicals" are all derived from Vía Campesina. Moreover, MNCI assumes an active role in CLOC, Vía Campesina's Latin American chapter. Most important in this regard is that MNCI led the creation of CLOC's operative secretariat in 2013 in Buenos Aires. As implied in Flor's testimony, MNCI's involvement in CLOC is of paramount importance for agrarian class formation, because it is seen as an important initiative that fosters political-ideological training and generates experience in coordination and the logistics of organizing:

We are going to have a congress of CLOC here [in Argentina], and this will greatly strengthen the national movement, especially in terms of training, because making a congress involves a lot of operational and logistical issues, issues related to communication, relationships and all that... and this will [foster] political formation for all the militants of the movement... Many comrades will be able to participate in the congress and they will have left the countryside to go to a mobilization... A lot of comrades from Latin America will come here and this will serve as a training opportunity for our militancy, and that is super important and very, very valuable (Flor, 10 April 2014).

Speaking of Vía Campesina, the question of alliances once again brings into prominence the role of leadership "from without", or more precisely the vanguard

intervention of the university youth. Following the 1999 rupture, MOCASE-VC established close relationships with FAEA, which provides the peasant movement's link to academia. MNCI's priority target is mostly left-leaning agronomy students who are also willing to take part in agrarian mobilization and relocate to rural areas on behalf of the movement:

There are young people who study agronomy, who have more of a leftist tendency, more critical thinking, and interest in struggle and social justice. They want an agrarian reform. It was called agrarian reform, so when they finish the school, they go to other provinces such as Córdoba, Mendoza, so that they can organize other peasants, rural, indigenous peoples. It took ten years to form MOCASE, and another ten years expanding and strengthening it, but also forming young people who went to other provinces, to other states of Argentina (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Recruited agronomy students thus regularly visit MNCI communities to exchange experiences and support the indigenous-peasant movement. They also contribute to expanding fair trade networks by helping the informal marketization of peasant products in urban areas. In the meantime, FAEA is affiliated with the Caribbean and Latin American Confederation of Agronomy Students (*Confederación Caribeña y Latinoamericana de Estudiantes de Agronomía*, CONCLAEA). CONCLAEA affiliation provides Argentine students with the opportunity to forge relationships with other agrarian movements, including the Mexican neo-Zapatistas, Bolivian *cocaleros*, and Brazil's MST. In fact, MOCASE-VC's alliance with MST as a key constituent of Vía Campesina greatly owes to FAEA's referencing of MOCASE to MST, which were later to become a model of agrarian mobilization for Argentine peasants. Similarly, FAEA has been a key actor behind the idea of MOCASE-VC's transformation into a national movement under the name of MNCI. More importantly, MNCI militants still include former agronomy students who had been affiliated with FAEA. There is a constant flow of militancy from FAEA to the peasant movement (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

Finally, Ángel adds that MOCASE-VC's international alliance is also extended to non-peasant organizations including human rights organizations and universities such as the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, and NGOs such as Engineers Without Borders. Cooperation with universities and engineers is particularly intense in crucial livelihood matters such as renewable energy and agroecological production (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

Alliances with Environmentalists and Community Radios

MNCI pursues a highly diversified strategy of national alliances. While rural-urban working class alliances reflect a more systematic approach, as will be examined in the next sub-section, MNCI also devotes its energy to individual alliances with other progressive movements. The fieldwork data refer to two important moments of MNCI's individual alliances, which include community radios and environmentalists.

Deo of MOCASE-VC affirms that her movement is part of AMARC's Argentina chapter (Deo, 10 April 2014). AMARC groups progressive local radio stations throughout the world, including those of MOCASE-VC (FM del Monte 88.7- Quimili, FM Pajsachama 89.5- *Comunidad El Retiro Boquerón*, FM Sacha Huayra 89.9- Tintina, FM Inti Manta 90.5- Pinto). These radio stations serve to communicate news and coordinate political organizing among movement members, while also contributing to propagating the views of their movement. AMARC's Argentina chapter is home to 27 radio stations associated with indigenous-peasant and urban community movements. The main theme that brings these movements together is an aspiration to democratize communication, transcend the local reach of communitarian radios, integrate them in a broader leftist project of social change, and build a lasting bridge between communitarian radios and other progressive social groups for continual exchange and collaboration (Deo, 10 April 2014).

As discussed in Chapter 5, MNCI's alliances include environmentalists whose role was essential in the signing of the bill of native forests into law. A similar sort of alliance was also forged with environmentalists and other community organizations who organize to prevent the construction of a Monsanto plant in the municipality of Malvinas Argentinas (Andrea, 14 April 2014). As such, MCC as a MNCI constituent took part in the resistance tent against Monsanto. According to Andrea of MCC, it is important to build a common front of struggle against Monsanto with the participation of peasant movements allied with other urban communities and environmentalists, because Monsanto as the epitome of the agribusiness model does not discriminate whom to poison:

Monsanto is like the central of the productiv[ist] model... It is good that we are also there as peasants, because Monsanto destroys us too. They [Monsanto] poison and kill us. They make us leave the countryside. It's all the same [as what happens in urban communities]: the evictions, the [destruction of native] forests... All of this is part of the same [problem]... The fight is not only that of Malvinas in Argentina, but it could set a precedent for Monsanto not to be in Latin America, to leave [the region for good] (Andrea, 14 April 2014).

Rural-Urban Class Alliances

Rural-urban alliances occupy a pivotal place in MNCI's efforts at agrarian class formation, because MNCI believes that *barrio* residents have not become removed from their peasant roots yet and that both rural and urban communities share similar material grievances, therefore converging interests against a common enemy (i.e. capitalism). This final sub-section starts with a discussion on MNCI's driving motivations for building rural-urban alliances with reference to a shared sense of cultural self-identification and material hardships. It then closes with an examination of MNCI's main partners in cities such as progressive NGOs and the Evita Movement.

As a founder of MOCASE-VC, Ángel implicitly suggests that he and his comrades opted for a class organization that would pursue agrarian class formation beyond local community organizing and mere development assistance:

We were seeing that we also had to spread the movement and expand it throughout Argentina (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

As such, MNCI's integration with (peri-)urban movements is crucial in the political-cultural constitution of peasantry. In line with Ángel, Diana emphasizes the importance of MNCI's alliance with progressive urban movements;

... establishing a link between cities and the countryside so as to understand that life in the city has much to do with life in the countryside has been one of the things that the [peasant] movement has done, proposed and achieved (Diana, 10 April 2014).

Indeed, this class alliance does not merely consist of a pragmatic move to form solidarity with *barrios*, but of a perceived necessity to reach out to the "peasants" who live in urban peripheries. As Gonzalo points out;

Most of the *barrio* settlers, the majority is of a rural origin, from other provinces. They are expelled from these provinces, and experience unemployment, among other problems. There are a lot of people from the interior of the country and also from Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru [in *barrios*]. This is the link between the countryside and cities, which needs to be recovered [by the peasant movement] (Gonzalo, 13 March 2014).

Gonzalo is aware that the building of an organic alliance between the countryside and cities represents a great challenge that can only be overcome by realizing that both parties fight a common enemy, which is capitalism:

That each other [i.e. rural vs. urban] has distinct identities requires a lot of efforts. There are people who live in the city, grew up in the countryside and for some reason went to live there, and what we want to achieve is

that they realize that the struggle in the countryside and cities is not alien to one another, ... that the struggle is the same (Gonzalo, 13 March 2014).

The commonness of the struggle waged by the classes of labor in cities and the countryside is also strongly acknowledged by Pablo of MOCASE-VC:

... we also should put ourselves into the shoes of those comrades who live in the streets, in *barrios*, in the city, who do not have a job and disappear without even reaching us... We know who are the sons of bitches who have been impoverishing us. In that too, we are part of a more collective construction where the countryside and the city must be articulating work strategies and a direction towards a more just society where there are possibilities for everyone. This is a challenge, and we believe that this is why we are also here, to exchange, articulate, tell ourselves what we live, and what we propose for the future (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

The vision of Pablo of MOCASE-VC on the unity of the city and the countryside as a rural organizer finds echo in that of Pablo of the urban chapter of MCC in Córdoba city (Pablo, 25 March 2014). Pablo is a Peruvian migrant who came to Argentina a couple of years ago. As a former peasant, he was not involved in politics until he came to Argentina. Although he was relatively new to “militancy” [*militancia*], to use his own words, he sounded certain about the unity of struggle in the city and countryside:

I hope that we can also be involved [in the struggle] when people are taken out of their lands in the countryside. It is the same fight; the people that produce soy or food that is not nutritious for the body, that hurts you, that causes cancer or diseases, those same people deprive other people of their land in the countryside. Those same people, the same businessmen, also come to the *barrios*, *villas*, or ‘human settlements’ as they call them, in order to make buildings and do real-estate. We share so many struggles in the city and countryside. That is why we have the power when the struggle is the same, against the same agro-businessmen of the countryside and the same real-estate businessmen here (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Clearly, both Pablos’ testimonies point to a joint vision of the future in which the class trajectories of the peasantry and urban informal proletariat are merged with one another. The collective construction of such a shared future is strongly embodied in MNCI’s imaginary of territory, as thoroughly explored in Chapter 4. As Pablo highlights, indigenous-peasant territory – land re-envisioned as part of the indigenous heritage under shared, communitarian property – is not necessarily held under the monopoly of rural movements (Pablo, 25 March 2014). In fact, both urban and rural movements representing the classes of labor express the same aspirations towards a common

future, a “territorial” restructuring that offers a more “dignified” life. Meanwhile, this common future depends on constant exchanges between rural communities and *barrios*:

Territory in the city also has to do with an environment, a healthy environment, where we can also have our house, place, living space, our education, our way of life. Each one of us has been building [our territory]. One may come from the mountain, others from *el monte*, others come from the city, but no matter where we come from, we believe that we can share [our territory]. Many of our comrades may not know the city. Many do not even have the slightest idea [about city life]. Many people from the city do not know the countryside either, and these are different realities that we can share through ... mutual exchange for getting to know *barrios*, the zone of the communities. I believe that this space generates ‘movement’ and an experience of what we do there, how we got there, and what we do in the cities and in the countryside. How can we articulate a more dignified life, better for an education, a better life, an education that has to do with our own realities? I believe that this is what we want to share and transmit (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

Gonzalo does not necessarily disagree with Pablo’s argument on the shared interests of rural communities and *barrios*. But he also draws attention to the challenges of organizing in cities, especially when it comes to struggling with the prevailing sense of private property that distracts people away from “territory”:

Barrios in the city also... identify themselves with territory. In the city, land is marked by the concept of private property. Yes! And this is why I am telling you that the existing dominant system, the capitalist system separates people under a monopoly of the city, where everyone has its own place to live. And ‘territory’ surged through the struggle of the people who live here in the territory. However, the system prevails in that those who have a small piece of land identify themselves with it, as having a private property (Gonzalo, 25 March 2014).

Certainly, this dilemma between territory and the individualistic conception of land in the city as – voiced by Gonzalo – is not amenable to an easy solution. However, MNCI devotes considerable efforts at overcoming this individualistic hegemony through community-building and pedagogical endeavors. As a side note, these explicitly ideological struggles also seem to complicate, if not invalidate the posthegemony argument, which argues against the explanatory efficacy of hegemony because of the so-called decreasing relevance of ideologies, rhetorics of persuasion and states (Beasley-Murray, 2003; 2010). Whilst MNCI’s ideological struggles point to the persistence of rhetorics of persuasion, these urban movements’ close engagement with the state reveals that the state is far from being dissolved as the major actor of social struggles. Regarding the persisting relevance of the state in the agri-food sector, for

example, it would not be accurate to portray the global food regime with reference to the “deregulation” of markets and firms, which implies the decreasing importance of the state (See Chapter 3). What is being witnessed instead is the increasing relevance of neoregulation, i.e. new forms of state intervention that promote the neoliberal development project. Central state policies have included both domestic and international regulations geared to, among other things, the homogenization of intellectual-property rights across the three NAFTA states, provision of subsidies for agribusiness multinational corporations and allowing huge freedom of movement to private capital (Pechlaner and Otero 2008; Otero, Pechlaner & Gürcan, 2013; Otero, Pechlaner, Liberman & Gürcan, 2015; Otero, Gürcan, Pechlaner, & Liberman, 2018). Accordingly, peasant mobilization against the neoliberal globalization of food and agriculture targets not only agribusiness multinational corporations, but also pro-business state actors and policies.

MNCI is determined to address the hardships of *barrio* life for building an organic alliance with the classes of labor in the city. As Diana of MOCASE-VC asserts, much of the problems that (peri-)urban organizing confronts have to do with drug and alcohol addiction conflated with lack of education, unemployment and other forms of social discrimination (Diana, 13 March 2014). She continues that the youth greatly suffers from “discrimination on the part of the police in remote barrios from the city centre”:

When the police see them [i.e. *barrio* residents] in the city centre, very often, it detains them... We call this *portación de cara* [carrying a face], for looking like a poor person (Diana, 13 March 2014).

Regarding the discrimination of remote *barrio* residents, Facundo of MCC adds that *barrio* residents include a large number of international migrants and that they are heavily discriminated in Argentina:

Many of our comrades... come from countries like Peru, Bolivia, and this is an identity that we do not want to be lost in Argentina. So, we are working on their integration [in society] against discrimination. Many people here in Argentina discriminate the Bolivian and the Peruvian, but we believe that this is bad... With this in mind, we do lots of activities, like games, workshops, in some special cases school support is provided, that is, individual tutoring, and then sport activities like volleyball... and professional training... We do masonry workshops, which are given by our comrades who are certified masons... and this week, the idea is to make a garden with children in order for them to learn how to farm too, the responsibility of looking after the garden, irrigating and working, and that is, more or less. Last year we worked on literacy with adults, in order to teach them how to read and write. This is the idea this year, if not the next (Facundo, 22 April 2014) ...

Diana and Facundo's observations about social discrimination are validated by Pablo of MCC, who is himself a *barrio* resident and Peruvian migrant. He resents:

Unfortunately, they [politicians] don't like our skin color, and unfortunately, living here [in *barrios*] means that you are poor (Pablo, 18 April 2014).

In the integration of *barrio* residents, MNCI accords a great deal of importance to agrarian production. Pablo points out that the domination of agribusiness leads to the costliness and unhealthiness of food, which renders peasant production even more important:

Produce costs even more, because all of it is prepared in order for businessmen to keep producing and not us! This is why we have been discussing of organizing fairs in cities in order to bring these [healthful] products and see how to guarantee [their access by the people] ... Here in Córdoba, in groceries, in cities, in markets, you cannot get healthy foods. Everything is genetically modified, and it all contains agrochemicals. They are all industrial foods. Therefore, there is a necessity to bring these [healthful] foods with good [affordable] prices (Pablo, 18 April 2014).

This objective is also pursued by other MNCI chapters including MOCASE-VC's *barrio* organizations. As Diana explains, MOCASE-VC is active in a total of four different barrios in the city of Santiago del Estero where it assists its members in making gardens and other produce such as *dulce de leche* [milk caramel], bread and cookies (Diana, 13 March 2014).

MNCI's alliance with *barrios* goes beyond mere community organizing. MNCI is also interested in recruiting *barrio* residents and encouraging their return to the countryside by occupying unused land in rural and peri-urban areas. MNCI's program of return to the countryside [*vuelta al campo*] is modeled on a similar strategy of Brazil's MST and Venezuela's Chavista anti-poverty program *Mission Vuelta al Campo*. In Facundo's words, this program can be summarized in the formula of "going back to the countryside to work the land, leaving the city". With this aim, MNCI takes the lead in building new agrarian communities (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

In line with these aims, Adolfo asserts that *barrio* life constrains the people's potential to live a dignified life, which is why returning to the countryside is the best strategy for the urban poor:

There is no other way out from the city [other than a return to the countryside]. There are more opportunities for production [in the countryside] ... In cities, only those who have the power... like drug traffickers can make it (Adolfo, 25 March 2014) ...

Pablo of MOCASE-VC agrees with Adolfo's view that the countryside offers better opportunities for poor barrio residents' liberation, because he believes that the city has been taken over by capitalism and the mafia for good:

What I was going to say is that the city always depends on labor. There is no space for producing. It [one's success in the city] depends on one's education level. We can only educate ourselves if education reaches us, because we need to pay for education. But the opportunity to have a job and dignified salary for our families to live in a dignified manner, this is only possible in the countryside. This is the only territorial space where we can develop ourselves productively and, in the city, there are always things that are imposed on us. It is easier to bang us up in the city, because ... we are the mafia's target. Or, we end up without a space [to live in], because nowadays everything is privatized (Pablo, 25 March 2014).

As a barrio militant, Pablo of MCC shares his namesake's view about the advantages of rural over urban life and supports the idea of encouraging the *barrio* youth to meet their peers in the countryside:

When there is a youth meeting, we take them outside [of the *barrio*] to go and meet other young people, for them to know how others spend their time, how life in the countryside is... We try to get them a bit out of the city, because not being free in the city is suffocating. The city kills you and we always try to get the children out so that they do not suffocate and avoid drugs or delinquency, because we always try to do that, to instill the best (Pablo, 18 April 2014).

MNCI's program of return to the countryside is not limited to building new communities from scratch. As a matter of fact, building new communities requires substantial resources that are yet to be fully developed. At the time of this research, the program of return to the countryside was carried out on a small scale with the relocation of retired families and troubled youth to rural areas. Returning youth is either encouraged by consenting families or recruited through SoA. End of scholarly terms is no stranger to urban students who choose to stay and keep living in the countryside. As such, these individual relocations facilitated by MNCI constituents can well be seen as part of rural community expansion. Diana of MOCASE-VC evokes that the first exchanges between the barrio youth and peasants started in 2000-2001 with the initiative of militants in Buenos Aires, which spread to other areas throughout Argentina including the city of Santiago and the locality of Ojo de Agua where the Peasant University is located (UNICAM):

At UNICAM, there are now many young boys and girls who come from different situations here in Santiago, and Buenos Aires too (Diana, 13 March 2014).

In turn, Santiago from MNCI Bs As asserts that peasants' hospitality, benevolence and insistence towards the visiting youth play an important role in encouraging the return to the countryside:

When the peasant comrades met troubled and drug addict youth for the first time, they said to them, 'stay here, do not return'. That's what happens usually. It is not the same here in *barrios*. Many times, the neighbors themselves despise them and their peasant comrades tell them, 'no, you will have to stay here with us!'. This happened a lot. Kids chose to stay, because some peasant family in the middle of *el monte* told them to stay (Santiago, 08 May 2014) ...

MNCI's alliance with progressive urban movements is the most intensive with SERCUPO and the Evita Movement. SERCUPO is known to be home to some of MOCASE-VC's most active professional leaders such as Diana of the Quimilí Central. Equally important is that this association between both movements has allowed the peasant movement to forge closer alliances with progressive urban movements, particularly the *piquetero* movement in which SERCUPO was heavily invested. A similar situation is encountered in the case of Santiago from MNCI Bs As. He argues that SERCUPO's initial contacts with MOCASE-VC led it to transform from an NGO that only focuses on community development and assistance to a progressive movement that aspires to contribute to broader issues of social justice at the national level:

Yes, our main organization was SERCUPO... SERCUPO as an organization established its relationships with MOCASE in about 2001. Originally, back in the late nineties, SERCUPO was just a militant group that has spent several years in neighborhoods with young people, dealing with the problems of drugs and addiction in the streets, neighborhoods. In 2001, they [SERCUPO] made a trip to the Simona resistance [MOCASE's resistance in Santiago del Estero's Simona locality to violent land evictions led by the company Mimbres S.A., which erupted in 1998 and moved MOCASE to a national presence (Arzeno et al., 2013, p. 183)] and started to make trips [i.e. *pasantías*] to Santiago del Estero. This is how a change in our logic of work began [i.e. towards a participatory model of mobilization that reclaims the indigenous-peasant identity]. Our logic of intervention or perhaps the logic of conceiving the territorial halo has changed and we started to work closely with peasant organizations. It was a long process (Santiago, 08 May 2014).

Those NGOs which insisted on a top-down assistencialist mentality failed to transform themselves and lost contact with the indigenous peasantry. A case in point is

the experience of Facundo, of MCC, who explains that he and his comrades in MCC's current *barrio* organization started their journey in militancy under the roof of an NGO dedicated to neighborhood development in (peri-)urban areas:

... We first worked with an NGO, an institution called *Un techo a mi país* [A Roof for my Country, or UTAMP], that is how it was called. We were not part of, or reached by, the organization [i.e. the peasant movement] yet. We left UTAMP with a group of people (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

According to Facundo, the NGO character of this organization did not allow *barrio* communities to freely organize and takeover the land where they lived (Facundo, 22 April 2014). Communities needed a different form of organization that would help them to organize themselves rather than passively receive development aid. Therefore, Facundo and his friends as former leaders of this NGO mobilized *barrio* communities to join the peasant movement:

When we left [UTAMP], the people and our comrades in *Barrio Ampliación Pueyrredón* (BAP)... were already holding assemblies. This is when land occupations started and they [BAP] invited us in. So, this is how it started. We started to work mostly with children and youth. Then, I was studying law and started to help the community with legal processes. And from there we started and a [closer] collaboration was initiated. All of this was not built deliberately. It unfolded slowly into a peasant movement. That was when [MCC] helped us a great deal on how to organize ourselves (Facundo, 22 April 2014).

As a side note, Facundo's assistance to *barrio* movements in providing legal services and forging organic relationships with the peasant movement further confirms the importance of professional leaders. However, in contrast to NGOism, this leadership "from without" became internalized, respects grassroots initiative, and encourages bottom-up participation. As highlighted by Eduardo of MCC, this reasoning is grounded in the belief that "you should change the world not from the outside, but from here, inside" (Eduardo, 29 April 2014). He continues by asserting the centrality of bottom-up participation in social organizing:

To this day, the strongest decisions, the most felt are the most democratically constituted, the ones that emerge from communities, go to the national level, and return here, or the ones that surge from elsewhere, but go back and forth. But I believe that life grows thanks to that, with respect to decision-making (Eduardo, 29 April 2014).

As far as national class alliances are concerned, Ángel asserts the importance of allying with the classes of labor, which is to be translated into practice through a close alliance with the Evita Movement (Ángel, 18 March 2014). As discussed in Chapter 5,

this movement acts as a semi-autonomous political party that represents the informal sector of Argentina's working class in the *kirchnerista* social pact by participating in the government and organizing cooperatives. In emphasizing the importance of MNCI's alliance with Evita Movement, Ángel states:

We must create a party instrument, go out and dispute state power. [In doing so,] We also need to win the critical mass of the youth, millions of young people who are simultaneously workers, slum dwellers, informal laborers and students, who are in favor of creating an agrarian movement that is willing to take back the land and create national industries, and also, create communes (Ángel, 18 March 2014).

The organic class alliance between cities and the countryside makes itself felt strongly in what the Evita movement and MNCI calls "popular economy". The term "popular economy" is adopted from CTEP led by the Evita Movement, at which MNCI participates. Other CTEP constituents include unions represented by *cartoneros* (waste pickers), artisans, street vendors, fairground workers (*feriantes*), stitchers (*costureros*), windscreen cleaners (*limpiavidrios*), car watchers (*cuidacoches*), construction workers, gas system repairers (*gasistas*), locksmiths, cooperative and recuperated workplace workers, workshop workers such as carpenters, mechanics and food producers, and community workers such as caregivers, cooks and educators. CTEP defines "popular economy" as the entirety of "economic processes immersed in popular culture, based on accessible and unprotected means of work" (Grabois & Pérsico, 2017, p. 33). By popular culture, it is meant "neighborhood, slum, community, indigenous and peasant identities" (Grabois & Pérsico, 2017, p. 34). Accessible work refers to both personal and communitarian forms of organizing production based on solidarity economy, which involves self-employed workers and contributing family workers, recuperated workplaces, cooperatives, etc. In turn, unprotected work includes popular sectors that belong to the informal sector without access to job and employment security. These sectors are not represented by the traditional labor movement (Grabois & Pérsico, 2017).

Certainly, MNCI's alliance with the Evita Movement and CTEP is of strategic importance for class formation through immersion in a broader struggle of the classes of labor. Santiago from MNCI Bs As affirms:

[Peasants] must live together with the working class. [Therefore] They must live together with CTEP... We also feel like workers ourselves. It is interesting to me too: at this moment, we find ourselves listening to CTEP, but we are coming from a peasant background. Imagine when we

came to work in the neighborhoods, saying 'we are the peasant movement' (Santiago, 08 May 2014).

Deo of MOCASE-VC confirms Santiago's claim to self-identification with the working class and justifies MNCI's immersion in the working-class movement through popular economy (Deo, 1 May 2014). According to her, what brings peasants and the working class together is that they all know "what hard work means". She goes so far as to portray CTEP as a both indigenous-peasant and *barrio* movement:

CTEP is a peasant; CTEP is indigenous. CTEP is formed by those *barrios* that have been marginalized by that system that does not want to include us... As peasants, we are convinced that we are not only recognized through CTEP, but that we are also protagonists of an economy that is popular, an economy of men and women who know what is enough to live, that we don't want more than what we have, but yes, we also want to be recognized, respected [by the state] (Deo, 1 May 2014).

All in one, MNCI is driven by a keen interest in building popular-democratic alliances with *barrios* as the living space of Argentina's informal proletariat. The indigenous-peasant roots of *barrio* residents mostly live in the memory of their eviction from the countryside and forced migration towards urban centres from countries such as Bolivia and Peru. The re-vitalization of these cultural bonds and constitution of laboring communities into self-conscious agents that see capitalism as the common enemy greatly owe to MNCI's engagement with *barrio* organizing. In Gramsci's language, the popular-democratic aspect of this engagement also finds its expression in MNCI's program of return to the countryside, which helps re-vitalize indigenous-peasant cultures by encouraging *barrio* residents to reclaim their land in the countryside. In the meantime, *barrios* allow MNCI to recruit and educate its professional leaders, especially students some of whom are to be relocated to the countryside. In turn, progressive urban movements' contacts with MNCI seem to have a transformational impact on urban leaders some of whom renounce the NGO model of assistencialism and opt for class organizing. Finally, MNCI's immersion into the popular economy and inclusion in the Evita Movement's CTEP initiative contribute to the re-peasantization of urban communities in a communitarian direction and constitution of the classes of labor into a class-for-itself beyond individual community boundaries.

Evaluation and Discussion

This chapter provided an empirical exploration of MNCI's leadership mechanisms within a theoretical framework derived from the integrative literature reviews in Chapters 1 and 2, which was briefly summarized in the previous chapter's concluding section. The present chapter focused on how MNCI creates its own organic intellectuals and builds organic, or popular-democratic alliances with the classes of labor in the direction of agrarian class formation. Besides the fact that students and experts also play a key role as MNCI's organic intellectuals, they are systematically drawn to the organization through what MNCI calls *pasantías*. These regularized instances of experience and knowledge exchange that involve accommodation in MNCI-affiliated communities also apply to peasant militants who seek acquaintance with other distant communities including those affiliated with foreign organizations in countries such as Brazil and Bolivia. Certainly, the contribution of these regularized exchanges to class formation is of invaluable importance. A similar regularized instance of organic intellectual creation and class formation is MNCI-affiliated schools, including SoA, peasant secondary schools, UNICAM, political training and historical memory schools, and youth camps. Not only do these schools offer socializing opportunities for young and adult MNCI student so as to build a lasting network of militancy, but they also provide technical and ideological education so as to allow for the reproduction of indigenous-peasant lifestyles and promotion of food sovereignty.

The horizontal style of learning encapsulated in MNCI's philosophy of popular education is a key pedagogical tool to consolidating the bottom-up leadership structures in place. Moreover, these pedagogical practices also serve to strengthen popular-democratic alliances by acting as a meeting venue for rural and urban militants. Another dimension of MNCI's popular-democratic alliance-building efforts thus speaks to the expansion of rural mobilization to *barrios* and the improvement of cooperation with *barrio* movements. Interestingly, the same *barrios* also serve as a strategic recruitment venue for MNCI's organic intellectuals. Overall, these entangled spaces of organic intellectual creation and popular-democratic alliance building constitute the living proof that agrarian communities are not doomed to social heterogeneity and can well serve as a mainstay for the alliance of the classes of labor beyond populism (See Chapter 1).

Conclusions

Miguel Teubal, a veteran Argentine scholar of agrarian studies claims that “the 20th was the century of peasant struggles for land and agrarian reform”. He goes so far to argue that these struggles “have [even] greater political significance” in the 21st century (Teubal, 2010, p. 148). Not only has the peasantry somehow survived the age of globalization, according to Teubal, but also agrarian movements have started to “operate with greater force and autonomy than previously” (2010, p. 149). What renders these movements more relevant than before, continues Teubal, is that they do not limit their struggle to the defense of their corporate interests and control of the agricultural sector. They rather merge themselves with the “widespread struggle of the excluded, marginalized and unemployed, both urban and rural” (Teubal, 2010, p. 150).

As a matter of fact, Teubal’s observations (2010) convey the dictionary definition of class formation in Marxism, i.e. the constitution of previously isolated social groups into a collective agent of the classes of labor endowed with an organized political presence at the (inter)national level beyond bread-and-butter demands (Thompson, 1966; Katznelson, 1986; Mann, 2002; Otero, 1999). Yet, if we are to take seriously Miguel Teubal’s (2010) ambitious proposal to conceive of agrarian movements as being more relevant than ever in the lead of class formation, a sophisticated theoretical model is required to understand how these movements come to occupy such a historically important socio-political role and lead the way to class formation in Latin America, if not in the world. More particularly, how can food sovereignty contribute to agrarian class formation, if it were to be considered as an essential element of the so-called “new agrarian struggles”? An adequate understanding of food sovereignty, however, necessitates acquiring a conceptual clarity that can only be derived from the theoretical literature and empirical knowledge, by the interaction of theory and practice, or praxis.

Teubal’s observations thus help to contextualize the empirical and theoretical contributions of this research, which confirms the crucial relevance of contentious agrarian movements in the 21st century. By re-envisioning food sovereignty from a class-analytical lens, this research reveals that agrarian classes of labor, namely the informal proletariat or lumpenproletariat, are not doomed to social heterogeneity and disorganization, even though they live at the margins of capitalist society by being supposedly devoid of any social or material resources. On the contrary, these classes can even occupy a center stage in anti-capitalist struggles in the era of capitalist

globalization characterized not only by technological dynamism and urbanization, but also by an incapacity to resolve people's needs for simple reproduction. Therefore, the countryside appears to have become a mainstay of class formation by also mobilizing the precarious semi-proletariat in the cities. Theoretically speaking, the analysis of this class formation process allows for transcending economic-reductionist forms of Traditional Marxism that automatically brand agrarian mobilization as populism and civil society-centric forms of libertarian and autonomous Marxism that dichotomize between vanguardism and democracy. In doing so, this research expands the scope of Marxist class formation theory by transcending Thompson's culturalism and Katznelson's top-down model of collection action.

My literature review on the conceptual ambiguities of food sovereignty identified a total of five challenges, namely the challenge of determining how food sovereignty as a both political and theoretical concept can address the tensions between (a) state-movement relationships, (b) local-national interests, (c) rural-urban conflicts, (d) individual-collective choices, (e) sporadic mobilization and political-organizational continuity (See Chapter 1). Regarding state-movement relationships, critics argue that there are no universal standards as to the most "effective" food sovereignty policies, besides the fact that food sovereignty might not simultaneously benefit local communities and the state in certain cases. When it comes to local-national interests and rural-urban conflicts, similarly, the food-sovereignty claims of rural communities might not always overlap with the daily livelihood necessities of urban society. As far as the tensions between individual and collective choices are concerned, food sovereignty seemingly contradicts its claim to democracy, because it excludes those farmers who reject collectivist methods and defend capitalist practices. Another concern raised in the literature is that food sovereignty movements seemingly have the potential to confine their activities to mere sporadic and agitational mobilization rather than acquire a strong organizational presence. Moreover, this concern is also associated with high levels of social heterogeneity and isolation in the countryside, which potentially lead to political fragmentation.

Based on the contributions of food sovereignty proponents, I argued that these conceptual ambiguities can be overcome if the criteria for addressing these tensions were based on the interests of the classes of labor by re-envisioning food sovereignty as a social mobilization outcome that potentially leads to agrarian class formation. In such a case, food sovereignty would evaluate social practices based not on the so-called

“national/public” versus “local community” interests, but rather on where the shared interests of the classes of labor meet and what kind of compromises are made to meet these interests. Similarly, the individual interests that contradict the collective interests of the classes of labor would be subordinated to those of food sovereignty. Meanwhile, such level of collectivity and class awareness is only possible if food sovereignty movements could transcend the sporadic nature of social mobilization and move towards class formation on a national scale.

Certain contributors to the food-sovereignty camp seem to agree that no universal and one-size-fits-all standards can be imposed on food sovereignty in order to transcend the abstractness of these conceptual remedies. On the contrary, tangible remedies can only be developed with reference to the peculiarities of the broader political-economic context that shapes the form and content of food sovereignty struggles. Besides the fact that food sovereignty cannot be reduced to rigid formulas and can only be operationalized based on political-economic peculiarities, food sovereignty is not immune to intra-class conflicts among the classes of labor. Accordingly, due attention is needed to certain sociopolitical mechanisms in detecting these peculiarities, overcoming internal conflicts, and devising cooperation strategies beyond political fragmentation. The literature on Argentina’s agrarian mobilization reveals that such convergence depends on the presence of crucial subjective factors such as the classes of labor’s awareness of the social injustices that they commonly face and cultural mobilization, leadership strength, political alliance-building capacities, and confronting the state.

In this context, I suggested a rigorous theoretical framework that could systematically address these challenges voiced by the broader literature drawing on Gerardo Otero’s theory of political-cultural class formation (See Chapter 2), and proposed a further elaboration based on Gramsci’s leadership theory (see Chapter 6). Overall, my theory brings the literature’s contributions into proper focus by identifying three sets of mediating determinants leading to class formation that build on a political-economic analysis of class structures: regional cultures as the conceptual encapsulation of how a higher awareness of class grievances are translated into a stronger sense of class identification and solidarity beyond local corporate interests; state intervention as an expression of the ways in which class agents can improve their position vis-à-vis the state, while retaining their independence from it; and leadership mechanisms as a

means by which class agents transcend the sporadic nature of social mobilization and build lasting alliances at the (inter)national scales.

My entire research design was guided by the challenges of food sovereignty and agrarian mobilization identified by the broader literature. I then pointed to the explanatory potential of Gerardo Otero's theory of class formation, whose power resides in its ability to more fully respond to the challenges of the literature. As regards the class formation theory, Otero's framework simultaneously addresses Thompson's (1966) bottom-up approach to cultural formation and Katznelson's (1986) concern with the political aspects of class formation. Its originality, moreover, lies in that it brings a bottom-up approach to the analysis of the state in contrast to Katznelson's framework and proposes a systematic analysis of the organizational/leadership-related dynamics of class formation in contrast to Thompson's framework. Using Otero's theory as a conceptual guide to systematically address the literature's challenges, I further operationalized his variables based on Gramsci's work. Given its appreciation of subjective factors along with its political-economic, or objective counterparts, Gramsci's theory of leadership becomes a crucial springboard for this research. As such, my original contributions to Otero's theory has to do with the creation of a systematic and conceptual approach to cultural mobilization and leadership. Regarding culture, I shed light on the mechanism in which cultural mobilization leads to group cohesion, the creation of a shared political language, and the salience of claim-making. When it comes to leadership, I propose a model to systematically examine the multi-scalar aspects of decision-making and the pedagogical aspects of leadership formation.

My empirical analysis started with a study of the political-economic grounding of agrarian class formation in Argentina (See Chapter 3). Taking the cue from my literature review, the importance of this study lies in that it allows for detecting the contextual and historical environment and political-economic peculiarities of food sovereignty struggles in Argentina. A food regime analysis of how Argentina has integrated itself into the neoliberal food regime through the state-supported soy monoculture was conducted in order to understand the implications of this integration for agrarian class structures. A macro-level analysis of Argentina's integration into the neoliberal food regime reveals that the state-supported soy monoculture contributes to greater capital concentration, while aggravating rural unemployment and dispossessions. This historical account was then combined with a bottom-up examination based on peasant testimonies collected through fieldwork. These testimonies revolve around the manifestation of soy

monoculture in the decline of small farming, regression of public health, destruction of native forests and land evictions. Research participants from MNCI-affiliated communities reflected a certain level of awareness of the political-economic transformation of agriculture and a wide array of socioeconomic injustices. Contrary to the agrarian-populism thesis, the transformation of agrarian class structures under the soy regime appears to have led to a process of social homogenization in a diversity of precarious situations rather than heterogeneity due to shared material deprivation. The common understanding has become that a return to the land and autonomous control of territory is the main route to securing a livelihood.

How can such an awareness of shared material deprivation be turned into a stronger sense of self-association that can be sustained in the long term? Put differently, how can agrarian communities build on their regional cultures to assert their position and unity by inventing new forms of common living and solidarity? Chapter 4 addressed the cultural dimensions of the class formation process. Characteristic of MNCI's cultural mobilization towards class formation is the creation of a movement language that triggers group conviction and mass emotions with reference to certain historical descriptions that idealize and glorify this history in today's context. In a Gramscian language, this act of creation of social myths finds its expression in the regeneration of a long-erased culture of indigeneity marked by a lack of its primordial markers such as tribal authority structures, spoken language, and indigenous *cosmovisiones*. MNCI members' testimonies showed that the mobilization of these myths revolves around an indigenous sense of being oppressed and the theme of territory and communitarianism, indigenous languages, and *el Monte* along with a strong claim to the revival of peasant communities and re-peasantization. These themes are then merged into a coherently formulated ideological programme of food sovereignty as the highest expression of the indigenous peasantry's class position and unity. Interestingly, MNCI militants' description of food sovereignty voiced a class-analytical vision that puts forth the need for inventing a new production model, the task of reclaiming the territory, and the idea of the unity of the classes of labor. In Argentina's case of indigenous-peasant mobilization, the most strongly articulated sector of the classes of labor has been the informal proletariat, which has become interpolated by food sovereignty and a call to return to the countryside.

Class agents' collective position and sustained unity also have to do with how strongly they can convey their claims to the state and extract policy concessions without giving up their original political agenda and independence (See Chapter 5). Therefore,

class formation was also assessed on a spectrum between cooptation and organizational independence to extract popular-democratic gains. This assessment was then situated in the peculiar context of the Latin American left and *kirchnerismo*. In this framework, I was particularly interested in whether MNCI was coopted by the state due to its immersion in *kirchnerista* welfare networks as well as the increasing availability of mutual dialogue and cooperation mechanisms with the state. The fieldwork data unveiled that MNCI draws on a strategy of accumulating power and transforming the state from within thanks to an encouraging and peaceful political environment. However, the expansion of extractivist capitalism alongside the poor state of government assistance and institutional governance leads MNCI to avoid forging organic relationships with the state and reject assuming government posts (with the exception of the PSA experience, which however reflected a popular-democratic thrust and did not last long). Relatedly, MNCI puts forth its efforts to prevent de-mobilization and continue its organized presence to push for popular-democratic policy gains. The movement's popular-democratic advances are most strongly manifested in its success to suppress *Juarismo* through extensive struggles, make the national government pass a bill on food sovereignty and prepare another bill on communitarianism, create an autonomous development organism designed to improve food sovereignty, continue land struggles at the expense of violent confrontations with public authorities, and run semi-autonomous schools.

Finally, the organizational dynamics of class formation are also found in leadership formation and structures. Chapter 6 addressed the aspects of leadership that have to do with the modes of grassroots participation and decision-making, whereas Chapter 7 tackled its aspects regarding leadership creation through pedagogical mobilization and class alliances. The fieldwork data showed that class agents' collective position and sustained unity at the organization level are most strongly articulated in a close coordination of various levels of leadership from the ground-up. Deliberative and participatory leadership starts at the level of community assemblies, where community claims and political contributions are conveyed to regularly-held provincial assemblies. Provincial assemblies are then followed by their national counterparts, which are usually attended by the most committed and politicized leaders who take the lead in class formation. This coordination finds its conceptual underpinnings in Gramsci's theorem of fixed proportions, where he attributes the vibrancy of class organizing to the active and coordinated circulation of leadership cadres in close touch with the laboring masses.

Moreover, from a Gramscian perspective, the lack of a presidential status and official ranks that empower bureaucratic tendencies can be seen as an important guarantor of bottom-up democracy.

MNCI's leadership strength also stems from the presence of institutionalized pedagogical mechanisms of leader training and its openness to broader and organic alliances with the classes of labor by mobilizing the pedagogical efforts of urban leaders. As an example of MNCI's systematic pedagogical endeavors, the *pasantía* experience allows student sympathizers and other outsiders to acquaint themselves with the movement by organizing stays in affiliated communities and exchange sessions with community members. Indeed, students who are to later join the movement play a leading role as one of the most committed sectors of the MNCI leadership. The movement also uses *pasantías* to train its own rural community organizers by sending them to distant provinces and other countries in order to expand its network of class solidarity and exchange. A higher level of solidarity and exchange is promoted through the mobilization of MNCI's schooling institutions. MNCI's institutions such as SoA, peasant schools and UNICAM combine technical training in peasant production with political and ideological training on food sovereignty. The schools of historical memory and political training alongside youth camps further contribute to the mobilization of this political and ideological training. As a final note on leadership, organic (i.e. popular-democratic) alliances with the classes of labor in the slums are particularly evident in the leading role of students and *barrio* organizers at MNCI along with their active participation in the movement's schooling activities. Similarly, MNCI devotes close attention to expanding towards slum communities and promoting re-peasantization via its program of return to the countryside.

Overall, MNCI's success in advancing agrarian class formation cannot be neglected given its status as Argentina's largest critical agrarian movement, even though it essentially represents the indigenous-peasant minority in a country where the myth of European whiteness is still prevalent. Equally important is that MNCI has not shown any major sign of political de-mobilization despite the favoring environment of *kirchnerismo*. As pointed out in the Introduction, however, class formation cannot be viewed as a "once and for all" outcome given that abrupt advances and setbacks are a regular part of class politics. As such, the research agenda ahead is to explore how the new configuration of political power marked by the demise of *kirchnerismo* and ascendancy of the right-wing Mauricio Macri government in 2015 have affected the course of agrarian class formation.

Have land evictions and state repression accelerated under the facilitative influence of right-wing government? Has the demise of *kirchnerismo* resulted in MNCI's repression or demobilization? How have MNCI's relationships with the state evolved under the Macri government? In what direction has MNCI's strategy of engaging the state and alliance-building changed? Certainly, this re-configuration would also provide an invaluable opportunity to re-test the explanatory potential of the class formation theory. With reference to the methodological caution voiced in the Introduction, it is certainly to be bore in mind that social theories are like "work in progress" given the subjective complexities of social life. A constant engagement with what E.P. Thompson (1966) calls the "real life" and "real contexts" can sharpen the conceptual tools accumulated over time.

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