

The Silences of Dispossession

The Dynamics of Agrarian Change and the Politics of Indigenous
People in Chaco, Argentina

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Abstract

Recent studies of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ have highlighted the link between agrarian changes and the expansion of social capitalist relationships that has occurred in the neoliberal era. However, the high degree of abstraction of these studies and the lack of analysis of the role of the actors involved in these processes, especially the subaltern groups, presents challenges for the analysis of empirical processes (Hart, 2002; 2004; Hall, 2013).

To overcome these limitations this work proposes to analyze processes of agrarian change through an approach centred on the ‘local rationalities’ of the actors involved (Nilsen and Cox, 2013). From that perspective this thesis argues that the positions of the actors in ‘processes of accumulation by dispossession’ can be explained by examining their memories of past experiences, the actual forms of power and dispossession and the position of subalternity of each group in a determined time and place (Li, 2000; Hodgson, 2011).

The focus on local rationalities is applied here to analyze the different perceptions and positions of two indigenous communities in the province of Chaco, Argentina with regard to the expansion of the agribusiness model since the 1990s. This work thus seeks to illuminate the multiple dynamics that exist between subaltern and dominant groups in the different contexts of dispossession. Through analyzing these processes by considering the complex network of power relationships that have been produced, which generate acts of resistance but also complicity, this approach aims to make a contribution that will help to revitalize political readings of new rural dynamics linked to capitalist development.

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List of Abbreviations

- ACT (Asociación Civil Cacique Taigoyic- Cacique Taigoyic Civil Association)
- CARBAP (Confederación de Asociaciones Rurales de Buenos Aires y La Pampa- Confederation of Rural Associations of Buenos Aires and La Pampa).
- CCC (Corriente Clasista y Combativa - Combative and Classist Current).
- CCCA (Corriente Clasista y Combativa Aborigen - Aboriginal Combative and Classist Current)
- CRA (Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas- Argentine Rural Confederations)
- CZT (Comisión Zonal de Tierras- Area Land Commission)
- D. Ch. A. (Dirección del Aborigen Chaqueño - Department of the Chaqueñan Aborigine)
- DGMF (Dirección General de Fabricaciones Militares - General Department for Military Manufacturing)
- DINFIA (Dirección Nacional de Fabricaciones e Investigaciones Aeronáuticas - National Department of Aeronautical Research and Manufacturing)
- DPA (Dirección para la Protección del Aborigen - Department for the Protection of the Aborigine)
- ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America)
- ENDEPA (Equipo Nacional de Pastoral Aborigen - National Team Pastoral Aborigine)
- FAA (Federación Agraria Argentina - Argentine Agrarian Federation)
- IAPI (Instituto Argentino para la Promoción del Intercambio - Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange)
- IDACH (Instituto del Aborigen Chaqueño - Aboriginal Institute of Chaco)
- IDB (International Development Bank)
- IMF (International Monetary Fund)
- INAI (Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas- National Institute of Indigenous Affairs)
- INCUPO (Instituto de Cultura Popular - Institute of Popular Culture)
- INDES (Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo Social - Social Institute for Social Development and Human Progress)
- INTA (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria - The National Institute of Agricultural Technology)
- INASE (Instituto Nacional de Semillas - National Seed Institute)
- RC (Consortio Rural- Rural Consortium)
- SENASA (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria - National Agrifood Health and Quality Service)
- SRA (Sociedad Rural Argentina- Argentine Rural Society)
- WB (World Bank)
- UC (Unión Campesina - Peasant Union)

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Chapter 1

Introductory Remarks

1.1 Identifying the Issues

In recent decades, rural Argentina has undergone a process of profound transformation. The 1970s marked the beginning of a process of agriculturalization; the expansion of industrial agriculture to the detriment of other rural activities. This trend intensified notably in the mid-90s following the deregulation of the agricultural sector, the high international prices for certain grains, and the spread of new technologies such as transgenic seeds and direct seeding. In just a few years, Argentina changed from a country with a widely diversified agricultural sector aimed at satisfying internal and external demand to one that specialized in a few commodities for export (Barsky and Fernandez, 2006; Teubal, 2008; Gras and Hernandez, 2008; Delvenne et al, 2013). Among these commodities, soybeans were of special importance. The surface area planted with this crop grew from approximately 3 million hectares in the 1997-8 season to more than 20 million in the 2012-3 season, equivalent to approximately 64% of the national planted surface area (SIIA, 2014). This ‘soybeanization process’ had a significant effect on the social structure of rural Argentina. It led to the acceleration of the concentration of production and property, which had been occurring since the 1970s, significantly reducing the share of small producers in national production.

Several authors have argued that these changes in the rural sector can be explained by changes in the forms of capital accumulation at a global level. In more specific terms, they state that the rise and consolidation of the ‘agribusiness’¹ model is inextricably linked to the rise of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ as the main mechanism for the reproduction of capital (Harvey 2003; 2007). According to Farsad Araghi (2009) this link can be seen in certain patterns that, in the neoliberal

¹ Following the analysis by Teubal (2008); Giarraca and Teubal (2010); Dominguez and Sabatino (2006), I understand the agri-business model as being characterized by: 1) Increased control by transnational corporations and large national companies that produce, distribute and sell agricultural products; 2) An increase in contract-based agriculture (via seeding pools and mutual investment funds); 3) An increase in the production of commodities for export to the detriment of the production of foods or industrial crops for domestic consumption, and 4) A growing dependence on technological packages (transgenic seeds, agri-toxins and machinery). In Argentina the implementation and expansion of this model occurred principally through the expansion of the cultivation of transgenic soybeans. For this reason, throughout this work I will use the terms ‘soybeanization process’, ‘soybean model’ and ‘agri-business model’ interchangeably as my interpretation is that they refer to the same process.

era have been reproduced across the world. The “visible foot”² of neoliberalism can be seen in processes of land enclosures, the decline of family agriculture, the fall in rural employment, the formation of a ‘surplus population’, damage to the environment, etc. (Araghi, 2009a, 2009b; see also Borrás et al 2012; McMichael, 2006; Li, 2001b; Levien, 2013).

In the Province of Chaco³, where this study is focussed, the hallmarks of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ are easily identifiable (Harvey, 2003). One simply needs to go a few kilometers from Resistencia, the provincial capital, to see the extensive areas that have been ‘opened’ with bulldozers and fires and incorporated into the agribusiness market. Workers are rarely seen in these new fields: in the words of Teubal and Giarraca (2008), it is the landscape of ‘agriculture without farmers’⁴.



Forest clearance in *Paraje Las Tolderias* (2012), photo taken by the author

In many of the urban areas of the interior, the effects or ‘visible foot’ of accumulation by dispossession are easily seen. For example, entering a town or village one sees old cotton spinning plants in a state of utter neglect. They leave little room for doubt that, as Li (2010b)

² Araghi (2009) uses the idea of “the visible foot” to counter the idea of the invisible hand of the market. The visible foot can be seen in global patterns that make it possible to demonstrate that changes in the rural sector are rooted in changes in power relationships.

³ Chaco means ‘hunting territory’ in Quichua (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971). This Argentinian province is part of the Gran Chaco, the second most important ecological region in South America. Its territory dips slightly towards the Southeast, from the foothills of the Andes to the Paraguay and Paraná rivers and from North to South from the Chiquitos Sierras in Bolivia to the pampas plains in Argentina, covering approximately 1.2 million km². The region is divided into three sub-regions: Boreal Chaco, to the north of the river Pilcomayo (which stretches across parts of Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil), Central Chaco, to the south of the river Bermejo, and Austral Chaco to the south of the Bermejo river (part of the Argentine provinces of Chaco, Santiago de Estero, the north of Santa Fe and part of Salta). The Gran Chaco Argentino is made up of two of the sub-regions; Central and Austral (Mari, 2008).

⁴ In the case of Argentinian soybean production in particular, different technological innovations such as direct seeding, transgenic seeds and first generation agrichemicals have notably reduced rural employment.

says, the population that has been ‘pushed out’ by the new rural dynamics has little chance of finding employment in urban areas, thus making them part of a ‘surplus population’ in terms of the needs of capital accumulation (see also Harvey, 2003; McMichael, 2006; Araghi, 2009a).



Cotton spinning plant in Pampa del Indio (2012). Photo taken by the author.

Without a doubt, these changes in the Chaqueñan landscape are evidence of the link between local changes and the characteristics of a specific historical moment in capitalist development. But they do not tell the whole story.

What these characteristic features, which are repeated across the entire world, conceal are the multiple paths followed in the different struggles and agreements that have taken place between the actors in each specific location, giving rise to concrete processes and dynamics. The ‘visible foot’ also fails to reveal how, through these processes, the perceptions, objectives and subjectivities of the actors themselves have changed (Cleaver, [1979] 2000, 1993; Lebowitz, 2003; 2005; Hart, 2006). The process that led to the ‘desolation of the fields’ of Chaco and its meaning can only be understood if one considers the multiple relationships that are forged in these spaces and how they changed across history (Gordillo, 2013;2014). For example, the *monte* (bush) that used to cover the area now taken up by soybean crops was, during the first stages of the development of capitalism in Argentina, a space of resistance for indigenous communities, a refuge from military persecution and a place that allowed them relative autonomy (Trinchero, Piccinini and Gordillo, 1992; Gordillo, 2002). Later, the bush became a partial safeguard against

economic strife, a space that helped to offset a precarious, marginal economic situation by supplementing wage labour (Gordillo, 2004; Vivaldi, 2007). At this time a large part of the *monte* was private property but given the relationship that these communities often had with *Criollo* colonists, they were still allowed to use the resources. Currently, and paradoxically, far from being a refuge from capitalist relationships, the remaining bush has become one of the few sources of rural wage labour. Indigenous populations are often hired to carry out deforestation and uprooting work so as to leave the fields 'clear' for sowing and planting

The uniformity of these 'desolate fields' also conceals the fact that many of those being used for soybeans were previously cotton fields where the indigenous population worked as ploughers and harvesters and also in some cases as producers. It was in these spaces that relationships of dependency were constructed with *Criollo* and/or state patrons, giving rise to many of the perspectives and demands of indigenous populations today.

In other words, the transformations that occurred in the neoliberal era did not take place in a vacuum and were not (re) produced automatically. Their dynamics depended to a great degree on the different positions taken by the different actors involved, which are intimately linked to the specific history and geography of each specific case. For this reason, in order to understand new rural dynamics, it is necessary to investigate how actual populations experienced, reproduced and/or confronted these processes, aspects that have been generally relegated in the field of the 'sociology of dispossession' (Levien, 2013).

The title of this work: "The Silences of Dispossession. The Dynamics of Agrarian Change and The Politics of Indigenous Peoples in Chaco, Argentina", has a dual objective. Firstly, drawing on the work of Cleaver ([1979] 2000) and Lebowitz ([1992] 2003) this investigation seeks to reverse the silence that the theory of accumulation by dispossession imposes on actors in general and subaltern actors in particular. To paraphrase Cleaver, it could be argued that the greatest weakness of works on accumulation by dispossession is that capital 'is seen as the only active force. Albeit evil, it emerges as an expanding, dynamic, world encircling power. The subaltern, by contrast, are mainly portrayed as passive victims' (Cleaver, 1977).

Secondly, this work also seeks to investigate and challenge the silences that we often reproduce when we study the positions of subalterns with regard to processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). As Wendy Wolford (2010) states, while we often acknowledge the diverse nature of indigenous communities, when we discuss them in terms of the new rural

dynamics, we usually resort to the use of homogenizing images. Generally the focus is on the incompatibility between the way of life of indigenous peasants and the agribusiness model, but in few cases is the dependence and participation of subalterns in these processes analyzed. As I will argue throughout this work the heterogeneous nature of the perspectives and strategies that the indigenous communities develop in response to these processes are important not only in understanding the subtle differences within a group but also to understanding the development of the process itself.

This thesis questions these ‘silences’ by analyzing the different perceptions, experiences and positions of the indigenous communities with regard to the advance of the agribusiness model on the Province of Chaco, Argentina. Building on Pablo Wright’s observation, it analyzes processes of accumulation by dispossession in a space formed by a lattice of multiple peripheries (geographic, economic, political and social) (Wright, 2008:22). The first periphery refers to Argentina’s historical position in the international context (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Wright, 2008). Since its consolidation as a nation state in the second half of the 19th Century, Argentina has been a supplier of primary goods, so its economic growth has historically been dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on the economic cycles of the major powers (Arceo, 2003; Rapoport, 2000).

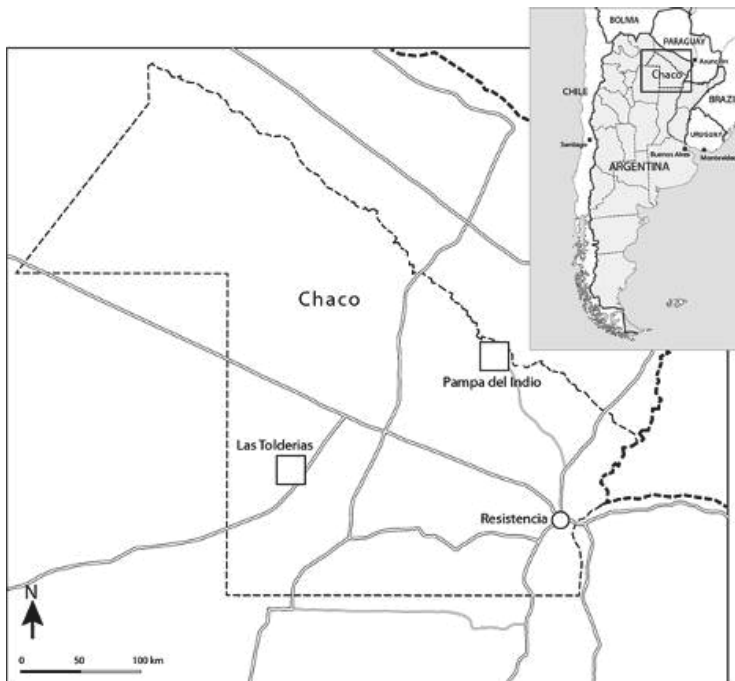
Thirdly, this work analyzes the changes in rural Chaco, a province at the margins of the national socio-economic structure⁵. Although the economic structure of the province has historically been based in the primary sector – tannin extraction (1914-1930) and cotton production (1930-1990) – these activities were not of major importance in the national agricultural context, whose centre has historically been the pampas region. As other authors have noted, Chaco’s peripheral status is illustrated both by the gradual way in which it was incorporated into the national territory, and by its relatively late establishment as a province in the national political administrative structure (Wright, 2008; Valenzuela and Scavo, 2009)⁶.

⁵ Some statistics reflect the marginal status of Chaco in the national context. The province of Chaco has a surface area of 99,633 KM² and a population of 1,055,259 inhabitants. According to Census data (INDEC,2010), 18.2% of homes qualify as having Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN), while the national average is 9.1%. At a provincial level, homes designated UBN make up 15.9% of urban homes and 31.4% of rural homes. Chaco also has the highest rate of illiteracy in the country at 5.5%.

⁶ Argentina’s National Constitution dates back to 1853 but the National Territory of Great Chaco, which included the present-day provinces of Chaco and Formosa, was founded in 1872. Chaco was declared a province on the 8th of August 1951 (law N° 14.037), initially under the name Presidente Perón (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Finally, this thesis will analyze new rural dynamics by examining the experiences and perspectives of the members of two indigenous communities⁷, populations that have historically been marginalized in Argentine society (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Wright, 2008). The study will specifically focus on the Qom community in Pampa del Indio located in the north of the province and the Moqoit community of *Paraje Las Tolderias*, located in the provincial southwest.

Map N° 1 Chaco province, Argentina



Developed by Kjell Helge Sjøstrøm

1.2 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter 2 I present a brief overview of studies of the process of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). I go on to argue that although this approach has made it possible to expose the links between changes in national agricultural sectors and global processes driven by the mechanisms of contemporary

⁷ The indigenous population in Chaco province is 60,000 according to data from IDACH (2014).

capital accumulation, the literature has not paid sufficient attention to the role of subaltern actors in the development of these processes. To encourage a political reading that will allow us to go further than a simple description of the effects of neoliberalism in rural areas and to move on to an understanding of the dynamics of production and reproduction of these processes, I propose refocusing the study to examine local rationalities, following the approach developed by Nilsen and Cox (2013). I then suggest that an analysis based on the different perceptions and multiple positions of the subalterns in these processes will allow us to gain a fuller understanding of the multiple power relationships that mould “the actually existing process of accumulation by dispossession”.

Chapter 3 presents the main characteristics of the “Extended Case Method” (ECM) (Burawoy 1991; 2000; 2001, 2009) the methodological approach I have used during my research. By promoting a “theoretically driven ethnography” the ECM provides appropriate tools for observing and analyzing multiple connections between global and local processes through the perceptions and positions of the actors.

Chapter 4 presents a brief historical summary in which I try to reflect how the subaltern positions of indigenous groups in Argentina were constructed. To do this I analyze the main political policies of the state which were to define each phase of capitalist development, placing a special emphasis on rural policies and those affecting indigenous populations. To show the links between national and global processes, each stage is introduced with a brief description of the policies implemented simultaneously at an international level, for which I make use of the concept of the food regime developed by Friedmann and McMichael (1989).

Chapter 5 focuses on a summary of the history of Chaco Province. In contrast to the previous chapter, which focussed mainly on state policies, the intention of this chapter is to show the various actions of resistance, negotiation and complicity that were implemented by local indigenous communities during the historical process. Seen together, Chapters 4 and 5 try to provide an overall vision of the history of capitalist development in Argentina that includes both the mechanisms of domination and the struggles and negotiations of subaltern groups.

Subsequently, Chapters 6 and 7 present the case studies on which this research is based. In addition to analyzing the different trajectories or dynamics, each chapter tries to illustrate different issues related to the expansion of the agribusiness model.

Chapter 6, which focuses on the case of the Qom community in Pampa del Indio, shows the diverse, fragmentary and changing nature of resistance to new rural dynamics. Through the information gathered from the interviews, we will see that different groups within a single community take different positions in relation to the multiple changes that have occurred in recent years. The chapter also invites reflections on the influence of different contexts on these positions. In particular, it analyzes the difference between the positions that emerged within the ‘ethno-bureaucratic space’ and the positions of the groups living in the *parajes*.

In Chapter 7, which explores the experience of the Moqoit community in *Paraje La Tolderias*, I try to highlight the cases where accumulation by dispossession has not led to resistance and has even had the consent and/or complicity of the subaltern actors. In addition to analyzing relationships with the dominant sectors, this chapter seeks to determine the way in which tensions within the community, and with other groups at a provincial level, affect the positions of these groups towards the new rural paradigms.

The fragments that we will see in Chapter 6 and 7 should be seen as a sample of the complex web of relationships through which the communities make sense of their past, perceive the present and take different positions towards new rural dynamics. The thesis thus provides a partial picture that seeks to show some of the different ways in which the history and politics of these communities have been molded and how these same communities have in turn molded processes of accumulation by dispossession.

CHAPTER 2

Subjectivities under construction. Accumulation by dispossession and the politics of indigenous groups.

“As a struggle over power, politics has always been about coalition and conflict along many lines of hierarchy (...)”

F. Mallon (1995)

2.1 Introduction

How should we understand the processes of accumulation by dispossession that occur in the neoliberal era? Are they simply processes that create a regressive redistribution of wealth through privatization and commodification of common goods or are they also processes that transform social relations? Does accumulation by dispossession only arise by ‘predatory, fraudulent and violent’ means, or can it also be carried out consensually? How do subalterns perceive and experience these processes? What roles do they play during these events? How can the subalterns’ ‘complicity’ with these processes be explained? (Wood, 2007; Adnan, 2011; 2013; Levien, 2013; Hall, 2013; Strümpell, 2014).

The main objective of this chapter is to contribute to the debate over processes of accumulation by dispossession from a perspective in which the agency of the subalterns is given greater emphasis. More specifically, these pages seek to establish the criteria I will use in the next few chapters, to investigate not only how the expansion of the agribusiness model has exacerbated the vulnerability and inequality of certain groups but also the roles of the subalterns in the reproduction of and/or struggle against these processes.

The literature on the processes of accumulation by dispossession that take place in the neoliberal period provides the initial conceptual framework for this analysis. However, as I will argue below, the literature has not placed enough emphasis on the role of the subalterns involved and on the dialectic transformations that occur during this process. As I will try to show, understanding the process of accumulation by dispossession as a process perceived and experienced differently by diverse actors, may help to replace the dichotomous conception of

spaces of power and spaces of resistance usually put forward, more or less explicitly, in most works on contemporary rural issues (Mitchell, 1990; Strümpell 2014).

The chapter is organized as follows: in the first section (2.2), to introduce the general subject of this thesis, I will briefly outline some of the ways in which links between neoliberalism, the dynamics of agricultural change and the re-emergence of indigenous movements in the 'Global South' have been studied. In the second section (2.3) I will introduce the concept of accumulation by dispossession developed by David Harvey and briefly summarize the main criticisms of it. The third section (2.4) will examine some of the recent works that have tried to analyze the participation of subalterns in the processes of accumulation by dispossession. The fourth and fifth sections (2.5 and 2.6) will present a perspective that will help to understand the different roles that subalterns play in these processes. There, I will argue that the way in which the actors perceive and act within these processes is based on local rationalities (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013). I will go on to argue that the actions of the subalterns represent a varied range of positionings that help to mould these processes (Li, 2000; Hodgson, 2011; Kasmir and Carbonella, 2008). In the sixth and final section (2.7) I will briefly summarize the main ideas expressed in the chapter.

2.2 Neoliberalism and the 'indigenous re-emergence'.

There are many different ways to interpret the term neoliberalism. One is to approach it as a process and a political project whose main objective is to restore the power of a dominant group via the weakening or destruction of restrictions previously imposed upon the accumulation of capital (Duménil and Lévy, 2001; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Harvey, 2007; Springer, 2012).

One of the fundamental assumptions on which the neoliberal project was based was that the development of countries and thus the greater wellbeing of their populations (understood in terms of individual freedom) would be achieved only through the supremacy of the free market, meaning an open, deregulated and competitive market. Under this doctrine, the state should be limited to guaranteeing the free functioning of the market and/or creating it if it does not exist (Duménil and Lévy, 2001; Jessop, 2002; Harvey, 2007). As I will explain in Chapter 4, in Argentina, as in many other countries, neoliberal reform meant the adoption of policies of

stabilization and structural adjustment programs as prerequisites for the receipt of loans from international institutions (International Monetary Fund –IMF- and World Bank –WB-) in order to cover external deficits (Patnaik, 1996). The implementation of these structural adjustment programs in rural sectors led to the opening up and deregulation of domestic agricultural markets, the privatization of state companies and the commercialization of government lands and other key resources. In the vast majority of cases this resulted in the expulsion of mid-sized and smallholder farmers from the sector, the displacement of rural communities, the increased concentration of property and production and the increasing replacement of agricultural work with non-agricultural activities (Araghi, 2009; Teubal, 2009).

As I said above, neoliberalism is also a process that has been ‘forged, adapted and reformulated at different times⁸ and in different contexts (Tickell and Peck, 2003:164). This means that ‘the concrete shape of the project’ is the result of different struggles and shifting alliances between different factions of dominant groups and subalterns on different scales and at different times (Tickell and Peck, 2003). The localized form of neoliberalism (i.e. the way and the degree to which the markets were deregulated, state companies privatized, state land sold, etc.) thus reflects the legacies of other historical processes and ‘political-cultural formations’ specific to each place (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008; see also Peck, 2004; 2008; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Tickell and Peck, 2003; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Springer, 2012).

Both aspects, the consequences of the neoliberal project in rural areas and the ‘new social movements’ that arise during the process, have been subjected to numerous different analyses. In general terms these studies include research focussed on global economic forces and their consequences for rural populations. Generally this kind of analysis painstakingly details some of the mechanisms by which contemporary processes of accumulation are reflected in rural areas, such as, for example, appropriation of land, commodification of seeds, privatization of natural resources, environmental deterioration, displacement of peasants, food shortages, etc. (See Akram-Lodhi, 2007; Kay, 2009; Araghi, 2009; Teubal, 2009; Patnaik and Moyo, 2011; Borras et

⁸ Tickell and Peck (2003) analyse the history of the neoliberal process, dividing it into three stages: proto-neoliberalism (this phase refers to the origins of neoliberal thinking and the reestablishment of free market ideologies during the 1970s); roll-back neoliberalism (this period includes the 80s and early 90s. The authors call this stage “the destructive stage of neoliberalism,” when policies were focussed on dismantling and deregulating Keynesian institutions) and roll-out neoliberalism (this period begins in the 90s and continues to this day. In contrast to the previous phase, this stage can be described as ‘creative’, given that the policies are focussed on the establishment of different regulatory mechanisms to manage the internal contradictions of neoliberalism).

al, 2012, amongst others). Because most of these analyses have placed the emphasis on the global agri-food system, the roles of local actors are not usually analyzed, with the exception of certain dominant trans-national sectors (Hall, 2013).

On the other hand, much research has chosen to focus on the ‘new’ resistance movements that emerge within – or are linked to – rural areas. These studies usually argue that neoliberal globalization provided new parameters for subaltern struggle, so issues related to cultural identity and ethnicity have acquired increasing importance (Watts, 2009; Bengoa, 2009; Renfrew, 2011). Among the factors that explain the rise of the ‘new rural movements’, these works usually note the following: the reduction of the state as a result of the reforms, the crisis of labor allegiances, a revaluation of local identities as a result of decentralization policies, the erosion of corporate citizenship and the emergence of a multicultural citizenry. Many have also commented on the significant influence of international human rights and ecological movements in the formation of these new rural movements (Jackson and Warren, 2005; Hale, 2002; Bengoa, 1998, 2009; Lazzari, 2007b; Bartolomé, 2003; Doane, 2007; Yashar, 1999; 2007; Hodgson, 2009; Motta, 2009; Carruthers Rodriguez, 2009; Steur, 2011).

In general, the new rural dynamics and practices of the subalterns are analyzed separately, thus limiting understanding of the dynamics generated. That is to say the mechanisms and process of accumulation are understood as autonomous forces that impose themselves on subjects who might resist with greater or lesser success, but do not essentially seem to be transformed.

Very often, both focuses derive from an analysis in which indigenous populations and peasants are represented either as passive victims or as in steadfast opposition to all the transformations caused by neoliberalism. As Harvey says, commenting on certain readings of Zapatismo: “They appeared as ‘authentic’ bearers of a ‘true’ alternative to an homogenizing and globalizing capitalism” (2003:74). In these cases, the argument tends to be that indigenous people and peasants seek a return to the past and/or the establishment of an alternative model outside the market (Brent, 2013; Baird, 2011; Spronk and Webber, 2007; Gordon and Webber, 2008; Holden et al, 2011; Carruthers and Rodriguez, 2009). In contrast, cases where resistance from subalterns is absent or where they have assisted or cooperated with neoliberalism have rarely been subject to analysis.

In my opinion, there is a risk of a homogenized reading of the actions and positionings of the subalterns, or even a simplistic interpretation of these processes as being imposed upon populations, which are just two different ways of (intentionally or otherwise) continuing to deny them their agency and thus their role in history. To avoid this kind of reading, without losing sight of the interaction between local and international processes, I will return to the concept of accumulation by dispossession but argue that it should be understood as a process that is perceived and experienced in a heterogeneous manner. It will thus be a return to investigation, rather than assumption, of the roles played by subalterns with regard to contemporary processes of agrarian change.

2.3 Accumulation by dispossession, theft on a global scale

The global proliferation of situations in which subalterns are displaced, or prevented in some way from access to essential resources for the reproduction of their livelihoods due to the increased integration of agriculture into global production, commercialization and financial channels, led many academics interested in studying the issue of agriculture under neoliberalism to revisit the concept of “accumulation by dispossession” developed by David Harvey (2003). This concept, as we shall see throughout this section, transformed how agrarian change was interpreted, allowing for increased understanding of the interaction between global and local processes (Hart, 2006). However, it has also contributed to the establishment of a perspective in which new rural dynamics are reduced to simple processes of appropriation of goods. This means that complex processes of negotiation, resistance, and change are represented as being replicated almost identically across different parts of the world (Wood, 2007; Glasman, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2012). However, to be able to begin a discussion of the advantages and limits of the concept, it is necessary to briefly review its origins.

2.3.1 Primitive accumulation

The concept of accumulation by dispossession presented by David Harvey (2003, 2006, 2007) is a reformulation of the concept of primitive accumulation as proposed by Marx in *Capital* [1867]. In very general terms, primitive accumulation can be understood as a historical process by which the worker is deprived of his/her means of subsistence. In Marx’s words:

“The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production” (Marx, [1867] 1995: 705-706).

This deprivation obliges human beings to sell their labor in the market as their only means of survival, converting them into wage workers. This process, which transforms the social relations of production and gives rise to capitalist social relations, is achieved by what Marx ironically calls “idyllic methods” such as:

“The spoliation of the church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of State domains, the robbery of the commons lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism (...)” (Marx, [1867] 1995:723).

The debate about how to understand the concept of primitive accumulation has been prominent within Marxism (Glassman, 2006; De Angelis, 2001). One proposed reading held that it was a closed phase, and was later replaced by the process of reproduction of capital. This interpretation was based on the idea that primitive accumulation, in Marx’s terms, was the ‘*original sin*’, “the pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it” ([1867] 1995:706). Primitive accumulation refers here only to the founding moment of capitalism (De Angelis, 2001; Levien, 2013; Ince, 2013).

Later, other studies suggested that primitive accumulation should also be conceived as a process inherent to how capitalism functions. Thus Marxist studies into imperialism sought to explain why the development of capitalism in core countries had led to increasing territorial expansion, exportation of capital and, finally, rivalry between the new imperial powers (Brewer, 1990:7; De Angelis, 2001). Chief amongst these is the work of Rosa Luxemburg, whose analysis would be used by Harvey as the starting point for the development of the concept of ‘Accumulation by Dispossession’. In the text *The Accumulation of Capital* [1913] Luxemburg suggested that primitive accumulation had a dual nature. On the one hand it referred to the separation of human beings from the means of production and on the other the relationship between capitalist and pre-capitalist formations. In general terms, Luxemburg argued that competitive pressure and the need to resolve the crisis of underconsumption, aspects of capitalism, led states and enterprises to have to continually force the opening of new markets still in pre-capitalist stages.

“Capital is faced with difficulties because vast tracts of the globe’s surface are in possession of social organizations that have no desire for commodity exchange or cannot, because of the entire social structure and forms of ownership, offer for sale the productive forces in which capital is primarily interested (...) Since the primitive associations of the natives are the strongest protection for their social organization and for their material bases of existence, capital must begin by planning for the systematic destruction and annihilation of all the non-capitalist social units that obstruct its development. With that we have passed beyond the stage of primitive accumulation; this process is still going on. Each new colonial expansion is accompanied, as a matter of course, by a relentless battle of capital against the social and economic ties of the natives, who are forcibly robbed of their means of production and labor power” (Luxemburg, [1913] 2010: 350).

Thus primitive accumulation ceased to be understood as part of a historical period that saw the foundation of capitalism and was now viewed as a condition for the reproduction of capital in thoroughly capitalist social formations. In addition to conceiving this link between primitive accumulation and the reproduction of capital, Luxemburg’s analysis called attention to the political nature of the process⁹. However, as De Angelis (2001) notes, in Luxemburg’s analysis, conflict was a side effect and not a constitutive part of the process¹⁰. In other words, the conflict was caused by the expansion of capitalist sectors into pre-capitalist sectors, which, in spite of their greater or lesser resistance, were destined to disappear.

In the early 2000s¹¹, debates about the role of primitive accumulation came to the fore once more. Michael Perelman (2000), in his book *The Invention of Capitalism*, suggested that Marx’s formulation should be understood as both an *historic process* and an *ongoing process* within capitalist formations. Referring to the historical process, Perelman emphasized that primitive accumulation did not just refer to the ‘enclosure of the commons’, or to the gathering of a mass of capital, as these were necessary conditions but not sufficient to convert the dispossessed into wage workers. According to this author, what Marx described as primitive accumulation was a long term material and ideological process, i.e. the appearance of capitalist social relations

⁹ During her explanation of the separation of agriculture and industry, Luxemburg says “In reality, however, the process of separating agriculture and industry is determined by factors such as oppressive taxation, war, or squandering and monopolization of the nation’s land, and thus belongs to the spheres of political power and criminal law no less than with economics.” (Luxemburg, [1913] 2010:376).

¹⁰ As we shall see later this is repeated in Harvey’s thesis (2003), it being, I believe, one of its main limitations.

¹¹ Other early texts to this effect appear in *Midnight Notes*, (1990) in which the contemporary role of enclosures was already suggested. In the book’s introduction the author says “The enclosures, however, are not a one-time process exhausted at the dawn of capitalism. They are a regular return on the path of accumulation and a structural component of class struggle. Any leap in proletarian power demands a dynamic capitalist response: both the expanded appropriation of new resources and new labor power and the extension of capitalist relations, or else capitalism threatened with extinction. Thus Enclosure is one process that unifies proletarians throughout capital’s history (...)” (Collective, 1990:1)

required the establishment of enclosures, but also “a host of oftentimes brutal laws designed to undermine whatever resistance people maintained against the demands of wage labor accompanied the dispossession of the peasant rights” (2000:14; see also Perelman, 2001). Furthermore, Perelman also sees primitive accumulation as an ongoing process, a mechanism by which the conditions of the existence of the working class were defined. There would then be a gradual process that ensured continuous benefits to capital. As the author says: “All out primitive accumulation would not be in the best interest of capital. Instead, capital would manipulate the extent to which workers relied on self-provisioning in order to maximize its advantage” (2000:32).

Furthering this argument, Massimo De Angelis (2001) stated that primitive accumulation is a *necessary process* for the functioning of the system and thus is continuous in nature. According to De Angelis, primitive accumulation is characterized by the use of extra-economic methods and occurs “any time the producers set themselves as an obstacle to the reproduction of their separation to the means of production” (2001:13). Primitive accumulation thus functions as “a reassertion of capital’s priorities vis-à-vis those social forces that run against this separation (...) Objects of primitive accumulation also become any given balance of power among classes that constitutes a ‘rigidity’ for furthering the capitalist process of accumulation” (2001:14). Thus, the continuous nature of primitive accumulation is explained by the continuity of social conflict, which is inherent to the capitalist system¹² (De Angelis 2001; see also Glassman, 2006; Hart, 2006; Levien, 2013).

In addition to these important contributions, among the studies of neoliberal agricultural issues, the most influential reformulation of the concept of primitive accumulation was indisputably that developed by David Harvey (2003).

¹² The representation of ‘primitive accumulation’ as a ‘continuous process’ applicable to any stage of capitalist development and more specifically the theses presented by Perelman (2000; 2001), De Angelis (2001) and Bonefeld (2001), have been criticised by Zarembka (2002) in his article “Primitive Accumulation in Marxism, Historical or Trans-historical Separation from Means of Production?” According to this author, Marx’s development of the concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ only sought to frame the history of the beginning of capitalism to demonstrate the contingent or ‘unnatural’ nature of the transition from one mode of production to another. Zarembka believed that, given that ‘capital accumulation’ always involves an act of separation and violence, the use of the concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ is only justified when it refers to the historical moment of transition from feudalism to capitalism.

2.3.2 Accumulation by dispossession

In *The New Imperialism*, Harvey argues that in the neoliberal era, to avoid crises of over-accumulation, capital has sought out new territories and commercialized social sectors that had previously been partially or completely free of market influence (2003:156). In this approach, accumulation by dispossession does not just include the co-option of pre-existing structures, but also their confrontation and violent suppression in cases where they are inconsistent with the needs of capital (Harvey, 2003:146). The final objective is none other than the liberation of a series of ‘goods’ at a very low cost, in such a way that capital can make use of them in highly profitable ways (2003:149).

A more detailed definition of processes of accumulation by dispossession appears in his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. There, Harvey says that

“By [accumulation by dispossession] I mean the continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices which Marx had treated as ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ during the rise of capitalism. These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations...; conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights (most spectacularly represented by China); suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade (which continues, particularly in the sex industry); and usury, the national debt and, most devastating of all; the use of the credit system as a radical means of accumulation by dispossession.” (2007: 159).

These forms of accumulation by dispossession during the neoliberal period occur and multiply via different mechanisms. According to Harvey (2006) there are four main mechanisms involved: 1) *Privatization and mercantilization* of public goods and services (this may include the privatization of public services such as the provision of water and transport, the privatization of education, pensions and retirement funds and even the mercantilization of culture and some ways of life – via tourism for example); 2) *Financialization* (these mechanisms require the destruction and/or seizing of shares and resources via inflationary processes, debts and other practices linked to financial speculation); 3) *Management and manipulation of crises* (here, Harvey refers to the link to the processes of state debts and the later imposition of structural cuts as a prerequisite for access to international credit); and 4) *State redistribution* (for example via tax reform or the provision of subsidies to large corporations).

After explaining the causes and mechanisms by which accumulation by dispossession occurs, Harvey goes on to analyze the social and political consequences of these processes. The author states that in addition to a significant transfer of assets to the dominant classes, the pre-eminence this form of accumulation acquired during neoliberalism created a new politics of resistance. In Harvey's words: "The whole field of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-globalization struggle has consequently been reconfigured and a very different political dynamic has been set in motion" (2003:174). According to Harvey, struggles against accumulation by dispossession, in contrast to traditional forms of resistance against expanded reproduction of capital, are characterized by pursuing fragmentary and contingent objectives, function on different scales and also tend to remain in the form of social movements (2003:162-179).

The versatility of the concept of accumulation by dispossession perhaps explains why it became so important to contemporary agricultural studies (Levien, 2013). The first main advantage of the concept is its multi-faceted nature. In contrast to other studies in which primitive accumulation is limited to the conversion of 'the commons', Harvey's concept addresses the conversion – or reconversion – of different kinds of property into private property. This encompasses a wide range of contemporary dispossessions brought about through both extra-economic and economic mechanisms. Secondly, accumulation by dispossession is not just limited to the sphere of production but also includes other economic sectors such as the financial and public spheres, making it possible to analyze the role of national states in these processes more clearly. Thirdly, Harvey, again in contrast to other authors, says that accumulation by dispossession can have both regressive and progressive aspects (such as agrarian reform, for example, see 2003:178). This factor, even though it is not very well developed, is crucial because it suggests that these processes can only be understood and evaluated in their concrete forms. Finally, through the distinction between movements against accumulation by dispossession and movements against the expansion of reproduction, this approach makes it possible to see how the changes in the mechanisms of accumulation also shape the resistance of subalterns. However, as we shall see in the next section, the theoretical reduction of the role of subalterns to reactive postures limits comprehension of these processes.

2.3.3 *The limits of Accumulation by Dispossession*

“In the absence of examination of the part of workers’ struggles in shaping the course of the development of capitalism, capital’s tendencies are taken as objective, even technical, laws inherent in its own essence” (Lebowitz 2003:121).

The inevitability of the historical development of capitalism and the presumption that its workings are determined by inexorable forces rather than the actions of human beings are the main premises of what Lebowitz has described as “one-sided Marxism” (1982; 1997; 2003; 2007). According to this analysis, the worker is usually represented as being a necessary instrument of capital and the fact that they are also a subject that acts and struggles to satisfy their ‘own development needs’ is ignored (Lebowitz, 1997; 2007).

By subsuming the history of capitalism to the logic of capital, this approach forgets that capitalism is a relationship based not only on the struggle of capital against workers to valorise itself, but also the struggle of workers against capital to achieve the ‘full development of human potential’ (Lebowitz, 2007:167-169). The consequences of omitting this latter element can be seen in the reproduction of an economic deterministic perspective in which everything that happens is exhaustively explained by the needs of capital (Lebowitz, 1997; 2003)¹³. ‘One-sided Marxism’ also ignores the fact that the struggle of the workers is, in turn, a process of production of new ideas and new needs, “of producing new people, of transforming them into people with a new conception of themselves - as subjects capable of altering their world” (Lebowitz, 1997:142).

A similar argument was presented by Harry Cleaver ([1979] 2000; 1986) who argued for the need to overcome economics-dominated readings of capitalist development, and to return to an approach that took into account the capacity of human beings not just to resist the exploitation and domination of capital but to act according to their own diverse interests¹⁴. Cleaver

¹³ Lebowitz argues that this kind of Marxism limits our understanding of capitalism for two reasons. Firstly, because it silences the role of workers and secondly because, in ignoring the worker as an active subject, it ends up offering an incomplete image of the role of capital. In the author’s words: “Only with the completion of the totality are new sides of capital revealed. Only then do we have capital that faces workers who are struggling for their goals, workers who are more than mere technical inputs to be stretched to emit more labour or to be produced more cheaply. In this respect, Capital does not present one ‘half’ of the totality- but it is rather, merely a moment in the development of the totality. Only when we have a completed totality can we grasp properly the distinctions within the unity” (2003: 121-122).

¹⁴ In contrast to Lebowitz, Cleaver sees economics-driven readings as not being derived directly from Marx’s work, but as being a product of the efforts of certain Marxist academics who, in their search for an alternative economic paradigm, have placed excessive emphasis on that dimension (see Lebowitz, 1982 and Cleaver, 1986; 1992).

emphasized the multiplicity and potential conflict of interests not just in relation to capital, but also within the working classes. He stated

“(….)what is required is an ability to grasp simultaneously: the nature of totality/globality that capital has sought to impose, the diversity of self-activity which has resisted that totality and the evolution of each in terms of the other”(1993:3).

These observations on the limitations and effects of analyses that over-emphasize the role of capital in the development of capitalism are echoed in numerous criticisms of the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’. Several academics agree that the main limitation of Harvey’s analysis lies in the emphasis given to crises of over-accumulation as drivers of the process. Ellen Wood, for example, says “In Harvey’s account, accumulation by dispossession seems to be less about the creation or maintenance of social-property relations which generate market compulsions than about the redistribution of assets to enable investment (….)” (2007:23). She believes (in contrast to Harvey’s concept) that primitive accumulation is characterized not by the concentration of wealth, but by the transformation of social relations, i.e. the establishment of new rules for reproduction and new forms of domination based on market dependence. From this perspective, the primitive accumulation of the neoliberal era would not be defined so much by the hoarding of goods or the use of extra-economic forms of coercion as by the subjection of an increasing number of spheres of human life to the imperatives of the market.

Another important criticism has been made by Gillian Hart who has argued that “what gets lost in the conception of accumulation by dispossession is the constitutive role of contestation” (Hart, 2006:9). In other words, in Harvey’s work, while over-accumulation of capital is the driving force behind the process, the resistance movements of those affected are relegated to the status of being mere reactions to external processes. According to Hart, to overcome this limitation we need to develop more specific concepts that illuminate the specific geographic and historical particularities of each case. Phillip McMichael (2009) made a very similar observation, noting that:

“While the agrarian question is embedded within processes of capital accumulation, these processes are politicized in time and space. Accordingly, the agrarian question cannot be reduced to a question formed within the terms of capital theory itself. The historical conditions of accumulation are not equivalent to the theoretical conditions of accumulation, just as the subjects of accumulation impart a historical sensibility that cannot be deduced from a categorical representation of the processes of accumulation.” (2009:289)

Concerning this last criticism, Michael Levien (2011, 2013) has recently noted that an emphasis on the crisis of over-accumulation does not allow for a determination of the distinctive aspect of ‘accumulation by dispossession’. According to Levien, it is precisely this idea of the process as a “generic response to crisis of overaccumulation in the global economy” that makes it difficult to grasp the different dynamics it creates in different places (Levien, 2011). More specifically, Levien states that Harvey’s approach, in considering that ‘accumulation by dispossession’ can occur through both economic and extra-economic mechanisms, prevents recognition of the eminently political nature of these processes. Consequently, he has developed the concept of “domestic regimes of dispossession” in order to emphasize both the political aspect – especially the role of the state – and the historical specificity of the processes. Defined as “socially and historically specific constellations of state structures, economic logics tied to particular class interests, and ideological justifications that generate a consistent pattern of dispossession” (2013c:383), the concept of regimes of dispossession seek to explain “how and why states restructure themselves to dispossess land for different purposes and different classes in different times” (2013:17; see also Levien, 2013c). The main objective of this approach is to show that “the character and outcome of dispossession in different times and places will be shaped by the heterogeneous and nationally specific political, economic and ideological factors that cannot be read off of global circuits of capital”(2013:17; see also Levien, 2013c).

Given the theoretical contributions mentioned above and returning to the argument made by Lebowitz (1982; 2003) and Cleaver ([1979]2000; 1986), we still need to ask ourselves: what happens to the other groups involved? What is their role in the process?

In my view one of the main limitations of the concept of accumulation by dispossession is the fact that its perspective of the mechanisms by which it occurs places an emphasis almost exclusively on the action of a dominant group, thus presupposing certain passivity on the part of subaltern actors (Hall, 2012; Adnan, 2013). As Glassman reminds us: “For Harvey neoliberal PA/AD¹⁵ is a renewed effort by capitalist and core states to extract surplus by extra-economic means in an effort to fend off crisis tendencies” (2009:95). So the result of this process is simply described as a more inequitable reallocation of goods, relegating the actions of the subaltern

¹⁵ PA (Primitive Accumulation); AD (Accumulation by Dispossession).

sectors, as Hart and McMichael¹⁶ suggested, to the status of an opposing reaction after the event. And even when it is clear that accumulation by dispossession does not just occur simply through the use of direct force¹⁷, thus requiring action or acquiescence from dominated groups, these actions are not analyzed as they are assumed to have been completely ‘coerced’.

From a perspective that focuses exclusively on dominant sectors and the politics of the state, several of the processes that characterize neoliberal agriculture appear to be inexplicable, as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7. For example, it is difficult to understand why in certain cases these processes are not resisted and it is also problematic to explain why different groups resist different mechanisms and factors. It is even harder to understand why, in cases where the state establishes regulations to avoid dispossession, subalterns choose not to follow them. This is why, although I agree with several authors mentioned above about the importance of understanding accumulation by dispossession as a political process, I believe it is important to remember that politics cannot be limited to the realms of dominant social groups. Neither can politics be seen as simple coercion exercised by dominant groups over dominated sectors. It must also be borne in mind that the politics of the subalterns, as Scott noted some time ago (1985), are not expressed simply during periods of open resistance or solely in their relationships to dominant sectors (Ortner, 1995; Gal, 1995). On the contrary, we should keep in mind that accumulation by dispossession is comprised of interaction, and the cooperative action and resistance of human beings. In other words, while most analysis of processes of accumulation by dispossession portrays a clear contrast between the capitalist class and the dispossessed masses, ‘actually existing accumulation’¹⁸ focuses our attention on the complex network of relationships across

¹⁶ Although analysis of the role of subalterns is generally limited to the resistance movements that occur after dispossession, in *The New Imperialism* Harvey also acknowledges the complexity and variety of positions taken by subalterns. For example, he writes “In some instances the position of women, who provide the bulk of labour power, has been significantly changed if not enhanced. Faced with the choice of sticking with industrial labour or returning to rural impoverishment, many within the new proletariat seem to express a strong preference for the former. In other instances sufficient class power has been achieved to make real material gains in living standards and to achieve a standard of life far superior to the degraded circumstances of previous existence” (2003:164). In addition, other works such as *Spaces of Hope* (2000) show us more clearly that his focus is characterized by a dialectical analysis of the relations between dominant and dominated groups, the subalterns’ role being a heterogeneous, integral part of these processes rather than mere reactions.

¹⁷ Harvey (2003) repeatedly emphasizes the use that the state and international organizations make of coercion and consensus in order to implement these processes. In his work Harvey clearly states that accumulation by dispossession occurs through both legal and illegal activities. However, the idea that ‘voluntary dispossession’ is always ‘forced dispossession’ remains implicit in his examples, such as the case of ‘house-flipping’ (p153)..

¹⁸ Here I am paraphrasing Brenner and Theodore (2002), who present the concept of “actually existing neoliberalism”.

different groups. It is thus possible that subaltern groups themselves may not only resist but also reproduce ‘accumulation by dispossession’. As Hall rightly observes (2012):

“the implications are not just analytical but political (...) when analysis of primitive accumulation assumes the opposition to capitalism requires opposition to any form of markets or private property, and that people only engage with markets or want property when they are forced to, they suggest a politics at odds with what seem to be the wishes and interest of many people” (2012:4).

2.4 Accumulation by dispossession and the complicity of the subalterns

In recent years, some authors have begun to highlight the need to consider the active role of subalterns in the production and reproduction of the processes of accumulation by dispossession. So, for example, Webber (2008), in a study of the change of rural areas in China in recent decades, noted the possibility of subalterns contributing voluntarily to the development of these processes. He sees processes of accumulation by dispossession as being guided by different logics, economic logic being “only one of the drivers that underlie change”. According to Webber, the other logics “derive from extra-economic sources, including environmental modernization, ethnic politics, nation building and personal motives” (2008:397). Unfortunately, as he himself admits, his analysis continues to focus on market mechanisms and the economic logic of these processes, making him unable to observe more clearly how these different logics affect the processes, or how they influence the different forms of action of the subalterns.

A closer analysis of the participation of subalterns in these processes is that of Hall, Hirsh and Li in their book *Powers of Exclusions. Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia* (2011). Through the concept of “exclusion”¹⁹ the authors analyze the dilemma that “all land use and access requires exclusion of some kind. Even the poorest people, farming collectively and sustainably, cannot make use of land without some assurance that other people will not seize their farms or steal their crops”(2011:4). Hall et al. investigate, rather than assume, the identity of the actors who favor and those who oppose the changes. They identify four powers that interact in the processes of transformation in rural areas: a) state regulation, b) coercion (exercised by the state and non-state actors), c) the market and d) legitimization (understood as establishing certain moral

¹⁹Hall, Hirsh and Li adopt the concept of exclusion to analyze the changes caused by neoliberalism as they believe that the concept is more inclusive than the concept of accumulation by dispossession. In my opinion, this choice obscures the relationship between local processes and the capitalist system. This is the main reason I have decided not to adopt their focus more extensively in this text.

precepts that define correct and incorrect uses of the land). The specific way in which these powers interact at a certain time and place determines the form that the process of exclusion will take²⁰.

Although *Powers of Exclusions* maintains a greater emphasis on the role of the state, international bodies and NGOs, it also presents an analysis of what Hall, Hirsh and Li call ‘intimate exclusion’. These exclusions, which occur between the members of a single community, show that “smallholders do not always engage in community oriented defence of the commons, and they often *want* private property in land for themselves” (2011:14, emphasis in original).

Similarly, following research in the Delta area in Bangladesh, Adnan (2013) analyzes the role of internal political conflicts in the development of processes of accumulation by dispossession. He notes that these processes can occur through both economic and extra-economic means and even, in different stages, in both forms, which he calls ‘multi-stage land grabbing’. During those different stages, the subalterns may resist, but they can also voluntarily encourage these processes depending on the different political alliances in which they are involved. Although this research contributes to the debate about different degrees of ‘unwillingness’ exhibited by the subalterns in these processes, their agency is limited as their voluntary action is explained as being the result of the manipulation of dominant sectors (2013:112).

There are two other important contributions to the study of the roles of the subalterns. One is Smalley and Corbera (2012), entitled *Large-scale land deals from the inside out: findings from Kenya's Tana Delta*, which analyzes peasants’ varied positions towards two large scale projects, one linked to biodiesel and the other to ethanol. This article is particularly valuable because it does not just address the participation of subalterns in these projects, but also looks at “how local individuals frame their life experience and how evolving land deals fit into their development concerns and expectations” (2012:1044). So the different expectations of the subalterns can cause resistance in some cases and complicity in others. Similarly, the article “*The mouse deer and the crocodile: oil palm smallholders and livelihood strategies in Sarawak, Malaysia*”, by Cramb and

²⁰ Hall, Hirsh and Li (2011) analyze six processes: “licensed exclusions, related to the process of land titling, formalization and settlement”; “ambient exclusions related to conservation initiatives”; “volatile exclusions related to the expansions of boom crops”; “post-agrarian exclusions, land conversion to non-farm usage”; “intimate exclusions or enclosure from below”; and “counter exclusions - the mobilization of collectivities to defend or assert their access to land”.

Sujang (2013) analyzes the reasons for which Sarawak peasants have decided to become part of oil palm production in recent years. The authors decided to investigate the relevance of perceptions of traditional production to these decisions. They then observed that for these peasants oil palm production was not just a profitable form of sustenance but also a practice through which they can achieve autonomy.

Finally, going beyond specifically agrarian studies, I would like to emphasize the importance of Strümpell's (2014) *The Politics of Dispossession in an Odishan Steel Town*. This article seeks to investigate the reasons for which the process of accumulation by dispossession, exemplified here by the restructuring of public steel production in Rourkela (India), did not result in organized resistance from the working class.

Using an ethno-historical analysis, the author looks at the regional government of Odisha's implementation of national development policies in Rourkela during the early postcolonial Nehruvian period. This was to sow the seeds of discord within the working classes and generating ethnic tensions and schisms that remain to this day. According to Strümpell, these differences were a key factor in understanding the specific way in which each fraction of the working class has both perceived and reacted to neoliberal reform. So, for example, the sectors that strongly benefited from the regional government's policies in previous decades, primarily the Odia people, accepted neoliberal restructuring and perceived the consequent economic liberalization as an opportunity for future generations²¹. By contrast, the majority of Adivasis, who were marginalized during the Nehruvian period, saw the policies associated with neoliberalism as aggravating their vulnerability and they thus resisted it. Through this text Strümpell shows that 'accumulation by dispossession' can not only generate 'resistance or transversal alliances' as Harvey suggests (2003) but can also accentuate divisions and hierarchies within the working class, limiting or preventing resistance. To understand why these processes develop in one way or another, it is necessary to analyze the interaction between the specific form the process of accumulation by dispossession takes and the specific history of each region²².

²¹ For example, Strümpell states that the access to education enjoyed by this group during the post-colonial period, means that many of them believe that even if they themselves were no longer able to work in the public steel sector due to job losses, their children will be able to enter other sectors that emerge through economic liberalization of public or private entities.

²² In emphasizing the need to consider regional variations and not just national-temporal ones, this analysis, without explicitly setting out to do so, points out a limitation of the theory of regimes of dispossession developed by Levien (2013).

Regardless of the different foci, what all these studies remind us is that the greatest difficulty, but also the richest area for analysis, lies in trying to understand how people and processes are jointly constructed, and the specific dynamics that ensue.

2.5 Local rationalities and the positionings of the subalterns

Given the relevance of the concept of accumulation by dispossession to analyzing contemporary rural dynamics and the need to consider the different roles played by subalterns in the development of these processes, I will now return to an approach focused on “local rationalities” (Cox, 1999; Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013).

Based on the philosophical anthropology of Marx²³ and in an attempt to bring the focus back to the agency of the actors, this approach seeks to interpret “the social world as a constant making and unmaking of social structures²⁴ (...) that are constructed through the conflictual encounter” between dominant and subaltern groups (Nilsen and Cox, 2013:64; Nilsen, 2009). Within this framework, historical development is the result of interaction between the actions of different sections of the dominant classes seeking to “reproduce or extend their power and hegemonic position”; and the everyday actions of different sections of subaltern classes that seek to counter the restraints and encroachments imposed by this dominant social order (Nilsen, 2009; 2010)²⁵.

All of these actions are based on rationality, i.e. “a particular way of making sense of and relating to the social world” (Nilsen and Cox 2013:3). In the case of subaltern groups, the ‘local rationalities on which their actions are based can be defined as “those oppositional ways of doing, being and thinking that people develop in their situated, everyday effort to cope with, negotiate, and resist such restraints and encroachments” (Nilsen, 2010:15).

There are two points that need a further clarification. Firstly, it is important to note that the local rationalities of subalterns are not constructed in a space located outside relations of dominance.

²³ Here, human beings are defined by their skill at mediating between their needs and capacities by employing conscious activity. For a more detailed analysis, see Nilsen (2008).

²⁴ Social structures are defined in this approach as “the sediment of movement struggles, and as a kind of truce line which is continually probed for weaknesses and repudiated as soon as this seems worthwhile - by social movements from above and social movements from below” (Nilsen and Cox, 2013:66; Nilsen, 2009:115)

²⁵ Emphasizing the central role of human agency in the structuration and historical change allows us to avoid succumbing to what Lebowitz would call a ‘one-sided’ analysis (point 2.3.3) and also avoids a voluntarist approach that does not consider the restraints and encroachments imposed upon the actors.

On the contrary, “(...)they are shaped in and through learning processes that unfold as subaltern groups engage with and contest the hegemonic projects of dominant groups and the institutional complexes and discursive formations in which this hegemony is entrenched”(Nilsen, 2012:258). In short, they are shaped by and interwoven with relations of power (Cox, 1999; Nilsen, 2009; 2010; 2012; Mitchel, 1990). Secondly, insofar as they are responses to particular situations, local rationalities are not unique and unchanging but multiple and evolving (Cox, 2011). This is why, when we use the concept we are obliged to explore rather than assume the local rationalities that explain the positions of different groups at a given time and place (Nilsen, 2009; Cox, 2011).

In this research, in order to explore the different rationalities of subaltern groups in the context of accumulation by dispossession, I focused on three dimensions: the positions of subalternity of the actors, their memories of past experiences and their actual experiences of power. Next, I will briefly explore each of these dimensions.

2.5.1. Positions of subalternity.

The adoption of the concept of the ‘subaltern’ in this text seeks to emphasize the complexity of the relations that determine the status of an actor within a social order. I interpret subalternity²⁶ in relational terms, i.e. as a status “constituted in and through relations between social groups that are differentially positioned and endowed in terms of the extent of their ‘control of social relations and... the scope of their transformative power’” (Nilsen, 2012:258; see also Moore, 1998). It is important to note that, when we refer to the relationships that determine the status of an actor in a given social order, we are referring to a ‘complex matrix’ and not a single relationship. In this regard, as Green states, “subalternity is not simply reducible to class or confined to the concerns of the proletariat” (2011:399). On the contrary, the concept of the subaltern refers to the different axes of power (class, ethnicity, location, gender, etc.) and the

²⁶ The concept of the subaltern was popularized by the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG). This group was formed in the 1980s to provide an alternative viewpoint to the reigning Eurocentric historiography (neo-nationalist, neo-colonial, Marxist economics). The objective was to analyze historical process through the perspective of the dominated groups. The SSG thus made use of the concept of the ‘subaltern’ developed by Gramsci in *The Prison Notebooks* (Chaturvedi, 2007; Green, 2011). Initially the SSG defined subalternity as “a general attribute of subordination in South Asia society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (Guha, 1988:35). In its first works, both the awareness of the subalterns and their political practices were considered autonomous environments that could not be influenced by hegemonic cultural forms (Sivaramakrishnan, 1995:399; see also Bidaseca, 2010; O’Hanlon, 1988). However, this assumption was strongly criticized, even by members of the group, because it concealed the fact that “subalterns’ resistance did not simply oppose power but was also constituted by it” (Prakash, 1994:1480). The conception of this awareness and of the agency of the subalterns was modified in subsequent analyses, it ultimately being concluded that subalternity could be understood on intersectional terms (O’Hanlon, 1988; Sivaramakrishnan, 1995; Moore, 1998; Chaturvedi, 2007; Sinha, 2012; Green, 2011).

actual way in which this articulation works within social, political and economic relations in a given time and place²⁷ (Green, 2011).

The notion of ‘intersection’ is relevant as it situates the subalterns not only in their relations with dominant sectors but also within the power relations in the group, i.e. it allows us to explore ‘different degrees of subalternity’ and also to see how they influence the positions and strategies employed during processes of accumulation by dispossession.

In saying that local rationalities are molded by the ‘position of subalternity’, I agree with Mallon:

“(…) no subaltern identity can be pure and transparent; most subalterns are both dominated and dominating subjects, depending on the circumstances or location in which we encounter them (…). These ever-shifting lines of alliance or confrontation, then, are not deduced from specific, already existing subaltern identities or subject positions. They are constructed historically and politically, in struggle and in discourse” (Mallon, 1994b:1151).

Thus, subaltern identity is always plural and diverse as the subalterns are always being constructed (O’Hanlon, 1988; Ortner, 1995; Roseberry, 1994; Sivaramakrishnan, 1995).

2.5.2 Memories of past experiences

For several years now, various studies have shown that although the past influences the present, it does so neither mechanically nor deterministically. This is because it always requires the re-interpretation and re-allocation of meaning from any given local, positioned present (Briones, 1994:99; Halbwachs, [1950] 2011; Alonso, 1988).

The memories on which ‘local rationalities’ are based may or may not be autobiographical (Halbwachs [1950] 2011; Harris, 2006). Autobiographical memories concern the life story of each interviewee. These memories, even when they refer to individual experiences, are collective in that they are molded by the experiences, desires and needs of the groups to which each individual belongs. In other cases, memories provide accounts of events not experienced directly by the actors, but that are central to the formation and strengthening of a group identity, for which reason they are transmitted down the generations via informal channels such as the family and/or formal ones such as educational entities (Halbwachs, [1950] 2011; Alonso, 1988; Olick and Robbins, 1998; Harris, 2006; Russell, 2006). It is important to remember that memories change

²⁷ I owe this formulation to Prof. Alf Nilsen. March, 2014.

over time. Our perspectives on our own memories vary depending on the social reality, the particular position we occupy in society and the groups with which we interact at a given time and place (Halbwachs, [1925] 2011; Friedman, 1992). As we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7 the memories of the cotton period in Chaco formulated by indigenous state representatives diverge markedly from the memories of the same period of the indigenous peoples who live in the rural *parajes*, which can be explained partially by their differing social positions. In summary, collective memories are dynamic constructions, molded by the actual context and by the position occupied by each group in each context, in which individual and group experiences are inexorably interwoven (Olick and Robbins, 1998; Friedman, 1992).

With regard to the memory of subaltern groups, we must also take into account that, as has been noted on numerous occasions, their memories are also affected by the discourse and practices of dominant sectors. The memories of subalterns never occur in a fully autonomous space, but neither are they a simple reproduction of the memories of dominant sectors. They are spaces of confrontation and negotiation (Alonso, 1988; Mitchell, 1990; Nugent and Alonso, 1994; Olick and Robbins, 1998). On this point, it is important to clarify that although in many instances the memories of oppression, submission, resistance, displacement and impoverishment encourage collective action, this is not always the case. As Harris (2006) argues, in many cases the memories of subalterns can inhibit confrontation, depending on the meaning that each group assigns these memories. Similarly, in this work I will argue that the memories of subalterns are not limited to situations of oppression, and that memories of inclusion are a source of consensus between subalterns and the dominant social order (Cleaver, 1992; James, 1997).

2.5.3 Concrete experiences of power and dispossession

As Marx wrote in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and as various authors have subsequently argued, the need to bring the subaltern subject back to the centre of the historical stage and to analyze different perceptions and ranges of the possible positionings that they might adopt, does not at any point mean denying the concrete forms of power and domination to which they are subjected (O'Hanlon, 1988). As Briones said, paraphrasing Marx's celebrated paragraph²⁸ in the *Brumaire*, "subjects interpret their own history (and the history of others) but

²⁸ "Men make their own history, but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" ([1852] 2001:7).

they do not do so as they please because they interpret it under circumstances that they have not chosen” (1994:111). This means that local rationalities can only be understood in the light of the historical, economic and political contexts in which they are produced and expressed (Nugent and Alonso, 1994:13, Cox, 2009).

It is for this reason that actual expressions of power, such as “the forms, routines, rituals and discourses of the rule of the state”, must be considered when analyzing the positionings of the subalterns (Nugent and Alonso, 1994). It is also important to emphasize that actual experiences of power are not reduced to the processes and practices of the state government; they also include other actors such as large states, smallholders, government agencies and NGOs as well as, in certain cases, subaltern groups. Actual experiences of power are also related to the main mechanisms by which dispossession in a given area occurs. It should be made clear, then, that during this research, the processes of accumulation by dispossession, although intimately related to land issues, are not restricted to phenomena such as land grabbing²⁹. As we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7, accumulation by dispossession also refers to: 1) changes in the use of and access to resources (such as the diversion of the River Bermejo, deforestation and pollution from glyphosate spraying), 2) changes in social relations that make it possible to maintain alternative modes of reproduction (such as the practice of *marisca*), and 3) control of knowledge deriving from new technological developments (the introduction of transgenic seeds, agrichemicals and machinery increased the dependence of peasants on experts) (Hall, Hirsh, Li, 2011).

In short, the processes of accumulation by dispossession to be analyzed in this work “are not just about closing off soil and land in a narrow sense but shutting down access to any space or sociality that threatens our ideological or material dependence on capitalist social relations, thus threatening accumulation”(Hodgkinson, 2012:509).

Having analyzed some of the elements in which local rationalities are rooted, next I will offer some brief clarifications of the positionings of subalterns within these processes.

²⁹ David Harvey also uses the term accumulation by dispossession to discuss a wide range of mechanisms, including “the escalating depletion of the global environmental commons (land, air, water)” (2003:148).

2.6 The everyday politics of subalterns groups.

Adnan states that “the poor have a repertoire of strategies to oppose domination, upon which they can draw in accordance with changing circumstance” (2007:185). In this regard, the politics of the subalterns are not only expressed in open confrontations with dominant groups, but also in the everyday activities through which people attempt to minimize, revert or take advantage of some of the consequences, effects and spaces opened up by the processes analyzed here.

Drawing on Turton, it might be said that open resistance “refers, in a fluid way, to forms of social action which vary as to physical strength, critical awareness, effectiveness, collectivity, social range, etc. capable of being judged either more ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’ ” (1986: 38). As Turton argues and Harvey suggests (2003:168-169), it is important to consider that the resistance of subalterns does not necessarily represent a complete rejection of all the aspects that make up processes of accumulation by dispossession. Neither does every subaltern group agree on the specific aspects that must be resisted.

As mentioned above, Harvey’s focus (2003) has given rise to various analyses that argue that after the advent of neoliberalism, social conflicts occur in the sphere of accumulation by dispossession. However, I believe that this simple division does not contribute to an understanding of the complex framework of struggles. Like Glassman (2009), I believe that “Expanded reproduction was not necessarily the most fundamental site of struggle in the Fordist era, (...) nor is PA/AD necessarily the most fundamental site of struggle (...) Both are always active and significant” (2009:97). It is for this reason that rather than thinking of them as differentiated spaces of struggle, I will analyze the specific aspects of current resistance movements through the filter of positionings. Here, I shall make use of the analysis by Kasmir and Carbonella (2008), who emphasize the mutability of class relations and forms of resistance, specifically the concept of ‘positionings’ which “encompasses and signals the struggles over representation, recognition, resources, rights that are central to any form of political action” (Hodgson, 2011:11; Li,2000).

It is also necessary to explain that, as resistance does not just refer to confrontation, we also take it to include negotiation and thus the use of institutional channels and the formation of alliances at different levels. Roseberry observes that “[w]e can also see how forms and languages of

protest or resistance must adopt the form and languages of domination in order to be registered or heard.” (Roseberry, 1996:81) One should thus not think in terms of ideological co-option or assimilation, but in terms of placing subaltern politics within the institutions and organizations of the state and civil society where these agents exist. We can thus postulate that in these cases resistance activity is “an attempt to reconfigure the field of struggle” (Gordillo, 2009).

Analyzing these practices is key for not succumbing to an essentialist conception of indigenous communities, avoiding the images of their being presented as subjects whose only relationship with state institutions is that of oppression or who are out of synch with certain political practices (Gordillo, 2009).

Finally, subaltern acquiescence, should not be understood as the result of a ‘false consciousness’ that prevents them from seeing their real interests. It is crucial to remember that in some cases, acceptance of the processes of agrarian change could be an indication that certain aspects are considered legitimate (Fletcher, 2001). In addition, as subaltern positionings are not constructed solely in response to dominant sectors, but also in response to other subalterns, acquiescence may be revealing the importance of other axes of power (Brosius, 1997, Ortner, 1995). Like resistance, acquiescence should be seen a position generated by local rationality at a given time and place. It should not be understood as a definitive or permanent response, as subalterns may adopt postures of complicity in certain aspects and not others.

2.7 Concluding Remarks

In these pages I have argued, referring principally to the work of David Harvey, that during the neoliberal period a global transformation in the process of capital accumulation took place in which one mechanism of accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, predominated in the processes of reproduction of capital.

Although Harvey’s work has been very important in expounding the links between global and local processes, I have argued that in studies of accumulation by dispossession, the role of subalterns has barely been acknowledged. This is because the focus of the analysis usually falls almost exclusively on the actions of the dominant sectors and/or on the mechanisms by which the process occurs.

Rather than discarding the different contributions mentioned here, or seeing them as irreconcilable points of view, I believe that it is both possible and necessary to provide a complement to them. My understanding, then, is that accumulation by dispossession is a process inherent to the accumulation of capital through which our dependence on capitalist relations becomes deeper and more intense (Perelman, 2000; De Angelis, 2001; Wood 2007). In other words, accumulation by dispossession involves transformations in social relationships, ideas, distribution and access to goods, resources and spaces to the benefit of capital. I also believe that these transformations require the use of both economic and extra-economic methods (Harvey, 2003).

Undoubtedly, dominant groups and states (be they large companies, NGOs, international bodies, etc.) “play a crucial role in both backing and promoting these processes” (Harvey, 2003:145; Levien, 2013). However, as I have noted on several occasions, to consider the political nature of these processes is not to limit them to the actions of these sectors. These processes also require the participation, resistance or acquiescence of the subalterns. The role played by subalterns and the positionings they take are variable and must be investigated; they cannot be assumed beforehand.

In other words, to understand the dynamics of accumulation by dispossession, it is necessary to have a historical focus that includes both changes in the politics of the dominant sectors and the multiple changes that occur within subaltern groups and the diverse dynamics between them.

I have gone on to suggest that to be able to consider the complexity of these processes it is appropriate to analyze them not just according to their effects but also according to the perceptions of the actors involved (Hart, 2006; Strümpell, 2014; Cox and Nilsen, 2013). I then argued that local rationalities are the basis from which subalterns develop their positionings, which are not just positioning of resistance but also complicity and negotiation. These positionings are thus variable and heterogeneous. Resistance does not rule out negotiation and neither does it mean that subalterns don't make use of the institutional channels available to them.

In summary, what I have tried to make clear in these pages is that an analysis that shines a light on the local rationalities of the actors involved will allow us to open a space for investigation into

the multiple power relationships and interactions that shape accumulation by dispossession in a given time and place (Mallon, 1994; Fletcher, 2001).

CHAPTER 3

Bridging 'global' and 'local' analysis Notes on Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In order to analyse accumulation by dispossession as both a global and local process formed by simultaneous interaction between systemic forces and the everyday actions of actors in a given time and place, it is also necessary to use a specific methodology.

To provide a breakdown of the methodological approach adopted, this chapter has been organized as follows: Section 3.2 presents some of the reasons why, to analyse the processes linked to capitalist development, it is necessary to articulate a macro analysis with an ethnographic study³⁰. Next, Section 3.3 sets out the main characteristics of the Extended Case Method (ECM), a method specially designed for the kind of research mentioned above. Section 3.4 outlines exactly how the ECM was used to gather and analyse the data that provides the basis for this study.

Having explained the main methodological issues, Sections 3.5 and 3.6 offer a brief reflection on the power relationships that shape the fieldwork experience and the research process in general. Finally, Section 3.7 summarizes the main ideas covered in this chapter.

3.2 The need for an ethnographic rooting of global processes.

As Burawoy says, “Even though capitalism may diverge in its expression from sector to sector, from country to country, these divergences are interconnected (...)” (2001:1114). In general terms it can be argued that these interconnections explain the need for and the importance of theoretical analysis. Theories allow us to understand the world in which we live, transcending observable specificities, connecting multiple spatial scales and connecting the past with the present (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Burawoy, 2001b; 2009). It is only through them that we

³⁰ Here I return to the definition of ethnography presented by Burawoy in “Extended Case Method: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations and one Theoretical Tradition”, which explains that “By ethnography I mean writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation” (2009:23) Participant observation is defined in the same book in the following way: “(...)studying others in their space and time, with a view to comparing his or her site with the same one studied at an earlier point in time, whether by this ethnographer or someone else” (2009:75).

can analyse the forces that “lie outside the empirical grasp of fieldworkers” and understand their roles in global processes (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009:256).

However, if we restrict our analysis to that high level of abstraction, we could easily succumb to what Hart (2002; 2004) calls the ‘impact model’. This means an analysis in which the ‘local’ is represented as a mere passive recipient of the changes that are imposed upon them. One of the major problems with this kind of analyses is that they usually ignore the fact that global processes are the result of the actions of human beings, their struggles, alliances and negotiations in specific historical, geographical, political, sociocultural locales and conjunctures (Burawoy, 2000; 2001b). As Comaroff and Comaroff said “Even macro-historical processes – the building of states, the makings of revolutions, the extension of global capitalism – have their feet on the ground” (1992:33). In addition, relegating the analysis of the ‘local’ factor to a simple demonstration of macro-processes usually reproduces homogenous and simplistic images of the actors involved and the relationships they establish between different groups and within each of them.

An ethnographic study, by contrast, makes it possible to show that the conditions for production and reproduction of any process must be actively created and continuously reformulated through the actions of human beings in specific localities. In this regard, this kind of analysis emphasizes the contingency of social processes, avoiding the fallacy of assuming that they are self-generated, eternal and unchangeable phenomena (Burawoy, 1991; Hart 2002, 2004; Lapegna, 2009). Furthermore, ethnographic approaches usually serve to counter the prevailing image of subaltern groups and dominant sectors as coherent, well-defined groups that follow individual, univocal rationalities (Wolford, 2006). An advantage of these studies is that they make it possible to demonstrate the importance of ‘local rationalities’, i.e. heterodox, fragmentary and contradictory forms of perceiving, thinking, and acting in relation to the exercise of power from above (Nilsen and Cox, 2013).

In short, our ability to explain the forms in which global processes occur depends to a great extent on how capable we are of exposing the interconnections without losing sight of their different characteristics. But is it possible to make sense of our data in such a way that it transcends the ‘here and now’ without it becoming diluted overall?

3.3 Summary of Extended Case Method

Following the above point it can be said that instead of a dichotomous vision of global and local processes that reduces one of these spheres to the other, we should encourage a greater focus on processes of interconnection and mutual formation (Hart, 2004).

In order to achieve this objective I have followed the methodological approach known as the Extended Case Method (ECM) (see Burawoy, 1991; 2000; 2001, 2009). This methodology allows us to tie local experiences to wider structures and power flows to a great degree (Burawoy, 2000; Tavory and Timmermans, 2009). In Burawoy's words, this methodology seeks "to extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', to connect the present to the past in anticipation to the future, all by building on pre-existing theory" (2009:21).

This methodology analyses the world by using both hermeneutic and scientific approaches to social research. The hermeneutic dimension focuses on the micro level and inter-subjective understanding. Studies that give prevalence to this dimension arise from concepts and theories in which we inhabit or experience the world and can only be understood in the context of their production. The scientific dimension, however, refers to the macro, to the underlying processes and structures, which 'create and sustain patterns of domination in the micro-situation' (Burawoy, 1991:283). Generally, studies that give priority to the scientific dimension lose sight of the way in which processes, as they are mediated locally, generate heterogeneous dynamics (Burawoy, 2000; Lapegna, 2009).

It is to avoid 'the dangers of both individualism and universalism', that this methodology makes use of 'theoretically driven ethnography'. In its traditional form, the researcher starts with a case considered to be anomalous within a theoretical framework and the participant attempts to 'reconstruct' the theory through observation. This is theoretically-driven ethnography because it starts from the idea that our perception of reality is always mediated by the theories to which we subscribe, i.e. we do not produce knowledge from a 'blank slate' - our research subject and the case we choose to investigate are always determined by the theoretical 'lenses' through which we assign a determined order of reality. In other words, "(...) what is interesting in the field emerges from our theory" (Burawoy, 1991: 9).

It is important to make clear that when we use this methodology we are not just thinking up a different use for certain research techniques such as, for example, the use of participant

observation as a tool to analyse global phenomena, but we are also adopting a reflexive model of science, which differs entirely from the positivist model of science.

The four principles of reflexive science on which this methodology is based are ‘intervention’, ‘process’, ‘structuration’ and ‘reconstruction’ (Burawoy, 2009). These principles can be seen at different moments or dimensions of the research process. According to Burawoy:

“Reflexive science starts out from dialogue, virtual or real, between observer and participants, then embeds such dialogue within a second dialogue between local processes and extra-local forces that in turn can be comprehended only through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself” (2009:20)

The first step, ‘extending the observer to the participant’, immerses us in the situation we seek to analyse, in the ‘place’ and ‘time’ that our informants ‘inhabit’ (Burawoy, 2009:44). From this moment on the researcher distorts this situation, leaving their traces, because they have intervened within it. But this ‘intervention’ is not just inevitable, it is also desirable and necessary. This is so because, in many cases, the ‘distortions’ we create reveal certain unknown aspects of the ‘world of the participants’.

It is important to make clear that the ‘intervention’ is not momentary or fleeting. We don’t just intervene when we penetrate the ‘space of the other’, we also alter that reality when we leave and when we share the results of our work. There is always an impact that generates new dynamics. In contrast to the position against reactivity proposed by the positivist model, here it is held that “[n]o claims to impartiality can release us either from the dilemmas of being part of the world we study or from the unintended consequences of what we write” (Burawoy, 1991:46).

The second stage, which is inextricably linked to the first, concerns the duration of our immersion in this ‘other’ space and time. This methodology involves cohabitation with the others, where the researcher must ‘move with the participants’ in order to be able to ‘unpack the situational experience’ (Burawoy, 1991; 2009). This ‘movement’ can be virtual, real, or a combination of both. Participant observation is one of the techniques by which we can achieve this immersion.

“As a technique of research, participant observation distinguishes itself by breaking down the barriers between observer and participant, between those who study and those who are studied (...) the ethnographer confronts participants in their corporeal reality, in their concrete existence, in *their* time and space” (Burawoy, 1991:291 emphasis in the original).

But, as noted above, this ‘immersion’ in the world of participants can also be ‘virtual’ through ‘ethno-history’ (Burawoy 1991).

After cohabiting this ‘other’ space and time, the researcher should “aggregate the situational knowledge, the multiple readings of a single case, into social processes” (Burawoy, 2009: 41). The very flexibility we need to communicate this ‘other’ time and space, as well as the characteristic subjectivity of our intervention, explains why this methodology does not tend towards a standardization of the data, rejecting the principles of reliability and replicability of the positivist model.

During the third stage we extend the social processes that we identify in the research site to the level of social forces, making use of theory. ECM compares similar cases and holds that their differences can be explained through an analysis of external forces. The possibility of generalizing here is not allowed by the number of observations we make but because the theory to which we subscribe allows us to associate our observations with larger dynamics. This point is important in understanding why the research that adheres to this model does not follow the logic of representation. Finally, during the fourth stage we extend the theory to the one to which we subscribe, in such a way that it can now include the case that was initially classified as anomalous. So, “reflexive science insists, therefore, on studying the everyday world from the standpoint of its structuration, that is, by regarding it as simultaneously shaped by and shaping an external field of forces” (Burawoy, 1991:41).

3.4 Accumulation by dispossession in Chaco and the ECM

Having summarized the main characteristics of the methodological framework for this research, I will explain how I made use of the precepts of the ECM in conducting this study.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1 the research has a dual objective. Firstly, the work proposes to analyse the new rural dynamics in which indigenous communities in Chaco are immersed, in the light of changes that occurred historically in the process of capital accumulation. More specifically, the study seeks to examine the transformations experienced by these communities as the result of the process of soybeanization³¹, using the approach of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003).

³¹ This research considers the process of ‘soybeanization’ to be an emblematic case of the new agri-business model. The process started in earnest in the 90s but its roots go back to the mid-70s.

However, this research study does not seek to analyse the problems and agrarian struggles in indigenous communities in Chaco as mere examples of a macro process. On the contrary, my intention is to show how these social formations have been transformed historically through interaction between extra-local forces and the everyday practices of the actors, which are rooted in local rationalities (Nilsen and Cox, 2013). Hence the second objective of this work has been to use the diverse dynamics generated within these communities to throw light upon these concepts and to question some assumptions usually put forward in most works on accumulation by dispossession.

It could thus be said that the objective of this research is founded on one of the main principles of the ECM, namely that “(...) there can be no microprocesses without macroforces, nor macroforces without microprocesses (...)” (Burawoy, 2009:9).

3.4.1 Cases

The intention of analysing the new rural dynamics related to the expansion of soybean cultivation in Chaco led me to carry out fieldwork in two rural communities that are inhabited by different groups belonging to the Guaykurú³² linguistic family. The selected cases were the paraje³³ Las Tolderías, which was settled by Moqoit families, and Pampa del Indio (more specifically the parajes Campo Medina, Pampa Chica and Campo Nuevo), inhabited by Qom groups.³⁴

Las Tolderías is a rural paraje located near Charata, in the department of Chacabuco. This department is part of an area known as the Western Agricultural Region (along with the departments of General Belgrano, 9 de Julio, 12 de Octubre and 2 de Abril), where most of the land was used for agricultural production at an early date. Pampa del Indio, meanwhile, is located in the department of General San Martín, which is part of a region known as North Mixed Region. In contrast to the previous region, in this area productive activities were initially focused on raising livestock and exploitation of the forest, with commercial agriculture only arriving subsequently. Although their experiences vary on a case by case basis, towards the end of the

³² Made up of the Qom, Moqoit, Pilagá and Abipones peoples.

³³ Parajes are spatial units defined by population dispersion.

³⁴ Throughout this work I shall use the denominations Moqoit and Mocovi and Qom and Tobas, interchangeably. Although the term Toba has been imposed upon Qom communities and has negative connotations, they have now re-appropriated the name and use it themselves interchangeably.

Toba is a word of Guaraní origin, and means ‘large forehead’, alluding to the ancient custom of shaving the eyebrows. Qom, in contrast, refers to those who speak the same language (qom laqtaq) and share certain practices (for a more detailed analysis see Tola, 2010).

90s, both areas saw an increase in soybean production and the agri-business model which caused major changes in the geography and dynamics of each place.

It should be stressed that the comparison between these cases is not intended to see which case fits the theory best, but “(...) to build a montage that lends greater insight into the whole” (Burawoy, 2001b:156).

The decision to focus my research on communities inhabited by different ethnic groups sought, firstly, to highlight the different ways in which subaltern groups perceive and participate in processes of accumulation by dispossession. Secondly, as these are communities located in regions where the use of the land has historically been diverse, the selection of case studies sought to highlight the specific way in which ‘extra-local’ forces interact with local processes. The ability to observe these specific interactions was essentially important for a subsequent understanding of the actual way in which the process of soybeanization took place in each case. Thus, the work could reflect in more detail on the contingent and indeterminate nature of the process of accumulation by dispossession.

It should be noted that in contrast to the traditional model of the ECM, the cases selected here do not constitute ‘anomalous’ cases within the theoretical framework developed by Harvey (2003), i.e. neither the case study of the Moqoit community nor that of the Qom community represent a ‘challenge’ to Harvey’s thesis (2003), which states that processes of accumulation by dispossession took on a prominent role under neoliberalism. Instead, many of the changes that have occurred in these communities and the characteristics of the process of soybeanization are examples that reinforce the theory rather than ‘anomalies’ that must be explained. However, the selection of both case studies is appropriate because, as the previous chapter states, this work seeks to contribute to the theory to which it subscribes, not by rectifying ‘errors’, but by analysing certain relevant ‘silences’ (Burawoy, 1991).

3.4.2 From observer to a participant in Qom and Moqoit communities

After selecting the case studies, I had to immerse myself in the space and time of the actors (Burawoy,2009). To do so I carried out fieldwork for a total period of seven months, split over two trips.

My first stay in Chaco took place between December 2010 and February 2011. During time, with the support of members of the Office of the Undersecretary for Family Agriculture, I was able to travel through a large part of the interior of the province. Although I travelled constantly around the interior, I was based in Resistencia, the provincial capital, which is 208km from Pampa del Indio and 268km from Charata.

These first visits were useful both in constructing a network of contacts and as an introduction to the issues that concern indigenous communities in Chaco. Furthermore, the contact with officers from the Office of the Undersecretary for Agriculture, INTA (The National Institute of Agricultural Technology) and SENASA (National Agrifood Health and Quality Service) allowed me to observe the interaction between indigenous communities and state representatives, and how these problems with communities and state policies are observed, accepted or resisted by both groups.

In 2012 I visited the province of Chaco between the months of August and November. Half of this time I stayed in Pampa del Indio and the other half I was in Las Breñas, a city located 17km from Las Tolderías *paraje*. The short distance allowed me to visit the *parajes* daily. During this period I also visited the city of Resistencia to carry out isolated interviews with members of the provincial government and the IDACH (Aborigine Institute of Chaco) authorities.

I generally followed the snowball sampling method by which interviewees suggested other actors whom it might be useful to contact. One of the problems with this method is that it normally doesn't produce a representative sample and thus makes it hard to generalize from the issues that arise. However, as I noted earlier in relation to the methodological approach used, the meaning of the case studies is linked here to "what it tells us about the world in which one is embedded" (Burawoy, 1991:281) rather than being *representative* of it. Furthermore, I believed that snowball sampling was the best technique with which to build bonds of trust. Although the formation of these ties is always necessary, it is more significant in situations where certain additional barriers exist; for example, when the researcher going to work in rural indigenous communities, is a '*criolla*'³⁵ or '*doqshi*'³⁶ from an urban area, this being true in my case.

³⁵ *Criollo (creole)* in Argentina is usually used to refer to someone who does not have immediate aboriginal or European ancestors (Miller, 1979:19).

³⁶ '*Doqshi*' means 'white' in the Qom language.

3.4.2.1 Interviews

In addition to participant observation, another of the ‘empirical research techniques’ that I used was the interview (Burawoy, 2009). During my first visit to Chaco, I carried out 35 unstructured interviews with key informants (indigenous settlers; indigenous representatives; local researchers; journalist and members of NGOs). Generally in our first conversations with indigenous settlers and/or indigenous representatives I asked the interviewees to tell me their story, asking what significant changes they had noted in rural areas of the province and the *paraje* and what they felt were the main problems they faced. The intention of the interviews was not to reveal ‘the truth’, but their memories, perceptions of their history and actual experiences (Hodgson, 2011).

On my second visit to Chaco, I held 58 interviews with a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire. In this case I was returning to contact indigenous actors whom I had interviewed during my first visit, and I also interviewed provincial representatives whom I had been unable to contact previously. During these interviews the questions were focused on more specific issues which I felt were not entirely clear. Some of the questions were also aimed at recording the changes that had occurred since my first trip.

The duration of the interviews, which were usually recorded, varied in length between an hour and two hours. I asked for the prior oral³⁷ consent of the interviewees both for my interviews and my recordings.

In many cases the interviews were carried out in the homes of the actors, so, although they were with specific individuals, other members of the family and the technician³⁸ who arranged for the contact to be made were also present. This situation created certain tensions, especially when the technician intervened in the dialogue or interview. I shall return to this point during my analysis of the power relationships that shaped the fieldwork space (see Section 3.5). The interviews carried out in Resistencia (the provincial capital), with civil servants³⁹ and academics took place individually in official offices.

³⁷ It should be borne in mind that within these communities there was a high proportion of people who didn’t know how to read in Spanish, although they do speak it. This situation has led in the past to these groups being tricked into involuntarily giving up ownership of their land. In this context, the arrival of a foreigner asking them to sign a document impedes the building of bonds of trust that are necessary in order to carry out the interview.

³⁸ These technicians worked in diverse institutes and State Programs, INTA (The National Institute of Agricultural Technology), INDES (Institute of Social Development and Human Progress) and the Undersecretary for Family Agriculture or they were members of INCUPO (Institute of Popular Culture), an NGO located in the Pampa del Indio area.

³⁹ Members of the Legislative and Executive bodies and also representatives of IDACH (Aborigine Institute of Chaco).

In both *parajes* interviews with women were proportionally scarce. In some cases the women themselves refused to be formally interviewed⁴⁰. In both communities women were always more willing to maintain informal dialogues with me, starting from discussions on motherhood. Revealing that I was a mother provided an initial subject for conversation and spanned the difference that the interview situation appeared to generate.

In addition to the interviews, during my stay in Chaco I was able to gather various testimonies from everyday conversations and meetings to which I was invited to participate. To keep a record of these experiences, in the second stage I kept a field diary and I have photographic records of both periods, some of which are in the appendices.

Finally, it should be noted that apart from representatives and leaders of organizations, whose positions are public knowledge, the names used here are pseudonyms. In addition I have withheld the identity of all the people interviewed, including leaders and representatives, on any occasion where the analysis touches on particularly sensitive issues.

3.4.2.2 Documentary Research

As we saw in the description of the ECM, ‘immersion in the actors’ world’ can also take place through ‘virtual techniques’ such as the analysis of historical archives, for example (Burawoy, 1991). This is why as part of my research work I spent some time in the Monseñor José Alumni Historical Provincial Archive in Resistencia. This archive was founded in 1954 and the objective was to gather all the documentation generated in the provincial state. During my time at the archive I consulted provincial documents, files and newspapers. I was specifically interested in seeking out information related to the official policy encouraging agricultural colonies and the history of the *parajes* studied here. Furthermore I visited the General Archive of the Nation to study the minutes of parliamentary sessions in which ‘the indigenous question’ was debated (some fragments of which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5).

⁴⁰ This coincides with the analysis carried out by Altman and López in which it is stated that “the norms of courtesy and precedence in Chaqueñan indigenous groups make it very difficult for women to express themselves freely when adult men are present.” (2011:142)

Although I had access to different documents and files related to the official policies promoting agricultural colonies (see photos in the appendix) and policies on indigenous populations, it can be said that in general the information about indigenous communities was less systematized and was relatively scarce in comparison with the information available about other groups. The absence of reliable census data is an example of this. In part, as has been mentioned in numerous works (Briones, 2004; Bidaseca, 2010; Carrasco, 2002) this lack of reliable information can be explained by the policy of the national state of making the indigenous population invisible and the construction of a ‘Eurocentric’ national identity that has only started to be questioned relatively recently. However, I believe that the invisibility can be interpreted not only as the result of policies of colonization and domination but also as a result of the ‘tactics’ chosen by indigenous populations in determined historical periods to face domination scenarios (Citro, 2006). This latter argument is consistent with some of the testimony gathered during the interviews. As a Mocoví leader said:

“Actually our grandparents said that they remained quiet for a period because it wasn’t the time. But when they decided to reappear in strength, the military dictatorship came and it repressed every sector. When the dictatorship fell and democracy returned, I think in 1982 or 1984, we strode out to make our voices heard; it was a shout that we had really been saving up. But really the rising was already there...” (interview held on October 11th 2012).

I will return to this point in Chapter 7.

In addition to the information provided by the actors themselves and the archival research, I made use of information published in print media (national and provincial), by alternative journalistic agencies on the internet, by broadcast media (local and national) and also by publications of social and party organizations.

It worth mentioning that within this secondary data I have found a clear imbalance between the information that can be obtained about the Qom and about the Moqoit peoples. This can possibly be explained by the imbalance of power between diverse ethnic groups in the interior of the province. The Qom ethnic group is the largest in Chaco, with an estimated population of 50,000, while the Moqoit population is estimated at 6,000. This difference of population density generates, within indigenous institutions and the outside world, different powers of pressure, influence and visibility, and was mentioned repeatedly in my conversations with inhabitants of Las Tolderías, as well as Moqoit representatives in Resistencia (see Chapter 7).

3.4.3 Extending out from micro processes to macro forces

After ‘extended observations in the time and space of the actors,’ the next stage consisted of relating the information gathered to ‘macro processes’. More specifically, this meant considering the process of soybeanization and the *positionings* of the indigenous communities in the light of the process of nation building and the different historical stages of capitalist development (Li, 2000; Hodgson, 2011).

To develop the analyses in these ways, I have based my work on prior anthropological and historical studies of the region such as the studies by Gaston Gordillo, Silvia Hirsch, Pablo Wright, Martinez Sarasola, Morita Carrasco, Elmer Miller, Cerini Cernadas, Jorge Cordeu, Alejandra Siffredi, Nicolás Iñigo Carrera, Alejandro Martín López and Agustina Altman, amongst others. These works were of vital importance in reconstructing the historical process of these communities and observing how national and provincial policies were assimilated, adapted and/or resisted at a local level.

Simultaneously, to explain the changes in the national agri-food system and its different interactions during different stages of global capitalist development, I returned to the concept of the food regime developed by Friedmann and McMichael (1989). This concept allowed me to explain the characteristics of “the rule governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale” (Friedmann, 1993)⁴¹ during different historical periods and their implications for economic and social policies at national and provincial level.

Both extensions to the analysis seek to show how national and regional levels conformed to the patterns of inequality and dependence on which the current processes of accumulation by dispossession are based. So this work tried to show how the way in which these communities were incorporated into the nation state and the subsequent type of access to natural resources, changed according to the requirements of capitalist development and how this in turn shaped the way in which the groups experienced and positioned themselves with regard to contemporary dispossession.

⁴¹ It is important to note that in its initial formulations the concept was clearly institutional in nature. I.e. each Food Regime was inextricably linked to the rise, maintenance and fall of the hegemonic state at a global level. On this account, each hegemonic fall necessarily led to the end of the corresponding food regime and the establishment of a new one. However in its later formulations, even when the concept continued to reflect the stages of stability and instability, the changes in global leaderships did not necessarily mean the replacement of the food regime. For a more detailed vision of the evolution of the concept and the debates surrounding it see Philip McMichael 2009; Friedmann, 2009.

These extensions thus show how the different stages of capitalist development and construction of the nation state were associated with the establishment of certain cultural values which have had major repercussions for the social configuration and identity of these groups and also the way in which the processes of accumulation by dispossession are perceived (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003).

3.4.4 Shortcomings

Like all methodological approaches, the ECM has certain limitations or ‘effects of power’, associated with each stage of research mentioned above (Burawoy, 2009). For example, the extension of the observer into the world of participants is associated with a situation of domination, i.e. there is a power relationship between the researcher and participants in which the exchange naturally becomes unequal. However, as I have anticipated in subsection 3.4.2.1 and as I will further discuss below (see points 3.5 and 3.6), fieldwork is in many cases a space for negotiation, where the researcher can also be the object of ‘domination’ exercised by the participants.

The second effect of power is ‘silencing’, an effect researchers inevitably cause due to the very impossibility of reproducing the multiple voices that define local processes. When we extend our observations across time and space “the ethnographer’s problem becomes one of understanding the succession of situations as a social process” and “such a reduction of situational observations to social process involves underscoring the contribution of some agents at the expense of others” (Burawoy, 2000:27). According to Burawoy, given that this silencing cannot be avoided, the only option is to try to sufficiently sharpen our observations in such a way that we can perceive and incorporate the voices that are repressed or that defy our structures of understanding (2009:58). In this regard, even when this work does not exhaust the different experiences or positions of the subalterns with regard to processes of accumulation by dispossession, the limitation of this ‘effect of power’ is the continuous questioning of the homogeneity of the subalterns, i.e. this research seeks to serve as a sample of the multiplicity of voices that exist within these communities. However, in order to limit the silencing it is necessary to point out the possible elements or characteristics of this work that actively contribute to the dominance of certain voices over others.

Firstly, with regard to the interviews and the testimony, it should be borne in mind that they were all carried out and gathered in Spanish. As this is my mother tongue, I did not need to use interpreters or translators. However, even though both the Tobas and Mocovies speak perfect Spanish, it is still the language that was imposed upon them and thus the language in which the information was collected also brings with it implications of a power relationship and silencing. So there is the possibility that the accounts, opinions and answers that arose from our conversations would have been different had the dialogue taken place in their native tongue.

Another silence related to this work is related to the way in which the results are presented. For practical reasons I decided to translate into English only those parts of the interviews, testimony and field notes that were incorporated into the final text. This already represents an ‘editing of the voices’ that were revealed during my time in Chaco, but the difference between oral and written language should also be taken into account. Given the conditions in which they occurred, the interviews were carried out in a oral Spanish accentuated by regional and especially rural vernacular. In spite of this I have chosen in every case to translate the interviews into a ‘neutral’ English to avoid establishing a system of linguistic exchange that could be the subject of an argument beyond the space of this text. This change in style is a form of silencing that I may not be able to negate, but I do try to minimize by making it explicit (Srivastava, 2006).

The next ‘effect of power’ to consider, objectification, is related to the consequences of transforming micro-processes into macro-forces. The risk of understanding reality as “a structured totality in which the part is shaped by its relation to the whole” and of arguing that the whole is represented by ‘external forces’ is that we end up naturalizing these forces and regarding them as inevitable. “Objectification can be a powerful source of mystification, since we often believe we are in the grip of forces beyond our control which turn out to be quite fluid and susceptible to influence” (Burawoy; 2000: 27).

Although this objectification cannot be completely avoided, by focusing the attention on the actions of the subalterns and how they also shape the processes of accumulation by dispossession, the work seeks to reduce that effect. In other words, by exposing the historical and political nature of these processes, it is possible to denature them and show that they are the result of the agency of multiple individuals with different powers of intervention (Gille and Ó Riain; 2002).

Finally, the fourth effect of power is normalization. As noted above, instead of trying to infer a theory from reality, this methodology seeks to reconstruct a theory from a case that, within these parameters, is considered anomalous. In doing so, we reduce a complex reality to something manageable that contradicts our theory and then we modify that theory so that it will include the anomalous case (Burawoy, 2000). As with the other effects of power, normalization cannot be avoided but it can be tempered by working more closely with those whom the theory seeks to serve, “exposing our theories to the continuous criticism of those we say we represent” (Burawoy, 2000).

Having explained how I have tried to put the ECM into practice to analyse the change of rural dynamics in indigenous communities in Chaco, I will now move on to reflect briefly on the roles and power of the researcher and of the informants during the fieldwork.

3.5 Who are we in the process? Spaces of power and negotiation during fieldwork.

Months before my trip to Chaco I started to plan my fieldwork. At that time I had to face a series of practical questions, especially regarding the interviews: how I would present myself, what personal information I would share and what I wouldn't, how I would ask the questions, what order would I ask them in, etc. I anticipated different scenarios, all of them dominated by the same preoccupation - how would I establish the parameters of our interaction? I did not take into account that they would very often be established for me.

Traditionally it has been held that there is a clear imbalance of power between the researcher and the sources, principally because it is the researcher who “initiates and defines the interview situation, determines the interview topic, poses questions and decides which answers to follow up, and also terminates the conversation” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 33). Although in my case this ‘situation of domination’ was clear – for example, as I mentioned above, the use of Spanish as the means of communication – on other occasions and scenarios the fieldwork was more of a negotiation and collective construction (Burawoy, 2000; 2009).

There are two experiences that I would like to return to in order to illuminate this point. One relates to the way in which my identity was negotiated during my stay in Chaco and the second is related to certain dynamics that were generated during the interviews.

3.5.1 *A contested identity*

The influence of the identity of the researcher on the data that is gathered during research, as well as the image that the actors project onto it, is the subject of analysis in a wide variety of studies. Influenced by different critical perspectives several authors have considered, using their own experiences, not only how the identity or representation of the researcher influences fieldwork but also how on many occasions it is the actors (and not the researcher) who create and control that image (see Kondo, 1986; Madge, 1993; Rose, 1997; Henry, 2003; Giampapa, 2011 amongst others).

During my first few weeks in Chaco I found that all my conversations with different key informants followed a similar pattern. Almost all of them began with the observation:

“Here comes Mercedes ‘the Norwegian’” followed by the dialogue. “Interviewee: where are you from?” Me: “I’m from here, Argentina,” Interviewee: “But where do you live?” Me: “I live in Norway, but I’m *porteña*.⁴²” Interviewee: “So you’re Norwegian...” (field notes February 2011).

These dialogues had significance far beyond superficial confusion. Even after explaining that I had moved to Norway in 2010 to study for my doctoral thesis and that up until then I had lived in Argentina, on several occasions the technicians and certain leaders preferred to foster the impression that I was a foreigner. For example, before putting me in contact with some member of the community, they would urge me to “Tell them where you’re from... tell them that you’re Norwegian.” This sort of comment on my identity did not just occur during my first visit to Chaco but was reiterated during my second trip.

The recurrence of these situations led me to question both why it was so important to me to make my nationality clear, but also why it was so important for them to note where I had come from.

From my perspective, my Argentinian identity was a significant source of access to the participants’ lives, as it allowed me to show that we had a common history beyond the undeniable differences. There were many tales and experiences that I understood because in some way they were also part of my life. From my point of view my position in Chaco was made up of “spaces of betweenness”, or “a position that is neither inside or outside”, and that was an advantage (Mascia-Lees et. al.,1989 cited in Katz: 1994:72; see also Giampapa, 2011)

⁴² A term used to describe people from Buenos Aires, which is the largest port in the country.

In contrast, for many of the actors (especially some of the technicians from the programs and state offices and/or indigenous leaders) the importance of introducing me as a foreigner was related to the construction or maintenance of power relationships within the community. As we shall see in the next section (3.6), those who introduced me as a foreigner were showing the other members of the community that they had access to international contacts which are often associated with the possibility of accessing financial and material resources.

In addition to modifying the power relationships between members of the community, this construction of my identity as a foreigner certainly changed my interaction with the interviewees and thus the information that emerged from those meetings. Their insistence on how I needed to introduce myself made clear that they thought they knew the kind of testimony I wanted to hear and what I had to do to get it (Jakobsen, 2012).

By the end of my last stay the comments about where I had come from (and the relative tension that they generated, within me at least) began to fade away and they started to joke: “They’re not going to recognize you in Norway, you’re just another ‘*paisana*’⁴³”. This gradual change in the form of ‘naming’ me that occurred towards the end of my stay in Chaco (from ‘*la noruega*’ to ‘*la paisana*’) also reminds us that positions and identifications assumed and imposed during the research process, as their effects, are always ‘contingent, conditional and changing.’ (Henry, 2003; Giampapa, 2011)

3.5.2 *The voices of the interviews*

The second example with which I would like to present an example of the ‘negotiated’ nature of fieldwork is related to the interview dynamics. As I noted before, on many occasions the interviews were carried out on the verandas of houses so, although they were individual, they often took place in the presence of other family members and/or the technicians who brought me there. Under these circumstances the interviews often took the form of dialogues, and interventions from the other people present were hard to avoid. The interesting aspect is that generally these interventions did not derive from a greater number of answers to my questions but reinterpretations of them and/or the answers of the person being interviewed. So in many recordings one can hear phrases such as “Sorry for interrupting, but what she means to say is...”, “What she’s asking is...”, or “Mercedes, what he’s saying is...”

⁴³ A generic term to describe indigenous populations (Wright, 2001; Lazzari, 2003; Citro, 2006, among others) .

The need to ‘translate’ what the interviewees were saying, or what I meant to ask were related, in my understanding, to my status as a city woman and also the maintenance of a patronizing position on the part of agents of the state and the indigenous leaders or representatives towards the other members of the communities. These situations occurred mainly in Pampa del Indio, where all the representatives of the different state programs and institutes related to peasant and indigenous communities were men⁴⁴.

Just like the previous example, in which my identity was being debated in front of the interviewees, the reinterpretation that certain actors introduced without my consent reveals that the fieldwork can in many ways be “a prolonged and surreptitious power struggle between the intrusive outsider and the resisting insider” (Burawoy, 2009:56; see also Kondo, 1986). And also that there also exist multiple ‘insiders’ and power relationships that determine the form and content of the fieldwork space.

3.6 “Can we be friends on Facebook?” The role of the internet in the research process.

In contrast to what might be expected, *negotiation* with the informants was not just restricted to the practice of fieldwork, but was also related to its spatial and temporal frontiers.

During my first visit to Chaco, some informants asked me to continue our contact via Facebook. Although this means of communication was very useful in maintaining and extending my links during the period between both visits, the decision to use it was not an easy one.

The first requests that I received from people involved in my research led me to think about “(...) the tensions between the accountability to the world we study and the obligation to the academic community” (Burawoy, 2009:267). To a great extent I believe that the doubts I had about the use of social networks are simply updated versions of issues that have been widely studied. Principally I refer to how the relationships that are made in the field affect our research. In this case, the new factor for me was that the relationships which we had started in the field spread into another environment which seemed governed by different rules than those of the fieldwork space. I was not worried by the possibility that I might be contacted at any time, but by the way in which

⁴⁴ On my second trip to Chaco I met Isabel, a representative of an NGO who worked with the Qom Community in Pampa del Indio.

the information found there and the future exchanges we would make through this medium might affect our relationship and thus the research.

Some authors, such as Beaulieu and Estalella (2012) and Sarah M. Hall (2009) analyse the advantages and impacts of using social networks for social research as well as the challenges that these new technologies present to one's ethical code. The advantages found in these studies include the greater flexibility they provide the researcher in getting in contact with people, as distances are reduced (Markham, 2004); and also the greater ability to monitor the researcher, in terms of accountability, that these technologies can provide the actors (Beaulieu and Estalella, 2012).

In my experience, although the first aspect was certainly relevant, the second advantage does not seem to have occurred. To me, as the authors mentioned above noted, the ability to make contact across great distances allowed me to stay in constant contact with sources even though I was in Norway, which was very important for the second stage of the fieldwork. However, the reason that sources used social networks was not to ensure accountability but rather to achieve a measure of reciprocal action in the future. For example, during a conversation I held with a Qom leader, he clearly explained:

“Having you as a contact might help us because you're an international contact. That's how indigenous people in Formosa, who had been unsuccessful with the government, presented a claim in an International Court to recover their land. They could do so because they had international contacts. Other countries can intervene through laws and treaties that Argentina has already signed. So we want to contact a lot of people so they can support us later.” (September 8th, 2012).

In addition to the benefits, however, the use of these networks opens up ethical dilemmas, or otherwise adds new dimensions to old dilemmas: how to preserve the anonymity of actors and sources and how to ensure that certain data remains confidential are some of the main challenges. There is a general consensus that the use of social networks facilitates the identification of sources by third parties and that they allow access to personal information that would otherwise not be available (to the researcher or the source). Even so, authors such as Sarah Hall (2009) believe that it is possible to adjust the use of these networks to the ethical codes of academic research by properly using the privacy functions offered by these networks.

Following the course suggested by Hall, I decided to accept the requests for contacts having previously modified the privacy functions of my profile. I thus personalized my privacy configuration, creating groups of contacts with different levels of access to my information.

However, as “ethical issues are present not only at particular moments when we approach informants” (Beaulieu and Estalella, 2012:26), controls on the use of Facebook (or any other social network) should be considered and established not only when making new contacts but also in our subsequent interactions through this medium. I thus decided to interact with my sources in this place only in cases where they had initiated the conversation (be it via messages or chats) and configured my profile in such a way that I would not be automatically notified with all their updates. This meant that I could be sure that I only had access to information that they specifically wanted to share with me.

However, this is not to deny that the control we can establish over these spaces is probably slight. Beaulieu and Estalella state that “One of the fundamental implications of traceability is that decisions about ethical practices such as anonymization may not be in the hands of ethnographers, with the result that they may no longer be in a key position to offer any subject protection, as the term is conventionally understood. This is, especially, evident when mediated settings are highly embedded in infrastructures (such as Facebook or Flickr) and much beyond the control of the fieldworker” (2012:34).

But even if we refuse to incorporate our sources or are not members of any social networks, the internet is a constant challenge for fieldwork and the research process. For example, during the final days of my stay in Las Tolderías, a technician from the office of the Undersecretary for Family Agriculture ‘confessed’ to me that after our first meeting she had ‘Googled’ me trying to confirm the information about myself that I had given her. To my surprise, after asking her what she had found she replied, a little annoyed: “I saw that you were with the governor but you never said anything.” I had never met the governor or interviewed him. However, a provincial newspaper had published a small photo of a woman interviewing the governor to illustrate a story about a talk to which I had been invited at the CECUAL cultural centre in Resistencia.

Without doubt the information (reliable or not) available on the Internet, as well as the continuous modifications to the privacy policies of social networks, means that the control we have over these spaces and their impact on our interactions during fieldwork are, at least, limited.

However, these technologies are part of our daily life and are hard to avoid, so the best course of action is to maximize their benefits, establish set limits and controls and to continue to critically examine the consequences of their use for our work.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

In these pages I have tried to explain the reasons why I believe that a theoretically driven ethnography is an essential tool in understanding the connections between the past and present, between the macro and the micro. Furthermore I presented the general framework of the ECM as a methodological approach that makes it possible to connect local processes with global ones, without losing specificity or being reduced to it. In addition I have detailed how I have used that methodological focus to gather and analyse the data that provides the basis for this study.

Finally, these notes have sought to reflect mainly on the different ways in which the actors and the researcher are involved in the formation and definition of the fieldwork space, influencing the dynamics produced there and thus the knowledge generated. Throughout my different experiences, I have tried to show that in my case the fieldwork was an area of continuous negotiation. It was a collectively constructed space in which different positions, voluntarily or involuntarily, were created by both myself and my informants as the work went on, influenced by the vectors of power that prevailed in the different contexts (Narayan, 1993).

Although these experiences do not deny the power that every researcher has over the research process, they make it possible to see that fieldwork is in several instances a process of negotiation in which our positions, identities and the power relationships that exist there are - far from being fixed - relative, contingent and fluctuating.

Having established the main theoretical and methodological criteria that guide this study, I will move on to start my analysis of the process of accumulation by dispossession and the politics of indigenous communities in Chaco, Argentina.

CHAPTER 4

Phases of Capitalist Development and the Indigenous Question in Argentina

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I argued that the analysis of processes of accumulation by dispossession requires a ‘political reading’, centred on an orientation towards and an understanding of the complex dialectical relationships that exist between dominant and subaltern groups (Cleaver, 1986, 2000; Lebowitz, 1982, 2003). This reading, as I noted in previous chapters, requires a return to investigating – rather than assuming – the positions taken by subaltern groups and how they have shaped macro-processes.

To understand these multiple positionings, I proposed tying the analysis to the study of ‘local rationalities’. Following the theoretical approach suggested by Cox and Nilsen (2013), I stated that the actions of the subalterns are shaped by their memories of previous experiences, their concrete experiences of power and their position of subalternity. These dimensions are of course intrinsically linked to historical development of the actual case on which this analysis is based. This is why this chapter will briefly summarize how the positions of subalternity of indigenous groups in Argentina were constructed, through a description of the policies that defined different periods of capitalist development and shaped their experiences and memories.

In this brief historical overview I will be focusing mainly on the history of policies on agriculture and those aimed at indigenous peoples. I will then try to assess how these policies varied over different periods to serve the different political and economic objectives of the state and the dominant elites and how policies were affected by the food regime of each period. Although this chapter focuses on the national level and places an emphasis on state policies, this does not mean that the processes analyzed here are reduced to mere impositions of dominant groups upon subaltern groups. On the contrary, as we shall see in this and the following chapters, indigenous peoples have always been active subjects both in the reproduction of and opposition to established power relationships in each period (Hart, 2006).

The chapter is organized into three main sections that correspond to different stages of capitalist development (Polanyi [1944] 2007). In the first section (4.2) I briefly describe the formation of the national state and the insertion of Argentina into the world market during the liberal capitalist era. I argue that during this first stage the politics of the dominant sectors were centred on the extensive use of territory and the production of primary goods for export. This economic and political project was characterized by the eviction, invisibilization and forced labour of indigenous peoples. In the second section (4.3) I analyze the period corresponding to the stage of organized capitalism and the import substitution development model in Argentina. During this period industry replaced the agro-export sector as the key pillar of economic politics. In an attempt to expand the basis of its legitimacy and reduce the power of the traditional oligarchy, the Peronist government implemented policies aimed at encouraging industry, family agriculture and the assimilation of indigenous people as workers or peasants. The third and final section (4.4) provides an account of the changes that occurred during neoliberalism. There I analyze how the increasing specialization in the production of commodities for export, which has caused new displacement among the rural population, has occurred in tandem with an increasing recognition of ethnic rights, creating new spaces of opportunity and also new limits and exclusions.

4.2. Agro-Export Argentina (1853-1930)

4.2.1 The era of liberal capitalism and the colonial diasporic food regime.

When, at the end of the 19th century, Argentina joined the international market, Great Britain had already established global hegemony. Its position of power was bolstered by economic, financial and industrial supremacy as well as imperial domination of other territories⁴⁵. The generalized promotion and acceptance of free market ideologies was equally important for the consolidation of its hegemonic position. As Arrighi says:

“Free- trade imperialism (...) established the principle that the laws operating within and between states were subject to the higher authority of a new, metaphysical entity – a world market ruled by its own ‘laws’- allegedly endowed with supernatural powers greater than anything pope and emperor had ever

⁴⁵ The imperial domination that Great Britain exercised over other territories allowed it to extract income through tributes (be they workforce, natural resources or forms of payment) which contributed to its consolidation and expansion as the principal financial and industrial center. In other words “The territorialist and capitalist logics of power thus cross-fertilized and sustained one another” (Arrighi, 1994:54).

mastered in the medieval system of rule. By presenting its world supremacy as the embodiment of this metaphysical entity, the United Kingdom succeeded in expanding its power in the inter-state system well beyond what was warranted by the extent and effectiveness of its coercive apparatus” (1994:55).

The growing industrialization and urbanization in Europe made the opening of new areas for agricultural production essential. Access to food and cheap consumer goods was the main objective of European governments, not just to ensure low-cost reproduction of labor but also as a mechanism of control in the midst of acute social conflicts (Friedmann, 2005).

Meanwhile, some countries in the global periphery had recently achieved independence and were seeking to consolidate their place as new nation states, building their ties with the world market.

Thus an international division of work was established, creating a ‘periphery’ which specialized in the production of wage-goods and raw materials and a ‘core’ which specialized in the production and exportation of manufactured goods and capital (Friedmann, 2005; McMichael, 2011). The multilateral commercial relationships that arose at the time represented the end of pre-capitalist organization and its gradual replacement by a system of national economies governed by the collective interest of the capitalist class⁴⁶ (Arrighi, 1994).

This mode of interaction gave rise to the ‘colonial diasporic Food Regime’, characterized by a complementary relationship between exports by countries from the periphery and the economies of the core countries (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). Within several countries, for example Australia, New Zealand and American countries such as Argentina, this was the time of the conquest of territories hitherto controlled by indigenous peoples and the rise of a new kind of commercial agriculture based on family labor. In many cases the new colonists were European workers who had migrated to escape the persecution they had suffered in their own countries, due to their participation in anarchist or socialist movements and/or as workers migrating to improve their economic situation (Friedmann, 2005).

The 1929 crisis would mark the end of the period dominated by what was known as ‘liberal capitalism’. The fall in the price of raw materials would see the interests of the peripheral and central countries come into clear conflict (Hobsbawn, 1994:213). In the context of the crisis countries that produced primary goods reduced their purchases of manufacturing equipment and machinery, while industrial countries started to protect their markets with trade barriers

⁴⁶ The states that remained under a colonial regime of direct administration reproduced the new dynamics of the emerging nation state (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989: 98).

(Friedmann, 1982).

In peripheral countries the economic crisis was accompanied by increasing popular mobilization, which led to the formation of movements against colonialism and dependence. As Hobsbawm says, “The 1930s were, therefore, crucial to the Third World, not so much because the Slump led to political radicalization but rather because it established contact between the politicized minorities and the common people of their countries” (1994:214).

These struggles between the dominant and subaltern sectors caused a systemic convulsion that gave rise to a new order. The end of the ‘liberal-capitalist’ era also saw the decline of the ‘colonial diasporic food regime’, leading to the era of ‘organized capitalism’ and the ‘mercantile industrial food regime’ (Friedmann, 1982, 2005; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989).

4.2.2 The Process of Argentine state-building.

During most of the colonial period the territory on which Argentina was founded was considered a marginal area, with Lima (Peru) and Potosí (Bolivia) being the main political and economic centres of the region. This peripheral status partially explains why a significant part of the territory remained under indigenous control until the 18th Century (Maybury-Lewis, 1991; Hirsch and Gordillo, 2003; Wright, 2008; see map 2).

Only after the formation of the “United Provinces of the Río de la Plata”⁴⁷ and the wars of independence was the regional balance of power restructured, making Buenos Aires into one of the major centres of power. This change was due principally to the change in trade routes, which made the port of Buenos Aires increasingly important (Zusman, 2000; Hirsch and Gordillo, 2003).

During that time a creole elite started to establish itself. To differentiate itself from the Europeans and consolidate its power situation it had initially included the indigenous populations in the national project⁴⁸. However, that ‘indigenist’ stage would rapidly disappear amidst the power struggles of different regional elites (Hirsch and Gordillo, 2003; López, 2009). Thus, the

⁴⁷ The restructuring of power between cities was a trend that began in the final years of Spanish rule, during the formation of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata in 1776, but was consolidated with the formation of the political-economic organization known as the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, which included the territories of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia (Fuscaldo 1982).

⁴⁸ In the assembly of 1813, some representatives proposed crowning an Inca monarch.

political-economic organization called the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata slowly disintegrated, giving rise to independent states⁴⁹.

In Argentina, the first half of the 19th century saw continuing civil war between different provincial *caudillos*⁵⁰. By 1860 Buenos Aires had been established as the capital of the Republic (Romero, 2002).

Insofar as “[n]ation-state formation is a profoundly world-historical process” (McMichael, 1997:631), it is not surprising that the political project imposed by the victorious fractions placed its emphasis on a liberal state together with a republican, federal form of government. In the economic sphere the governmental elite supported specialization in the production of primary goods for export. This model mainly focused on the production of meat and cereal crops, products for which Argentina had several ‘comparative advantages’ (Romero, 2002).

Due to the chosen pattern for growth, the national economy was based on the extensive cultivation of the land from the outset (Rapoport, 2000). This development model also required the continuous expansion of the agricultural frontier, as well as the unification of the domestic market. In this context, the resolution of the ‘indigenous question’ became a pressing one. The National Constitution approved in 1853⁵¹ established that it was Congress’ duty to “[p]rovide security at the borders; preserve peaceful relations with the Indians and promote their conversion to Catholicism” (Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2013). However, in practice policies towards indigenous peoples were reduced to the use of force and the repression of these populations.

At the end of the 1870s the national government intensified its offensive strategy with regard to the land. The conquest of the Pampas and Patagonia region, which was to form the heart of agricultural production, was achieved through a military campaign known as the “Desert Campaign” (1878-1885). The other great military campaign was the Conquest of Chaco, also known as the “Conquest of the Green Desert”, which took place between 1884-1917⁵² (Lazzari, 2007).

⁴⁹ Paraguay 1811, Bolivia 1825 and Uruguay 1828.

⁵⁰ Local leaders or warlords (Rock, 2000; Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003)

⁵¹ It is important to note that even though the National Constitution dates back to 1853, Buenos Aires only accepted it in 1860 after being beaten in the Battle of Pavón by the Argentine Confederation.

⁵² The first military campaign was led by the Minister of War and the Navy, General Benjamín Victorica (Lois, 2002).

These so-called ‘desert’ campaigns had two main objectives. Firstly, as mentioned above, they sought to extend the land base on which the development model would be founded⁵³ (Rapoport, 2000; Leon and Rossi, 2003). Secondly, at the discursive level, they served to strengthen the legitimacy of the new state. The term ‘desert’ was used to indicate “an absence of state control, capitalism and civilization” in those territories, making them into ‘legitimate’ objects of appropriation (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003:4, see also Zusman, 2000; Trinchero, 2006; Delrio et al 2010; Nagy, M. A. and A. E. Papazian, 2011).

In some cases the defeated indigenous peoples were incorporated into the army. Generally they were used against ethnicities other than their own, which would later create deep and lasting resentment between different groups⁵⁴. For some, serving in the army was a means of earning citizenship, but these recruits were considered ‘descendants of Indians’ or ‘individuals of the fatherland’ (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Lenton, 2012)⁵⁵.

It is significant to note that even though both military campaigns had similar characteristics, they also presented major differences with regard to their socio-demographic nature and the politico-economic role they played within the national project. While the main objective in the Pampas and Patagonia was to annex land that could be used for new ranches on which to raise livestock; in the north, in addition to the annexation of territory, the goal was to recruit cheap labour for

⁵³ As these military campaigns required a large quantity of resources, Law 947 was approved in 1878, authorizing the issue of an international bond. Every subscription ensured the allocation of 2,500 hectares, but as the law established a minimum of four subscriptions, each purchaser was guaranteed a minimum of 10,000hectares at the end of the campaign. Before the military campaign, 100,000,000 hectares already had owners. The unequal distribution of the land is a key factor in understanding historical inequalities (Rapoport, 2000:26).

⁵⁴ During my first conversations with people from the Paraje Las Tolderías, they said that the mistrust between the Moqoit and the Qom peoples dated back to that era (see Chapter 7).

⁵⁵ The debate about the participation of indigenous men in the army can be seen in the minutes of sessions of the National Congress. For example, in the minutes for the session of the Chamber of Deputies of September 7th 1882, Deputy Zeballos said, referring to the indigenous people in the Conesa Colony, “To me it appears that the best option would be to incorporate those forty Indians into the lines of battle (...) These Indians should be placed with the soldiers of the line, with their women, like the rest of them”. Meanwhile Deputy Gilbert said “What more does an Indian, brought by force into civilization, want than to be at the side of the brave Argentine soldiers who brought freedom to the Republic! What more could he want than to march in the shadow of the glorious flag of the motherland! It would raise them up and convert them to civilization. It is a hundred thousand times more preferable than to leave them in the planned colonies, where they will always remain savages, living as they did in their huts.” In the minutes of the session of the Chamber of Senators from the 19th of August 1884, Senator del Valle said that approximately half of the soldiers in the Argentine battalions were indigenous. Senator Rojas declared that incorporating Indians into the army was a means of civilizing them. It is interesting to note that in both debates there were also senators and deputies who opposed these practices. For example, Deputy Pizarro, referring to the indigenous people in the Conesa Colony, protested “A proper definition of Civilization would not have Congress impose service upon these poor Indians, turning them into cannon fodder, without any respect for their status as men with the same right to live as any other citizen, with rights that must be protected, such as that not to be condemned in this manner, as beasts of burden, precisely because they are the most unfortunate, those who have lost the most” (Chamber of Deputies, minutes of the session of the 7th of September 1882).

different agro-industrial enterprises (sugar, tannins, cotton). The emphasis was thus placed on social discipline rather than extermination (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Trinchero, 2007).

As the military offensive upon indigenous territories came to an end, the resources and capacities of the state started to be refocused almost exclusively towards consolidating an agro-export model (Oszlak, 1997 [1982]). Major infrastructure work was carried out (railways, warehouses, ports etc.) in order to connect the new territories to overseas markets. Foreign investment, mainly British capital⁵⁶, was extremely important in this process (Donghi, 1998; Romero, 2002).

Between 1892 and 1913 exports of maize, wheat and linseed quintupled, consolidating Argentina's position as a supplier of agricultural products to the international market. These years also saw the increase of production and export of meat, making Argentina into one of the principal meat producers in the world. The dynamism of the agricultural sector also drove the growth of the industrial sector, and major flour mills, meat-packing plants and other facilities were built during this time (Romero, 2002).

4.2.2.1 *Immigration policies*

The formation of a liberal state integrated with the world economy also meant the adoption of a series of cultural values that were summarized by the motto 'order and progress' (Oszlak, 1997 [1982]; Zusman, 2000; Donghi, 2005). While from an economic point of view progress was understood as the consolidation of the agro-export model and full integration into the international market, in the cultural sphere progress meant the adoption of western ideas and values, thus leading to the suppression of the cultures of indigenous peoples. As Trinchero (2007) suggests, the notion of the imagined empty space represented by the 'desert' introduced a need to fill it with content. So cultural homogeneity became a priority and encouragement of European immigration was seen as a prerequisite for national development⁵⁷ (Delrio, Lenton et al., 2010). The concept that 'to govern is to populate'⁵⁸ became enshrined in the National Constitution of

⁵⁶ Between 1883 and 1913 British capital in Argentina increased twenty-fold (Romero, 2002:5)

⁵⁷ One of the most important figures in the intellectual elite of this period was D. F. Sarmiento (President of Argentina between 1868 -1874). In his book *Facundo* he claimed "Before 1810, two distinct, rival, and incompatible forms of society, two differing kinds of civilization, existed in the Argentine Republic: one being Spanish, European, and cultivated, the other barbarous, American, and almost wholly of native origin. The revolution which occurred in the cities acted only as the cause, the impulse which set these two distinct forms of national existence face to face, and gave rise to a contest between them, to be ended, after lasting many years, by the absorption of one into the other." (1868:54).

⁵⁸ Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884) was an Argentine lawyer and political theorist. His work *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina* was the main influence on the Argentine Constitution of 1853.

1853, which stated that:

“(Art. 23) The Federal Government shall encourage European immigration and shall not restrict, limit, or levy any tax on entry to Argentine territory to foreigners who come in order to work the land, improve industry or to introduce and teach art and science” (Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2013).

In the same spirit the Law on Immigration and Colonization was passed in 1876, creating a Department of Immigration as part of the Ministry of Agriculture (Trincherio, 2007). The encouragement of immigration and the economic depression that affected some European countries between 1880 and 1890 resulted in a significant flow of immigrants, mainly from Italy and Spain. During this period, 795,396 people from Europe entered the country (Immigration Department, 1904). They were given access to the land but generally only as tenants (Rapoport, 2000:41).

In 1903 the General Land Law (4167) was passed, and remained in force until 1950. This established that after exploration and determining the conditions for irrigation and suitability of state land, the Executive Branch would determine the different purposes for different areas (tillage, livestock, the exploitation of forests and fallow fields), allocating the most suitable areas for the establishment of colonies and villages. The rest would be allocated for tenant farming or for sale by public auction. In this case the purchasers were obliged to fence off lots, build a house and cultivate the land in the proportions determined by the government for one year. Furthermore, with regard to indigenous peoples, Article 17 establishes that “[t]he executive branch will encourage the reduction of indigenous tribes, establishing them through missions and by supplying land and tools” (Carrasco, 2000).

So this would leave a diverse group of owners of the land, made up of the old landowners, of soldiers awarded land in return for their participation in the campaigns of conquest⁵⁹ and of foreign investors. The majority of the immigrants were tenants and the indigenous people who had survived were surrounded or moved to reserves and missions.

4.2.2.2 The millenarian movements and the Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians

The organization of the Argentine nation-state continued with the creation, in 1884, of National Territories (Chaco, Formosa, La Pampa, Misiones, Neuquén, Rio Negro, Santa Cruz and Tierra

⁵⁹ In 1885 a law was passed that stated that soldiers who had participated in the ‘conquests of the desert’ would receive between a minimum of 100 and a maximum of 8000 hectares as a reward (Rapoport, 2000).

del Fuego) (Law 1532)⁶⁰. In these jurisdictions the authorities were directly designated by the National Executive Branch in agreement with the Senate, giving the inhabitants civil but not political rights.

In addition to establishing the borders of each of the administrative districts, the law specified the official policy towards each of the indigenous groups that lived in these areas. Article 7, section 11 stated that each governor

“[s]hall try to establish in each of the districts under their jurisdiction, in the areas inhabited by the indigenous tribes and under the authorization of the Executive Branch, the number of missions that are necessary to bring them gradually into civilization” (Law 1532. National Registry 1882/84)⁶¹.

The policy of forced settlement, exploitation and implementation of regulations preventing migration in some National Territories such as Chaco drew strong resistance from indigenous populations. This gave rise to the first millenarian uprisings, such as those which occurred in the north of Santa Fe province (1904) and Formosa Province (1915).

These movements, led by shamans, involved attacks on *criollo* colonies, theft of livestock and refusals to work in the fields. The shamans, who were believed by their followers to possess supernatural powers, decided upon the time and the form that the resistance would take. In certain cases the shamans mingled Biblical elements into their narratives, showing the growing influence of the religious missions (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Miller, 1979; Gordillo, 2003, 2006; Wright, 2008).

Faced with continuing indigenous resistance the national government decided later to centralize all its policies and issues relating to these groups in a single body. Thus, in 1916, an Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians was created as part of the Ministry of the Interior. This was the first federal institution tasked with administering indigenous reservations and inducing work as a form of civilization (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003).

However, the Commission was unable to prevent the uprisings, because most of the reservations continued to exploit the indigenous people and because of the lack of resources provided by the

⁶⁰These National Territories arise from the subdivision of the National Territory of the Great Chaco, which had been created in 1872, and the subdivision of the Government of Patagonia, which had been founded at the beginning of the Desert Campaign.

⁶¹ The concept of attracting indigenous people to civilized life through the creation of work is also demonstrated in the project contained in the National Work Law of 1904, which, in the section on Indigenous Labour, states that “business people must make sure to maintain order and morality among the Indians. They must be encouraged into the entertainments of civilized life. They must be removed from idolatry. Missionaries must be allowed to train them in Christian morals” (Martínez Sarasola, 1992)

government.

In this context new uprisings occurred in the Province of Formosa (Rio Pilcomayo, 1917; Las Lomitas, 1944) and the Province of Chaco (Napalpí, 1924; Pampa del Indio, 1933; Zapallar, 1933)⁶². However, these movements were soon defeated, and in many cases harshly repressed. These defeats profoundly weakened the role of shamans within the communities and marked the beginning of a new kind of leadership (Miller, 1975).

4.2.3. The end of the agro-export model and the beginning of state intervention

The agro-export model that had sustained the Argentine economy started to weaken in the years running up to the First World War as international trade and foreign investment declined. The crisis in the cities caused by inflation and unemployment coincided with a rural crisis caused by a fall in exports and the unstable conditions for rentals and share-cropping. This situation caused great social upheaval⁶³, forcing the oligarchical government to implement political and social reforms⁶⁴. At first these reforms sought to integrate the middle classes, which had expanded in the years running up to the war (Rappoport, 2000; Romero, 2002).

However, the newfound stability did not last long as 1919 and 1922 saw major protests and strikes throughout the country. This increasing social conflict was accompanied by the continuing worsening of the economic crisis caused by the fall in exports.

The trade deficit was aggravated even further when in 1932 Great Britain, one of the main markets for Argentine exports, established a preferential trade system in favor of products from Commonwealth countries (Rapoport, 2000).

In this context, an attempt was made to balance the national budget through the implementation of orthodox policies such as cuts to salaries and restrictions on public spending. However, the worsening economy and increasing discontent of the population made further reforms to include sections of the popular classes essential. So the same liberal elites started to implement interventionist policies with the objective of safeguarding an economic and political system in

⁶² These movements are analyzed in greater depth in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2

⁶³ Notable among these were the uprising among colonists in Santa Fe in 1912, known as the Grito de Alcorta (Roar of Alcorta). The movement sought to improve land-lease conditions and increase the participation of small and mid-size producers in agricultural earnings. The Grito de Alcorta gave rise to the Federación Agraria Argentina (Romero, 2002; Leon and Rossi, 2003).

⁶⁴ These reforms included the sanctioning of the Sáenz Peña Law in 1912, which guaranteed universal suffrage (for men). For further analysis of this issue see Sabato and Palti (1990).

serious danger. In 1933 an Economic Action Plan was implemented and the first regulatory boards and advisory commissions were formed, charged with protecting the interests of the different sectors. During a ten year period, 21 autonomous and 25 directly controlled organizations were formed. The most important of these included the National Cotton Board, the National Meat Board and the National Grain Board. The purpose of these Boards was to protect producers from fluctuations in international prices, through buying their products at prices considered profitable and then selling them at market prices (Rappoport, 2000, Girbal-Blacha and Mendoça, 2007; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

In addition to the regulatory boards, two of the biggest changes of the period in the rural sector were the creation of the National Agrarian Council (Law 12.636) and the passing of the Rural Worker Statute.

Through the National Agrarian Council the government sought to reduce agrarian conflicts, reformulating the regime of land ownership. Its objectives included increasing the number of landowners, dividing land into economic and family units and improving the social conditions of people living in the countryside. As León and Rossi (2003) note, by 1945 the National Agrarian Council had acquired 14,738 hectares for colonization by purchase, 71,423 hectares by expropriation and 13,858 hectares by transfer from other bodies.

Regarding the indigenous population, the National Agrarian Council was charged with determining the land that was to be allocated to them and how it should be used. Indigenous people were to be publicly considered as possible individual producers and not only seen as rural workers from reservations and other establishments. This change in focus would later be reflected in a change of policies and was already becoming visible in political discourse. For example, Deputy Montagna, presenting a proposal for a new law for the creation of a National Commission for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples, stated:

“(...) And we should not just consider the Indian problem for humanitarian and higher reasons, but because indigenous people can be easily adapted to our civilization, they are useful workers and very productive when guided, led and instructed in the first steps to take during the adaptation, until they can fend for themselves as has happened in the colonies run by the Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians. In Napalpí, Bartolomé de las Casa, Muñiz and other reserves in Chaco and Formosa, naked, and semi-naked jungle inhabitants, without any training, or even any knowledge of Spanish, have built a progressive colony that earns, through their efforts and work, \$10,000 (...) And they have even produced some of the best quality cotton harvested in America (...)” (Chamber of Deputies, session of the 2nd of June, 1939).

This period also saw the passing of the Rural Worker Statute (1944). This statute, proposed by J.D. Perón, improved working conditions in rural areas by establishing a minimum wage, rest on Sundays, paid vacations and minimum accommodation conditions, among other things. These regulations sought to put an end to paternalistic relationships, establishing a new relationship between employers and rural workers with a framework of collective work agreements (Rapoport, 2000; Schiwittay, 2003). The Rural Worker Statute is a very important element in understanding the close alliance between the rural workers (including indigenous groups) and state power that characterised the Peronist period.

4.3 The model of industrialization through import substitution (1945-1970)

4.3.1 The era of organized capitalism and the mercantile industrial food regime

The period after the Second World War marked the beginning of a new international order led by the United States, which had replaced Great Britain as the primary political, economic and military power.

The establishment of a new order required the rebuilding of the economies of the capitalist countries. Thus the Marshall Plan was developed, an agreement which led to the transfer of billions of dollars to Europe and Japan, thus satisfying their needs for immediate consumption and the reconstruction of their economies (Friedmann, 1982; 2005).

In both peripheral and core countries the so-called ‘golden era of capitalism’ was characterized by the dominance of Keynesian policies promoting growth through increasing productivity, mass consumption, full employment and the expansion of social benefits⁶⁵ (Arrighi, 1994; Hobsbawn, 1994; Kiely, 2009). To a large extent, these policies were a reflection of the new balance of power between social classes, as well as the attempt made by dominant classes to limit the increasing influence of communism. Furthermore, the establishment of the new world order required recognition of the right to self-determination of countries that continued under foreign control as colonies and the establishment of the United Nations system (Arrighi, 1994; Kiely, 2009).

Although it supported decolonization movements, the period of North American hegemony was

⁶⁵ It is important to note that although the dominant sectors had to concede numerous demands presented by subaltern groups, many sections of these groups continued to be marginalized. This is why, as several authors have noted, during this period differentiation among these groups also increased (Kiely, 2009; Strümpell, 2014; Cox and Nilsen, 2014).

from the beginning defined by attempts to limit individual state actions through the development of international organizations. In addition to the United Nations, the period saw the formation of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Both organizations would have a significant impact on the development model followed by peripheral countries, which sought to accelerate industrialization.

They did not just determine the purposes for which some loans should be used but also required the countries receiving the loans to adopt certain policies as prerequisites for their provision. Thus for example, in addition to infrastructure, World Bank loans were aimed at making agricultural sectors more capital intensive. The innovations introduced by the 'green revolution' gave rise to agriculture dependent on external supplies such as oils, non-organic fertilizers, hybrid seeds, machinery, pesticides, etc. This new industrial agriculture started to displace small and mid-sized producers⁶⁶ who didn't have the start-up capital needed for this new kind of production. Furthermore, the developing integration between the industrial and agricultural sectors led to the emergence of large agro-industrial corporations. This model led several countries to limit their agricultural production to certain export products, increasing their dependence on the importation of cheap food to maintain the process of industrialization (McMichael, 1998, 2005; 2011; Teubal and Rodriguez, 2002).

At the same time in the United States, stocks of agricultural crops increased thanks to the maintenance of indirect subsidy policies that family agriculture movements had won during the Great Depression, and due to the reduction of American overseas trade as a result of European protectionism (Friedmann, 2005; McMichael, 2011)⁶⁷.

The complementary nature of these interests resulted in the rise of the mercantile industrial food regime, characterized by numerous bilateral agreements and food aid programs under which these countries absorbed a large part of the excess North American production. As McMichael says "Food's role was to subsidize, simultaneously, the First World social contract and Third World urban-industrial development" (2005:276). As a result of these policies, the proportion of agricultural exports from Third World countries to the global market fell from 53% to 31%

⁶⁶Even in cases when agricultural reforms were implemented these were of a very conservative bent. In general terms they were used to stabilize the peasant sectors, promoting the displacement of basic food crops in favor of commercial and industrial crops, incorporating them in credit circuits (Araghi, 1995).

⁶⁷ It is important to note that although these subsidies initially favoured mid-sized family producers, they progressively became directed towards 'agro-food corporations'. A result of this was that by the end of this period mid-sized American producers were also harmed by agricultural subsidy policies (Friedmann, 2005).

between 1950 and 1980, turning previously self-sufficient areas into grain importers (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 2005; 2011).

The size of American production subsidies resulted in a continuous trend towards lower international prices, giving the country a relative advantage against its competitors, which included Australia, Canada and Argentina. European protectionism aggravated the trend towards lower prices as the excess production created by internal subsidies increased international supply. By the early 1970s Argentina had been replaced by France as the third largest supplier of wheat in the world (Friedmann, 1982).

Between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s major changes took place that not only marked the end of the industrial mercantile food regime but also the collapse of organized capitalism. In both core and peripheral countries during these years, major social movements arose. In general terms it can be said that subaltern groups sought to expand benefits to sectors that were still marginalized and/or extend the improvements achieved during those years (Hobsbawm, 1994; Kiely, 2009; Cox and Nilsen, 2014). Meanwhile, the fall of this food regime was linked to increasing competition between the United States and Europe; the pressure exerted by second level exporters such as Australia, Canada and Argentina to end the subsidies of the United States and Europe; and the lobbying of the agro-food corporations to liberalize trade (Friedmann, 2005).

Thus, within a context of recession in central countries, of stagnation and increasing indebtedness in peripheral countries and increasing social upheaval on a global level, the transition to the neoliberal era began.

4.3.2. The Peronist Governments (1946-1955)

Although state interventionism had started in the mid-1930s, the development model known as ‘industrialization by import substitution’ would only be adopted in the mid-1940s with the accession of Juan D. Perón to the presidency.

As has been noted by Brennan and Rougier (2009), one of the main objectives of Peronism⁶⁸ was

⁶⁸Peronism as a political movement started to form between 1943 and 1945, when the country was under the de facto administration of General Ramirez and later General Farrell. Its founder Juan Domingo Perón was president of the Argentine Republic on three occasions. His first term covered the period between 1946 and 1951. The second began in 1952 but would be interrupted in 1955 by a military coup. His third term started in 1973 but ended when he died in July 1974. During his first term Perón organized a political party, the Partido Justicialista. This and the Unión Cívica Radical (founded at the end of the 19th century), would be the two dominant parties in Argentina for many decades.

to establish a national bourgeoisie that could compete for power with the agro-export oligarchy. Hence the early years of this administration saw the implementation of major economic and financial reforms to develop the industrial sector and control the income generated by exports. The most important measures included the nationalization of the banking system and the creation of the IAPI (Instituto Argentino para la Promoción del Intercambio, Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange). This institute monopolized overseas commerce during that decade, allowing the government to transfer the income from sales of agricultural exports to the recently created industrial sector through a credit policy. In addition controls on currency exchange were implemented and licenses were required to import capital goods and other industrial supplies⁶⁹ (Rapoport; 2000; Romero; 2002; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

State intervention was established in the new National Constitution passed in 1949. Article 40 specifically established that the state could, if it considered it necessary, intervene in any economic sector. Under this new framework public services were nationalized, including the railways and the gas, telephone, and electricity utilities.

In subsequent years, due to the lack of willingness of the private sector to take risks, state intervention expanded and several public and mixed capital companies were founded, among them the General Department for Military Manufacturing (DGFM) which produced war materials; the National Department of Aeronautical Research and Manufacturing (DINFIA) which would produce planes and cars; and Argentine Mixed Metallurgy (SOMISA) created in 1947 for steel production (Rapoport, 2000; Basualdo, 2006; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

Between 1946 and 1955 industry became a key pillar in the economic process, resulting in a large increase in both production and employment in this sector. For the first time in Argentine history, the proportion of GDP made up by industry exceeded the share of agricultural production (Basualdo, 2006; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

The place of the working class as a key player during this period was enshrined in historic achievements such as collective agreements by sector, the Law on Professional Associations, a minimum wage, social security provision, the creation of industrial relations tribunals, the suspension of cases if the defendant was bankrupt, and the passing of Law 13.010 which gave women the right to vote (Basualdo, 2006; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

⁶⁹ The need to substitute for imports rapidly led to industrialization focusing on the production of consumer goods and construction materials. Although it was planned to proceed to the production of intermediary goods and capital, this second stage of industrialization could not be completed (Baer, 1972).

In the early years of Perón's second administration, trade deficits and increasing inflation led to a significant change in economic policy, offering greater benefits to the agro-export sector and encouraging foreign investment. This was especially true after 1950, when strong competition from the United States and Canada in the global market lowered the prices of the main Argentine exports and the government decided to provide loans to promote the mechanization of agriculture. Rural loans thus grew until they made up 40% of the entire commercial portfolio (Girbal-Blacha, 2000). Some of the main beneficiaries were cotton cooperatives and agro-livestock enterprises in the Northeast and the Pampas region (Girbal-Blacha, 2000; Hirschegger, 2011).

By 1952 the situation had become critical; not only were there insufficient reserves and/or exportable assets but the terms of trade had deteriorated greatly. In 1955 the worsening economic situation and increasing internal conflicts with powerful sectors such as the Church and the landowning oligarchy resulted in a military coup (Rapoport, 2000; Brennan-Rougier, 2009).

4.3.2.1 The Peronist rhetoric: indigenous peoples as members of the 'Descamisados'⁷⁰

Perón's rise to power redefined the relationship between indigenous groups and the state. The National Constitution of 1949 modified Section 15 of Art. 67. In this new wording it was established that Congress 'would provide security at the borders', eliminating any mention of indigenous peoples⁷¹. It was explained that the allusion to "the peaceful treatment of Indians and their conversion to Catholicism" was an anachronism (Martínez Sarasola, 1992; Lenton, 2010). Thus official rhetoric ceased to describe indigenous peoples as "other internals", incorporating them into the Argentine people. However, this also implied cultural homogenization through their assimilation as rural or urban workers (Serbin, 1981; Bray, 1989; Mathias, 2013).

The inclusion of indigenous peoples and the dilution of all forms of cultural difference into a homogenous social body can be seen throughout the decade. For example, in one of his discourses Perón stated that "the Indian was the first proletarian of America and the first victim of foreign imperialism; from now on, Indians are simply Argentinians with the same obligations and

⁷⁰ The term 'descamisados' (shirtless ones) was initially used by anti-Peronist groups and was extremely pejorative. However it was then appropriated by the Peronists themselves and since then has been used to describe the workers who supported the movement.

⁷¹ The previous constitution established that Congress was responsible for "Providing security at the borders; preserve peaceful relations with Indians and promoting their conversion to Catholicism" – see page 71.

rights” (Perón, 1953 cited in Marcilese, 2011:5). Likewise, the first ‘Five Year Plan’, in the chapter entitled ‘Culture’, stated that “the culture acquired by the Argentine people draws, among other sources, on indigenous elements” (Martínez Sarasola, 1992: 414).

However, to the government, indigenous people continued to be defined mainly by what they lacked and by their poverty and were thus seen as a social sector needing special attention from the state. This is particularly well-reflected by the Second Five Year Plan (1952 – 1957) which states that

“The indigenous population will be protected through direct action by the State, through their progressive incorporation into the rhythm and level of the general life of the Nation” (Tesler, 1989:13).

As we shall see in the next section, governmental policies tried, by way of historical reparations, to train and equip indigenous people to convert them into wage laborers or farmers (Argeri, 2011; Lenton, 2010).

At the same time, the middle and upper classes that had begun to feel threatened by significant internal migration, came to refer to followers of the government as ‘cabecitas negras’⁷² (little black heads). As has been well noted by Gordillo and Hirsch (2003), Milanesio (2010) and Mathias (2013), the use of this term reveals a racialization and also homogenization of the followers of Peronism. To anti-Peronists, regardless of whether they were creole or indigenous, these sectors were defined by their supposed ignorance, lack of refinement and insolence. As Milanesio (2010) says

“Even though anti-Peronist prejudice against the *cabecita* had an unmistakable component of racism, racist sentiments were subordinated to a strong classism. Discrimination was directed against poor and working class people who were considered to be Peronist and happened to be dark-skinned and recent arrivals to the city” (2010:56).

It can be said that Peronist and anti-Peronist discourses extended the vision of what made up the ‘Argentine People’⁷³, even when many found this undesirable (Mathias,2013).

⁷² Other terms that anti-Peronist sectors used to describe government followers included ‘payuca’ and ‘yuca’ (referring to a bush native to northeast Argentina) and ‘hard hair’ (Milanesio, 2010).

⁷³ This does not mean that the narrative of a ‘white, European Argentina’ has been completely displaced, or that the massacres of indigenous people that took place during the nation-building process were recognized. An example of this can be seen in the name chosen for one of the most important railway branches that was nationalized during this period. The southern branch of National Railways would, from 1948, be called General Roca, who had led the ‘conquest of the desert’. Furthermore, the idea that there were no indigenous people in Argentina was reflected in the minutes of parliamentary sessions. For example, during the debate

4.3.2.2 Indigenous policies and institutions during Peronism

In 1946 the Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians was incorporated into the Department for Work and Social Planning and given the name Department for the Protection of the Aborigine (DPA)⁷⁴. This department, run for the first time by an indigenous person – the Araucan Cacique Jerónimo Maliqueo – was formally charged with implementing official policies towards the indigenous population. In practice, his role was focused on the acquisition and provision of tools and supplies needed by the existing colonies in the country (Serbin, 1981; Maybury-Lewis, 1991; Martínez Sarasola, 1992). Furthermore, indigenous delegates were nominated under the supervision of the Department of Aboriginal Protection, whose role was similar to that of workers' delegates in factories. Its functions included

“receiving and bringing to the Department all the complaints and requests of the indigenous peoples that are directed to it; to request on their behalf all the measures of social help that it believes necessary; to report any events that in one way or another affect the moral and material security of the aboriginal family” (Presidency of the Nation, Ministry of Technical Affairs, exp. N 6606/1948 cited in Argeri, 2011:352).

The Five Year Plans declared the need for indigenous peoples to become owners of their own land and for training in the skills considered necessary. As previously mentioned, the narrative changed from an attempt to civilize indigenous peoples to “incorporating them into an active national life” (Lazzari, 2007). The first Five Year Plan (1947 – 1951) set out a colonization program in three successive stages, through which half a million hectares were set aside so that indigenous people could gain ownership of their land. Likewise, the bill for the second Five Year Plan stated that the following would be taken into account: “c) Recognition of their (indigenous) rights to the land they occupy [and] d) Expropriation of farms or allocation of state lands for the formation of agricultural or pastoral colonies” (Session Minutes, Chamber of Senators, 2nd of June 1948). Under this framework Law 14.254/53 was passed, by which the Executive Branch

on the formation of the Special Commission for Indian Affairs, Senator Ramella stated “It is well known that in our country, an Indian problem cannot be strictly said to exist; but there are still some isolated groups in certain regions that have not been properly incorporated into national life.” During the same session Senator Antille announced that “we are considering the designation of a commission to study the measures to take in order to finally incorporate the entire population of the nation into its active life the aborigines that still exist, in Chaco and other territories.” (Session Minutes, Chamber of Senators, 2nd June 1948)

⁷⁴In 1949, after Decree 2.896 was signed into law, the Department for the Protection of the Aborigine came under the auspices of the National Immigration Department. (Tesler, 1989; Martínez Sarasola, 1992).

created “Colony-Farms for the Adaptation and Education of the Aboriginal Population”⁷⁵. The Law stated that “said establishments will have the purpose of providing, in addition to primary education, practical classes of agricultural education, with the cooperation of the ministry in question” (Art. 3, Sessions Minutes, Chamber of Deputies, 25th /26th September 1952).

Other policies that were very relevant to increasing awareness of Peronism among indigenous populations were the distribution of identity documents allowing them to exercise their rights as citizens and the abolition of the rents imposed by sugar plantations (Hirsch and Gordillo, 2003).

4.3.3 Peronist indigenous and syncretic movements

The change in state policies towards indigenous peoples was not simply the result of the rise of Peronism, it was also the government’s response to increasing indigenous demands to play an active part in the new political scene (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003). As Miller (1979) and Mathias (2013) suggest, indigenous groups’ support of Peronism occurred at a time when there were deep divisions within these groups, which began after the defeat of the millennialist groups.

The propagation of Peronism occurred in great measure through community leaders who worked as delegates of the DPA or other governmental roles, such as justices of the peace.

To channel their demands, indigenous leaders would write reports or draw up petitions; if they did not receive a response they would organize marches or trips to Buenos Aires to demand the intervention of the national authorities (Mathias, 2013).

Among the protests that these groups presented, perhaps the most important one was the ‘the Malón Paz’. This protest started in June 1946 when a group of indigenous people from the Kolla⁷⁶ walked and rode on horseback the 1300 kilometers between Jujuy and Buenos Aires in a campaign to claim their land. According to their accounts, President Yrigoyen⁷⁷ had granted them their land but, as they did not have the deeds, when the institutional order was interrupted by the

⁷⁵Four farming colonies were thus established in the Province of Formosa, two in Salta, one in Neuquén, one in Jujuy and one in Presidente Perón (Chaco) (Tesler, 1989).

⁷⁶ It is estimated that the demonstrators numbered 160 people (Tesler, 1989; Schwittay, 2003).

⁷⁷ Hipólito Yrigoyen was President of Argentina on two occasions. His first term started in 1916 and ended in 1922, while the second began in 1928 but was interrupted by a military coup. The sale of land occurred under the military dictatorship of Agustín P. Justo in 1936.

military coup of 1930 the land was sold (Schwittay, 2003). The new owner forced the indigenous people to work on a sugar plantation in exchange for remaining on their land. Under these circumstances the Kollas decided to ask the new President, Perón, to intervene.

Although they spoke to the president, the Malón Paz ended in a confused and violent incident. After 25 days in Buenos Aires the indigenous group was forcibly sent back to their province (Tesler, 1989; Carrasco, 2000; Schwittay, 2003). Three years later, in 1949, the land was expropriated. However, administration of the land was not given to the indigenous group but to the Ministry of Finance.

The Malón Paz was of particular importance because it was the first demonstration of an ethnic group presenting a demand as an indigenous one encompassing all the indigenous groups of the country. Thus a specific claim for land became a more extensive claim for the rights of ‘Argentine indigenous peoples’, making the land issue visible on a national scale. Today the Malón Paz is a symbol for many indigenous movements (Lenton, 2010).

While Peronism was increasing its influence evangelical churches were also spreading throughout indigenous communities. As with Peronist rhetoric, evangelical rhetoric promised a better future and gave converts access to certain resources. As we shall see in the next chapter (section 5.3.2), over time indigenous peoples started to found their own churches, giving rise to syncretic movements (Gordillo, 2006; Altman, 2011).

During this period the first political-religious leaders appeared, their power deriving from their ability to negotiate with the government and to obtain resources from the churches to improve their communities’ quality of life.

4.3.4 The development period

After the military coup that removed Perón, Argentina joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, bodies that started to become involved in the domestic economy. Furthermore, an agreement was signed with the Paris Club, which replaced bilateral agreements with a multilateral payment system (Rapoport, 2000; Basualdo, 2006; Brennan and Rougier, 2009).

This system removed controls on foreign trade and reduced state intervention in the economy, thus producing a profound change in the distribution of income.

Democracy was restored in 1958, although Peronism was banned. The new government led by

Fronzidi adopted a discourse that focussed intensely on development. Influenced by the ideas of Prebish and Singer, the government believed that the main problem with the economy was a deterioration in the terms of trade, which prevented an equitable distribution of technological production and thus expanded the transfer of income from peripheral countries to core countries. Hence one of the main objectives was to consolidate industrialization through policies that tended to favor direct foreign investment. To this end laws on foreign investment and guarantees were approved which protected foreign investors from any eventual problem with convertibility (Basualdo, 2006).

During this period rural areas were seen as places that should be 'developed' (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003:15). The creation of INTA (the National Institute of Agricultural Technology) is a good reflection of the development model that was to be implemented. Created on the recommendation of the ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America), INTA's main objective was to accelerate the mechanization of rural areas. It was during this period that the countryside saw major progress in mechanization, with the use of tractors, fertilizers and improved seeds becoming widespread. According to census information from 1960, during these years there was a significant increase in the average size of properties (Rapoport, 2000).

With regard to the indigenous population the Department for the Protection of the Aborigine was dissolved after the military coup of 1955 and its powers were transferred to the provinces where its delegations operated (Maybury-Lewis, 1991; Marcilese, 2011). In 1958, after the return of democracy, the National Department for Indian Affairs was created under the auspices of the Ministry of Work and Social Security. In general terms policies that addressed the indigenous population were focused almost exclusively on work training during the developmental period (Serbin, 1981).

It is important to note that after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 a doctrine of national security was adopted under which the armed forces came to regard themselves as "guarantors of a certain economic and social order" in addition to "guardians of the borders" (Rapoport, 2000). This partly explains why institutional instability increased during these years. Fronzidi's government was deposed by a military coup in 1962 and replaced by a civil administration that would call elections (with Peronism still banned) in 1963. President Illia held the presidency for three years but was also deposed by a military coup that called itself the "Argentine Revolution".

Under the regime of the “Argentine Revolution” the National Department for Indian Affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Social Wellbeing. During these years, policies towards indigenous peoples focussed on the military objectives of national security. Several communities were displaced to border areas, a measure considered necessary to guarantee national security (Serbin, 1981).

Finally, it is important to notice that in 1957 the International Labour Organization passed a treaty addressing indigenous and tribal populations (107), which was ratified in Argentina in 1959⁷⁸.

4.4 Neoliberal Argentina

4.4.1 The era of neoliberalism and the corporate food regime

In the 1970s a major transformation in the way capitalism functioned occurred. Since the beginning of the 1960s the world economy had started to decline with major contractions in rates of productivity, profitability, investment, and consumption in core countries as well as an increase in inflation and increased indebtedness in peripheral countries⁷⁹.

In this context the great majority of the countries started to abandon Keynesian policies, deregulating labor markets and eliminating restrictions on commerce and finance. All these changes represented a major transformation in the role of the state, making it into a guarantor of private property and the correct functioning of the market (Harvey, 2005; Duménil and Lévy, 2005).

It is important to recognize that the establishment of the neoliberal regime was not simply the response of the dominant sectors to the economic crisis but also to the radicalization of social movements⁸⁰ (Duménil and Lévy, 2004, 2005; Kiely, 2009; Cox and Nilsen, 2014).

⁷⁸ Treaty 107 of the ILO stated in Article 11 that: “The right to collective or individual property in favour of the populations in question on lands traditionally occupied by them should be respected” (ILO, 2013). It also established that in the event that these populations were moved, they should receive compensation for any loss or damage they might have suffered. Finally, with regard to agricultural policies, Article 14 stated that national agricultural policies must guarantee that these populations are assigned additional land if the land allocated to them is insufficient to ensure a normal existence or to anticipate a possible growth in numbers.

⁷⁹ “Four countries in Latin America (Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina) held 74 per cent of the international debt” (Duménil and Lévy, 2005:17).

⁸⁰ As we saw in Chapter 2, neoliberalism should be seen as both a project and a process. As a project its origins can be seen in the texts of Hayek during the Second World War and the ideas of Friedman from the 1970s. As a political process, three stages can be identified (proto-neoliberalism; roll-back neoliberalism and roll-out neoliberalism), which took different forms as shaped by the struggles between different groups of society (Tickell and Peck; 2003).

These changes also had major consequences for the food regime. Food aid, which had been central to the previous food regime, was replaced by highly subsidized cereal exports, giving rise to a new international division of labor in the agro-food industry. While the United States and Europe promoted their low added-value agricultural exports, the countries in the periphery started to specialize in products with high added-value for export (Teubal and Rodríguez, 2002; McMichael, 2012). This new organization was established during the Uruguay Round which included agriculture in multilateral negotiations for the first time and culminated in 1994 with the creation of the World Trade Organization.

The treaty on agriculture formalized policies of domestic support for the European countries and the United States as a mechanism for managing excess production and continued to promote the restructuring of the agricultural sectors of developing countries. Thus, a large part of the 'Third World' promoted the opening of domestic economies, the flexibilization of laws on the use of land and the elimination of barriers to foreign investment (Friedmann, 1995; McMichael, 2005, 2009, 2012; Pechlaner and Otero, 2008; Pritchard, 2009). This new specialization meant the adoption of a highly technological model with closer links to genetic engineering, resulting in an acceleration of migration from the countryside, increased concentration of land ownership and the replacement of crops for internal consumption with 'cash crops' (Friedmann, 1995; McMichael, 2005; 2009; Teubal 2001; Pechlaner and Otero, 2008; Araghi, 2009).

Thus arose the "corporate food regime"⁸¹ characterized by:

- 1) the growing role of corporations and of the financial sector in the production, processing and distribution of food on a global scale;
- 2)) the standardization of the processes of production and homogenization of patterns of consumption to fit prevailing patterns of consumption in highly industrialized countries;
- 3) growing specialization by southern hemisphere countries in the cultivation of cash crops

⁸¹Although there is general agreement on the main characteristics of the current period with regard to food production, there is not complete consensus on the existence of a new food regime. In Friedmann's view, a hegemonic food regime has not been established because it has not yet consolidated "a sufficiently stable constellation of agrofood relationships so that the states, individuals, corporations, social movements and other actors can predict the outcome of actions" (2009: 335). In any case, she states that what might be characterized as a "corporate-environmental food regime" is at an early stage. A similar position is held by Pritchard (2009) who believes that what has been seen up until now are just the remnants of the second food regime. Contrary to these positions, McMichael has stated that since the seventies a food regime has been implemented that might be defined as a "corporate food regime". In his opinion the most significant differences between the second and third food regimes were the changes in the role of the state with regard to both the organization of production and agricultural research, as well as the growing role of trans-national corporations. Other authors such as Burch and Lawrence (2009) also believe that we are experiencing a third food regime which they call a 'financialized food regime', as they believe that what distinguishes this period from the previous one is the role played by a series of institutions and financial instruments that have been able to reorganize the different stages of the agro-food supply chain, modifying the terms and conditions under which other actors in the chain can operate.

- rather than food crops;
- 4) commercialization of key supplies such as seeds (and their reproduction) through international regulations;
 - 5) growing dependence on chemical supplies and hydrocarbons for production;
 - 6) separation of the rural population from the land;
 - 7) the end of non-commercial means of subsistence (McMichael, 2005; Araghi, 2009; Burch and Lawrence, 2009).

4.4.2 Neoliberal Reforms

In Argentina, the foundations for the implementation of a neoliberal model started to be laid in the 1970s⁸² and it was then consolidated in the 1990s (Tapella, 2004). At the beginning of the 1970s social protests became radicalized⁸³. The previous decades had seen the formation of a strong union network and there were several leftwing groups that could mobilize large numbers of people. This is why dominant sectors reverted to the use of force to disrupt subaltern groups. The ‘Process of National Re-organization’, the name that the Armed Forces gave to the de facto government, imposed a terror-based regime through clandestine action of the state which served to disconnect bonds of solidarity and de-politicize civil society. In economic terms the military dictatorship started to implement measures to open up the economy, removed controls on financial capital, and reduced subsidies and social spending (Romero, 2004).

While the 1970s saw terror used to discourage political participation, the 1980s imposed the idea that “there was no alternative”. In a context of economic stagnation and increasing inflation, a discourse was established that emphasised the state’s lack of expertise, and the inefficiency and cost of national production compared to the free functioning of the market. These discourses also started to be associated with the consolidation of democracy and the application of neoliberal policies. In other words, competitive capitalism was not just seen as the only solution to the problems ‘created by the welfare state’, but started to be considered as the only basis upon which

⁸² After the military coup led by Onganía in 1966, democracy returned to Argentina in 1973. The presidency was returned to Perón once more although he died in 1974 and was succeeded by his vice-president. In 1976 another military coup occurred. This was the bloodiest of the dictatorships, causing thousands of deaths and 30,000 people ‘disappeared’.

⁸³ The radicalization of the protest also led to major conflicts within Peronism between sectors fighting for ‘the Peronist fatherland’ and those seeking to create a ‘socialist motherland’ (Romero, 2004).

democracy could be constructed and maintained (Munck, 2003; 2005).

By the early 1990s the ground was ready for further reforms and the consolidation of the neoliberal model with the support of the majority of the population.

Following the recommendations of international credit institutions (IMF – WB)⁸⁴, in a few years, Menem's government implemented the so-called "Reform of the State"⁸⁵. The main pillars of this reform were privatizations, commercial and financial deregulation, decentralization of the social roles of the state and a reduction of public spending (Orlansky, 1997).

These macroeconomic policies were then complemented by the establishment of a fixed exchange rate between the Argentine peso and the American dollar through the Law of Convertibility. The combination of unrestricted commerce with an overvalued exchange rate resulted in a significant increase in imports and the consequent dismantling of national industry.

By 1997, the resulting economic and social crisis had become more evident. The deepening recession was aggravated by the inability to increase the money supply due to the law on convertibility, the reduction of public funds after the privatization of the pensions and retirement system as well as continuing capital flight (Romero, 2004; Duménil and Lévy, 2006).

Faced with this situation, the government of De la Rúa, who won the presidential elections of 1999, continued to apply the orthodox austerity measures implemented by his predecessors. These years saw the most regressive tax reforms, even more reductions in public spending and a reform of the labor regime that annulled some of the rights won by workers during the 1940s (Vilas, 2006; Duménil and Lévy, 2006).

These policies resulted in mass unemployment and an increase in poverty levels. By 2001 the rate of unemployment in urban areas was above 20% and the percentage of the population considered to be living in poverty had reached 41.5%, while extreme poverty ran at 18% (Ministerio de Trabajo, 2014; CEPAL, 2004).

By the end of 2001, faced with the increasing mobilization of both the working and middle classes, President de la Rúa resigned. The severity of the political-economic crisis can be seen in the fact that in just two weeks Argentina had five interim presidents while poverty and extreme poverty rose above 50% and 27% respectively (Munck, 2003; INDEC, 2013b).

⁸⁴ The Reform of the State was a condition for securing external financing (Oszlak, 1999).

⁸⁵ The policies of the Reform of the State were established principally through the passing of two laws (Law 23696 on the Reform of the State and 23697 on the Economic Emergency in 1989) and four presidential decrees of 'need and urgency' (435 Reorganization of the State; 1457 Omnibus; 2476 of Rationalization of the State, all from the year 1990, and 992 on the National System of the Administrative Profession from 1991) (Orlansky, 1997).

The following years, as we shall see below, represented a new stage in the neoliberal process. As Veltmeyer and Henry say: “if significant political changes have taken place, they have occurred in a context of substantial continuities on socioeconomic structures and policies (...)” (2009:56).

4.4.2.1 The consequences of neoliberalism for the agricultural sector and rural areas in Argentina

In the agricultural sector neoliberal reforms resulted in the elimination of regulatory entities (such as for example the National Grain Board, the National Meat Board and the National Forestry Institute), the deregulation of land cargo shipments, the privatization of cargo railways and the passing of the Law of Port Activities in 1992 (which allowed the privatization of public ports and their transfer to the provinces - with the exception of Buenos Aires - and the installation of new private ports) (Obschatko, 1997; Barsky and Fernandez, 2006). Furthermore, several subsidies were eliminated and the ability to fiscally write off land with a low productivity was annulled (Decree 2284/91), making subsistence agriculture practically unsustainable.

Simultaneous to these reforms direct foreign investment was encouraged, as were highly mechanized production methods aimed almost exclusively at the international market (Teubal and Rodriguez, 2002; Lapegna, 2009). The seed sector was also reorganized by Decree 1104/2000 which dissolved the National Seed Institute (INASE) and several innovations developed by INTA were purchased by multinational businesses (Barsky and Fernandez, 2006), thus consolidating the agribusiness model.

The sale of transgenic RR soybean seeds was approved in 1996. The reduction of import tariffs on agrichemicals (from 15% to 0%) and machinery imports (from 50% to 15%) favored the rapid adoption of this form of cultivation (Ghezán, 2001: 12). The opportunity to have two harvests per year as well as heavy promotion by national and international bodies (such as INTA and the IDB)⁸⁶, were significant factors in their rapid spread (Richardson, 2009, Lapegna, 2009; Delvenne et al, 2013).

The expansion of the mono-cultivation of soybeans that characterized this period was initially focussed on the Pampas region, the agricultural/livestock center of Argentina, but spread progressively into peripheral regions. It is important, however, to note that the increasing specialization in soybeans was tied both to national policies and to the changes in the food regime

⁸⁶The Program for the Modernization of Agricultural Services (International Development Bank), which was implemented between 1992 and 1998.

noted above. We should also take into account that soybeans are a critical factor in the intensive rearing of chickens and pigs and are used in the majority of processed foods (Richardson, 2009).

Table 1
Growth in surface area planted with soybeans, in thousands of hectares

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1999	2000	2001
5,303.8	6,000.8	6,662.8	5,967.5	6,642.8	7,571.9	7,985.4	10,261.4

Source: My figures based on information from INDEC (2013)

One of the first consequences of the structural reform of the agricultural sector was an increasing concentration of land ownership. The relaxation of regulations on foreign investment⁸⁷ resulted in a rapid rise in the percentage of properties in foreign hands (according to the Argentine Agrarian Federation (FAA), in 2008 over 20 million hectares were owned by foreign citizens) and contract-based agriculture. As Burch and Lawrence suggest (2009), financial capital and various different instruments such as sowing pools and common investment funds⁸⁸ started to expand rapidly in Argentina.

Similarly, during this period there was a significant reduction in the number of farms without defined boundaries, from 17.33% of farms to 7% overall in 2002. This decrease is significant as “[f]arms without defined limits are made up of parcels not precisely defined. Generally, these lands form part of a larger unit which might be communal fields, an indigenous community, a park, national reserve or other kind of state or private land.” (INDEC, 2002b). According to the National Agricultural Census (CNA), between 1988 and 2002 the number of agricultural enterprises with defined boundaries diminished by 21%.

⁸⁷ Law 21.382 ended both the waiting period for the repatriation of capital, as well as the need to register the investments. Moreover, according to Decree 1853/93, which regulated that law, ‘the right of foreign investors to (...) transfer abroad their realized liquid earnings, can be exercised at any time’. Registration requirements were eliminated and, as a consequence, there are no official numbers regarding the amount of land in the hands of foreign investors, who receive an identical legal treatment to locals (Ghezán, 2001: 43).

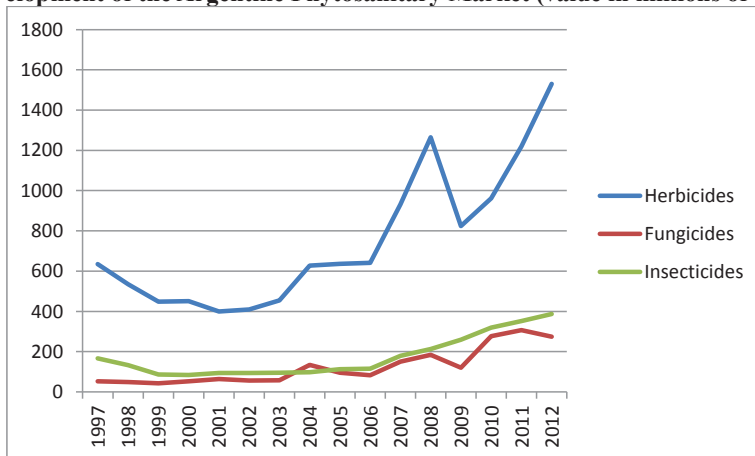
⁸⁸ Sowing pools are different types of producers’ associations whose common goal is to buy their supplies wholesale or to hire services collectively as a way to get reduced prices. Although this was originally a practice implemented by small and medium-sized producers, after a while larger producers adopted the idea. Furthermore, common investment funds and groups of private investors started to hire technical operators and management teams, consultants, administrators, auditing banks, etc. (Giarraca and Teubal; 2005). Small and medium-sized producers only participate in common investment funds indirectly, by renting out their land.

At the national level the populations involved in land conflicts are 54.3% indigenous, 32.1% rural, 7.4% indigenous-peasant (answering to both identities) and 6.2% other (when the information available does not specify) (Domínguez, 2009, Redaf, 2009). The high international prices for soybeans and the high profits obtained from their production did not just generate increasingly concentrated ownership of the land but also the annexation of new territories, much of which belonged to indigenous communities.

Simultaneously, the expansion of soybean mono-cultivation resulted in environmental damage related primarily to an increase in deforestation and the growing use of agri-toxins. The estimated rate of deforestation between 1990 and 2000 was 10%. In the year 2000, Argentina had lost 48% of its original forests (Zarrilli, 2008). Furthermore, the volume of glyphosate consumption increased from 1 million liters in 1997 to 100 million in 2003 (Morales and Schaper, 2004; Pengue, 2004b).

Figure 1

Development of the Argentine Phytosanitary Market (value in millions of US\$)



Source: my own table using figures from CASAFE 2013

4.4.3 “Export-oriented populism”

After the crisis of 2001, and especially since the election of Néstor Kirchner as President (2003), Argentina experienced major changes. Firstly, certain measures were taken to re-legitimize public institutions and make the state a ‘valid interlocutor’ once more. These include the reformation of the Supreme Court and the declaration of the unconstitutionality of the laws of Forced Obedience

and Final Point⁸⁹ (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009).

In the economic sphere the policy of convertibility was abandoned and a competitive exchange rate was maintained through the continuous intervention of the Central Bank. This monetary policy encouraged the rise of national industry and gradually reduced unemployment in urban areas.

The devaluation of the currency against a background of rising international prices also favored the export sector. However, this was partially countered by the implementation of taxes on exports (retentions) (Barsky and Fernández, 2006).

In general terms it could be argued that the income generated from exports allowed the governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003- 2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007 – present) to pay off the IMF debt, subsidize goods and services for domestic consumption, increase salaries and pensions and implement social policies⁹⁰. Among the activities that the government subsidized with this income was the production of feedlot beef, which currently supplies 40% of domestic beef consumption (Newell, 2009). This was a major change as traditionally meat production in Argentina has been based on pastoral systems.

Although this reversed certain effects of the policy implemented in the 1990s, the new model continues to support the agro-export sector. Richardson (2009) suggests that this is a new kind of populism, which he describes as “export-oriented populism”. This author sees the growing soybean exports as allowing the government to provide benefits to the population and maintain ties to the global economy. Newell (2009) has a similar perspective, arguing that Argentina harbours a “bio-hegemony”, which

“has been produced and sustained by an alliance of interest which includes powerful agribusiness producers and traders (such as Cargill), export oriented elements of national Argentine capital (such as Bio Sidus, Relmo, and Don Mario), multinational biotechnology firms (such as Syngenta, Down and Monsanto), large commercial banks, and supportive elements within the Argentine state itself” (2009:35).

⁸⁹ These laws prevented the prosecutions of officials from the last military dictatorship who committed crimes against humanity.

⁹⁰ Amongst the social programs that have been implemented to fight poverty, the allowance for single mothers with 7 children and the universal children’s allowance can be mentioned.

/In line with these arguments, in 2004, the Ministry of Agriculture launched a strategic plan for the development of agricultural biotechnology (2005-2015). Among the main objectives of the plan was “the generation of a commitment between public and private actors who have been at the forefront of the development of agricultural biotechnology” (Office of Biotechnology, 2004). As part of this initiative the government signed important agreements with major transnational companies and national agri-business groups.

The continuity of the process of soybeanization can also be seen in the increasing surface area planted with soybeans, as well as the continuing reduction in the number of agricultural enterprises.

Table 2
Surface Area Planted with Soybeans in Thousands of Hectares

2004	2005	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2012-2013
11,976.5	12,265.8	16,141.3	16,603.5	18,032.8	18,343.3	18,886.6	19,700*

Source: My own table using information from INDEC (2013)

*ESTIMATED FAO (2012-2013)

Table 3
Number of Farms without Defined Boundaries

1960	1988	2002	2008
471,756	421,221	332,057	251,082

Source: My own table based on information from PROINDER (2002), INTA (2004), and INDEC (2013).

Currently, soybean production represents over 50% of the volume of grain produced in the country and it makes up over 25% of current exports (INTA, 2011). Internationally, Argentina is the third largest producer of soybeans and the largest of processed soybean products (flours and oil). Almost all soybean produce and soybean derivatives are sold to the overseas market (INTA, 2011; FAO, 2013).

4.4.3.1 The conflict with the countryside

The increasing dependence of the Argentine economy on agricultural exports led to one of the

largest political crises of the Kirchner period. The start of the conflict occurred in March 2008, after Resolution 125/08 was announced by the Ministry of the Economy, increasing the percentage of retentions (taxes on exports) on certain commodities. More specifically, this resolution established a structure of mobile values that changed in accordance with international prices over a four-year period. In the case of soybeans, the increase in the share rose from 35% to 44%; for sunflower oil it rose from 32% to 39.1%; for wheat it fell from 28% to 27.2% and maize also saw a fall from 25% to 24.2% (Giarraca and Palmisano, 2010: 280). The government's reasoning for this increase was that during the months when international commodity prices⁹¹ rose and the peso was devalued, the sector made extraordinary profits which had started to damage the national economy. In other words the increase in retentions was necessary, not only to redistribute profits but also to limit inflation and especially the rise in the price of food. Although the argument behind the rise was based on a concentration of wealth in certain sectors, it was applied uniformly across all producers without distinction with regard to the size of the establishment or their share of exports (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009; Giarraca and Teubal, 2010; Lapegna, 2011).

This measure was immediately rejected by the representatives of the four traditional organizations in the sector: the Sociedad Rural Argentina (SRA), the Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas (CRA), the Federación Agraria Argentina (FAA) and the Confederación de Asociaciones Rurales de Buenos Aires y La Pampa (CARBAP), who made up the so-called 'Mesa de enlace' (The Liaison Committee). These groups argued that the government was applying excessive taxes and thus decided to stop selling grains until the government withdrew the resolution. This sector was supported by the majority of the middle classes who were suspicious of the government's leftwing rhetoric and its close ties with Cuba and Venezuela (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009).

It is notable that the measure was not rejected by the so-called 'new rural actors' - sowing pools, investment funds and sowing groups. According to Petras and Veltmeyer (2009) support for the government's policies from the largest agri-businesses such as Grobocopatel, Eurnekian and Elsztain can be explained by the fact that they would soon be able to buy or rent the land of small and mid-sized producers at lower prices. In addition the support of these groups showed that the

⁹¹ In March 2008, the price of a ton of soybeans in Chicago was US\$ 550, maize was US\$ 215 and wheat US\$ 410 (Giarraca and Palmisano, 2010)

conflict was not over the model - the government continued to base its policies on sustained growth through agricultural exports - but rather over the distribution of agrarian income (Giarraca and Palmisano, 2010: 280).

The subaltern sectors were split in their positions, some being for and others against the government. For example the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (CCC), a group we will discuss in Chapter 6, believed that it was necessary to maintain the retentions as a means of redistributing income and reducing the role of agribusiness, but this did not mean that it supported the national government. Both the CCC and other rural organizations complained that the government had only changed its discourse, but had not change its model, which was essential if small producers were to remain in the countryside.

The marches and road blocks organized by the sectors opposed to the retentions led to a scarcity of food and a significant rise in prices.

The conflict lasted until July 2008 when, amid strong opposition, the national government sent the resolution to be approved by congress. It was the Vice-President, Julio C. Cobos (a representative of the UCR), who cast the deciding vote to veto the law.

The conflict with the countryside weakened the government significantly, so to rebuild its relationship with small producers and rural workers, it decided to convert the Social Agricultural Program (PSA) into an Undersecretary for Development and Family Agriculture. This replaced a program to combat rural poverty that had to be renewed annually with an undersecretariat with its own funds. In addition, to provide a channel for increasing complaints about pollution, the National Commission for Research into Agrichemicals was formed (Lapegna, 2009).

Finally, as part of the celebration of Argentina's bicentenary the national government launched the Strategic Agri-food and Agri-industrial Plan (PEA), which set goals and policies for the agri-industrial sector for the next ten years (2010-2020). These goals included increases of 58% in production, 27% in planted surface area and 14% in productivity⁹² (Papotto, 2013).

⁹² When the PEA was being drawn up participation was requested from provincial governments, representatives of producers, civil organizations and representatives from scientific bodies (including the National Institute of Agricultural Technology – INTA; the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research – CONICET; the National Health and Agri-food Quality Service – SENASA – and different National Universities).

4.4.4 The reorganization of indigenous movements

The neoliberal period also saw a reorganization of indigenous organizations and campaigns.

The economic crises that occurred at the end of the 1960s and the increased mechanization of the countryside resulted in a major migration of indigenous peoples to urban centres. This resulted in associations that slowly started a process of re-evaluation of generic indigenous ethnicity as a political tool. The most important organizations created included the Indigenous Centre of Buenos Aires, founded in 1968; the Indigenous Federation of Neuquén, in 1970; and the Indigenous Federation of Chaco, created in 1973 (Maybury-Lewis, 1991; Carrasco, 2000; Bartolomé, 2004; Lenton, 2010).

Later these different organizations combined to hold two major congresses: the Futa Traun ('indigenous parliament' in the Mapuche language) and, in 1973, the second Indigenous Parliament, named 'Eva Perón' (Martínez Sarasola, 1992, Bartolomé, 2004). As can be seen by the name of the Second Indigenous Parliament, the influence of the state, as well as some civil associations and the Church⁹³ at these meetings was very strong.

The main points that were debated at these parliaments were as follows:

- 1) The land issue (resulting in calls for the expansion of reserves and for priority to be given to indigenous peoples in colony planning, as well as the handing over of official land deeds);
- 2) The enforcement of national labor laws;
- 3) Access to forest and mineral resources on reserves (which were reserved by law for the state);
- 4) The need for indigenous communities to be given legal status; and
- 5) That oversight of indigenous affairs be given to a member of the communities concerned (Bartolomé, 2004).

After the death of Perón, against a background of increasing conflict and political persecution, many organizations had been dissolved by force and their leaders imprisoned. In 1975 some of the members of these previous organizations formed the Indigenous Association of the Republic of Argentina, whose slogan was "Land, Culture and Political recognition" (Serbin, 1981; Maybury-Lewis, 1991; Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003; Bartolomé, 2004).

⁹³Such as, for example ENDEPA (National Team for the Pastoral Aborigine) which continues to have a major influence in the Chaco.

During the military dictatorship installed in 1976 indigenous peoples, like other groups, were persecuted and repressed. This period saw the reassertion of the ‘desert narrative’. As Gordillo and Hirsch state, indigenous peoples were also seen as subversives - “they were seen as elements alien to the national being” (2003:18).

After the return of democracy many members of indigenous organizations that had emerged at the beginning of the 1970s started to campaign for a new legal framework for aboriginal peoples (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003).

Indigenous peoples’ experiences in the neoliberal period were characterized by a clear and increasing contradiction between the legal-political framework which provided specific rights and guarantees to these groups and the consolidation of the agro-export model described above which undermined them (Trincherro, 2010).

First, provincial laws were passed, followed by national laws⁹⁴. In 1985, the Law of Protection and Support to Indigenous Communities was passed, being regulated in February of 1989. This established major principles such as the creation of the INAI (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs) run by the Ministry of Health and Social Security. The law also granted legal person status to communities.

The National Constitution, reformed in 1994, states in Article 75, Section 17 that it is the responsibility of Congress

“(…) to recognize the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Argentine indigenous peoples. To guarantee respect for their identity and the right to a bilingual and intercultural education; to recognize the legal person status of their communities, and the communities’ possession and ownership of the land they traditionally occupy; and to allocate other land that is suitable and sufficient for their human development; none of which can be removed, transferred or subject to burdens or embargoes. To ensure their participation in the administration of natural resources and other interests that affect them. The Provinces may also exercise these powers.”

Furthermore, Law 24071 enshrines Treaty 160 of the ILO, which was ratified in the year 2000 and came into force a year later (Mombello, 2002). This agreement established ‘self-identification’ as the criteria for determining the population that should have access to specific legislation; the concept of ‘territory’ refers to the “entire habitat of the regions that the peoples in question occupy or use”; the rights to the use, administration, and conservation of the natural resources on their land; and the necessary participation of the indigenous peoples in the affairs

⁹⁴ The Comprehensive Law of the Aborigine of Formosa was the first (1984). The Law of the Chaqueñean Aborigine 3258 was approved in 1987 (Carrasco, 2000; Hirsch and Gordillo, 2003).

that affect them (Carrasco, 2002; Mombello, 2002).

After 2003, as human rights issues took center stage in the country, indigenous claims also started to be presented in this specific context. As Vom Hau and Wilde point out, “[t]his focus on human rights in public discussion and policy making provided indigenous activists with a new rights-based language for their identity claims” (2010:1288). One of the most important achievements, after the adoption of the language of human rights as a strategy in the struggle, was the passing in 2006 of Law 26.160. The objective of this law, known as “Emergency with Regard to Possession and Ownership of the Land Traditionally Occupied by Aboriginal Communities in the Country” was to stop the evictions that had started as a result of the expansion of the agribusiness model.

Although the new legal framework benefitted indigenous groups, economic policies continued to worsen their economic and social situation, increasing levels of poverty and unemployment. For this reason, after 1995, different programs focussed on these communities were implemented. These included: the Program for the Health of Indigenous Peoples for the training of health workers; the Program of Training for the Strengthening of Indigenous Institutions and Communities⁹⁵, aimed at training indigenous leaders; and different programs for conditional grants. These compensatory policies from the 1990s also continued into the period of the Kirchner administrations. For example, in the rural sphere, in 2005, an agreement was signed between INTA and INAI to carry out cooperative technical activities for the development of indigenous communities. In 2008 an agreement was signed between INAI and the Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Security which gave rise to the ‘Community Employment’ program aimed at unemployed people from indigenous communities (INAI, 2013).

In the last four years there has been an aggravation of territorial conflicts and indigenous movements have grown stronger. Among the most notable events are the March of Aboriginal Peoples held in Buenos Aires in 2010 and the occupation by the Qom community of Primavera, Formosa, of Avenida 9 de Julio, also in the center of the capital, in 2011. In general terms, these movements did not necessarily reflect a departure from previous movements as new positions incorporated many of the demands from previous decades (Li, 2000; Hodgson, 2011).

⁹⁵ This program was financed by the World Bank (PROINDER, 2002).

4.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have briefly summarized the main characteristics of the process of state-building and the different forms of domination that have operated in each of the periods of capitalist development in Argentina. The main objective of these pages has been to analyze the political, economic and cultural processes that have shaped the memories and positions of subalternity of these groups. In addition, I have tried to demonstrate that indigenous groups, through their different actions, including resistance, collaboration and/or legitimization, have also molded the different processes.

In general terms I have argued that the period of formation of the nation state was characterized in economic terms by the extensive development of export-oriented agriculture, which required the prior dispossession of indigenous people from their territories and their subjection to forced labor in areas where European immigration was not sufficient to satisfy the demand for labor. This economic model was accompanied by a discourse focused on the notion of the desert. As Wright (2008) says, the desert “meant both a physical and cultural threshold beyond which wandered savage, uncultured, naked, disorganized and useless creatures guided by bizarre customs. In short, creatures in need of domestication so they could become part of Western life and share its values.” (Wright, 2008:120).

Indigenous groups responded to the advance of capitalist relationships and their political and economic subordination through millennialist movements that were defeated, in the majority of cases through the use of force.

During the second period, when the model of import substitutions was followed, the agricultural sector was subordinated to encourage industrial development. During those years, certain industrial crops such as cotton were encouraged while family agriculture, which served not only to compensate for the lack of international trade but also to weaken the internal power of the agri-export oligarchy, was also supported. During the Peronist governments, indigenous groups were recognized as being part of the ‘Argentine people’, although only as workers or peasants. As Natalia Milanesio says, “Peronism avoids ethnic or racial language when addressing the working class, subordinating ethnic specificity to class consciousness and loyalty to the Peróns” (2010:56).

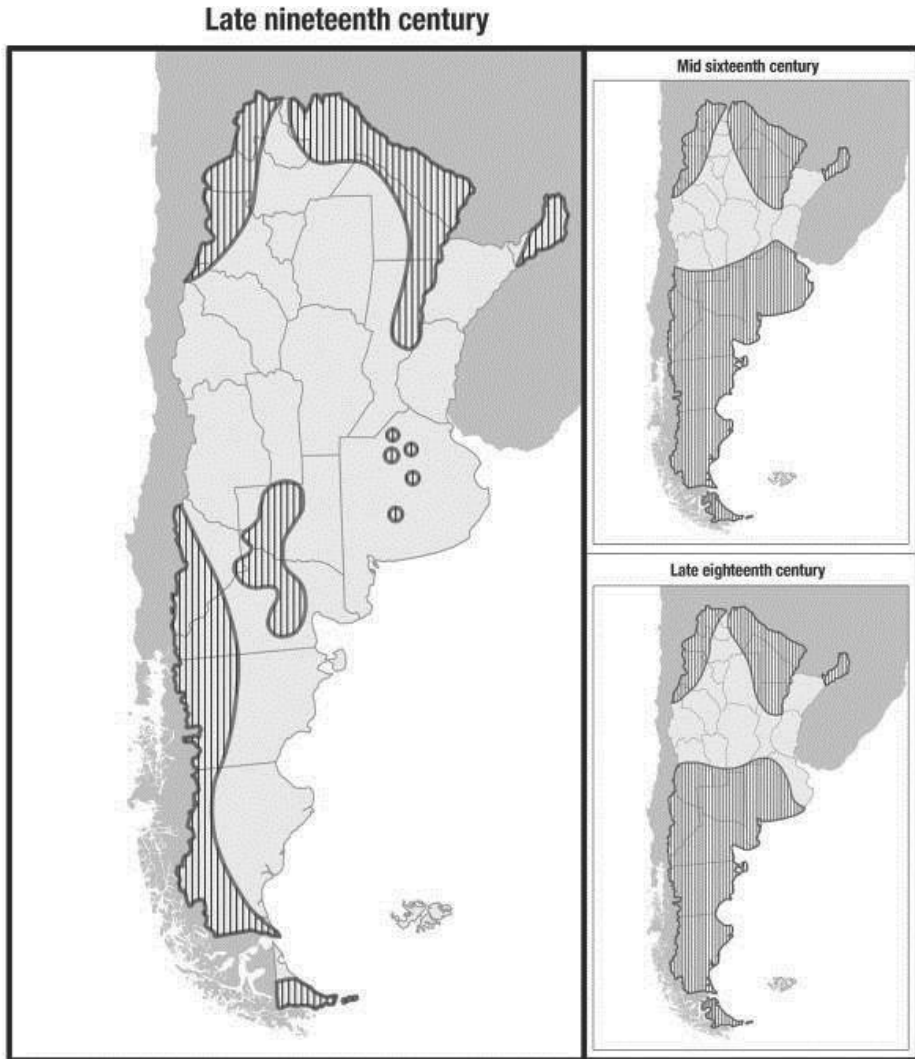
This assimilation of indigenous groups was not just the result of government action, but also the increased participation of indigenous leaders in Peronism after the defeat of the millennialist

movements. A new indigenous leadership began to arise that sought to negotiate their inclusion in the economic and political model, through participation in a political party and/or the Evangelical Church.

If the period of industrialization through import substitution was characterized by the incorporation and homogenization of indigenous groups, the neoliberal period was characterized in contrast by increased formal recognition of rights and a return to exclusionary development policies (Trincheró, 2010).

Next, in Chapter 5, I will analyze the specific way in which these processes developed and manifested themselves in Chaco.

Map N° 2
Indigenous Territories



Miguel A. Santángelo based on Martínez Sarasola (1992)

CHAPTER 5

The Margins of the Periphery

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented an analysis of the processes of economic, social, political and cultural change that took place across Argentina over different phases of capitalist development. Following this analysis, this chapter will study how patterns of domination and subalternity were formed and modified in Chaco Province during these processes. Through these pages I try to highlight the actions of the Qom and Moqoit groups throughout the historical development of this territory. With this in mind, the intention of this chapter is not to provide a ‘backdrop’ as an introduction to the cases we will be analysing later but to show in greater detail how the processes analysed here historically involved subaltern groups “as conscious actors rather than simply as those acted upon” (Mallon, 1995:11; Hart, 2006; Cox; 2011).

The chapter is organized into four main sections. In the first section (5.2) I will briefly summarize the ways of life of the Moqoit and Qom groups in the period prior to the formation of the national state and the main changes that occurred during the advance of the Argentine army.

In the next section (5.3) I describe the development of Chaco within the national agro-export model. Here, I will discuss some of the changes within the Qom and Moqoit groups as well as their relationship to dominant sectors, especially with regard to their incorporation as wage labour at sugarcane plantations and sawmills. In this section I will also describe the principal millenarian movements through which indigenous groups tried to resist their incorporation into capitalism.

In Section 5.4 I summarize the development of cotton production in Chaco as part of the nationally implemented industrialization model of import substitution. Here I will explain the changes that occurred among the Qom and Moqoit groups within a context of expanding policies in favor of subaltern groups. In this section I describe how the process by which political party leaders and syncretic movements emerged to form a new relationship between these communities and dominant sectors, characterized by greater integration, dependence and bureaucratization.

To finish, in Section 5.5, I describe the changes and continuities that the neoliberal period caused in the way of life and politics of the indigenous people of Chaco. Firstly, I analyse the disruption that occurred after the replacement of the cotton model by the agri-business model that implemented the planting of soybeans. Secondly, I note how the process of bureaucratization that began in the previous period was modified and consolidated.

5.2 'Desert' dwellers

Before the conquest and colonization of the Mbayá Guaycurú communities, to which both the Qom and Moqoit belong, they were organized in bilateral *bandas*⁹⁶ of two or more extended families. These units were nomadic hunter-gatherers within a defined territory. The different Qom groups moved in circles around the territories which are now called Formosa and Chaco (Miller, 1979:12). The Moqoit, by contrast, were active in the south of Chaco province, and their territory stretched down to the provinces of Santa Fe and Corrientes. After adopting an equestrian culture, their migrations expanded to the current provinces of Santiago del Estero, Córdoba and Tucumán (López and Gimenez, 2006; López, 2009; Altman, 2011; see map 3). At certain times of the year, when forest fruits had ripened, the different *bandas* would meet to consolidate leaderships, exchange products, hold marriages, seal agreements or carry out certain rituals (Miller, 1979; Ceriani and Citro, 2005; Salamanca, 2006; Wright, 2008; López, 2009).

In these communities there was a gendered division of labor for daily tasks. Men hunted, fished and collected honey, while women took care of the family and made shorter journeys to gather fruit and collect water (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Wright, 2008; López, 2009).

Both the Qom and the Moqoit practiced hereditary leadership but, in order to hold these positions, leaders had to have certain attributes such as shamanic powers⁹⁷ or exceptional skill at hunting (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Wright, 2008). Except during moments of crisis, leadership powers were limited to the extended family and their reputation depended on the use of knowledge, oratory, powers and skill at taking care of the family group. This period also featured

⁹⁶ Braunstein (2008) defines a *banda* as "a group of relatives without a unilinear or local focus. I.e. the members would live together in the same place be it stable or not." They are described as being bilateral or non-unilinear because no distinction was made between maternal or paternal lines.

⁹⁷ It is interesting to note that women were also inducted into shamanic practices and the leader's wife occupied a central place in the *banda*, although women did not usually lead directly (Mendoza, 2002).

a *Consejo de Ancianos* (Council of Elders) whose main function was to provide advice and monitor the performance of the leaders (Miller, 1979).

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the region which these groups inhabited, Gran Chaco Argentino, remained free of Spanish control for a far longer period of time than other regions. The late conquest of this region was due firstly to the fact that the conquerors were only interested in it as a transit corridor. Secondly, once indigenous peoples had mastered the skill of horse riding⁹⁸, this helped them to resist the advance of the colonizers (Fuscaldo, 1982; Vitar, 1991; Tamagno, 2001).

After the middle of the 18th century the Bourbons, faced with the decline of their empire and the prospect of other powers – mainly the British – taking power in those areas, sought to reinforce their presence in the area. A line of forts was thus constructed, and the foundation of reserves and missions was encouraged with the purpose of disciplining the population and forcing them to submit to the colonial authorities (López, 2009). However, all the missions and forts established on the banks of the Salado River between the middle of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th were abandoned shortly after being set up. The fort garrisons were incorporated into the liberationist army in 1810 during the struggle for independence against the Spanish crown.

Once the wars of independence were over, further military campaigns were waged in the Chaco region, but not in systematically. Some Guaycurú groups were thus able to recover the territory they had lost during the previous colonial advance (National Census, 1869:604).

5.2.1 The advance of the Argentine army

Only after 1860 did military forces start to systematically make incursions into the region to establish the national borders. This process would lead to the creation of the National Territory of Gran Chaco in 1872 which included the current provinces of Chaco and Formosa (Fuscaldo, 1982).

⁹⁸ The importance of the horse in indigenous resistance was made clear by the orders of colonial authorities after the first incursion into the Chaco. For example, when Governor Urizar addressed his troops regarding horses he stated “that they couldn’t be left in the countryside and should be killed so as not to serve the barbarian enemy, as alive they could be weapons used against the Spanish” (Cited in Vitar, 1991).

As a result of the military advance into Chaco and increasing state control, organization in *bandas* started to decline in importance among indigenous groups. The advance of the line of forts created different interethnic alliances, giving rise to the so-called ‘great leaders’. In contrast to their ancestors, these new leaders or *caciques* gathered groups belonging to different tribes and their prestige was increasingly determined by the courage they demonstrated during clashes and by how generously they redistributed wealth among their group (Trincherro, 2007: 209). These ‘great leaders’ also needed to know how to mediate between the different indigenous groups over whom they had influence. This type of interethnic leadership was made clear in the Census of 1869 which stated that:

“They (the main tribes) war among themselves; but not with great zeal, as they understand that they cannot destroy one another, but should unite against the Christians to defend and claim their lands” (National Census 1869:602)

The most important leaders from this period included *Cacique Inglés*, *Cacique Cambá* and Metzgosché of the Qom people, which may have repelled several army incursions into the region⁹⁹ (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Miller, 1979; Sánchez, 2007).

After the formation of these alliances between different indigenous groups, the lines of forts became increasingly inadequate for ensuring state control. In general terms, the forts, which were often poorly equipped and with intermittent lines of communications, were unable to resist indigenous attacks. Furthermore, supplies to these forts depended to some extent on the pacts¹⁰⁰ that officials made with the indigenous people themselves and very often attacks on the forts “seemed to have more to do with broken commercial agreements or non-incursion pacts than elaborate indigenous strategies to attack established positions” (Trincherro, 2007:195).

However, this situation came to an end in 1883 when the national government decided to replace conquest by fort construction with a more offensive military strategy. In addition to the actual conquest of these territories, one of the objectives of these new military campaigns was the

⁹⁹ According to Courdeau and Siffredi (1971), the final battle fought by *Cacique Inglés* occurred in May 1873 in the forests of Napalpi. The final uprising led by Cambá occurred in 1884, while Metzgosché’s last skirmish occurred in January 1885.

¹⁰⁰ The trade that the different indigenous sectors established with the creoles was also recorded in the census of 1869. This states that “[t]he tribes who live close to the towns trade with them, exchanging skins, wax, honey, etc. for axes, knives, spirits and clothing” (1869:602).

elimination of the ‘great leaders’ and the incorporation of these groups as wage labor (Trincheró, 2000:209; Sánchez, 2007:30)¹⁰¹.

In 1884, after the military campaign led by General Victorica, the National Territory of Gran Chaco was divided into two Federal Territories: the National Territory of Formosa and the National Territory of Chaco. The process that started at that time was clearly not just limited to the drawing of borders, but also included the imposition of a new kind of territoriality (Miller, 1979; Fuscaldo, 1982; Trincheró, 2007; Wright, 2008).

5.3 The agro-export model in the National Territory of Chaco (1884-1930)

After the military campaigns, state land in the National Territory of Chaco was divided into extensive sections where large establishments of foreign and/or mixed capital were set up, dedicated to the exploitation of red *quebracho* and sugarcane plantations. The exploitation of *quebracho* and tannin productions were the main productive activities of Chaco until the mid-1920s (Zarrilli, 2000; Valenzuela and Gernaldi, 2004).

Some of the most important firms in this period were the ‘Forestal Land, Timber and Railways Company Ltd’ and the sugar refinery ‘Las Palmas del Chaco Austral’. The ‘Forestal Land, Timber and Railways Company Ltd’ was a company set up with French, German and British capital that established itself in the region in 1906. It grew to occupy a surface area of 2.3 million hectares between the north of Santa Fe Province and Chaco Province. The Forestal also possessed 300km of railways and four ports on the Paraná River (Stunnenberg and Kleinpenning, 1993). ‘Las Palmas’ refinery, meanwhile, was founded in 1909 by the brothers Charles and Richard Hardy from Ireland. In those years the Hardys requested the concession of 100,000 hectares¹⁰² for

¹⁰¹ The last major military campaign, led by General Rostagno, occurred in 1911. One of its main objectives was to incorporate indigenous labor into productive processes, and the army received precise instructions as to how the campaign was to be waged: “Peaceful penetration, the conquest of new regions for colonization, should not degenerate into extermination by starvation of the indigenous person fleeing into Paraguay or Bolivia at the sight of the advancing army they fear so much. It is important that the heads of the regiments ensure the fulfilment of the orders previously issued in this regard, stating that the National Government wants to help the Indians, via their *caciques* who live in the areas governed by current forts or who wander in the area around them, giving them land to cultivate and stating that no aggressive action shall be taken against any who want to work...” (Forces report on operations in Chaco, in Fuscaldo, 1982:52).

¹⁰² At first Richard Hardy requested the concession of 20,000 hectares for ten years; however after the modification of the law on Immigration and Colonization (see chapter 4 section 4.2.2.1) he requested the allocation of 80,000 more hectares. He then formed the company “Hardy and Company” which was sold in 1909 to the firm Las Palmas del Chaco Austral S. A”. Charles Hardy was president of the latter company (Bisio et al., 2010).

the exploitation of sugarcane. However, some years later the owners of the company also expanded into livestock and tannin production (Fuscaldo, 1982; Bisio et al., 2010; Picconi, 2011)¹⁰³. Most of the tannin produced by such firms was exported to Europe and, after the First World War; the United States became the main destination for these exports (Miranda, 1955; Brodersohn and Slutzky, 1978; Fuscaldo, 1982; Stunnenberg and Kleinpenning, 1993; Valenzuela and Gernaldi, 2004; Schaller, 2010).

Both the Las Palmas refinery and the Forestal recruited indigenous people as woodcutters and harvesters. Although both groups participated in both activities, some authors state that in general the Qom were recruited for sugar harvesting while the Moqoit were usually employed for timber work (Fuscaldo, 1982; López 2009). Usually the work was piecemeal and paid for with merchandise. Rarely was a cash wage offered and when it was it was in a currency issued by the refinery or timber company. The small amount that they were paid could only be used to purchase merchandise provided by the company, which increased the company's earnings further (Fuscaldo, 1982; Silva, 1997). These conditions of semi-slavery were endorsed by the national authorities given the great influence these companies had over political and military power in the region¹⁰⁴ (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971). Thus, although the report "The State of the Working Classes in Argentina" written by Biale Masse at the request of the national government in 1904 describes the role and power of these companies as a "small despotic, monarchic state that exists within a democratic republic", their operations were unaffected.

As we shall see in the following chapters, the relationship, domination and oppression to which indigenous peoples were subjected during this period (through exploitative labor policies, the lack of political rights and violation of civil rights etc.) gave rise to a collective memory of the 'everyday tyranny of the state' that is still present today among members of indigenous communities (Nilsen, 2010).

¹⁰³ For the case of central-western Chaco, see Gordillo (1995).

¹⁰⁴ Many saw this exploitation as the only solution to the 'indigenous problem'. For example, the *Colono* newspaper of Resistencia, Chaco, stated in January 1918 that "nothing good can be expected from this savage race, especially if one tries to direct colonization from the offices of Buenos Aires... The Indian of the Chaco knows nothing of agriculture and cannot harvest cereals he doesn't know. These Indians are only good for menial jobs and not because they do them better than other peasants but because they do it for less money... We cannot make mistakes that endanger the progress of the territory for humanitarian reasons. The Indian of the Chaco in his current state is a hindrance to agricultural and livestock colonization" (cited in Giordano, 2003).

5.3.1 *The role of the caciques*

Among the Guaycurús, during the ‘tannin-sugar cycle’ there was a transition from ‘great leaders’ of a military nature to leadership of a more politico-religious nature. After the colonization of Chaco, courage demonstrated in battle became less relevant as a source of legitimacy. In the new political context the increased importance of wage labor, skill in speaking Spanish and the ability to mediate with national authorities and *criollo* patrons made these central elements for the establishment of authority. Thus from this period white people’s processes of legitimization started to function within the community as well. (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Gordillo, 2006; Salamanca, 2006).

The prestige of these leaders in the eyes of the authorities and creole patrons was linked to the number of indigenous people they could recruit and their ability to maintain discipline. In many cases, the national authorities sought to reinforce the power of these leaders by granting them a rank in the security forces¹⁰⁵ (Sánchez, 2007). Within their communities, however, prestige was earned through an ability to demonstrate skills at negotiating working conditions, protecting members from abuse and skill at obtaining and distributing goods to the community (López, 2009).

Some of the most famous *caciques* from this period were Taigoyic, Moreno and Pedro José Nolasco. Both Moreno and Taigoyic belonged to the Qom ethnicity, were *pi’oxonaq* (traditional healers) and both were in charge of recruiting indigenous workers in Chaco and Formosa for the sugar companies. Taigoyic, who earned the nick-name of ‘butler’ from the heads of the refineries, was the man who obtained the land of Pampa del Indio after speaking to President Yrigoyen (Courdeau and Siffredi; 1971; Silva, 1994; Sánchez, 2007 See Ch. 6). In addition to recruiting labour for the Las Palmas refinery, Moreno was tasked with recruiting harvesters at the request of the Governor of Chaco (Courdeau and Siffredi; 1971; Sánchez, 2007).¹⁰⁶ As part of his role of mediator, Pedro José Nolasco was the one who led the mobilization of Mocovis from Vera, Santa Fe, to the Tolderías *paraje* (Ch. 7). It is important to note that these leaders are not remembered

¹⁰⁵ Generally the *caciques* received official uniforms, weapons and travel permits.

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that ‘cooperation’ with the large establishments and national authorities was always unstable. Many of these *caciques* also took part in rebellions and millenarian movements. For example, the Qom *Cacique* Machado, who took part in the Napalpi rebellion, had previously accepted an official post offered by the governor (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971).

negatively but instead are usually praised for their bravery and power, for “speaking forcefully to the whites” (Salamanca, 2006:8)¹⁰⁷.

Although this ‘mediating role’ became established as a source of power and authority, the fact that those who possessed these qualities did not necessarily come from ‘traditional’ families had created a certain crisis of legitimacy within the communities. This is why, as we shall see later on, in the decade 1920-1930, shamanic powers became more relevant as an extra source of legitimacy within these groups. (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Gordillo, 2006).

5.3.2 *The decline of the tannin and sugar cycle in Chaco*

The 1920s saw the decline of the agroexport model linked to tannin and sugar production. The end of this period can partly be explained by the reduction in global demand for tannin as well as the appearance of other curing agents.

Between 1917 and 1918 the National Ministry of Agriculture, run by Tomás Le Breton, who had previously been an ambassador to the United States, started a vociferous campaign to expand cotton production in Chaco. The measures implemented to achieve this included, in particular, the free delivery of seeds imported from the United States and the hiring of foreign technicians to provide training courses in cultivation methods. (Fuscaldo, 1982; Guy, 2000; Mari, 2008; Girbal-Blacha; 2010; Moglia; 2010).

In addition to production supplies and training, this period saw major infrastructural works which contributed significantly to the colonization and establishment of agriculture in the region. In 1914 the railway joined Resistencia to Avia Terai, crossing the central part of Chaco, and in 1931 it linked the entire territory to Taco Pozo (Beck, 1992; Valenzuela and Geraldi, 2004; Schaller, 2010).

The efforts of the national government to encourage cotton cultivation were helped by the significant rise in the international price of cotton in 1923 due to a fall in production in North America. During this period some of the larger companies such as Las Palmas switched to cotton production while others such as La Forestal started to sell parcels of land to contractors and

¹⁰⁷ A Qom tale reproduced by Salamanca, portrays Taigoyic as a brave, confrontational *cacique*: “In the forest there were two men with natural power. One showed a gun [to Taygoyi] and the other seeds and they asked him: ‘Which do you want?’ He took the gun and said: ‘This is all I need.’” (2006: 17-18)

administrators, giving rise to a new strata of family establishments (Guy, 2000; Zarrilli, 2000; Valenzuela and Gerarldi, 2004).

In a short period of time the growing number of agricultural colonies created growing demand for labor. This led, in 1924, a group of colonists to present a request to the government asking that the migration of indigenous peoples be prohibited definitively (Trinchero, 2007). Similarly, the *Asociación de Fomento y Defensa del Chaco* (Association for the Encouragement and Defense of Chaco) sent a request to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1926 in which it called for:

“taking all appropriate measures to adapt the Indigenous to civilized life, making him a useful element in cotton harvests, stabilizing him, i.e. allocating him reserves in such a way that he can give up the nomadic life and providing those who are so trained with land for crops (...)” (Gaceta Algodonera, 28 of February, 1926 in Girbal-Blacha, 2010:44)

In response to these petitions the authorities of the National Territory of the Chaco issued a decree that prohibited the hiring of indigenous labor outside of the Territory. As these new regulations sought to ensure that they would carry out agricultural work, indigenous people were not only obliged to remain within the province, but they were also prevented from selling unmarked animal hides. After this, in accordance with the rural code, indigenous people started to be prosecuted for cattle rustling. Thus harvest work and cotton picking became the only alternative (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Miller, 1979).

5.3.3 *The millenarian movements*

All these changes in the region, plus the terrible working conditions and the inability to migrate, which did not just prevent indigenous people from seeking better wages but also reduced the *caciques*' ability to negotiate and thus their legitimacy, led to the rise of millenarian movements (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Miller, 1979; Grodillo, 2006; Wright, 2008).

One of the most important millenarian movements in the territory of Chaco was the Napalpí Rebellion¹⁰⁸. Napalpí was the name of a reserve founded by the national state in 1911 where around 700 indigenous people of the Qom, Moqoit and Vilela ethnicities were forced to settle.

¹⁰⁸ Napalpí means 'The place of the dead'. The origin of the name comes from a traditional Qom folktale. The account tells of a Qom woman who marries a Moqoit man, but when the rest of the Moqoit family refuses to accept her, the woman violates an important rule, arousing the anger of *araxanaq late'e* who brought up a storm so large that the earth opened up, killing many members of the community (Chico and Fernandez, 2011).

Until 1915 the activities of the reservation were focused on lumber, but later it became an important center for cotton production. Napalpí functioned as follows: the administration provided the indigenous people with a temporary title to the land where they settled and obliged them to hand over 15% of their production to the administration to pay for the working tools and maintenance of roads inside the reservation (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1979, Martínez Sarasola, 1992; Chico and Fernández, 2011).

In 1923 the administration decided to reduce the wages of indigenous people still further, retaining 10% more of the price of a ton of cotton for transportation costs (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Chico and Fernández, 2011). This was the year that the indigenous people started to meet¹⁰⁹ in an area known as the ‘Island of Ahuará’ (Miller, 1979). The indigenous leaders of this movement were José Machado and Dionisio Gómez, who were Qom, and the *Caciques* Pedro Maidana, Mercedes Dominga and Miguel Duran, who were Moqoit. These leaders claimed that they could communicate with dead shamans of the past. According to their accounts, these ‘voices’ said that they must stop working and announced that a time of plenty was coming when dead indigenous people would rise again (Miller, 1979; Martínez Sarasola, 1992; Gordillo, 2006).

In May 1924, guided by these voices, the leaders¹¹⁰ started to organize attacks and robberies in the surrounding white colonies. The leader-shamans convinced their followers that the moment had come for confrontation with white people, that bullets wouldn’t hurt them and that they had nothing to fear. The increase of these attacks and the murder of two colonists resulted in an increased police presence and culminated on the 24th July 1924 with the massacre of over 200 indigenous people (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971, Martínez Sarasola, 1992; Gordillo, 2006).

Many of the indigenous people who managed to survive escaped into the bush, where they hid for several weeks, forbidden from returning to their land. Some of them migrated to other areas. This was true of Pedro Valquinta, the last survivor of the massacre, who settled in the Las Tolderías *paraje* (see Chapter 7).

¹⁰⁹ Elmer Miller (1979) in his research into the events of Napalpí states that the experience of resistance of the indigenous workers at the Las Palmas refinery, through which they achieved an eight hour working day, may have influenced the decision of indigenous people to resist the unequal pay they were receiving (the administration paid them \$194 per ton of cotton, while it paid creoles \$250) and other exploitative conditions.

¹¹⁰ Cordeu and Siffredi (1971) note that differences and disputes occurred between the Moqoit and Qom leaders.

In the years after the massacre of Napalpí there were two more uprisings with similar characteristics. The first of these occurred in the area of Pampa del Indio in 1933, which was led by Tapanaik. This Qom leader, although he wasn't considered a shaman, claimed that he could see the future. In these visions Tapanaik said that he foresaw the arrival of planes filled with goods. This would not only put an end to the scarcity of supplies they were currently experiencing but would also mark the start of an era of abundance. Meanwhile his followers, to prepare for this new era, were to avoid the consumption of all foods that came from the land, thus prohibiting agriculture (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Martínez Sarasola, 1992).

The next movement, known as the Zapallar movement, occurred between 1935 and 1937 in the area now known as General San Martín. This uprising, led by the shaman Natochí, included both Qom and Moqoit groups. It championed the resurgence of ancient practices, urged people to leave their work in the farms and prohibited contact with the creole population. Natochí didn't just claim to have power over storms because he was the son of thunder and lightning, he also said that he could transmit power to his followers through the use of sticks (Martínez Sarasola, 1992; Tamagno, 2008; López, 2009).

Like the Napalpí uprising both movements gathered large numbers of people attracted by the leaders, aggravating the lack of food in the settlements, which in turn led to attacks on nearby farms. These events then created fear and anger among the creole population who subsequently campaigned for an intensification of security efforts by the state. The Zapallar and Pampa del Indio movements were quickly ended through the imprisonment and subsequent murder of their leader, as with Tapanaik, or when the leader fled, as with Natochí (Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Miller, 1979).

The millenarian movements in the Chaco region were significant moments of indigenous resistance to the demands and conditions imposed upon them by the capitalist model which obliged them to abandon the nomadic life and reduced them to semi-slavery in the works, colonies and refineries (Tamagno, 2008). Their defeats have had lasting consequences on the internal politics of these communities¹¹¹. As a Qom I interviewed in Pampa del Indio noted:

¹¹¹ It is important to note that the Napalpí and Zapallar massacres were denied for many years. The Napalpí massacre was recognized by Law 6.171 in 2008, which established the 19th July as the Day of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Chaco. The massacre of Zapallar was recognized by the provincial state, which established, through the passing of Law 7.403, the 9th

“One doesn’t forget that the *caciques* were the ones who began the story [of the struggle]. They were great leaders, but one must also emphasize their weakness in the end, negotiating and then being left without power. That is over. Today the leaders are of a different kind.” (2012).

5.4 ‘White Gold’ Chaco 1930-1980

After the economic crisis of 1929 and the collapse of the national agro-export model, agricultural activity took a more dynamic turn in the National Territory of the Chaco. Nationally, the surface area of land planted with cotton rose from 2,349 hectares in 1914 to 375,460 hectares in 1937, of which 78.5% were located in Chaco (National Agricultural Census, 1937). This increase in cotton production after 1930 was due to the increasing demand of the textile industry, which expanded rapidly as part of the import-substitution model of industrialization (Guy, 2000).

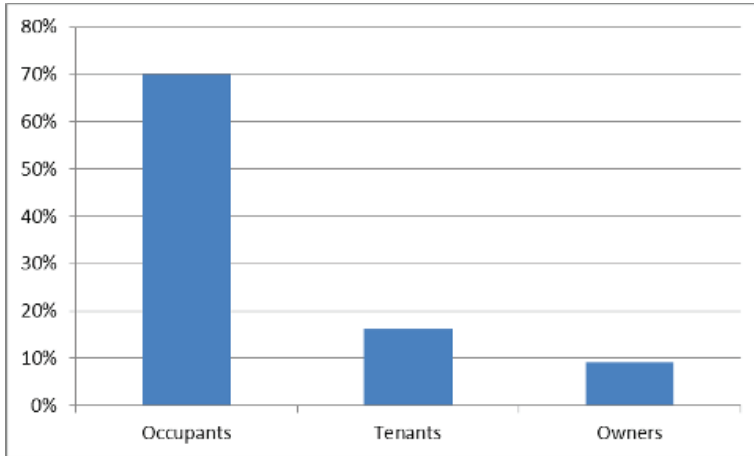
The conversion of Chaco into the ‘cotton capital’ of Argentina represented a new form of territorial occupation which, as I mentioned above, had started to be implemented by the state at the beginning of the 1920s (Fuscaldo, 1982; Mari, 2008; Girbal-Blacha; 2010; Moglia; 2008). This approach promoted the formation of agricultural colonies on state land, where it was mainly immigrants from Europe and creoles from neighbouring provinces who came to settle (Guy,2000). Generally these colonies were made up of small farms with lots between 25 and 50 hectares in size, characterized by: “...a relatively low level of investment in machinery... the direct work of the colonist.... (and) the use of paid labor for planting and harvest work...” (Iñigo Carrera 2010: 151-153).

As the number of settlers was greater than expected and the state was slow to measure the lands, precarious tenancy became common practice in the region (Mari, 2008; Gómez, 2009). Usually, the delay in the Department of Land to deliver titles was attributed to the combination of a lack of staff and centralized decision making in Buenos Aires (Schaller, 2010).

September as a Day of Provincial Mourning in commemoration of the event (Infojus, 2014; Infoleg, 2014). The law also ordered the placement of a memorial plaque on a tree where the massacre occurred.

Figure N°. 2

Categorization of settlers in Chaco 1947



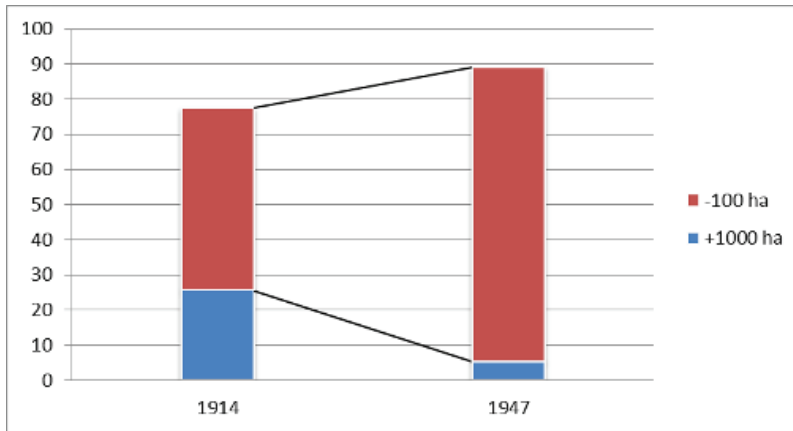
Source: My own table based on data from the National Agricultural Census of 1947

In addition to the immigrants and creole colonists, certain indigenous groups also joined the category of ‘small farmers’. As small farmers they produced from small parcels of land and also continued to be hired as seasonal workers to carry out planting and harvest work (Moglia, 2008). These indigenous farmers could be sorted into three categories: the ‘*colono*’, who was indigenous, trained in agriculture and received a temporary title to the land; the ‘*agregados*’ who were indigenous groups who arrived subsequently, received a temporary title to the land and were relocated to lots already allocated to other indigenous families; and the ‘*tanteros*’ who carried out seasonal work on these farms (Fuscaldo, 1982:62; Beck, 1994).

In 1950 agricultural, mixed colonies took up a surface area of 44,000 km², or the equivalent of 44% of the entire province (Valenzuela and Scavo, 2009:45). A few years later, most of the territory of Chaco had already been set aside for agricultural production.

Figure N°. 3

Chaco: Representation of the size of farms in percentages.



Source: My own table using the National Agricultural Censuses¹¹² (Valenzuela and Gernaldi, 2004)

Although cotton production was in the hands of small producers, warehousing and sale were carried out by large companies that had moved there in the second half of the 1920s. These included Bunge & Born Ltda., Louis Dreyfus y Cia Ltda. S.A, and Anderson Clayton S.A, among others (Moglia, 2008; Girbal-Blacha, 2010). The monopoly power these companies had was the cause of several conflicts during this period. The producers' main issues focussed on the high transport costs they had to pay to take the cotton to be picked, the low price they got for their produce and also the lack of titles to the land (Mari, 2008; Barri, 2009).

In this context the national government promoted the strengthening and expansion of cotton cooperatives in Chaco¹¹³. Through this policy the government tried to reduce the cost of mediation and increase production to benefit incipient national industry. These measures also helped to increase popular support and achieve greater social control. By 1950 cooperative entities already represented more than 50% of producers (Moglia, 2008; Girbal-Blacha, 2010:53).

¹¹² It is important to note that National Agricultural Censuses tend to underestimate the degree of concentration of the land as the census only counts farms as units. In other words, these statistics do not identify cases when a single producer owns more than one farm (Rosati, 2012).

¹¹³ Although this type of organization expanded markedly in the mid-40s, the history of cooperatives in Chaco goes back to the 19th century. The first cooperatives were formed in the Margarita Belén, Colonia Popular and Colonia Benitez colonies. In the mid-1920s, the state granted legal status to the cooperatives through Law 11.388. In 1934 the Union of Chaqueñan Agricultural Cooperatives was created, which included 12 cooperatives in that territory (Moglia, 2008; Girbal-Blacha, 2010).

5.4.1 From National Territory to Province

In addition to the changes mentioned above caused by the consolidation of the cotton model, another important change occurred in 1951. In that year, after the passing of Law 14.037, the National Territory of Chaco was granted the status of a province under the name Presidente Perón Province. That institutional change meant, among other things, that the population could elect their own local authorities, and it thus attracted political parties.

The transformation of Chaco into a province also resulted in the rise of a provincial bureaucracy. The most important body in the new local bureaucracy related to the indigenous population would be the 'Dirección Provincial de Acción Agraria y Colonización para la Readaptación del Indígena' (Provincial Department for Agricultural and Colonization Activity for the Re-adaptation of Indigenous People). According to the decree establishing the Department, it was to "foster the support of the Aborigine and ensure their incorporation into the Argentine citizenry" (Decree No. 460/54 cited in Giordano, 2003).

Throughout the cotton-producing period, indigenous peoples started to participate in political parties and to channel their demands through the different institutions. It is interesting, for example, to observe that while in the previous period the files containing requests for help from the national authorities were initiated by people from outside the communities, subsequently it became common practice for indigenous people themselves to initiate files with requests for seeds and other tools from provincial authorities. I will transcribe three of these as examples¹¹⁴.

As we shall see below the first two files correspond to the period prior to provincialization. The main difference between them is the person acting as the applicant. The transcripts show that while the first file was opened by a trader from Pampa del Indio, the second file, which was opened during the first Peronist government, was opened by Cacique Martínez.

1) "Pampa Del Indio, July 16/1941

To the President of the Honorary Commission for Indian Reservations,
Buenos Aires

I have the honour of addressing the distinguished President in order to request help for the indigenous population in this region of the National Territory of Chaco.

¹¹⁴The annex contains photos of the files. The originals can be seen in the Monseñor José Alumni Historical Provincial Archive in Resistencia

Mr. President: With regard to the efficient work carried out by the commission to benefit the indigenous peoples of the Republic: As I have stated, this area is extensively populated by them but they lack official support such as agricultural loans and other benefits, privileges that the other colonists do enjoy, said colonists numbering at least 50, contributing to the progress of the Territory and thus the Nation.

It is sad, Mr. President, to witness the poverty that reigns in the absence of this support, which is aggravated by the lack of commercial loans due to the continuous failure of harvests.

It would be praiseworthy if your respectable personage could influence the appropriate persons to provide cotton and maize seeds and also agricultural tools.

Said need is essential and urgent and it would be greatly beneficial to satisfy it by the next planting season.

For your information: in this area, between 150 and 200 hectares can be planted.

The planting in question can be carried out between August and September of each year.

In anticipation of a favorable response, I salute Mr. President with all due respect. Luis Dojas.”

2) “September 1946

The undersigned, Cacique and spokesman for *the Toba tribe of this territory*, addresses his Excellency the Governor of the Territory and any relevant intermediary, requesting the necessary cotton seeds and insecticide for planting and defence of the lands duly granted to us by the Upper Government of the Nation. We attach the list of colonists. With nothing further to add, we salute his Excellency the Governor very sincerely.” The document ends with the signature of Cacique Martínez and his fingerprint.

The third of the three files was presented by another Qom group from Pampa del Indio in September 1957. By this time, the Perón government had been overthrown by a military coup (see Chap. 4, Section 4.4.3) In this file, the indigenous people state the following:

3) “The undersigned *Argentine citizens* of Toba origin settled on state land in the jurisdiction of 10 de Mayo, Pampa Chica and Pampa Grande respectfully address the Inspector in order to request the free delivery of 5 or 6 metric tonnes of cotton seeds as we are entirely lacking in resources to pay for them. We wish to make clear to your Excellency that *we are entirely lacking in official support, which is to say that we do not belong to any group supported by the Government with land, work equipment, seeds, etc.* We wish to make clear to the Inspector that the help that we hope will be successfully granted, and we have no doubt that it will be, would serve to alleviate our struggle, and make us eternally grateful to the government for what it means to our humble economies” (my own emphasis).

As can be seen in the last case, with the intention of requesting ‘help’, the Qom decided to differentiate themselves from the group that had been supporters of the government and emphasized their status as Argentine citizens over their ethnic identity, promising their support to

the new authorities in exchange for the help. Noting these actions is not in any way to ignore the power relationships in which they were involved but rather to emphasize that these practices are far from being mere impositions and constitute an integral part of the political strategies of these groups (Arenas, 2003; Gordillo, 2009).

The bureaucratization process would also continue after the fall of the Peronist government, when the military regime decided to decentralize policy related to the indigenous populations (Bray, 1989). In 1956 the Department was replaced by the 'Dirección del Aborigen' (Aborigine Department) whose main policy was to assist indigenous people in cotton production. Thus, subsidies, tools and seeds were distributed and the organization also started to encourage greater mechanization of indigenous production, distributing tractors and providing technical training programs that were continuously monitored by state agencies (Bray, 1989; Miller, 2002). So during the 'cotton cycle' a new relationship was established between the state and the indigenous communities, which would give rise to memories of inclusion and dependence, as we shall see in the following chapters.

In addition, it is worth noting that the conversion of Chaco to a province also meant that state lands, which up until then had been administered by the national state, became part of the resources of the province. This change in the state land regime was established in the first provincial constitution, which determined that the provincial state was from that moment charged with

“administering the purpose, distribution and management of rural land and forest in order to develop and improve its performance in the interests of the community and to help each rural producer or family of rural producers to purchase the land on which they work” (Art. 3).

According to this law, the land was to be subdivided so that each plot, depending on the quality of the land, its location, etc. be large enough for a family establishment. The new guidelines also established that its receptors could not subdivide it or grant concessions to it to companies or other for-profit enterprises.

In accordance with national policies, the provincial government carried out a number of expropriations to continue with the creation of agricultural colonies. One example of this policy is the expropriation of in 1954 of the livestock enterprise Comega. 8,741 hectares were expropriated from this firm, which took up 70,000 hectares overall on the banks of the Bermejo

river. The government used it in an attempt to create a cooperative administered by indigenous groups (Moglia, 2008). By 1960 80% of occupied parcels were no larger than 100 hectares and 55% of registered producers worked on state land as occupants (Beck, 1992; Schaller, 2010).

5.4.2 Syncretic Movements

After the defeat of the millenarian movements it was not just party-political relations that became more important within indigenous communities; Evangelical churches also took on more significance¹¹⁵ (Gordillo, 1995; Miller, 2008).

The first mission to arrive in Chaco was the Emmanuel mission, whose headquarters were established in the area of El Espinillo in 1934. Then, in 1942, the Go Ye Pentecostal mission run by John Lagar arrived in Resistencia. And just a year later the Mennonite Mission to the Chaco was formed, which founded the Nam Cum mission in Roque Sáenz Peña (Miller, 2002). It is important to note that, in contrast to previous religious missions, the evangelical missions did not settle within indigenous communities, but in ‘creole territories’¹¹⁶ (Wright, 2008 and Ceriani and Citro, 2005; Salamanca, 2006; Altman and López, 2011).

The Evangelical missions¹¹⁷ fulfilled an important role in these groups, not only in religious but also political terms. In addition to religious instruction, these centers also gave classes of Spanish and agricultural training. They also provided clinical nursing care and legal advice for the obtainment of titles to property (Miller, 2002; Ceriani and Citro, 2005). To a certain extent evangelist preaching encouraged the assimilation of indigenous leaders with *doqshi* (*white/criollo*)¹¹⁸ society by rejecting the past and traditional practices (Salamanca, 2006). This in turn

¹¹⁵ Significant research on the impact of Evangelical churches in the Chaco region includes Cordeu and Siffredi, 1971; Wright, 1992; 2007, 2008; Miller, 1979, 2002; Tamagno, 2008; Altman, 2011; López and Altman, 2012. The research of Ceriani Cernadas (2005) into the influence of Mormons and Evangelicals should also be mentioned.

¹¹⁶ Currently, tales about journeys to contact a political or religious authority are often used to emphasize the voluntary nature of the adoption of certain practices and values. As we shall see in the next few chapters, when discussing agricultural work and their conversion by the Evangelicals it is common to hear that “they were the ones who decided to change” (see Ch. 7).

¹¹⁷ Authors such as Miller (1979) and Ceriani and Citro (2005) also state that the success of the Pentecostal church among the Qom can be explained by the similarity between certain characteristics of Pentecostal doctrine that could be easily assimilated by the Qom. In particular they refer to the charismatic aspects and the direct contact with the supernatural. According to these authors Pentecostalism allowed these groups to adapt the symbols of the new religion to the traditional vision of the world.

¹¹⁸ However, it should also be remembered that Evangelical Protestantism is not the largest religion in Argentina. It could, in fact, be described as a ‘peripheral’ religion emerging principally from contacts with foreigners rather than creole colonists in the region (Ceriani and Citro, 2005; Altman and López, 2011).

perfectly expressed the national policy of the time, which strove for the ‘integration’¹¹⁹ of these groups. In addition, indigenous people took on different roles in Evangelical churches (pastor, secretary, porter, etc.) that gave them experience with bureaucratic-administrative tasks. (Salamanca, 2006).

The increasing influence of *evangelismo*¹²⁰ and also the increased presence of political parties, resulted in another reconfiguration of leaderships. Now, power depended on belonging to a church and a political party (Gordillo, 2006; Altman, 2011). One of the most important examples of this kind of leadership is perhaps that of the *cacique* Pedro Martínez, a Qom from Pampa del Indio. His leadership was based on his relationship with Perón and his link to the Pentecostal Church of God. It was on a journey to Buenos Aires, organized to ask the national president for titles to land in Pampa del Indio that Martínez met Marcos Mazzuco, the head of the Pentecostal Church of God (Miller, 1979, Ceriani and Citro, 2005; Ceriani, 2005). In addition to obtaining property titles and a military uniform from Perón, Martínez obtained a permit to hold religious public assemblies. It was obtaining these documents that conferred authority on Martínez and he was allowed to travel through the province establishing new churches. Accounts say that many people believed that it was Perón himself who had given him the task of setting up these local congregations (Miller, 1979; Ceriani and Citro, 2005).

Martínez’s *evangelismo*, like that of other pastors, encouraged settlement and work on the farm, and also urged avoiding alcoholic drinks.

“That Pedro Martínez had a cult, he also preached to follow the path of the Lord, all that and everything... that you have to have a farm, work the land, grow everything... and not be lazy... to work... you had to work, so you’ll have more things... that was what he preached... everyone respected him... because he dressed like a boss” (interview with Qom residents by Vuoto, 1986).

By 1954 more than 22 Pentecostal Churches of God had been founded in Chaco. However, some time later, due to the lack of help from the central headquarters in Buenos Aires and the growing

¹¹⁹ As Giordano (2003) says, the concept of ‘integration’ was a ‘reformulation’ of the concept of ‘incorporation’ that had governed the official discourse in the 1920s and 30s, referring to the indigenous solely in terms of labor. ‘Integration’ was a more wide-ranging concept that, although the concept of work was at its center, also included these groups’ land rights, education and access to other social benefits.

¹²⁰ ‘*Evangelismo*’ has become a word used to describe religious affiliation, regardless of the specific church in question (Ceriani Cernadas, 2005).

differences between indigenous leaders, many decided to leave this church and form their own congregations. Faced with this break-up, the Mennonite Board of Missions decided to change its strategy and sent two missionaries with training in anthropology to study the Qom language and culture and evaluate the missionary activity in Chaco. These missionaries, William and Mary Reyburn, advised abandoning the previous strategy and contributing to the formation of a Toba church. Essentially, they decided to encourage and accompany the indigenous people's own interpretation of *evangelismo*¹²¹. From that moment on, more traditional missions began to disappear and United Evangelical Church bases were set up, which would have a vast influence in Chaco from the 1960s onwards (Ceriani and Citro, 2005; Altman, 2011; Altman and Lopez, 2011). It is important to note that in southwest Chaco, where the Moqoit groups settled, evangelical churches only arrived in 1970, brought by the Qom (López, 2009).

5.5 The Green Desert

5.5.1 *The beginning of neoliberalism*

In the 1960s the first symptoms of the crisis of cotton production were beginning to be felt. This was partly due to increased use of synthetic fibres and the industry's heavy reliance on state support. Although many producers tried to face up to the crisis by diversifying production, this was not a planned strategy and the possibilities of conversion depended to a great extent on scale. So, many small producers had to sell or rent their farms, leading to a rural exodus (Valenzuela, 2006).

The policies implemented by the military government after 1976 worsened the rural crisis. In 1977, Land Law No. 2107 was passed which established the status of 'intruder' for de facto occupants. It also stated that the 'intruders' would be evicted from state lands and that they had no rights to any improvements that had been introduced (Rozé, 2007).

In the official strategy, small farms were to be replaced and cooperatives transformed into efficient agricultural companies (Rozé, 2004). So during the 1976/77 season minimum prices were eliminated and producers were encouraged to take out loans to improve their farms and achieve the competitiveness made necessary by the deregulation of the sector. Within a short

¹²¹ The transcription of religious texts into vernacular languages caused a transformation of languages such as Moqoit and Qom into written languages, constituting a fundamental tool for contemporary resistance movements and producing a space for an increasingly bureaucratic-legal struggle.

space of time the high interest rates and low international prices ensured that debtors owed far more than they were able to repay (Valenzuela, 2006; Rozé 2007).

The objectives of the new government regarding agriculture were summarized by Bénédict, the Minister of Industrial Development, when he said that:

“The structure and dynamic of our sector will be much more similar to the more modern developed countries than the *campesino* sectors of less developed countries. Our producers will become like the farmers and mid-sized producers of Canada and the United States; highly mechanized, technologically advanced owners, using intensive production methods, grouping together for the sale of their products” (El Territorio, Resistencia, 22-4-1978, in Rozé, 2007).

The cotton crisis was also closely linked to the crisis in the textile industry that occurred after the industrialization by import substitution model was abandoned as part of the subsequent opening up of the economy. So during the 1970s and 1980s the fall in internal demand for cotton contributed to the increased debts of small and mid-sized producers, thus aggravating the process of land hoarding (Valenzuela, 2006).

5.5.1.1 The land problem

In formal terms, after the return of democracy in 1983, Law 2107 was withdrawn and replaced with Law 2913, which established a new regime for state land and gave rise to the Colonization Institute. This law sought to regularize occupations and implement land re-organization. It states that the allocation of land should, among other things, help the occupants to settle, eradicate migration and encourage the integration of aboriginal peoples into society (Art. 6). Once the land had been allocated, the beneficiaries had to make rational use of the land, being prohibited from renting, sub-letting, letting out to sharecroppers, tenants or coming to any other form of agreement for the exploitation of the land (Art. 29, section E). In the event of a violation, the Colonization Institute would be able to rescind the allocation (Art. 32).

The law further stated that it was the task of the Colonization Institute to survey, sub-divide and register state land so that the farms would be able to produce enough to ensure the prosperity of the families using it (Art.8).

However, in practice, these objectives were not met and from the mid-1990s there was a massive sell-off of state land to commercial and intermediary companies, leading to the creation of large

estates (Grupo de Estudios sobre Ecología Política, Comunidades y Derechos, 2009; Domínguez, 2013). Information provided by the Colonization Institute shows that of the 3,500,000 hectares of state land the province owned in 1994, only 650,000 were left in December 2007 (Domínguez, 2009).

These events were denounced by several social actors, who claimed that state land had not just been sold in an irregular manner, violating the social provisions of the law, but that it had also been done at derisory prices as low as \$1.14 per hectare (Agroar, 2008; Zarrilli, 2008; Szlutsky, 2011). After these reports, the Colonization Institute was taken over by the state.

5.5.2 The 'soybeanization' of Chaco

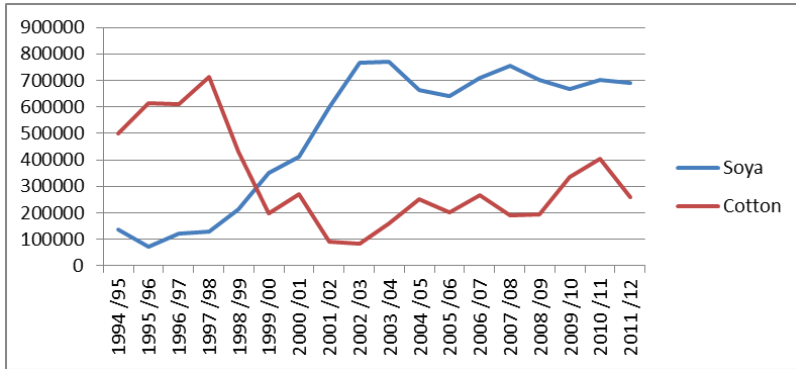
The irregular sale of state land in Chaco occurred at the same time as soybeans started to be planted in the region, after the so-called “Cotton Spring”.

After several years during which cotton production fell, in the middle of the 1990s a ‘Cotton Spring’ took place, led by mid-sized and large producers who made use of the credit that was available in the first stage of convertability (see previous chapter, 4.4.2) to modernize their farms. This occurred within a context of unrestricted openness to imports and the regional integration of Mercosur, in which Brazil was the main destination, absorbing 80% of this production. However, the ‘Cotton Spring’ ended in 1998 due to a sharp fall in the price of the fibre, leaving many of the mid-sized producers with establishments smaller than 200 hectares deeply in debt (Valenzuela and Scavo, 2009).

After that, the surface area planted with cotton reduced drastically from 71% of the cultivated surface area in the 1997/98 season to just 9.9% in the 2000/01 season. The surface area planted with soybeans, in contrast, exhibited a trend of constant growth, rising from 8.7% to 51% (MAGyP, 2013; Barri, 2009). Soybeans as a crop were to become increasingly important from the 1996 season in particular, after the use of RR soybeans was approved (see previous chapter, 4.4.2.1).

Figure N°. 4.

Chaco: Development of surface area planted with cotton and soybeans.



Source: My own table based on data from MAGyP (2013)

Thus, in just a few years Chaco ceased to be a center of cotton production and switched to the production of cash crops, in which transgenic soybeans and more recently rice became dominant.

Soybean production required a significant amount of capital and also implied an increasing loss of autonomy on the part of producers, with their dependence on technical advice for the proper implementation of the ‘technological package’ (Valenzuela and Scavo; 2009). In this new context, many creoles had to sell their land to large producers as they couldn’t achieve the economies of scale or amass the capital needed for the new form of production.

Similarly, during this period many indigenous people migrated to the urban centres of Chaco and those in other provinces such as Santa Fe and Buenos Aires¹²². Meanwhile, the majority of those who stayed in rural areas could only find work clearing land for the large estates to produce soybeans.

¹²² According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), of the Qom population recorded at a national level between 2004 and 2005, 45% no longer lived with their community, the majority of these having migrated for work reasons. In the case of the Moqoit people, this figure is 44% of its members (Complementary Survey of Indigenous People, INDEC, 2005).

Table N° 4

CNA	Number of farms	Farms with defined boundaries		Farms without defined boundaries
		Number	Surface area	
1988	21,284	17,595	5,324,518.1	3,689
2002	16,898	15,694	5,899,731.8	1,204
2008	15,749	14,364	5,632,746	1,385

Source: My own table developed using INDEC data.

5.5.2.1 Rural consortia

Against a background of increasing complaints about the sale of state land, the deforestation brought about by soybean planting and the PEA launched by the national government to improve its relationship with the agrarian sectors (see Ch. 4, section 4.4.3.1), the Institute for Rural Development and Family Agriculture was created in the province and the Law of Rural Producer Consortia was passed. The rural services consortia are associative structures of small producers, with at least 25 members, for the provision of services (agricultural labor, supplies and sale). This new law (6547) attempted to improve production in the farms of small producers (both criollo and indigenous peoples). The Sub-department of Family Agriculture would, together with INTA, be entrusted with giving training courses for small producers and also hand out loans and special subsidies.

According to these new guidelines, the training courses would take place through the selection of “community leaders”, creating a new hierarchy within the groups. As we shall see in the next few chapters, these new forms of organization would create new power relationships and tensions within the communities.

5.5.3 Indigenous politics under neoliberalism

The neoliberal period also brought about the consolidation of indigenous bureaucracy. A few years before the military coup in 1976, René Sotelo was designated to run the Aborigine Institute¹²³. Under his directorship the institute tried to continue with the incentivization of cotton production in indigenous communities, promoting the mechanization of production and encouraging the formation of community commissions. As Carlos Benedetto, who succeeded

¹²³ The Department of the Aborigine was created in 1956 and in 1963 it was transformed into the Aborigine Institute. In 1977 it was changed to the Department of the Chaqueñan Aborigine (see modifications to Law 970).

Sotelo after his death in 1981, remembers, after the military coup in 1976 the de facto authorities tried to transfer indigenous affairs to the municipalities and close the institute. Although René Sotelo, together with some Qom leaders such as Nieves Ramírez¹²⁴, managed to keep the Institute running, budget cuts prevented them from continuing with their projects (interview, 2012).

After 1983, with the return of democracy, the Department of the Aborigine, now run by Carlos Benedetto, started to encourage meetings with indigenous communities to develop a project for a new Law of the Aborigine. Benedetto recalls:

“That process was discussed a lot, there was a lot of confrontation and disagreement between the different indigenous groups. Some were very resistant to modifying the law because it was going to undermine their power, their leadership. We met in the spiritual retreat of the Sáenz Peña Catholic Church for a week. Leaders from Charata and all the colonies, Wichí, Toba, and Mocoví, were all there. Logically the Wichís, like the Toba and the Mocoví sometimes, started to speak in their own language, others were left out and we had to harmonize the internal discussions, but a lot of things were agreed upon...” (2012)

After reaching an agreement, the Department of the Aborigine and community leaders held the first large demonstration in the provincial capital in May 1987 (Bray, 1989). Eventually, that year saw the passing of the Law of the Chaqueñan Aborigine. This new law (3258) dissolved the Department of the Chaqueñan Aborigine (D. Ch. A.) and created the Institute of the Chaqueñan Aborigine (IDACH) as an autonomous entity. The main differences included the fact that at IDACH all the posts had to be occupied by members of indigenous communities, with people from outside able to play only temporary roles. According to the law IDACH had to be run by a board and an advisory council. The directors were to be made up of a President, two spokespeople and two replacements from each ethnic group. The President is chosen by a simple majority in an election involving the three ethnic group. The spokespeople and substitutes are chosen the same way, but only the members of each ethnic group participate in these votes. Meanwhile, the advisory council is appointed by the board (see Law 3258, Chapter VIII, Art. 26-31). As we shall see in Chapter 7 the way these authorities are elected is a controversial point among these communities.

As the representative of the indigenous communities before the state, IDACH is in charge, among other things, of:

¹²⁴ Nieves Ramírez was the first Qom to take a seat in the Provincial Chamber of Deputies.

- a) processing the granting of legal status to communities;
- b) developing and applying policies, plans and programs aimed fostering the comprehensive development of indigenous communities;
- c) encouraging the provision of land;
- d) providing scientific, technical, legal administrative and economic help;
- e) providing low-interest loans to improve levels of production and sale; and
- f) monitoring the enforcement of applicable labor laws, and assisting indigenous peoples in labor disputes (see Law 3258, Chapter VII, Article 25).
- g) To carry out these functions, IDACH assigns annual budget segments from the budget allocated to it by the provincial administration and also, on certain occasions, the funds from special laws, subsidies and contributions made by the national government and international sources.

The Law of the Chaqueñan Aborigine also covers issues related to education, culture, health, housing and land. In the latter area, the law states that a requirement for the provision of land is the formation of civil associations, cooperatives and mutual partnerships with legal personhood. The regulation also states that the land must be situated in a location inhabited by the community, but if necessary land in nearby areas can also be allocated. Finally, the law states that the allocation should be understood as “historic reparation” and cannot be “embargoed, transferred or rented to third parties or form part of any guarantee” (see Law 3258, Chapter II, Art. 11).

With regard to culture and education, the Qom, Wichi and Moqoit cultures and languages are recognized as part of the cultural heritage of the province. To achieve this objective the formation and incorporation of indigenous teachers was proposed (see Law 3258, Chapter III). All these rights were also recognized in the provincial constitution of 1994¹²⁵.

¹²⁵ The provincial constitution states that “The province recognizes the pre-existence of the indigenous peoples, their ethnic and cultural identity, and the legal status of their communities and organizations; it promotes their involvement through their own institutions; the immediate ownership by the community of the land that they traditionally occupy and that which has been granted as reserves. They will be provided with all that necessary and sufficient for their human development, which will be supplied as historic reparations, for free, and will be exempt of any debt. They cannot be embargoed, proscribed, divided or transferred to third parties. The State will ensure: A) Bilingual and intercultural education. B) Participation in the protection, preservation, recovery of natural resources and other interests that affect them and their sustainable development. C) Their socio-economic progress with suitable plans. D) The creation of a special registry of indigenous communities and organizations” (Art.37).

In general terms it could be argued that at present the spaces of power have multiplied with the main paths of access to leadership being politics, religion and professionalism. As we will see in the next chapter there are two kinds of leaders: community leaders and representatives before the state. The representatives of IDACH, although they have legitimacy with the state, are often questioned at a local level. At the community level, the leaders are usually linked to a political party and/or a church. In contrast to previous decades the link between indigenous people and political parties is not just reduced to affiliation or activism (Hirsch, 2003). In Chaco, as in other provinces, some indigenous leaders have come to form sub-factions within one of the main political parties, such as the Bloque Justicialista, Indígena y Popular within the PJ.

It is important to note that the significance of evangelical churches in these communities continues to rise. The crucial point here is that this involvement, like the previous instances, is not just religious in nature but also provides spaces for the discussion of economic and political questions. They also form part of international religious networks, and are thus important means of access to material and financial resources.

Finally, the creation of programs for the training of indigenous health agents and indigenous teachers, as part of the terms of the reform of the provincial constitution, has given rise to new spaces of power within the communities. In these cases these are not just positions of power earned through knowledge or official recognition, but also because many of the state and NGO programs and plans call for the participation of these actors as a precondition for their implementation.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

In these pages, I have tried to show how the pattern of domination and subalternity in Chaco Province has changed. To do so I briefly described the ways of life of the Guaycurú people before the conquest and the transformations to their organization and leadership that came with the advance of the Argentine army.

I then analysed how during the period when the agro-export model held sway, indigenous communities were subject to oppression and exploitation at the hands of the owners of tannin and sugar establishments with the acquiescence of the national authorities. The lack of any form of rights contributed to collective memories of the “everyday tyranny of the state” (Nilsen, 2010).

This subjection was challenged by millenarian movements, which were broken up and repressed.

The defeat of these movements, at a time when national politics started to favor the popular sectors, gave rise to a new relationship between the state and the indigenous communities which was characterized by dependence and inclusion. This encouraged assimilation into the creole way of life, a result both of state policies and the agreement of the indigenous communities themselves. As we shall see in the next few chapters, this incorporation into mass society caused, as Salamanca (2006) argues, an ontological rupture. This was the beginning of the period of the 'new ones', who may have maintained their memories of the 'everyday tyranny of the state' but also held a critical view of their ancestors' way of life (Nilsen, 2010). The teachings of evangelical churches also had a strong influence on the formation of this perspective.

Finally, in this chapter I summarized some of the ruptures and continuities that came with the neoliberal period in Chaco. The analysis particularly focussed on the description of new agrarian dynamics associated with the agri-business model and consolidation of political-bureaucratic spaces.

The next few chapters will introduce the case studies of Pampa del Indio and Las Tolderías. There, I will attempt to analyse the different positions taken within these communities with regard to the new rural dynamics emerging during the neoliberal era. To do so, I will return to a focus on 'local rationalities', analysing different actors' memories of the historical stages described in these chapters (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013).

CHAPTER 6

Disclosing the margins: Dispossession and the politics of Qom people in Pampa del Indio

“People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them”
James Baldwin (1955)

6.1 Introduction

Processes of accumulation by dispossession have been described as a ‘total, one-time threat’; “a sudden, exogenous and irreversible threat to people’s livelihoods, homes and perhaps ways of life” (Levien, 2012:14). According to this point of view, accumulation by dispossession also involves a clear process in which the winners and losers are easily identifiable (Spronk and Webber, 2007; Teubal, 2009; Carruthers and Rodriguez, 2009; Renfrew, 2011; Levien, 2012). And it is precisely this transparency and exogeneity of the process that sees subalterns being described as “unwilling agents.” This means actors who are not only “aware of the nature of the threat but also resolved to oppose it” (Beck and Bose, 1995:445).

However, accumulation by dispossession does not always occur suddenly; it can also occur gradually, in a non-linear, less intelligible manner. As I suggested in Chapter 2, in these ‘piecemeal dispossessions’ (Li, 2010; 2010b), the agency of the subalterns, far from being mere reactions to external events, are an integral part of the process and include a wide range of different actions, ranging from resistance to complicity. Not all subaltern responses are counterhegemonic, they do not necessarily oppose all the mechanisms by which the dispossession occurs, and it is not even certain that they will be opposed to the same events (Arnold, 2001; Hale; 2002; Speed, 2005). I will argue here that the diverse and variable agency of subalterns can be explained by the way in which ‘accumulation by dispossession’ is perceived, in accordance with ‘local rationalities’ (Nilsen, 2009; 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013). Secondly, I will argue that resistance based on ethnic criteria does not necessarily lead to homogeneity in the strategies employed or the objectives pursued. I will go on to show how this diversity of positionings is intimately related to the different contexts in which subalterns find themselves and the different positions of subalternity.

In order to analyze the tensions inherent to the resistance of the Qom in Pampa del Indio and their links to processes of accumulation by dispossession, I have organized this chapter as follows. The first section will provide a summary of the case study, the actors and the main points of conflict. In the second section I will focus on the memories that the Qom have with regard to the previous periods of accumulation in order to then center the analysis on their perceptions of the processes that took place during the neoliberal period. Having analyzed the memories and perceptions of the different groups, the third section will focus on analyzing the different objectives the groups are seeking to achieve through their struggle. Here, I will argue that the resistance movements against accumulation by dispossession and those against expanded reproduction can be seen as different positionings with regard to the experiences of dispossession rather than being differentiated as specific struggles (Kasmir and Carbonella, 2008; Collins, 2012). Later, in the fourth section, I will try to examine the potential and limits of ‘rightful resistance’ which has consolidated, as I mentioned in the previous chapters, one of the main forms of struggle for the Qom (O’Brien, 2013). Finally, I will finish this chapter with a brief summary of the points analyzed.

6.2 Piecemeal dispossession

Pampa del Indio is known as “one of the most populous indigenous enclaves in the country”. As we saw in the previous chapter, at the start of the 20th century, the Qom communities who lived there provided most of the work force at the Las Palmas refinery and sawmills. At that time it was they, rather than the land, who were needed for the accumulation of capital (Fernández and Braunstein, 2003). Given the importance of the refinery to the economy of the region, President Yrigoyen granted Cacique Taigoyic a temporary occupation permit for forty square leagues¹²⁶ for his tribe (interviews with Qom inhabitants of Pampa del Indio, 2012; see also Silva, 1994).

Years later, the arrival of new colonists in the prelude to the cotton period put great pressure on the land and resulted in the expulsion of numerous Qom families. “After Taigoyic’s death, strange people came from everywhere looking for land. Nobody knew where they came from” said Maria, an assistant teacher at the bilingual intercultural complex, remembering her family stories. This memory of creole incursions into Qom territory and the problems deriving from

¹²⁶ 40 square leagues is approximately 100,000 hectares; however some of my informants stated that the area granted by Yrigoyen was 220,000 hectares rather than 100,000. The decree granting this land has never been found so it is impossible to know the exact figure.

precarious tenancy are also documented in a note sent by the Governor of Chaco to the Chief of Police in 1932. In this note the Governor recognizes that:

“Although the lands of ‘Pampa del Indio’ have been measured, the land office has not granted ownership as yet. Cacique Bautista García has presented a complaint to this Office stating that colonizers are continually entering lands they occupy and are established in, fencing off land to which they thus far have had a recognized temporary right” (in Silva, 1994).

This dispossession of the Qom was partially reverted in the mid-1940s when the national state introduced certain “redistribution”¹²⁷ policies, with the land of large and mid-sized creole landowners being expropriated on this occasion. It was during these years that several Qom families received provisional titles to the land in plots of 25 hectares each. At that time the management of the land, which resulted in the creation of the *parajes* of Campo Medina and Campo Nuevo, was controlled by *Cacique* Pedro Martínez (see Chapter 5). Mártires López, who was founder of the Unión Campesina de Pampa del Indio (Peasants’ Union of Pampa del Indio) remembers the foundation of the two defined areas:

“When Perón was president, Pedro Martínez went to see him. That was in Resistencia. My father said that they were young when Perón came. He says that they threw a flag, probably from the Government House, into the crowd. The flag was flapping when a young man, an aborigine, jumped among the police and the creoles and grabbed it from above. Then there were struggles with the police. They didn’t know why he had done that. Perón said: ‘Who grabbed the flag?’ ‘The indigenous people’, said some of the police who wanted to beat him up and drive him away. They wanted to take the flag off him. My father was there and said that Perón said: ‘We want to speak to the *Cacique* General, let him through.’ But they wouldn’t let the *Cacique* through, there was pushing... then they said ‘let the sabre take care of it’, because he had a sabre. ‘You have to ask people’s permission,’ they said. Then they used the sabre to get through to talk to Perón. And they say that Perón asked, ‘What are you most interested in?’ and he said, ‘I want land for my tribe’. So Perón said, ‘We’ll send a surveyor, tell Mr. Medina, Pablo Medina’ who lived there and owned all that land, there wasn’t a fence. ‘There, you’ll have to take that land.’ They shook hands and we don’t know if they signed a document. But there must be a signature, with the seal of the President. A month passed and the order came. They told Pablo Medina that he had to divide the land up into lots. Only two or three lots were left to him and the rest of the land had to be handed over to the *Cacique*. ‘All that land is to be given to the aborigines’, was the order and the *Cacique* came from over there riding a white horse, telling everyone to follow him. They hammered in a post and asked ‘Which families will occupy this lot?’ and some raised their hands: ‘We will.’ ‘So, take the land’ they were told and it went on lot by lot. And when word got out that land was being given away a lot of people came. My father was with them. Then came

¹²⁷Borras and Franco believe that redistribution exists when “land-based wealth and power are transferred from the monopoly control of either private landed classes or the state to landless and near-landless working poor (poor peasants and rural laborers)” (Borras and Franco: 2010:16).

trucks full of tools, they asked for land and tools. There was always a line of trucks. Every month they brought Perón bread, large crackers that were given to the *Cacique* (...)" (Gómez, 2008¹²⁸)

The access to small parcels of land continued after the Peronist decade. Between 1960 and 1980, other Qom families obtained individual titles to the land, but this time with the help of the Baptist Evangelical Mission. That was the story of Ángel, one of the members of the Rural Consortium, who told me the history of the property where we met:

"After we left the bushland, we came here in '77. A religious institution came, a German one, the Baptist Evangelical Church which came to teach religious doctrine. And we waited a while because I hadn't been converted at that time, only my wife was. But I started as a volunteer. The pastor always needed help 'Will you come?' he asked and I said I would. Well, we drove in a jeep to where he wanted to go. And I said one day to the pastor: 'Pastor, I can't leave because my wife doesn't have anything, I have to go *mariscar*' and he said: 'No, don't worry, let's go.' So we went and in the evening I came back home. When I got out of the car he gave me some money to buy some food. That's when I began to think, until in '77 I converted and in '78 I became a member of the church. We didn't have any land at the time, we were *agregados* [additions] on Lot 101. One day the pastor asked me: 'You don't have any land? I'll ask for you to be given a piece in time.' So they gave me a piece and my wife and I got to work. He gave me all the seeds. In '78, the German pastor held a big meeting in the church and decided to name all the families who didn't have land, who were *agregados*, living on a piece of their neighbor's land. There were ten families from Campo Medina. The pastor said that he had to present a report for the Bread for the World Institution¹²⁹ and he presented a text signed by the whole community. A few months later he brought the money. Then we had to wait a few days because they had to change the money into Argentine money.'" (2012).

The way in which the land was given, as can be seen in both accounts, also involved the development and consolidation of a paternalist relationship that created ties of loyalty and dependence that lasted a lengthy amount of time. As can be seen in the memories of Mártires and Ángel, the body giving them the land was also the body on which they depended for the tools and seeds with which the families sustained themselves. This also implies that the subalterns had to satisfy the expectations of those actors, which they did via the adoption of certain habits and abandonment of others. Thus, in the first story, *Cacique* Pedro Martínez had to use the symbol that had been given to him by white people, the sabre, to open a path to the President. In this story, the incident with the flag could be seen as a metaphor for the tensions and struggles that were caused by the 'integration' policies that began to be implemented at the time (see Ch. 4 and

¹²⁸ This fragment is from an interview carried out by Cesar Gómez, a Professor at the National University of the Northeast, who I met on my first trip to Chaco.

¹²⁹ "Brot für die Welt" is a charitable program started in 1959 by Protestant churches in Germany. <http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/home.html>

5). In Angel's story, the delivery of land was conditional on the prior 'abandonment' of *marisca* practices in favor of work as a pastor and eventual religious conversion.

It is important to note that in spite of the granting of these lots, the total amount of land designated to the community did not reach the 100,000 hectares granted in 1922 by Yrigoyen¹³⁰. Moreover the progressive growth of the population meant that the 25 hectare lots became increasingly insufficient, and reinforced the Qom's dependence on wage labor, weakening their bargaining power over working conditions.

As has been noted in previous chapters, with the end of the cotton period, the population of Pampa de Indio was plunged into a severe crisis. The fall in the price of cotton meant that many of the farmers (mainly creole but indigenous people as well) could not continue production or were unable to pay their debts and were forced to sell their land¹³¹. This situation worsened the employment crisis and contributed to the increased migration to the towns and cities.

In the mid-1990s a business group, Unitec Agro SA, bought large tracts of land, some of which had been owned by the state while other areas had belonged to cotton producers. According to several Qom inhabitants, that land, where they say the final confrontations with the Argentinian army took place, forms part of the area ceded to Taigoyic in 1922 (interviews 2012). On this land the Unitec Agro SA Group founded the Don Panos establishment which takes up an area of about 120,000 hectares between the provinces of Chaco and Formosa along the shore of the Bermejo river. Of those 120,000 hectares, approximately 53,000 are in Chaco and border the rural *parajes* of Campo Medina, Pampa Chica and Campo Nuevo.

At first, during the severe recession, the inhabitants of Pampa del Indio were pleased by the news that the large company had moved in. For most of the Qom living in the *parajes*, the company represented hope of employment. Expectations of receiving a salary on which to support themselves were satisfied temporarily, as many members of the community were hired by Don Panos to carry out the clearance and deforestation work, which was not always legal. Although

¹³⁰ Currently, among the different rural *parajes* (Campo Medina, Campo Nuevo, Lote 4, Cuarta Legua, Pampa Chica, Lote 3, Campo Alemán, Tres lagunas, La herradura and 10 de mayo) the Qom occupy between 8,000 and 9,000 hectares of land and there is more than one family group on every lot (interviews with representatives from INDES and CZT, 2012).

¹³¹ Accounts of the sale of indigenous land take two forms. There are those who describe the process as voluntary if forced upon them by need. In these cases, according to my interviewees, given that legislation prevents the sale of indigenous lands, indigenous lands were in many cases sold to mixed families made up of one indigenous person and one creole, with the ownership being in the name of the indigenous family group. However, in other cases those interviewed said that they were scammed out of their land by creoles (interviews 2012).

the Forestry Department initially granted them authorization to cut down 1,000 hectares of forest, the first work involved the deforestation of over 1,600 ha¹³². The Forestry Department then fined the company, but the latter broke the regulations again a few months later. On that occasion the company cleared 2,500 ha without any official authorization (Greenpeace, 2006). Some of the informants mentioned during the interviews that this time the company didn't even pay the fine. Thus, over just a few months, innumerable *lapacho*, *urunday*, *quebracho* and *carob* trees were cut down and burned, radically changing the landscape, flora and fauna of Pampa del Indio.

It wasn't the deforestation, however, that caused the first conflict between the residents and the company, but the semi-slave working conditions they were subjected to every day. In 1996 a group of indigenous people who had been hired by Don Panos decided to present a complaint to the Commission of Human Rights at the Chaco Chamber of Deputies. The complaint demonstrated that the company had breached labor legislation on many counts. These breaches included: failure to make pension and social security payments; unpaid salaries and mass lay-offs without following due process (Report on the Situation of Rural Workers in Pampa Chica, Human Rights Commission, Chamber of Deputies). However, these complaints, like the fines applied by the Forestry Department, did not impede the company's progress. To finish its projects, the company simply decided to replace indigenous labor with workers from other areas, who were abundant as the country was suffering from a severe depression at that time (La Prensa, 1996).

Once all the projects (including the construction of an air strip for large aircraft, a hangar and a dam on the Bermejo River to feed the irrigation system), had finished, the far-reaching reconstruction of the territory and the new rural dynamics that came with it started to be felt. The arrival of Don Panos at Pampa del Indio meant, firstly, the loss of two activities that had complemented rural inhabitants' productive activity: seasonal labor and *marisca* activity. The loss of seasonal labor was due to the high degree of mechanization of the enterprise and its limited need for labor. As a consequence, according to a delegate from IDACH, over the last ten years in Pampa del Indio, at least four new Qom neighborhoods had sprung up in the town (interview, September 2012). In addition, *marisca*¹³³ ceased to be practicable due to the loss of

¹³² The company had gone beyond the authorized area by 400 hectares and had also burned 225 hectares of forest (Greenpeace, 2006).

¹³³ In this specific case *marisca* activity was focused around the Guaycurú River, a tributary of the Bermejo.

biodiversity caused by deforestation and by the perimeter fence and security personnel the company built and hired to prevent trespassing on its land. This enclosure constituted a clear difference compared to the relationship they maintained with the creole farmers, who allowed the indigenous people to cross their land to gather food or fish in the river.

But it was not just the complementary sources of sustenance that were affected; further barriers developed preventing the production of vegetables and cotton. The main difficulty was the scarcity of water caused by the diversion of the Bermejo River, but the pollution caused by the intense use of agrochemicals was also important¹³⁴. After the dam was built water was almost exclusively supplied by a truck sent by the municipality of Pampa del Indio, which distributed approximately 1,000 liters per family group every three or four weeks (field notes, 2010, see also Egea and Monteverde, 2010). When the water runs out the only option is to walk to the school where there is a pump¹³⁵, although that is only possible during weekdays when the school is open.

In short, the arrival of Don Panos represented the ‘definitive enclosure’ of these spaces and resources (Li, 2007).

6.2.1 Indigenous Organizations

There are three important indigenous organizations in Pampa del Indio: the Comisión Zonal de Tierras (Area Land Commission), the Asociación Cacique Taigoyic (Cacique Taigoyic Association) and the Unión Campesina (Peasant Union). Also working in the area are an IDACH¹³⁶ delegation and the Consejo Qompi (Qompi Council). As I mentioned in Chapter 5, IDACH is the official intermediary between indigenous groups and the state. The Qompi Council is a Qom organization that has been campaigning for bilingual education since 1997. Its achievements include offsetting up the Bilingual Intercultural Complex where many healthcare workers and support teachers have been trained to work in the community.

The Comisión Zonal de Tierras (CZT) and the Asociación Civil Cacique Taigoyic (ACT) were founded in the early ‘90s. Contrary to the idea that movements resisting accumulation by

¹³⁴ The company sprayed crops from the air and on the land.

¹³⁵ The digging of wells for water on individual plots is not possible as the upper layers of aquifer have become salinated as a consequence of the large amount of crop dusting. Generally, families use empty agrochemical containers to transport the water, exposing them even further to the highly toxic chemicals (Notes from field work, 2010).

¹³⁶ In total, IDACH has seven delegations distributed among the areas with the densest aboriginal populations. So far all the presidents of IDACH have been of the Qom ethnic group, with the exception of Romando Martínez who belonged to the Wichi ethnic group.

dispossession emerge as “independent people’s movements” (Levien, 2013), in Pampa del Indio the influence of political parties and NGOs has been strong right from the beginning. In this case, these groups were originally linked to ENDEPA (National Team of Pastoral Aborgines) and INCUPO (Institute of Popular Culture), a Christian non-profit civil association. Remembering the first stages of these organizations, Aristóbulo, the former president of the ACT and current pro-secretary of the Rural Consortium in Pampa del Indio, said:

“If we start to investigate how they [the organizations] arose, someone always accompanied them. The sisters Mercedes, Susana and Ángeles were the ones who started to campaign for indigenous people’s rights. They were from ENDEPA, they were Catholic but they went to the Qom church and won people’s trust. That was when they started to study law and human rights. They also worked a lot on education. Then others came, for example Gabriel from INCUPO, another organization that helped a lot. INCUPO did a lot of work with production, supplying animals and all the tools for the farm” (2012).

According to his account, for a long time the activities of both organizations were focused almost exclusively on facilitating the provision of definitive titles to land and contributing to efforts to prevent the sale of aboriginal land.

A few years later, during the 2001 economic crisis, a major new organization appeared in Pampa del Indio; the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa Aborigen* (Aboriginal Combative and Classist Current, CCCA), which then gave rise to the UC (*Unión Campesina*, or Peasant’s Union). The CCCA was an offshoot of the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (CCC), an organization linked to the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR)¹³⁷. Under the slogan “Indigenous peoples are at the forefront of the struggle of all the popular sectors to recover what was taken from us 510 years ago”, the organization started to place more emphasis on production issues and started to hold marches and block roads, campaigning for the immediate delivery of seeds and tools for both self-consumption and cotton production.

The CCCA rapidly became the most famous of these organizations and only two years after it was founded it managed to open up a space for negotiation with the government. In 2003, the National Ministry of Social Development, as part of its Local Development Plan, decided to give the CCCA eighty tons of cotton seeds and 15 thousand liters of fuel for agricultural machinery. A condition for handing these goods over to the movement was that it must register as a legal entity. Thus the CCCA was transformed into the *Unión Campesina*, under the classification of a civil

¹³⁷The PCR is a Maoist party; both the PCR and the CCC operate on a national scale.

association¹³⁸. At first the members of the UC worked on cultivating ecological produce and even became part of fair trade networks.

After the success of the UC, the CZT and the ACT decided to extend their demands and block roads to get state help for their production. So the activities of these groups began to develop and in June 2006 they held their first group action. On that occasion, instead of blocking the road to Pampa del Indio, the members of the three organizations decided to camp out in the central plaza in Resistencia, in front of the house of government. Their demands encompassed a wide range of issues (health, education and work) but they were mainly centered on the struggle for land. More specifically, the associations called for an investigation into the sale of state land over the previous fifteen years and for expropriation where irregularities were uncovered (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1.1).

After this protest, the provincial government agreed to negotiate but only with members of IDACH whom it considered to be the sole legitimate representatives of the indigenous peoples. Although IDACH and the government reached an agreement that would increase IDACH's budget and hand over the permanent titles to land occupied by the communities, the organizations stated that they didn't feel represented by IDACH and stayed in the plaza for several more days. Finally, without achieving a meeting, they ended their camp.

Group actions by the three organizations continued for a few years. However, after the passing of the Law of Rural Consortia in 2010 (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5.2.3), some of the members of the Taigoyic Association and the Zonal Land Commission formed the Rural Indigenous Consortium and decided to continue negotiating with the government but exclusively through institutional channels. In addition to their different views on the appropriate strategies to be employed, a tragic event weakened the ties between the groups that now made up the Rural Indigenous Consortium and the UC even further. In July 2011, Mártires López, the main leader of the UC, who had been the main point of communication between the groups, died in a traffic accident¹³⁹.

¹³⁸This transformation was a genuine challenge for the members of the CCCA. As Mártires explained to me, at first it was very difficult to meet the requirements as they didn't have access to accountants and were not familiar with the regulations for civil associations.

¹³⁹The death of Mártires López is still being investigated by the Chaco police.

6.2.2 *The conflict with Don Panos*

Although after the labor complaint there were no further open confrontations with the company, the situation changed after the 2006 camp. In addition to the investigation into the sale of state lands, that year the three organizations decided to report the company for its spraying activity. With the support of some state officials belonging to the Undersecretary of Family Agriculture and the INAI, the Qom placed a complaint with the Public Attorney in General San Martín requesting that the spraying be halted and that the Ministry of Social Development and Human Rights intervene to resolve the conflict. In spite of the evidence that had been gathered, the complaint was rejected and the conflicts continued.

Two years later, with the “countryside conflict” occurring across the country (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3.1) the problems with Eurnekian¹⁴⁰ took on greater prominence nationally. Indigenous organizations started to use this conflict as an example not just of the problems caused by the expansion of the agribusiness model but also as an example of the history of forced expulsions suffered by the indigenous population of the country. At the time, the leader of the Unión Campesina stated:

“The major stretches of land of over 200 thousand hectares that surround us were occupied by Bunge and Born in the early 1900s. At one time they sold the northern part to the Roseos from La Fidelidad and then another to Eurnekian. This was land that was taken through blood and fire from our aboriginal ancestors with laws of extermination implemented by General Victorica¹⁴¹” (Unión Campesina, 2008).

After holding several marches and road blocks, in 2008 the organizations signed an agreement with the governor. The agreement granted a large part of the organizations’ demands. These included, for example, the delivery of seeds, diesel, tools, repairs of pumps and the delivery of titles to the land owed. However, a year later, the agreement had not yet been implemented. For that reason in July 2009 the three organizations (UC, CZT and CT) decided to create a coordinating group and organizing a march from Pampa del Indio to Resistencia.

After five days crossing the 200 km between the town and the city, the organizations’ members set up another camp in front of the house of government. There an event was held and Mártires López was the lead speaker once more. On this occasion he said:

¹⁴⁰ The main shareholder of Unitec Agro SA.

¹⁴¹ Benjamín Victorica was the general who led the Conquest of the Chaco between 1881- 1884 (see Chapters 4 and 5).

“The governor has a friend here in Chaco, Eduardo Eurnekian. Eduardito has 45,000 hectares of land and receives subsidies from the province. So the governor must have some money and we’re asking him to resolve our problems, the problems of the rural poor. The governor said that he was going to buy tractors, deliver seeds and resolve the water issue for us, the aboriginal peoples. We also ask him to extend the electrical grid and build the houses he promised us; the blood of Taigoyic is here” (Marcha Multisectorial, 2009).

In spite of the continuous complaints and marches of the three organizations, the spraying and problems caused by the lack of water continued. Once more, the Qom decided to present their complaints, but this time to the national press. The visibility of their complaints in 2010 after they were published in *Página 12* in Buenos Aires resulted in the temporary ending of spraying and further promises from the authorities.

The peace in Pampa del Indio didn’t last long as the company resumed its spraying once more in 2011, and water scarcity grew more acute. However, by this time the UC had reached an agreement with the provincial government over production and it started to receive transgenic cotton seeds, which also required spraying and larger scales of production. The UC saw this as an achievement although it created new challenges for both the group and its relations with other organizations. This is especially because some members of the Unión Campesina have begun to withdraw from suits against Don Panos related to the pollution caused by the use of agrochemicals (interviews, 2012).

Without the participation of the UC, the members of other groups signed an agreement with the company in June 2012, as part of the Alternative Program for Conflict Resolution run by the Public Attorney of Chaco Province and the Nation. This agreement stated that the company Unitec Agro SA committed to leaving a 600 meter strip free of spraying while the Ministry of Planning and the Environment committed to a sustainable development plan in order to re-establish the farms. The agreement was signed by some members of the Rural Indigenous Consortium, the representative of the Public Attorney’s Office, the Undersecretary for the Environment from the Ministry of Planning and the Environment of Chaco, the local experts from the Undersecretary of Family Agriculture and the mayor of Pampa del Indio. IDACH was established as the arbiter of the agreement.

The agreement also established a plan by which the Ministry of Planning and the Environment, SAMEEP (Water and Maintenance Provincial Company Service) and the APA (Provincial Water

Administration) would resolve the water shortage. Paradoxically, the plan consisted of providing a national loan to the company Unitec Agro. The loan of 64 million pesos was provided as part of the Bicentennial Production Financing Program, a demonstrable example of how central the agribusiness model is to contemporary Argentine economics and politics (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3)¹⁴². The loan, whose objective was to triple the company's production through improvements in its irrigation system, and was granted on the condition that the company build a water reservoir on its land and a new 30 kilometer aqueduct to provide a supply to the urban area of Pampa del Indio. Meanwhile, rural areas would continue to depend on distribution trucks. At the time of writing the conflicts over the spraying continue as do the problems related to the scarcity of water.

6.3 The Meanings of Dispossession I

Andrew Turton (1986) has argued that resistance arises as a result of the effects that are perceived and experienced in a relationship. The author states that to understand “[w]hat is being resisted (and what combinations of things), and what is not being resisted and why”, studies should begin by investigating the interpretations, memories, or as Hart would say, ‘the meanings of dispossession’. These memories and perceptions are ‘as important as the material facts’ (Hart 2006:984) as they are used by the subalterns to justify their struggles to themselves and others (Cervone, 1998). Following on from these viewpoints, in this section I propose to reflect on the different memories that the Qom have of their past, as well as their perceptions of the changes and problems that the community has had to face in recent years. These aspects, as I noted in Chapter 2, allow us to understand the different local rationalities in which their actions are founded (Nilsen, 2009; 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013). The following pages also analyze the influence of different positions of subalternity and how the specific context in which said memories and perceptions are expressed affect these rationalities.

6.3.1 Remembering the past in the parajes

¹⁴²The line of bicentennial credit was a program announced as part of the festivities for the formation of the national state of Argentina. These loans were given over a period of 60 months (with up to 12 months grace) at a nominal annual fixed peso rate of 9.9%. (See <http://www.industria.gov.ar/credito-del-bicentenario/>)

When I got to Pampa del Indio for the first time in December 2010 one of the things that most caught my attention was the way in which the Qom structured their narratives. In the majority of the conversations, their memories seemed to be organized into three periods with porous boundaries. The first major division was between the *old Qom* and the *new Qom*. Generally, when they referred to the period of the ancients, they were referring to events prior to the 1940s whose end was determined by the arrival of the Evangelicals and the adoption of commercial agriculture, mainly the introduction of cotton cultivation. The second large division in the accounts dates to the mid-1990s when the established relationships and dynamics between themselves and other actors (creole producers and the state) were restructured.

The memories of the time of the ancients¹⁴³ were especially interesting as they evoke profoundly contrasting images. On some occasions it is remembered as the time “when we were free”, the period when “aborigine families helped each other,” “when the *caciques* were powerful” and the indigenous people were “owners of the land” (fieldwork notes, 2012). For example, Mario, who is an indigenous healthcare worker in Pampa del Indio, remembered the *caciques* as follows:

“*Caciques* defend their tribe. If it hadn’t been for them we wouldn’t exist today. Now there are leaders but they don’t fight man to man. Now they study the law. The ones who know the law are the ones who more or less lead. Before, my grandfather, who was a Toba *cacique*, told me that bullets didn’t hurt them even though they didn’t wear armor or anything.” (2012)

The usual emphasis was that in contrast to the present day which is beset by individualism that period was characterized by unity and the ties of solidarity between indigenous peoples. As can be seen also in the following tale from Maria, the figure of the *cacique* takes on a central role in these memories as a guarantor of the unity of the people, while *marisca* practices are seen as symbols of that brotherhood.

“At that time there were *caciques*, now there are presidents, now no-one depends on anyone¹⁴⁴. Before, the *cacique* told everyone to come together. Then we were all united. Now we’re not. Democracy came to the aborigines, as did Evangelical Christianity and that’s why it happened. When the Evangelicals arrived, everyone split in every direction. Everyone separated and had their own ideas. I mean, suppose you’re an aborigine and I am too; before we fought together but now we don’t. If you fight with a brother, it’s ‘You take care of yourself, I’m going to work.’ Before, in that period, with the *cacique*, we were united. We

¹⁴³ The perspectives of the Qom on the events of the past have been analyzed in depth by Gordillo (2004; 2006) Cernadas (2007) and Wright (2008). See also Briones (1994; 2003) for the case of the Mapuche.

¹⁴⁴ Note that, as we shall see later on, “dependence” in this case is not necessarily negative.

went to *mariscar* a lot. There was Monte Chico, which had everything like grass and bushes, and Monte Grande which had trees, the *quebrachos*, and larger species. The communities went to Monte Chico where there were more fruits of the forest, thistles for example. In Monte Grande they looked for honey and it was a lovely community because they didn't need anything" (2012, my emphasis).

The 'grandfathers', as the ancestors are often referred to, were also remembered in some conversations for their ability to anticipate events. One afternoon, speaking to Milciades, a member of the CZT and the CR, about the droughts the region has suffered in recent years, he said:

"It's not like the scientists say, it's not the deforestation, not that. This has been coming historically. I remember my grandfather. My grandfather didn't know how to write or how to read, he didn't know anything but he did say that tomorrow the drought was going to come and we needed to prepare. He told us. A lot of scientists say that it comes from the work clearing the forest, because they cut down a lot of wood, but it's not that. This was coming historically. I say that 400, 500 years ago they predicted that there would be a drought, that we wouldn't be able to plant crops, that there wouldn't be anything; even the water would dry up. Our grandfathers predicted all this. They said that tomorrow we would have bicycles, motorbikes, tractors, everything. And now look at people, they have everything. But everything has its time. Tomorrow maybe Argentina will use up all its fuel and the machines won't work anymore. Our grandfathers predicted that too. That's why we never panic or get scared because they already predicted everything." (2012)

However, on many other occasions, sometimes even during the same conversation, as can be seen in Milciades' account, the remote past was associated with different forms of 'lack'. At times this 'lack' was linked to lack of education or knowledge, especially with regard to the practice of commercial agriculture. In those cases the Qom usually referred to their ancestors as people who "didn't know anything", "didn't know how to work the land, or harvest it, they just survived" (2011-2012). As other authors, such as Gordillo (2002; 2004; 2006) and Wright (2008) have noted, in these memories the *marisca* practice isn't recognized as being work. It can even be defined as simple '*rebusque*' or scavenging, thus devaluing it compared to agriculture. As Mariano, a member of the CR, said one afternoon as we spoke on the veranda at his home, which borders the Don Panos estate, "only in '46 people did start to work as they should do" (2012). The expression that Mariano used to describe the moment that the Qom started to farm commercially, makes it clear that their memories are also permeated with hegemonic values (Gordillo, 2006).

On other occasions the lack could also refer to the lack of goods or absence of rights. The period of the ancients then became the time when the indigenous people "had no resources, they had

nothing” (interviews in Pampa del Indio 2011-2012). In those cases, in contrast to the earlier references to something lacking in which the ‘lacks’ were the responsibility of the members of the community themselves, because of their ‘ignorance’, the lack here was due to the fact that they were the victims of discrimination. Generally, these memories include graphic descriptions of the sacrifices and struggles their ancestors, and sometimes the people in question themselves, experienced, in contrast to the situation of the new generations. In this regard, Mariano told me:

“I’ll tell you how we struggled in our lives first. I started with nothing. I spent the first part of my life with my grandparents. But they didn’t have anything. They were the owners but they didn’t even have an ID card. They said that the land was theirs but in the end it couldn’t be. There weren’t any documents or anything. It’s not like when we started and realized, at least, how to work things out, how to fight for our lives, for daily sustenance. Because I experienced the ancient indigenous life and it wasn’t good. We didn’t have any rights. I know because I lived it. If we wanted to open our mouths they set the police on us to silence us. And we, where we lived, were always afraid of the police. Because an aborigine opening their mouth was beaten and no-one stood up for them. But today all the young people, those my age, know what we experienced. Now, at least we know what the law is and that it can protect us. We know that we have rights.” (2012)

A similar image arose during my conversation with Sebastián, a Qom who lived in the so-called old town. One afternoon, as we discussed the changes that took place in Pampa del Indio, Sebastián told me:

“Our children don’t know what we ate before. A girl asked her mother and started crying, she didn’t believe her. So the Evangelicals brought change, a new image. Before we gathered carob wood in the countryside and went to *mariscar* when there was a lot of water, not all day. But now we don’t; because of the Evangelicals and their education we have clinics, hospitals, medicines, before they didn’t take aspirin or anything” (2012).

Sebastián, like the majority of the Qom who I met in the *parajes*, see poverty and aboriginal status as being closely linked. But in those memories the experience of poverty is also associated, as we have seen in Mariano’s words, with their exclusion from the rule of law. These memories of the remote past reflect the ‘everyday tyranny of the state’ (Nilsen, 2013) to which they were exposed and from which they were only able to liberate themselves if they adopted a ‘new image’, as Sebastián explained.

6.3.2 *Memories of the cotton period*

In contrast to the different images brought up of the period of the ancients in our conversations, the Qom usually remembered the cotton period as a prosperous time. To a large extent, the start

of the cotton period was described as a key moment in the community's history. In the words of Pablo, one of the members of the UC:

“When the cotton harvesting started work started to become available. People were working all over the place. The big producers planted quite a lot of cotton then the people looked after it. We used to plant too, you could say that we were small producers. At the time people formed cooperatives and delivered their produce to market together. There were associations with presidents and delegates. During the harvest we picked up the bags on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. By Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday we'd have a load of bags full of the harvest. So, if you wanted to buy meat, you went to the association and they gave you credit or the cash. We didn't *mariscar* then. There was more action.” (2012)

Pablo's memories of the cotton period, like those of most of the interviewees, describe a period of abundant employment and greater equality with the creoles, which can be seen by their access to certain goods that had been difficult to get previously. These memories also usually mention the appearance of a sector of Qom producers. On this point it is important to mention that the proliferation of agricultural producers among the Qom, and specially cotton producers, far from being self-managed, was inextricably linked to the '*seguimiento*' (follow up). The idea of 'following up' refers to the training and supervision carried out by experts from state programs as well as the representatives of political parties and religious institutions¹⁴⁵. In the words of Sebastian

“(...)there was a lot of following up and we saw the results. For example, all the different crops that were planted gave something at the harvest. Sunflowers, sorghum, and also the vegetables. There were a lot. And after that the production issue got a little more democratic and more people could be served” (2012)”.

Dario, a Qom language teacher from Pampa del Indio who decided to move to Resistencia 15 years ago, referred to that period and the influence of other actors as follows:

“The cotton period was great. I was a harvester. It was great because it was a very important source of income when cotton was worth something. In the cotton period there weren't many large farms in Pampa del Indio so many of us went to Villa Berthe during the harvest where there were thousands and thousands of hectares of cotton. And it was good because it was good source of income, it was valuable, it was the only tool. I remember in '82, '84, and '86 cotton was worth quite a lot. But afterwards people started to stop harvesting and went to do construction because that was another source of work. People started to abandon cotton. At that time there were 60 families and I remember, to be more specific, that 52 families

¹⁴⁵ An interesting analysis of the transformations that occurred in the Qom communities at that time can be found in the report that William Reyburn prepared for The Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. In that report, Reyburn states that “Toba society may presently be described as extremely dependent. This dependency stems from the avowed desire of the Toba to be helped to achieve *criollo* identification” (1954:77).

produced cotton. In my area there were a lot of families attached to the agricultural cooperative, indigenous families, but they had been guided and shepherded by the Evangelical Baptist Church at the time. The members of the cooperative, who became members of the Pampa del Indio cooperative, were mostly members of the Evangelical Baptist mission. Then the mission led them toward becoming members and taught them how, told them how a cooperative works and all that. There was a missionary who took charge of teaching the communities and the mission helped with the planting, the subsidy and everything that might help. With the help of the mission we rented land and planted there. We organized ourselves with the evangelical mission and it subsidized us. I don't know where the subsidies came from, I suppose that they also had a political mechanism with the state, the government maybe. At that time my grandfather didn't have a title to the land, which was a large farm, he only had the political word, he had 50 hectares which were then divided up" (2012).

To a great extent, what Levien (2013) would call the "developmentalist regime of dispossession" in this periphery depended on the paternalist relationship between the indigenous people and the state or other civil organizations. This dependence resulted in the increase of clientelist practices, which produced "both spaces of control and spaces of resistance and accommodation in which the aborigine actors channelled their demands" (Gordillo, 2009). As Ferguson says "to be dependent on someone is to be able to make at least some limited claims on him or her" (2013: 231).

Insofar as the relationships with the state were increasingly channelled into development programs, the different 'experts' became central actors within the communities. For this reason, currently the Qom see the experts from different organizations (INTA-INDES- Undersecretary of Family Agriculture) and NGOs as 'the authorized voice' for certain issues. As León, a member of CR, said when I asked him about dealings with the experts:

"On the one hand it's good but on the other, the relationships are always... but they are the experts *and they tell us what's possible and what's not*. And we decide what action to take with the government. But I think that the support is good for our community. They work like that and they're closer to the provincial officials. Then they tell us." (2011).

This comment by León is particularly relevant because it reveals the dual role of the experts: 1) they are 'translators' in that they decide what's possible and what's not and 2) they are 'gatekeepers', who allow or prevent access to the government. Both roles contribute to the maintenance and reinforcement of the dynamics of dependency that often permeate the assessments and political practices of those groups. Furthermore as we shall see later on the difference in criteria between experts from different programs with regard to the type of

agriculture that should be encouraged and the use of technology reinforces the divisions between the members of the Qom community.

The paternalist and patronage relationships were central to the formation of the “indigenous peasant” as a political actor (Arenas, 2003; Otero and Jugenitz, 2003; Gordillo, 2009; Boccara and Bolados, 2010) and shaped the way in which dispossession is perceived and dealt with. In this regard, just as the ‘progress’ achieved since the 1940s was related to the ‘amount of following-up’, current problems are associated with a lack of ‘help’ and thus struggles become “declarations of dependence” (Ferguson, 2013). In the words of Luis, “[w]e have received a few things and now we’ve presented projects for vegetable cultivation. Later on we’ll see what other opportunities are available. We need projects, and experts to accompany them” (2012).

6.3.3. *“There’s no help here.” Dispossession according to the aboriginal peasants and their leaders.*

During my stay in Pampa del Indio my conversations with the Qom about the problems they faced rarely started out with mentions of the conflict with Don Panos. In most cases the narratives were focussed primarily on the absence of the state and the “lack of support for working in the fields” (Rafael, 2012). The ‘lack of support’ was almost always synonymous with the absence of the state which had been important during the cotton period as providers of goods and services. “Why did they leave?” Milciades (CZT and CR) asked me one afternoon, amazed at my questions. “Because how can they make a living from the land without help?” The absence of the state, which everyone agreed occurred during the 1990s, was the reason that the Qom were forced to leave the countryside to “scavenge in the towns” or “*mariscar* in the city” (Interviews, 2012).

On some occasions the ‘lack of support’ appeared to be associated with the role of being a small producer without differentiation from the situation of ‘poor creoles’. One night, while I was drinking mate tea with Susana, a major representative of the Indigenous Rural Consortium, she presented me with the following ‘challenge’:

“As part of this evaluation¹⁴⁶ there’s a question you need to ask yourself. You can write down the question and then have the other groups answer it. Could a farmer with children living 15 km away from the urban centre live on social security? It’s the simplest question you can think of. If you don’t have water, would you stay in the countryside? Is electricity a luxury or a benefit to the producer? That’s the question we are

¹⁴⁶She is referring to my survey.

asking society. In short, I say that they are basic needs. Another question: the house. How many rural peasants have houses? I can count them on one hand, do you understand? When they talk about development, they need to talk about real benefits, not half-measures (...) Now there aren't many members of the government who invest in the sector, there are more in the opposition. Or at least they talk about it a lot, but in practice most of the resources go to the big producers." (2012)

However, in the majority of cases and particularly in my conversations with the members of the UC, it was their status as indigenous people that explained the 'lack of support'. Generally, they argued that the government didn't want to recognize their role as producers. The problem, ultimately, was that they continued to be victims of the reproduction of a certain imaginative perspective of what it means to be indigenous, or as Li (2000, 2010a) suggested, they were in the "indigenous slot"¹⁴⁷. Pablo explained it in the following way:

"People are renting because they don't have the resources, because they don't have tools. And because of the increase in the price of seeds. So you work to pay your bills and nothing is left. Why don't they bring us a tractor? Aborigines can drive too. But no, they don't give them a loan facility, because they see you're an aborigine and they get stingy. But if a gringo comes along, it's 'Oh yes! How much do you want? Take it, here's a loan for some machinery too.' They give them everything, and us? They say no because you're an aborigine, you don't get anything. And aborigines also defended the motherland when there was a conflict too, do you remember '82? Well, a lot of aborigines gave up their lives and now the gringos don't help. I don't mean all the gringos, because there are gringos who give support like brothers supporting and lifting each other up and giving you something, but most don't help." (2010)

Pablo wasn't just criticizing what he perceives as reproduction by the state of the 'indigenous slot', but was also crudely describing the limits and contradictions of indigenous access to the Argentine citizenship. This is made obvious by his reference to indigenous participation during the war over the Malvinas islands and the marginalization that these groups suffer in daily life.

Although some Qom believe that the lack of help and support is a problem that affects the countryside in general while others believe that it affects indigenous peasants in particular, in both cases the lack of support and work were represented as being part of the same process. Mariana's words illustrate the point:

"When the soybeans appeared most of the colonists started to plant them so the labor that came with the cotton harvest was lost. More soybeans were planted and soybeans aren't harvested by hand, it's all done with machines. The weeding is all done with herbicides, with technology. This took away the indigenous communities' source of labor, harvesting. Cotton harvesting was the only work that indigenous

¹⁴⁷ As we shall see in the next section the disagreements about "what it means to be indigenous" are not just a dispute between the Qom and the state but were also one of the main problems of the community. In great measure the definition depended on what demands were considered legitimate and which weren't.

communities had. Then the aborigines had to leave the countryside and stop producing. There was a time during the Justicialist period when there was quite a lot of help for the community and then another government came in and the help was cut off. Then people started to go to the towns, to seek work there.” (2012)

Now, the focus on the ‘lack of support’ and the ‘lack of work’ in perceptions of dispossession does not mean that the Qom don’t mention the arrival of Don Panos and the subsequent lack of water, increased pollution and barriers to *marisca* as threats to their being able to remain in the country. However, there were particularly those who had direct contact with the company such as Mariano or the indigenous health agents and the indigenous teachers in Campo Medina, who emphasized the responsibility of the company. Mariano repeated on several occasions that the arrival of Don Panos was preventing him from staying on his land.

“A lot of things were grown here before the spraying. When my parents were still alive we produced cotton. Every week we gathered up to 45 tons of cotton. It was stored on a lot, the house and warehouse are still there. We also delivered to the cooperative as partners. We produced the seeds we planted on our land, but with all the spraying, all those problems, we can’t even produce sweet potatoes or *mandioca*. And we’re struggling with the animals now. We have difficulties because the cows and goats are having miscarriages. 26 mother goats died on me when they started spraying from the plane.”(2012).

Ángel, another member of the RC whose land borders that of Don Panos, also stated on several occasions that the arrival of the company had altered practices in the community. In this case, in addition to an end to honey production, Ángel emphasized that after the company moved in certain cultural practices disappeared.

“Here we’re 300 meters from his [Eurnekian’s] farm. And when the plane sprays with a southerly wind... we don’t have any hives any more. Not one is left, the bees go. We’re just left with the boxes. I don’t know when we’re going to recover. The beehive was important because it provided honey, and you can’t go looking for it in the country any more. You were OK with it. And we can’t make natural medicines because you have to look for them elsewhere. Some of them are inside that large company’s (Don Panos) land and they’ve closed it all off. The plants don’t grow here, in our area, maybe a little but not enough to make medicines. Before, when we had open land, there were a lot of plants and roots to make them. In the open country people knew where to go and they made medicine. But not anymore” (2012).

It is important to observe that, in the context of the new rural dynamics, *marisca* became a central practice for the community once more, while in the context of memories of the cotton period it was described as an unfamiliar or ancient practice, ‘something that they didn’t do any more.’ Maria said the following:

“Before, there was forest everywhere and the communities weren’t forbidden from going in, because they were just looking for food, for wood, whatever there was. At that time there wasn’t that law forbidding entry. Then, when Don Panos moved in, everything got fenced off, entry was forbidden and the communities couldn’t look for wood. It’s a pity because, for example, the other day I met an old man who’d been looking for dried scrub, when before he’d use dry pieces of *algarrobo* and red *quebracho* that would last longer. But Don Panos stopped everything. This was a very sad thing for the communities because they gathered food, hunted and fished there. Because there were streams in the forests, lakes only they knew about and medicinal herbs. Then the indigenous people had to give up their own medicines because the species died out, because something that had always existed in nature was broken. The change was very obvious. The communities went to see and mourned the loss of the forest. Then they [Don Panos] planted soybeans. But I don’t know if they were aware, they must have thought before they planted whether it was a good or bad thing. Because there were families just 50 metres away from the fence and a school 100 metres away and they had to have known that they were going to use herbicides, that they were going to spray from planes, and that made the people sick and people who study the earth say that it makes the land infertile too.” (2012)

However, with the exception of the people who lived next to Don Panos and the teachers and healthcare workers, for the majority of the Qom I was able to speak the neoliberal restructuring and the new agricultural model in Pampa del Indio meant

- 1) the lack of state help (and also that of other actors);
- 2) increasing difficulties with continuing their production due to the scarcity of water and spraying;
- 3) an increase in unemployment, and
- 4) the lack of land. The scarcity of land, although it is one of the key pillars of the struggle of each organization, is presented mainly as a historical demand, one that arose after overcoming other difficulties. Nora, Mártires’ wife, described her view of the path of dispossession and thus her struggle:

“The peasants’ union was born in hunger. When it started in 2001, when they threw out De la Rua and all that, there was hunger, real hunger. The kids didn’t have anything, they were malnourished. Some of them went to school barefoot. That was when the struggle began. My husband thought and organized the people. He called a meeting and spoke to our comrades: ‘So, what do we do now? If we stay quiet, if we don’t rise up, we’re going to stay like this.’ People were dying of hunger that year, 2001, so they rose up. Then the people marched from Campo Medina to Resistencia. They marched so that the government would listen to the claims of indigenous peoples. Then we fought for land. Because the land occupied by Don Panos today, for example, was what *Cacique* Taigoyic fought for so his family could settle there, in Pampa del Indio. But those pacts were ignored. Today the communities have children and they’re living on a plot of land of 25 hectares or less, a plot that can’t produce anything. There’s no space for planting, for producing anything, for the communities to improve or develop them.” (2012)

As I mentioned before the concrete experiences of power and the position of subalternity are the central factors that shape the struggle of the subalterns. This can be seen among the inhabitants of the *paraje*, for example between the members of the UC and those who live close to Don Panos. Similarly, as we shall see next, the struggle from within the ethnic-bureaucratic space adopts a different position to that of the organizations analyzed, presenting different potentials and limits.

6.3.4 History and dispossession according to the representatives of IDACH

Indigenous policy does not just involve grassroots indigenous organizations; institutional structures such as IDACH also play a central role in the definition of strategies for resistance and negotiation. As I indicated in Chapter 5 (see point 5.4.3) in the *parajes* a major distinction is usually made between the community ‘leaders’ such as Mártires, Milciades and Aristóbulo and the ‘representatives’. Generally, the Qom in rural areas call members of their community who have built a career within the institutional structure ‘officials’ or ‘representatives’. Furthermore the same concept of ‘politics’ is used to describe the politics of the creoles and the indigenous people who are part of the institution. ‘Politics’ and the institutions where they are practiced do not, according to this perspective, have the same rules and their discourse does not necessarily reflect that of the *parajes* (Wright, 2008).

Certainly, when one arrives at the IDACH offices, one can perceive the difference. Waiting times there are usually long and the uncertainty over whether you are going to be attended to is always present, as in any other public office in Argentina. But these formal questions are not the only differences. The historical stories and perceptions of the current situation also reveal clear differences. To the state representatives of the indigenous people, the remote past evokes homogeneous idyllic images that make no mention of the problems discussed above. Mónica, a young Qom woman in charge of the Indigenous Communications Department described the era of the ancients thus:

“There was a fruit similar to an apple that we called *l’huaxaic*, which is a delicious fruit but sadly because of the expansion or because the natural resources were used up, we don’t have it now. Or for example we had what the white world calls ‘noodles’, ours were brown and called *n-texac*, and they were very healthy. So we were very healthy and happy in our community, in contact with nature. Now we are facing a very different situation, now we have to wait to see if a businessman comes along” (2012)¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁸ The words written in Qom are reproduced here just as the interviewees wrote them in my notebook.

But even more striking are the different memories of the cotton period. In this regard, Mónica said:

“For the communities cotton is important, but it shouldn’t be the symbol of Chaco. Chaco’s symbol should be something like the *algarrobo* [carob tree]. The carob is what provides us with food, there are a lot of forests, a lot of carob trees. Cotton might be important, but it has no value for us. Obviously, in the peak period of cotton we planted and harvested, but that doesn’t mean that we should accept that it represents us. When cotton was planted many families were evicted. In fact one of the biggest struggles in the province was the massacre of Napalpí. A lot of brothers were killed there, and as a symbol of triumph they cut off the men’s testicles and the women’s breasts. So the history of cotton in itself does not hold good memories for us. We were enslaved because of cotton. They wanted to impose their customs on our culture and vision of the world. Instead of paying us properly, because growing cotton is very hard work (it hurts your waist, your fingers, there’s all the insects) they shot at us. And we know that as aboriginal people we let them impose the cotton issue on us. It was a gesture of kindness from the indigenous world and then they repressed us, killed our grandparents and our children. It was a struggle and an open wound. That’s why when cotton comes up we don’t have good memories of it. Thousands of brothers were killed, they gave poisoned sweets to the children and raped and murdered our women. So cotton isn’t a [positive] symbol for us, in fact it’s a pretty dark memory.” (2012).

For these indigenous officials even agriculture practiced by the aborigines themselves was and continues to be something alien to them. So their memories of the cotton period differed markedly to the testimony gathered in the parajes. This is important as these socially constructed memories have not just shaped past experience but also the present and the future (Chandra, 2013b). So, the different memories and perceptions that mobilize the different groups generate different strategies and legitimize different claims that on several occasions are mutually exclusive.

For the main representatives of IDACH the ill-effects of neoliberal dispossession are not so much that it has made it impossible to continue with agricultural activity but the environmental damage that these new productive practices have caused. In this vision, as indigenous peoples are an integral part of the environment, accumulation by dispossession has become a ‘silent genocide’.

“(…) Why do they attack us so much, try to destroy us? They’ll end up destroying our habitat, the forests and the rivers. The objective of the State and the system is to destroy us as an indigenous people because we are the people who have always been warriors with regard to the protection of the forests, the environment itself, because it is our mother land.” (2011).

Responsibility for this process lies with the state and thus it is the state against which the claim is made. But in this case the ‘absence of the state’ does not refer to the lack of support but the ‘lack of control’. Orlando Charole, who was the president of IDACH in 2010, stated that:

“The state is responsible for authorizing the actions of these companies. If the State doesn’t control their activities, if inspection agencies don’t act on these issues the population is left stuck shouting their complaints. We’re in a no man’s land where the state washes its hands of the opportunity. Then we are hostage to the ambition of those businessmen at the cost of polluting everything, the population and the environment, the whole area where we don’t want these things to happen. It’s a paradox, a contradiction that the State doesn’t exercise control.”

For these officials, the lack of control is due to corruption and the ties the business groups have with the provincial government.

“The areas where these communities live are the biggest focus of the soybean planting plans. These businessmen don’t go there because although they have authorization from the state, the province, they play dumb. We’re alone in our struggle to protect the environment because the politicians in the provincial government are involved. Today we’re suffering from spraying in Pampa del Indio, and the crop dusting and there’s no control. Although there have been public suits filed, the judiciary mostly doesn’t act or ignores them. So then we get into this situation, where rights are being violated. The laws are there, but they need to be enforced. That is our lack. We have clear concerns about the expansion of soybeans.” (2012)

6.4 Why do we struggle?

In an important contribution to the study of processes of accumulation by dispossession, Levien (2013) has stated that ‘the experience of dispossession’ has given rise to a particular form of politics, different from labor politics and previous rural politics. Returning to Harvey’s analysis (2003), Levien states that movements against dispossession demonstrate a different political orientation and organization to previous movements of subaltern groups. In general terms the new movements do not fight against exploitation but against ‘forced commodification’ and are characterized by being difficult to institutionalize, so their resistance can become potentially more disruptive.

However, as we have seen in previous sections, and as Levien (2013) also briefly alludes to, ‘the experience of dispossession’ in a single group is not a homogeneous, univocal or unchanging experience. In some cases, for example, the experience can be focused on the lack of support, the loss of seasonal work, while in others on the impossibility of reproducing cultural practices (such as the *marisca* practice) or of practicing agriculture, etc. This is important insofar as, as I have

observed previously, resistance depends on the way in which the dispossession is experienced and perceived. Thus, instead of contrasting ‘movements against expanded production’ with ‘movements against accumulation by dispossession’ or assuming that the struggle against exploitation has been displaced that against commodification (Burawoy, 2010; Spronk and Webber, 2007; Renfrew, 2011), we should understand them as different positionings in the same struggle.

Here I return to the notion of ‘positioning’ developed by Tania Murray Li (2000) who states that processes of resistance developed along ethnic lines should be understood as a “positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle” (2000: 151).

The idea of positioning is important for two reasons: firstly because it allows us to understand that positions are not univocal or invariable, but depend on the way in which the dispossession has been experienced and rationalized at a given moment. In this regard, the struggle of the Qom can be seen at times as being focused on what some authors would call ‘the politics of agrarian populism’ but can also focus at other moments of the struggle against ‘forced mercantalization’ (Levien, 2013).

Secondly, the notion of positioning is relevant because it allows us to analyze multiple struggles without reducing them to mere opportunistic or inauthentic attitudes, i.e. even when the positioning at a determined moment necessarily implies an arbitrary breach and contains a tactical element, these are not simple inventions. They are molded by the memories, the actual experiences of power, as well as the position occupied by each actor in the ‘field of power’.

Next, we will see the positions through which different Qom groups resist and negotiate the processes of dispossession. Firstly, we will analyze the positions of the groups that inhabit the *parajes* and then focus on IDACH. It is important to take into account the fact that positions do not just depend on the ‘experience of dispossession’ but also the rules that govern the specific ‘context’ or ‘political arena’ in which the subalterns find themselves.

6.4.1 Positions by paraje

In the *parajes*, the positions are developed around the figure of the ‘indigenous peasant’. As we shall see here, both in the case of members of the UC and those who make up the Rural Consortium, their role of producer takes centre stage in the struggle, which does not necessarily mean that both groups have the same aims.

The Unión Campesina

When in 2012 I returned to Pampa del Indio, Mártires had died. Nora had assumed leadership of the organization. This was a very important event as, although today women have started to take leadership roles, the top post is usually still held by men. When we met to talk for the first time, we did so on the patio of her house next to the large machines that had been received from the government. On this occasion Nora remembered Mártires saying:

“He said that we had to try to turn back the wind, firstly that we should be reorganized as peasants. Although we are aborigines, we needed to be recognized as peasants. Because we always had the idea that a peasant is a gringo who works the land, but if you go into the interior you’ll find it full of Wichis and Qom who want to work the land, who don’t want to leave the countryside. And he struggled for that a lot.” (Nora, 2012)

These words made it clear that to her, like the Qom who accompanied her, the struggle is firstly to achieve equality of opportunity with creole peasants. It is not just about being recognized as indigenous people but also to have the state recognize their role in the productive system. On positioning themselves as ‘aboriginal peasants’ they seek to have the state reintroduce a guarantee of certain relationships and conditions so that they can also take advantage of the opportunities that the market provides.

Nora’s words quickly reminded me of what Mártires had said some years ago. On that occasion he spoke about the need to overcome the association usually made between the indigenous people and subsistence production.

“When I moved here I saw that that wasn’t the solution, that we were wasting time on oxen. We started to struggle. Because I think, I always say, that we should have a little tractor. To work more fields we need to have the right equipment. Because it’s true that if you have a set of oxen in the field and a drought like we’re having now happens, you can’t work. The problem isn’t new, it happened before. Our parents suffered terribly from tiredness, they were exploited. In addition to the fact that they weren’t well fed, they had to sacrifice their lives. And I was thinking that we can’t repeat the path of our ancestors. We need to

change. And thanks to that we are achieving it. We never thought that we'd have this equipment, and yet the equipment isn't used any more in the south because they're already using another kind of technology. But we are only just learning, if we had been a part of the Nation of Argentina, we could have made use of the equipment before, when our parents were around" (Gómez, 2008¹⁴⁹).

As can be seen from this fragment it is precisely the fact that they don't have access to the technology and thus the opportunities available at a given time that defines their sense of injustice. Their exclusion from the nation of Argentina is associated with the delay in gaining access to technological advances and thus their struggle is focused on getting access to those benefits (Li, 2000; 2010a). In this regard the case of the UC shows that the objectives of the struggle that emerges in the context of accumulation by dispossession can, however, be placed within what has been called 'agrarian populism'. This is defined as "movements organized around remunerative agricultural prices and subsidies" (Levien, 2013:359). As Nora stated with regard to the productive practices of the members of the UC:

"We chose cotton because it is the only product that we can sell. We can sell it and the cotton is used to make many things, clothes and such. That's what the government has to understand, that there must be a price for cotton. That if we plant a lot of squash, and watermelons, who's going to buy them? There are aboriginal people who have a lot to sell but they don't have any way to transport it to the market. The government helps the soybean producers more than the cotton producers. So we feel that the cotton price is low because the price of soybeans is high. We are asking the government to guarantee a price for cotton." (2012).

Furthermore these experiences and tales also demonstrate that the 'ethnicization of the struggle' can in certain cases be a position from which to negotiate a more successful inclusion into the model rather than constituting a rejection of the 'narrative of modernity'¹⁵⁰. The aim is to achieve a socially just developmental model, to fight against the 'indigenous slot', rather than maintaining a traditional way of life (Li, 2000; 2010 a). This is also demonstrated, for example, by the position the UC has adopted with regard to the use of transgenic seeds and the spraying this requires. On this subject, one of its members started:

"The weedkiller (agrototoxin) is messed up because it messes with the farms, but we as a community are trained in using the transgenic seeds, that's why we have an expert and we are always in contact with them and they tell us how to plant. The problem is that the experts need to agree on how best to continue the

¹⁴⁹ Interview carried out by Cesar Gómez.

¹⁵⁰ On this point it is important to consider the influence of the PCR on leadership of the Unión Campesina, in particular because the PCR has an evolutionist reading of the development of capitalism and thus is inclined to promote the mechanization of the countryside.

work. And well, that's how it always happens. We are in agreement sometimes and sometimes not, the experts have their own ideas about technologies, but we'll find a way" (2012).

It is important to note, as I mentioned in Section 6.3.2, the influence that the experts have over these decisions. To this group, they are the ones who must decide on the 'possibility' or 'impossibility' of using transgenic seeds. Thus to many members of the UC the more 'ecological' postures in the community can only be explained by the ignorance of some of representatives (in particular the indigenous representatives of IDACH) with regard to agricultural production and the peasants' problems. On this subject Pablo said:

" (...) they want to lead but they don't care about the needs of the communities. They don't fight for the indigenous cause. They earn their wages but they never come here, they don't know what work in the fields is like." (2012)

The Indigenous Rural Consortium

In contrast to the perspective of the UC, many other Qom in Pampa del Indio believe that the struggle of the 'aboriginal peasants' should not be focused on ensuring access to the same technology that other producers in the region have. For example, they don't believe that it would be beneficial to use transgenic seeds for economic reasons and because they endanger the health of the inhabitants. According to Mariano:

"Transgenic seeds aren't worth it, because they need a lot of treatment and are also bad for your health. We have to cultivate organic, non-transgenic seeds because otherwise we'll be needing more and more chemicals to maintain production. How much do we have to spend? Instead of cultivating healthy crops like before, we're going to finish in the town" (2012).

In these cases the struggle seeks to ensure that the people stay in the countryside but through ecological agricultural production aimed at both self-consumption and sale on the market. For this reason the members of the CR are not interested in obtaining tools and prices for their productions but wish to create their own seed bank to ensure that they won't have to use transgenic seeds in the future.

The differences in criteria compared to the UC with regard to the form of agriculture that should be practised, presents a serious challenge especially because of the political weight of the UC. To Mariano the decision of the UC to plant transgenic seeds has caused great damage to the

community. The second time I interviewed him, at the health post where he works, he told me that

“Now some brothers plant transgenic cotton, which sunk us. Until the maize starts to flower, the transgenics screwed us. When your seeds flower you’re still screwed because of the bugs that come one after another” (2012).

This assessment has led in great part to the efforts of the Qom being directed not just toward confronting Don Panos but also achieving a new agreement among the organizations as to the objectives of the struggle. On my last visit Mariano was very worried by the situation and in an interview he gave to a provincial radio station he expressed his discontent: “Now what I’m asking the organizations is for them to support us, who have always lived at a disadvantage” (2012). This public call on a creole radio station was a very important gesture given that disagreements between the organizations are not usually made public. In any case, for the members of the Rural Consortium, the ultimate blame for the fact that other Qom people are using the seeds lies with the state.

“Before the transgenics, people came to offer training, especially people from INTA where they said that we needed to change because it was better quality and there were more benefits. There was training! Before the transgenics came, they said why they should be used, because the scale was less but it produced more. They said that a weeder wasn’t needed and the costs were less. That was the idea (...) So that’s how the producer culturally came to that and did what they wanted (...) They said: ‘If you guarantee that there will be at least 30 producers of transgenic cotton, I’ll bring you the seeds tomorrow.’ It’s not as though everyone woke up one day and said ‘let’s change’. No, no, they brought trainers (...)” (2012).

The important thing to note here is that although the Peasant’s Union believes that the struggle is against adverse incorporation in the model and ceasing to be “the bottom, the poorest of the poor” (2012). For the Qom members of the CR, adverse incorporation can only be reverted if another kind of agriculture is practiced. In both cases, however, these positions represent a struggle aimed not at ‘avoiding the state’ (Scott, 2009) but renegotiating more effectively and thus finding a way ‘to contest their very exclusion’ (Walsh- Dillely, 2013).

6.4.2 Positions in the ethno-bureaucratic space. Identity, territory and the environment

To the members of IDACH, in contrast, the struggle that began at the end of the 1990s was to ‘stop the businessmen’s advance and protect the forests’, as Mónica said in one of our conversations.

“We don’t want them to keep planting transgenic soybeans because they do not just damage human beings but also the environment so we want to stop it. We still have time to stop it and we invite every social movement to support the idea of indigenous people protecting the environment, not polluting, and preserving the water supply. Because difficult times are coming with regard to the water, the lack of water is beginning to be felt. This has been happening for years and we are experiencing that today.” (2010)

To the IDACH representatives, Qom resistance is a resistance to capitalist development and any form of mercantilization of nature. In this narrative, which could be classified by paraphrasing Chandra (2013) as “subaltern simplification”¹⁵¹, the essence of the culture is transformed, the ‘hunter-gatherer’ and ‘ecological’ essence defines the group outside of history. This is why their statements usually refer to community life, vernacular language and other images that satisfy the official standards of indigenous life in Argentina, as well as the eco-indigenous paradigm that exists internationally (Gordillo, 1993; Albert, 2004; Lazzari, 2007; Steur, 2011). Thus the resistance in this case “takes the form of offering one fully constituted, separate and distinct identity in place of another” (Grossberg, 1996:89), such as that of a creole producer. On this issue, Orlando says:

“The indigenous people are not expansive producers, we can’t even talk in terms of being a producer, the indigenous person has always been a part of nature, a guardian of nature. This is what what indigenous people have been historically. We as indigenous peoples have always campaigned for the need for the lands that have belonged to the indigenous people to be free of macro or extensive crops on large scales of any kind, not just soybeans. Because we understand that the viewpoint of the indigenous peoples on caring for nature, the environment and the ecosystem, is a gaze that is very different to that of westerners. So the state cannot be above the historical ecological criteria of the indigenous peoples, dictating norms that do away with all the ecosystem that we want to preserve for future generations because today the environment is a fairly big issue internationally. We are really alarmed in some cases by what is happening in the world.”(2010).

It is important to consider that these positions are shaped by the same ‘ethno-bureaucratic’ space in which they operate (Boccaro and Bolados, 2010) and that they thus reproduce an image of the ‘indigenous people’ that is politically functional for the state but that is opposed to that of the *parajes*. Although, as we shall see below, even in these cases Albert’s affirmation applies: “the ethnicity emphasized can never be reduced to the ethnicity imposed” (2004; 229). In this regard, although the IDACH narrative is a reflection of the rhetoric of official indigeneity, it is also used

¹⁵¹ The concept of ‘activist simplification’ has been developed by Chandra (2013b) and refers to the creation of utopian collectives which serve to justify determined processes. Although the author has developed this idea to explain situations in which activists that do not belong to the communities take up an essentialist discourse on indigenous politics, I think that this is applicable to situations such as that analyzed here in which the stereotypical image is constructed by a sector from the same group of subalterns.

to increase the margins for manoeuvre of these representatives within the field in which they operate. So, while in the 1940s being ‘an integral part of nature’ was put forward as an explanation of backwardness and an argument for domination, today it is that same image that is used as a tool with which to achieve political legitimacy.

“They proposed individual titles to the land but we asked why it had to be individual. We’re not individualist, we have a community practice. That’s why we are described as a community. Our projects are about being self-sufficient but also about protection. We want to have a dialogue with the state, but that doesn’t define us, they shouldn’t come to us with a finished project and tell us what to do. We already know, we know what’s right for our motherland, we can think for ourselves. We have direct contact with nature and we need to protect it. We don’t want to be dependent on subsistence. They gave us bags of merchandise, milk, but we don’t want that because it’s not ours either. If we accept that, then we will be vulnerable and we aspire as a people to be autonomous.” (2012)

When the members of IDACH state that they, as indigenous people, are better trained to administer natural resources, what they are doing is to divert and expand the indigenous influence in the state, which represents a ‘consultancy’ for indigenous peoples but they are not in favor of relinquishing of power over them (Doane, 2007).

The problem is that expanding the margins of power of state apparatus does not necessarily mean an advance for the struggles in the *parajes*. To Orlando, for example, the objective of the struggle is to gain access to the same benefits as creole producers, constituting a serious risk. Specifically speaking about the use of transgenic cotton seeds by the community, he says:

“I believe that the concept of wishing to include the indigenous people in production, in economic progress at the same pace as society, will create large imbalances that cannot be allowed.” (2010)

6.5 Legal indigenous resistance

Apart from their multiple objectives, if the current Qom resistant movements have something in common it is that they always ‘make headlines’. In recent years several authors have stated that everyday resistance has become open resistance. They have especially remarked that the use of the law and the language of the dominant sectors have become the main tool of resistance for the subalterns (Lazzari, 2007; Walker, 2008; Renfrew, 2011; Sinha, 2012; Levien, 2012; Chandra, 2013; O’Brien, 2013). Generally defined as ‘rightful resistance’, this type of resistance is usually described as such because “it operated near the boundary of authorized channels, employed the

rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb the exercise of power, hinged on locating and exploiting divisions within the state, and relied on mobilizing support from the community” (O’Brien; 2013:1-2). In contrast to the open resistance described by Scott (1985) in these cases direct opposition is not an intolerable risk for those involved (O’Brien, 2013) or a renunciation of negotiation with the dominant actors (Chandra, 2013; Nilsen 2013). As Victor, a member of the CZT and the Rural Consortium says:

“Our struggle is to end the discrimination, we don’t have water, we don’t have any forest, we’ve lost territory. We have to unite to address the president, to address the governor. Our struggle is so that our children can eat, so they have space to sow seeds. But that’s why we need to sign agreements.” (2010) On visiting Pampa del Indio it is clear that currently legal paths are at the core of the resistance and also its greatest risk.

“We seek another form of struggle, we are taking the path of dialogue. There are many things we must learn as representatives. It’s not just that we are leaders of an organization, we have to learn politics too. Because if you’re not involved in politics, you won’t get anywhere. [Milciades paused and then went on] Do you know the anecdote about *Cacique* Martínez? Well, as Perón had given him the uniform and the sabre, when there were problems over the land he went and gathered his people in a house and dressed up in military uniform and confronted the police. In those times our *caciques* had uniforms, sabres and everything. If there was a problem they faced up to it. The *cacique* was the highest authority. But today we need to learn another path. So as the law applies today, we need to learn the law, OIT 169, human rights, 3258, we need to start to make use of them to confront whatever problems arise. We have our own rights but those rights must be made to count. How can you make them count? You have to record them, you already know how. For example, if you’re talking about legal personage, the civil code, what do you say? If there’s a penal code, what for you say? The code in itself is nothing. We need to educate ourselves as representatives. And you have to be a strong leader because strong winds are coming. If you’re weak, you don’t have roots, you fall over.” (2012).

Milciades wasn’t the only one to remember the exact numbers of the laws; in fact during most of my conversations I was surprised at the memory my interviewees demonstrated for the numbers of orders, laws, decrees, international treaties, etc. But Milciades attracted my attention because his account reflects the tensions between the role and strategies of the ‘leaders’ and the strategies of the representatives. Learning the laws is to get involved in ‘politics’, in the politics of white people, and to adopt their discourse, which creates new challenges for communities, i.e. This new form of resistance enables and restricts the activities of the indigenous people, making it possible to facilitate the representatives but also to restrict the leadership.

6.5.1 *The challenges of the law*

For the members of IDACH the challenges presented by “rightful resistance” are only related to the gap between the recognition given by the law and its effective implementation (Carrasco and Briones, 1996, Occhipinti, 2003). In Mónica’s words:

“In a system like that the issue of law doesn’t matter to them, the law is there for us, but the letters are dead, meaningless because sadly it’s not applied and we have to hold marches, draw up petitions and do a lot of things when the law is already written. So we ask ourselves, what we need to do to make them listen? I don’t know” (2010).

However, this view of the challenges and limits presented by this kind of resistance would seem to differ from that of the *parajes*. There the debate centres not just on the implementation of the law but its content.

“Before, the indigenous communities, the aboriginal peoples, were killed by weapons but today the moment has come when they are dying from laws. Why? Because they’re poor. Don Panos has 40,000 hectares plus 20,000 hectares that it is exploiting. There’s no forest left. The land is private. You go looking for firewood and they put you in prison, they shoot at you. The law was that we pre-existed, that we are the indigenous people. The state recognizes you but doesn’t give you your rights. Your rights as a producer, to plant cotton, to have livestock. To be the owner of your land, that is our right. The indigenous communities don’t have any water, they suffer greatly. They don’t have drinking water, they’re drinking water from puddles. And what does Don Panos do? It makes channels in its 20,000 hectares. It rains everyday on their farms. And what does the judiciary do? Nothing. The judiciary works in reverse. The poor complain and they’re put in prison” (Pablo; 2011)

“We, the natives have no chance, they don’t give us the right to work, they don’t help to finance us. Why don’t they give us that possibility? They tell us that we’re the owners, they call us autochthonous but don’t give us a chance to work. It’s painful but that’s how it is. The aboriginal people don’t get a chance. To the contrary, they’ve reduced and reduced us until we’re where we are today. There might be two or three families in a 20 by 30 meter house.” (Leon; 2012)

The arguments presented by Pablo and Leon which are shared by many other members of the community emphasize that it’s not enough to recognize the indigenous peoples as representatives of an archaic paradise. To them the ‘law’ exists only insofar as it is enforced and this means being able to work the lands as they have been accustomed to doing.

The challenges of limiting the resistance to legal means do not arise solely because enforcement of the law ultimately depends on the will of the authorities but also because the law authorizes a specific type of indigenous life, which as we have seen in previous sections does not necessarily coincide with the desires of every group.

This problem has been explored in depth by Hale (2002; 2005) who, in his concept of 'neoliberal culturalism' explores "the menace inherent in the political spaces that have been opened". Generally these 'rights of recognition' that characterize neoliberal multiculturalism define the claims and rights that are legitimate and the ones that aren't as well as the way in which they should be achieved, thus disciplining the people who inhabit the new spaces (Hale, 2002: 490).

Thus, the spaces opened up by 'neoliberal culturalism', as they represent the indigenous peoples as ahistorical actors, create a gap between the claims of resources and cultural claims and justify the maintenance of economic and social differences (Gordillo, 1996; Muehlmann, 2009). In Mariano's words:

"If we want to cut down a small portion, they'll ask us 'Why are you clearing the bush? Why do you want to cut this tree down? For every piece of land we clear, forestry (the Forestry Department) comes. But I said to them 'before you could do anything you liked and now we're clearing for ourselves, so we can eat'. That's all it's for and it's not for big investment.'" (2012).

This new breach between recognition and maintenance of economic and social differences compared to other groups was also reflected in the words of Milciades speaking about the aspirations of the members of the community after they had obtained ownership of the land and what the law allowed:

"People want individual titles, not community ones, to get loans from the banks and the cooperatives. Well, that's the white people's idea and the aborigines have it too. We learned, we're not like before. But individual land is the same as community land, because, let's say they give you ownership, you still can't mortgage it" (2012).

As can be seen in these words the law defines and imposes a set relationship with the land. The problem of law and channelling the struggle through those channels is that the law homogenizes ethnic diversity into a pristine representation that ignores current rural contexts (Cowan Ros and Nussbaumer, 2013). As Mariana would say one afternoon:

"When the whites impose their law they prevent us from doing many things. We as a people had our own rules, unwritten guidelines, but we put them into practice in our communities. Our practices became isolated within a legal framework. Sometimes I don't know whether it's a good idea to have a law because some things don't fit, because the model of a law doesn't come from the communities, it absorbs some things but limits others so that the indigenous people will fit in with it but that's not how we organize ourselves." (2012).

6.6 Concluding Remarks

Throughout these pages I have tried to show that, far from having a univocal perspective on processes of accumulation by dispossession, the subaltern groups present heterogeneous positionings. I have thus argued that the different positions are intimately related to the different readings that the different groups have made of their past and the different ways in which they have experienced dispossession.

On examining the different discourses and practices developed by the different Qom groups, I haven't tried to explore which claim is the more 'legitimate' or which posture is the more 'indigenous'. Far from that, the objective of this chapter was "to complicate our assumptions about how politics are formulated and enacted in complex dialogic engagements between multiple social actors" (Speed, 2005: 30). In other words, using the data that I have collected during my fieldwork, I have tried to show that the politics generated by the processes of accumulation by dispossession cannot be reduced to conflicts between the dominant groups and the dispossessed as monolithic, fixed entities. On the contrary they include major disputes and negotiations within the subaltern groups and between these groups and other actors (different state institutions, religious institutions, NGOs and political parties). Thus, I have tried to emphasize the different positionings that can be explained by multiple memories, positions of subalternity and actual experiences of power, elements that mould local rationalities (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013).

In general terms I have suggested that in the case of the Qom there are two new political actors with different positions on accumulation by dispossession. On one side is the 'indigenous peasant' and the other the 'indigenous official'. Each of these positions, by legitimizing particular representations, facilitates and constricts certain experiences (Grossberg, 1996: 89).

The resistance of the 'indigenous peasants' is carried out by rural organizations whose claims focus primarily on the lack of state support for production, the scarcity of water, the lack of work, the increasing pollution and the scarcity of land. Within this position, as Cervone (1998) has suggested, the tension between class-oriented and ethnic aspects is constantly present. Thus the development of the communities might be an indigenous struggle but one that is for their survival as peasants. Certainly this position is also a disputed field between the two sectors. So, not all those who recognize each other and struggle as 'indigenous peasants' agree on what their

strategies should be and what ‘development’ they wish to achieve. In this regard, as the concept of positioning suggests, the shared interests through which one develops a collective identity should always be understood as provisional and subject to constant negotiation (Li, 2000).

Meanwhile, the ‘indigenous officials’ who work within the remit of the state have focused their claims on obtaining greater autonomy principally through an ethno-ecological discourse. In this case, the struggle seeks to increase the margins for manoeuvre established by the state for ‘official indigenous people’. The position of IDACH also serves to analyze how the simplifications or the ‘indigenous slot’, far from being a simple imposition by actors external to the communities, such as activists or experts from state programs, have also become a strategy for resistance reproduced by the subaltern groups (Li, 2000). It is important to emphasize that, within the *parajes*, several auxiliary intercultural teachers and healthcare workers had very similar postures to those of IDACH.

The tensions that arise between both interests and positions constitute a substantial part of the ‘politics of dispossession’ (Levien, 2013) and represent one of the greatest challenges that face the Qom today.

Figure N° 5

Pampa Del Indio

Memories of the Remote Past

UC-CR

Contrasting images
Powerful *caciques*
Lack of education
Poverty
Absence of rights

IDACH and Indigenous Support Teachers and Health Care workers

Period characterized by unity and ties of solidarity, powerful *caciques*, abundance and self-sufficiency.

Memories of the Cotton Period

Inclusion
Work
Follow up and production

Exploitation
Imposition of criollo customs

Perceptions of dispossession: Absence of the State

UC

Lack of help/work
Exclusion
Victims of the 'indigenous slot'

CR

Lack of help/work
No differentiation from the situation of poor criollos.

Lack of control - deepening of historical exclusionary policies

Members of CR who lived next to Don Panos:
The company is mainly responsible for the dispossession.

Struggles

Fight against adverse incorporation means achieving equality of opportunity with the criollo peasants, and access to the same technology.

Fight against adverse incorporation means trying to obtain support from the state in order to develop ecological agricultural production.

Fight to obtain greater autonomy/maneuver power through ethnic-ecological discourse.

CHAPTER 7

Disclosing the margins II: Dispossession and the politics of Moqoit people in Las Tolderías

“History continues very often to be written in Marx’ letters of blood and fire.
This, however, is not the whole of the story” Hall (2012).

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on the experiences of the Qom people in Pampa del Indio and tried to show that processes of accumulation by dispossession are perceived and experienced in different ways by different groups (Strümpell, 2014). In making this argument I noted that the positions of these subalterns towards the new dynamics of neoliberal agrarian change varied depending on their different experiences of dispossession, their collective memories of prior periods and their position of subalternity (Li, 2010; Hodgson, 2011). I then argued that this resistance has multiple local meanings and that the politics of the subalterns, far from being homogenous, encompass a wide range of actions that include also conformity, support and complicity (Kerkvliet 2009, see also Webber, 2008; Hall et al 2011; Hall, 2011; 2012; Adnan, 2013; Borrás et al., 2012; Williams et al, 2011).

This chapter, which is dedicated to the experience of the Moqoit¹⁵² who live in *Paraje* Las Tolderías, seeks to focus on an analysis of situations in which ‘piecemeal dispossession’ (Li 2010 a; 2010b) has not created resistance. The main objective here will be to investigate in greater detail the question asked in Chapter 2: How can the lack of resistance and/or complicity of subalterns in these processes be explained? (Adnan, 2013; Levien, 2013). With a similar focus to the previous chapter, I will argue that the compliance of the subalterns or their lack of resistance cannot be understood just because of the ‘nature of the process of dispossession’, i.e. due to their economic or extra-economic nature, but is the result of historical, economic, political and cultural processes that have moulded the ‘local rationalities’ (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013). More specifically, I will argue that the acquiescence of the Mocoví to these processes is fundamentally

¹⁵² Throughout these pages I will use the terms Moqoit, Mocoví and Mocovies indistinctly to refer to the indigenous population of Las Tolderías, because, as I noted in Chapter 3, they are used interchangeably by the inhabitants themselves.

related to patterns of historical settlement, the central role of wage labor as a mechanism of reproduction and intra-ethnic tensions.

This chapter is organized as follows: the first section will offer a summary of the case in question. The second section will focus on an analysis of the memories that the Moqoit interviewed chose to emphasize about previous eras. As in the previous chapter the third section aims to analyze the link between these collective memories and perceptions of the processes that neoliberalism set in motion. I am particularly interested in exploring how the ‘tactics of concealment’ employed by the Mocoví and the role this group played as waged workers in the socio-economic structure of the cotton period have contributed to moulding their perceptions and positions with regard to the present processes (Citro 2006; 2010; Domínguez et al 2006).

The fourth and final section aims to explore the influence of intra-ethnic tensions in the positions adopted by these groups. Here I return to the analyses that state that to understand the actions of the subalterns we must consider not only their relationships with the dominant groups but also the power relationships that exist within the dominated groups themselves (Ortner, 1995; Gal, 1995). Considering this other political dimension of the subalterns will make it possible to better understand the different links that exist between the new rural dynamics and different kinds of agency (Brosius, 1997).

7.2 The Moqoit of Las Tolderías

The history of this *paraje* began in 1911 when a group of Mocovíes led by the Cacique Pedro José Nolasco Mendoza was forced to migrate from the province of Santa Fe as a consequence of the advance of the state’s line of forts (see Chapter 5). In 1913 Colonel Rostagno, who was in charge of this military campaign, reported that he had achieved the reduction of “the 1,000 Mocoví from Pedro José” who “asked for schools in addition to land” (in Beck, 1994: 71). From then until the start of the 1920s the group led by Pedro José tried to settle in different locations including Quimilí, in the province of Santiago de Estero, and Quitilipi and Villa Angela in the province of Chaco.

Around 1922 this group of Mocoví reportedly divided into two bands, one of them settling in Colonia El Pastoril and the other in Pampa el Cielo (López, 2009). This latter group gave rise to Paraje Las Tolderías.

According to the recollections of those interviewed, shortly after settling in Campo del Cielo, 90km from their current settlement, they were forced to relocate. Miguel, a man around 75 years old, told me:

“They say; because nothing has been written down, this is what one hears or what they say at meetings. They say that, before, they walked from Santa Fe because it was all ours, all desert. And later they turned around. The journey took months. They hunted and explored, surveying the territory. When they found a big lake they rested and then came back. But then, when the south started to get populated there was no return, they came running back. They started to move like that, seeking out a path where they would be left alone, but there was no such case and they had to move everywhere because they were persecuted a lot. Our grandparents came from Santa Fe, 1,500 came in a single group to where the meteorite¹⁵³ is and they stayed there. Their land was 10,000 hectares. That was where the aborigines settled and rested. Then an officer came to see *Cacique* Pedro José, the father of *Cacique* Catán, and said, ‘This place isn’t good for you. People from the south are coming to look for land, they’ll use this land for firewood and you’ll die of cold’. Of course, because they wanted to give that land to people from overseas. Pampa del Cielo all belonged to aborigines but the aborigines had to be sent into the bush. There were aborigines everywhere, in Charata, las Breñas, but wherever they were they were driven out and their land was farmed” (2012, my emphasis).¹⁵⁴

In 1924, after being evicted from Campo del Cielo, the Moqoit settled in their present *paraje*. Las Tolderías was located inside the General Necochea Agricultural Colony, which was created by a decree of President Yrigoyen signed in June 1921. The accounts I gathered in my fieldwork state that many families had no fixed place to live or lived as *agregados* (additions) to other people’s land (notes from fieldwork, 2012). As José, about sixty years old, described it, the Moqoit “had no communities like our brothers the Qom and the Wichis who got large stretches of land, we were spread out across the colony, in the places left unoccupied” (2012). Currently *Paraje* Las Tolderías is also known as Colonia *Cacique* Catán, in homage to the man who is considered the last of the great Mocoví *caciques* (López, 2009; Altman, 2011).

¹⁵³ Campo del Cielo contains 20 craters formed by the break-up of a meteorite which hit the area approximately 4000 years ago (Cassidy and Renard, 1996). According to several studies, in the Mocoví culture, the place represents an important source of power, luck and wealth (Giménez et al, 2003).

¹⁵⁴ Miguel’s account serves as an introduction to this new case in which, as we shall see over the following pages, the differences between ‘them’ and ‘us’ are often diluted and the hegemonic narratives are constantly fusing with alternative accounts. It is interesting to observe how in this description the idea of the ‘desert’ appears associated with the time when indigenous people ruled the territory, while the ‘settlement’ is associated with the increasing presence of foreigners and creoles, as in the national hegemonic discourse (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2) By the same token it is worth noting that ‘the bush’ does not appear as a place where indigenous people belonged, but as a place that the dominant society wished to impose upon them.

The State's recognition of this *cacique*, the son of Pedro Nolasco, is commemorated by a sign located at the entrance to the *paraje*, which states his place of origin (Santa Fe) and the date he arrived at the colony. In some ways the sign functions as a remembering that 'they came to a territory that was already occupied', thus constituting a material expression of the power relations governing the space (Roseberry, 1994; see photo in appendix).

The region where the community was located was one of the main cotton producing centers of Chaco and, in contrast to the Pampa del Indio area which was dominated by large estates, the Moqoit settling there were surrounded from the beginning by small and mid-sized producers. This early experience of living in the same area as immigrants and creoles and the kinds of interethnic relations that became established is exemplified by a family tale told by Antonio Mocoví, a representative of the Moqoit ethnicity at IDACH who was born in Las Tolderías, at one of our first encounters:

"I'll tell you something; my grandfather told me that when we came with the group of 1,500 Indians from Santa Fe to Chaco, we came as a group and then the carts of the *gringos* came. A caravan of *gringos* came after the indigenous people, accompanying the caravan. So they came to Chaco and settled in Pampa del Cielo, throughout the Charata area. If a war arose during that period, the *gringos* were there, behind the indigenous people, to fight against the army. It was the army that trapped people, that sought out indigenous people to kill them" (2012).¹⁵⁵

Given that the indigenous people's access to free land was very much reduced, work as day labourers and harvesters in the fields of the colonists became, until the mid-1970s, the main source of livelihood for Mocoví families. That activity was complemented by farming for self-consumption (mainly squash, manioc, sweet potato, etc.) and the *marisca* they were allowed to carry out on the colonists' land (interviews 2010-2012; see also López, 2009).

7.2.1 First divisions within the community

The 1980s would bring major changes for the Mocoví in Las Tolderías¹⁵⁶. Firstly, although the *paraje* had been founded in the 1920s, the Mocoví only received provisional deeds to their land in 1984 (interviews, 2012). Ownership of the parcels of land, which varied between 20 and 25

¹⁵⁵ As can be seen, this account of the colonization differs markedly from the memories presented in the previous chapter in which the Qom remembered that after the death of *Cacique* Taigoyic "strange people came from everywhere looking for land. Nobody knew where they came from".

¹⁵⁶ In addition to the changes summarized here, it should be noted that Francisco Nolasco Mendoza, known as '*Cacique* Catan', died on the 7th December 1974.

hectares¹⁵⁷, was obtained from the Department of the Chaqueñan Aborigine (D.Ch.A), which was run by creole officials. Among them was Carlos Benedetto, whom many of the people interviewed referred to as “the father of the aborigines”, the person “who helped us to exist as indigenous” (Interviews 2011-2012; see also Chapter 5 Section 5.5.3). According to these accounts, immediately after obtaining the titles to the land the Mocoví started to receive tools and funds for production. In Narciso’s words:

“Help came, because they now knew the people had fixed places and so help began to flow. Everyone now had their own little parcel so the next step was to help them. After a while the house came too because they knew that we were the owners” (2012).

The ‘help’ referred to by Narciso, who was around sixty years old at the time we met, was a rural development project run jointly by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF¹⁵⁸) and the Department of the Chaqueñan Aborigine. The work of the IAF in Chaco had begun in 1981 when, together with the D.Ch.A, they started the process of selection of the indigenous communities. After the selection process that lasted several years, five communities were selected, including the Las Tolderías community. The agreement established a five year period in which the IAF would grant the necessary funds to clear land and help to increase existing crops (Bray, 1989). According to the requirements of the agreement, in order for the funds to be transferred the Moqoit created the Asociación Comunitaria Colonia Las Tolderías, which was one of the first indigenous organizations in Chaco with legal personhood. The association was directed by different members of the community and included some members of mixed families such as Angel, a man who is about sixty-five, the son of a Spanish father and Moqoit mother, who is married to a creole woman and also Roberto, a creole man of approximately the same age, who is married to a Moqoit woman (interviews 2011-2012). The association had to coordinate the use of machinery and jointly organize the sale of the produce. However, shortly after the project began, different conflicts started to arise that eventually led to the division of the community and the formation of two neighborhoods: Santa Rosa and San Lorenzo.

¹⁵⁷ Currently the Moqoit occupy an area of approximately 2,300 hectares (Dirección de Bosques de la Provincia de Chaco, 2013).

¹⁵⁸ “The InterAmerican Foundation is an independent US government agency created in 1969 to channel aid for development directly to the poorest organized groups in Latin America and the Caribbean.” For further information see <http://www.iaf.gov/index.aspx>

Speaking about this conflict, Rodolfo, a leader of the San Lorenzo community said:

“Before, when we were all together, we were helped by people from the United States. The truth is that they gave us a lot of money. They brought tractors, everything in full. But after a few years we had to split because the tractors didn’t get here. They were for the whole community but they [the members of the Santa Rosa neighbourhood] didn’t bring the tractors to the people here. They got there and the tractors returned there and nothing came here. That’s why the San Lorenzo community was formed and another commission was created” (2012).

The members of the Santa Rosa community claim, however, that the division was caused by personal ambitions and party politics¹⁵⁹. In the words of Miguel, a member of the Santa Rosa community:

“What happened was that they left. Yes, they’re all the same family, but you know how these politics are. Sometimes someone decides to form another organization just on a whim. We keep forming associations and don’t make any progress. Those with power are strong and those without get left behind.” (2012)

It is important to note that according to the IAF report the differences over the use of production equipment between the members of the community were not just caused by issues related to production. For example, the report states that the conflicts over the use of tractors were not just related to working the fields but also to meet the demand for services that the state did not provide, such as transporting water, as ambulances and as a mode of transport to do paperwork in town (Bray, 1989).

Regardless of the causes of this separation¹⁶⁰ the fact is that it seems to have accentuated certain differences within the community. In the area known as Santa Rosa the Asociación Comunitaria Colonia Las Tolderías¹⁶¹ continues to function, it has kept its legal personhood and has facilities such as a community center and warehouse (see attached photos). This is also where the first aid

¹⁵⁹ In this case the political parties mentioned were the Partido Justicialista (PJ) and the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), the problems arose between the two parties and also between different factions of each. It is usually stated that the Santa Rosa community is Peronist while San Lorenzo supports the Radical party. To understand the importance of both parties at a provincial level suffice it to say that since democracy returned in 1983, Chaco was always governed by one of these two parties. Between 1983 and 1995, the Partido Justicialista was in power and between 1995 and 2007 the government was run by the Unión Cívica Radical. After 2007, Jorge Capitanich, a member of the PJ, was elected governor but in 2013 he was named Head of the National Cabinet and the Governor’s role was passed on to Juan Bacileff Vanoff, the vice-governor.

¹⁶⁰ Some research (López, 2009; Altman, 2011) states that the division occurred after the arrival of Evangelical churches which, as we saw in Chapter 5, were introduced by Qom leaders.

¹⁶¹ It is important to note that inclusion in the ‘active member’ category of the Association is not related to agricultural activity per se but to their membership to the community. This is why they can remain members even if they aren’t necessarily producing at the time.

clinic, the school (No. 193) and the civil registry are located. The first Justice of the Peace was *cacique* Catán.

In the neighborhood known as San Lorenzo, in contrast, access to services is more restricted. The houses are more remote, located in what is left of the bush, electricity was only recently installed¹⁶² and there is only one pump for the water supply (see photos in appendix). To reach the first aid clinic inhabitants of San Lorenzo have to walk between five and seven kilometers. In this neighborhood, although a commission was formed it did not receive legal personhood, making it difficult to access the economic benefits distributed by IDACH or take part in rural development programs¹⁶³.

On this last point some members of the Santa Rosa community believe that the reason for the ‘lack of help’ to the San Lorenzo community, is not so much for not meeting formal requirements, but for being an area “a little bit more rebellious”, which makes the authorities consider them “more difficult” (interviews 2012). The inhabitants of San Lorenzo, meanwhile, also stated that they receive less aid and they did not see the failure to meet formal requirements as being a factor either. Although they don’t consider themselves ‘rebellious’, they say that their differences with the Santa Rosa community are due to the fact that they are more traditional. Rosa, a woman of about fifty said to me:

“From the crossroads and beyond, they don’t speak the language like our children. Our children only speak Spanish at school. They speak their own language at home. They say San Lorenzo is here and Las Tolderías is there. The community has two names. Here we keep up the customs more, here we never changed our minds about how to bring up our children.” (2011).

It is important to take into account that in contrast to Pampa del Indio, there are no official state offices¹⁶⁴ in the Las Tolderías area (INTA - Undersecretary of Family Agriculture offices) and nor was there, during my fieldwork, a regional IDACH office¹⁶⁵. For this reason, contact between the

¹⁶²Electricity was installed during my second visit in 2012.

¹⁶³The Pro Huerta program was one of the channels by which the San Lorenzo was able to obtain certain resources. But the majority of the programs occur in the Santa Rosa area.

¹⁶⁴In 2009, a community vegetable garden was created under the direction of INTA and the INAI as part of the “Sustainable Alternative Food Development with Indigenous Peoples” program. The regional delegate from the Undersecretary of Family Agriculture visited the *paraje* for the first time in August 2012 when I asked her to accompany me on my trip.

¹⁶⁵The regional office was created on 22nd May, 2013.

population and the institutions is more infrequent and occurs to a much greater degree through the leaders of each area.

7.2.2 Soybean expansion in the area around the community

Between the mid-90s and the first decade of the new century, a group of businesspeople from Córdoba province¹⁶⁶ started to rent and buy fields from creole colonists, progressively replacing cotton crops with soybeans¹⁶⁷. In contrast to the previous case study which involved a large enterprise (Don Panos), here soybean production is carried out by three mid-sized establishments. According to the information I gathered during my fieldwork, the new producers are barely known by people in the area. Usually when they are referred to, interviewees say that in contrast to the previous colonists, they're "rich men," "millionaires," or "capitalists," but their identities remain anonymous (interviews 2012). The only contact between Moqoit families and the soybean producers occurs through the 'managers' or employees who occasionally come to spray, plant and harvest in each field.

The departure of the creole colonists and introduction of soybeans, similar to events in Pampa del Indio, has generated major changes in the rural dynamics of the area. As I mentioned in the previous chapters the expansion of soybean cultivation represents a 'profound break between the land and work' due to the highly technological production (Li, 2010b; Hall, 2011). In this case the scarce demand for labor has forced the Mocoví to go further afield in search of work. Usually they travel to other provinces such as Santiago del Estero where they do deforestation or clearance work. Due to the increased distances involved waged labour and farming for home consumption have ceased to be complementary activities. Faced with the choice between producing or migrating in search of a salary, the great majority of members of the community have chosen the second option. On only one occasion, in 2009, has the Asociación Comunitaria Colonia Las Tolderías tried to encourage production through an agreement with El Tejar S.A.¹⁶⁸, a

¹⁶⁶ Córdoba is approximately 670km to the southwest of Chaco.

¹⁶⁷ Other studies have recorded the advance of soybeans and the subsequent deterioration of the environment in the region, although they don't focus on these issues. These include: López and Giménez, 2006 and López, 2007; 2009.

¹⁶⁸ This agreement was arranged by El Tejar's 'Community Commitment' unit, as part of the Sembrando Raíces project. The contact between the company and the Association was facilitated by the President of the Association's cousin, who was a company employee at the time (interview with a representative of El Tejar, S.A., 2011).

sowing pool located in the Charata area. This agreement, which lasted a year, involved the company giving the members of the Association cotton seeds and diesel, helping them to prepare their fields for sowing and giving twice-monthly training talks on ‘the advantages of the direct-sowing method compared to traditional methods’ (interviews, 2010). According to those interviewed, although the sale of the cotton crop was run by the Association, the small size of the fields and thus their production made the project unprofitable and it was abandoned the next year.

After this experience, in addition to migrating temporarily in search of work, the majority of Mocoví have decided to rent out their lots or just “give them to someone who can work them” (interviews 2010-2012 and field notes). Generally, they receive a percentage of the sales of production in payment for the use of the land. Although the percentage they receive is usually tiny, the majority of those interviewed said that they rent it out because

“if we leave it unworked, the roots will take again and it’ll be twice the work because we’ll have to clear the trees out again. So we give it to someone else to work it. Sometimes they give us something. When they sell, half a hectare is for us. That’s our payment.” (2012)

Because they constitute ‘a surplus labor population’/ the terms which they must accept to get work are often adverse (Araghi, 2009; Li, 2010b; Hall, 2011). Almost all those interviewed said that when they migrate, they are often scammed by the contractors through whom they get their jobs. However, as we will see in the account of Angel, one of the leaders of the Santa Rosa community, in spite of the swindles, they go on accepting the deal because they believe it is the only option.

“There have been cases of people coming back because they’ve been promised one thing and told another when they got there. But it’s not the boss, it’s the contractor in the middle. The guy will arrange \$500 per hectare for example, but when you get there it turns out to \$200 rather than \$500, so... Some have walked almost 100 km, hitchhiking. Also they give them sheets of black plastic and say: “Make yourself a shelter, get in it,” or otherwise it’s warehouses because aborigines can adapt to anything. What can we do? There’s no other option, but at least they get some money” (2010).

Furthermore, as in the case of the Qom, the advance of soybean cultivation in the region made it increasingly difficult to practice *marisca*. This is fundamentally due to the fact that the new owners (or usufructuaries) in the fields have forbidden entry onto the land, and increased deforestation and spraying. In this regard Fernando, who lives in the area known as San Lorenzo, said:

“There used to be a lot more bush and the producers, who we knew, let us come onto their land to look for animals. We’re talking about brocket deer, iguanas, armadillos, that kind of thing, just animals. We liked them a lot. And *algarrobo* trees because they were much healthier, more natural. But then came the super power from outside buying land, planting soybeans and spraying. Now, the bush is gone¹⁶⁹. We make do somewhat by raising bees and selling honey, but when 100 to 500 hectares of bush is cleared by a bulldozer, the bees get lost and the honey goes. Before, we took honey from the natural bush and we sold it” (2012).

In summary, like Pampa del Indio, the expansion of soybean cultivation in this region has resulted in growing unemployment and increasing difficulties for self-farming and the *marisca* practice. However, to the present day Las Tolderías has not seen any mobilizations, nor has any kind of protest been organized. We must then ask ourselves what factors explain the different positionings of the communities towards similar processes?

7.3 The Meanings of Dispossession 2

In analyses focusing on the ‘point of view of capital’, the existing literature on processes of accumulation by dispossession has failed to analyse the practices of subalterns in these processes, assigning them solely roles of resistance once the dispossession has taken place (Clever, 1992; Lebowitz, 2003). Many authors studying the dynamics of neoliberal agrarian change seem to explain the actions of subalterns by dispossession exclusively because of the extra-economic nature of the process (Adnan, 2013; Levien, 2013). Parting from this premise, they have stated that, since for subalterns and dominant groups dispossession occurs just once, class compromise and subsequent conformity of subaltern groups is not very likely, or necessary. Levien, for example, says that

“(…) as the common minimum denominator of dispossession, (non) compliance is a better starting point. At the rock bottom, regimes of dispossession need not produce consent, enduring political allegiance, or transformations in the subjectivities of the dispossessed (…)” (2013:23).

So although these viewpoints do not ignore momentary acts of compliance, they explain them almost exclusively as being the result of policies implemented by the state or other dominant actors when the dispossession occurred. Thus the origin of the ‘resistance action’ or ‘complicity’

¹⁶⁹Although a large part of the land had already been cleared for cotton production the greater surface area required by the production methods of soybeans has exacerbated the clearance (see photos in appendix).

is identified as being beyond the subaltern actors and depending exclusively on the intrinsic nature of the process.

The problem with this approach to processes of accumulation by dispossession is “somewhat ironic” as Hall has said, as “one of the great strengths of the primitive accumulation framework is its analysis of the centuries-long process by which capitalism has become truly global, but the framework can simultaneously encourage us to ignore the effects of that history of capitalist expansion on the places where land grabs are now taking place” (2013:1597)¹⁷⁰. As Hall says these processes do not occur in a vacuum, so to understand them one must analyse how the places and also the actors have changed over the course of history. In other words it is necessary to analyse the alliances or configurations of forces that have formed prior to and during those processes, as this allows us to consider the way in which collective memories and perceptions have been molded and subaltern positions have been constructed (Roseberry, 1994; Gordillo, 2006; Sikor, 2012). Considering that these latter factors are central to the positionings taken by the actors in this processes of accumulation by dispossession, I will return once more to the analysis of ‘local rationalities’, but this time to try to understand why ‘piecemeal dispossession’ can also be unresisted (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox; 2013; Hart, 2006).

7.3.1 The Past

In contrast to the Qom in Pampa del Indio, in my encounters with the Mocoví the accounts of their history prior to the settlement in the colony were very short and generalized. On many occasions interviewees stated that they had little interest in or curiosity about the history of their ancestors. For example, during a conversation with Marcelo, who lives in the Santa Rosa community, he said:

“When we were younger we didn’t pay attention to our grandparents, they came from Santa Fe. When my grandmother died I was fifteen, but I never asked how they got here, where they stopped first, what they ate, how they lived, how difficult it was for them to walk here from Santa Fe, from San Javier. In this regard we were very lax, we didn’t pay attention. I listened to what my grandmother said but I didn’t realize how valuable it would be today. The culture got lost, not many people speak the language, they speak it a little more over there in San Lorenzo but not here. Only the old people speak it and there aren’t many of them left” (2012).

¹⁷⁰ Hall makes this criticism regarding the studies that use AbD to analyse the creation and expansion of capitalist social relations but I think the same criticism could be applied to other cases which focus on the extra-economic nature of the process.

Marcelo's words, in which he remembers without remembering (he remembers that the group walked from San Javier, that they had to stop on their first journey and that he listened to what his grandmother said), allow us to begin to perceive the process of silencing that occurred within the community because of the 'lack of value' they assigned indigenous culture at the time.

Notably, in spite of the differences that often arise between inhabitants of both areas, accounts similar to that of Marcelo also occurred in the San Lorenzo community. For example when I asked Mariana, a young Moqoit woman, about the history of her grandparents she answered:

"I don't know, because I'm younger and never asked about their history. So I have no idea. My dad didn't tell me anything about them because he says he feels pity when he thinks about it. Because we were poorer before. We didn't have any food or clothes. He tells us about the times when he was working but he doesn't say much about poverty" (2012).

Mariana's account is interesting because once more it is her supposed disinterest that is presented as the main cause of her lack of knowledge about the past but then it immediately gives way to another reason; her father's refusal to tell the story. Now it is the sadness of these memories linked to an image of poverty and lack of possessions that becomes the principal cause of the 'silence.' In this and other cases the image of poverty was expressed through phrases describing the lack of certain goods, which seem to function as 'symbols of civilization' (Gordillo, 2006). It's common to hear that before "there weren't any shirts", "there were no clothes", "there were no coffins in which to bury the dead", "there was nothing, we were poor, poor" (2012).

This emphasis on poverty and the scarcity of goods was associated in many cases with the lack of work. Narciso said during one of our meetings:

"We didn't know work. All the wealth we have now; land, plows, horses, we didn't have before. We went hungry. Before we couldn't get things because what indigenous person has money? There wasn't any work. Only when there was work, people started farming" (2012).

As can be seen, just as was the case with the Qom, *marisca* is not conceived of in terms of 'work' here either, the latter generally being more valued (Gordillo, 2002; 2006; Wright, 2008). However, in the case of the Mocoví, 'work' refers mainly to their status as rural laborers, rather than producers as we shall see later on.

The fact that the majority of those interviewed have focused in their memories on the lack of possessions experienced by their ancestors, does not mean that they do not also emphasize

positive aspects of their past. Of these, the longevity of their ancestors was one of the most often repeated comments. As other works have noted (Gordillo, 2006; López 2007) the longevity and strength of ‘the ancients’ is usually associated with the food they obtained from the bush and the purity of the environment. For example Francisco, Miguel’s brother, an inhabitant of the Santa Rosa neighbourhood, remembered:

“I could eat thistles in the bush. We took the white part on the bottom and roasted it on the fire. We ate healthy foods, which is why the grandfathers lived one hundred, one hundred and five years” (2012).

However, during our conversations, these positive aspects were quickly made relative. For example, on that occasion, immediately after Francisco’s comment, Miguel said:

“Before there was more honey, *camachui*, *chiguana*, we kept the skins, our syrup was made from bee honey and herbs... But the thing is that the bush was inside [the creole land] and the bees died after the spraying, the birds and species died from the poison. For example, you don’t see *carquejas* any more and so things that were medicines for the community disappeared. But before it was more difficult because Indians were Indians” (2012).

Miguel’s words show once more the tension between the memories of the past and the perception of the present. It is interesting to note that his description, in contrast to the memories of poverty mentioned earlier, offers a picture of abundance. This shows again that the collective memories of scarcity in the past are linked to certain goods that in the current situation are particularly valued. And this point is relevant because it reveals that, like the contrast between *marisca* and work, hegemonic values partially mould the collective memories and perceptions of the subalterns (Gordillo, 2006; Wright, 2008).

7.3.2 ‘They decided to change’

In the majority of the stories I have gathered during my fieldwork the period that began with the migration from Santa Fe before the foundation of the settlement functions as a watershed between the ‘Ancient Mocoví’ and the ‘New Mocoví’. Rodolfo, in one of our conversations, described the foundation of the *paraje* in the following way:

“When they were in Santa Fe, our grandparents didn’t work, they were very poor. They didn’t have anything to plow the land or any of that. And then when they came here they decided to change” (2012).

The ‘change’ mentioned by Rodolfo does not just refer to the start of waged labor as a means of reproduction but also the assimilation of a wider range of creole cultural practices. The

persecution they suffered, their status as ‘forced migrants’ for over twenty years, the scarcity of free land and the subsequent need to take paid work resulted in the repression of their cultural traits (López, 2009). However, the ‘assimilation’ to the creole way of life, far from being seen as an imposition by a dominant society, is usually interpreted as something undertaken willingly by members of the community. As Rodolfo said: “they decided to change.” In accordance with this vision, some authors have seen this process as “tactics of concealment”, or “ways in which the Mocovíes tried to redirect the situation of domination, taking advantage of the opportunities available in the circumstances” (Citró, 2006:159; see also Citró, 2010; Domínguez et al, 2006 and López, 2009). In fact, these tactics constituted a central element in the policies of the *caciques*. This can be seen both in the request for “land and schools” issued by Pedro José Nolasco Mendoza that I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter and the policy of his successor cacique Catán. As Antonio remembered:

“The ideology of *cacique* Catán showed us that we had to learn Spanish well, without losing our own language, because learning Spanish would help us in the future as a tool with which to fight. I go around Chaco Province as an indigenous leader and I see some communities that aren’t able to speak Spanish, to express themselves and make their own claims. They don’t have it. I’ve seen that a lot. So it’s true what *cacique* Catán said, that we had to learn Spanish to be able to fight as equals. For me, for example, knowing Spanish well helps me to express myself, to present my claims. I think that the Mocoví community was inserted deeper into white society and in some way it allowed us to make advances in many aspects. Because of the Mocoví cohabitation with the whites, I think that the community is closer to the *criollos* (...) In contrast there are other communities who are frustrated because they don’t want to be a part of the white world. I still say that we shouldn’t abandon our identity, to the contrary, I feel much happier thanks to the knowledge that we have. But one learns a lot from the relationship with society. So I feel happy because the Mocoví people are very willing to work, to progress, in spite of the differences with other communities we’re struggling hard” (2012).

The ‘new Mocoví’ are characterized by the early adoption of Spanish and the incorporation of many other creole cultural practices such as a taste for certain kinds of music and dances¹⁷¹ (Citró, 2006; 2010; López, 2009). It is important to note that although the adoption of these practices can be seen as a resistance tactic, this does not mean that it is a mere ‘dramatization of power relationships’ that leaves the actors and their culture unaltered (Scott; 1992). To the contrary, what I am trying to make clear is that over time these tactics also moulded the communities themselves, which appropriated new values and practices, often giving them new

¹⁷¹In my interviews many people remembered that their parents and grandparents liked to dance chamamé and tango (2012).

meanings (Citro, 2006; Domínguez et al 2006). As Antonio said in the paragraph above, ‘converting’ was not ‘abandoning their identity’ but it was precisely these ‘fusions’ that came to define contemporary Mocoví¹⁷². By the same token, as we discussed the origins of the *paraje*, Rodolfo commented:

“Mostly the indigenous communities at Las Tolderías; the people, the brothers, worked on farms, they were rural laborers. We grew up there, we grew up in this environment of farmers. And today, for example, our young people run the modern machinery that the *gringos* (we call them that with all due respect) have. And we are in that environment, we know and live with the farmers, because our people were born like that” (2012).

As we shall see later on the adoption of these practices also molded the political culture of the community. To achieve their objectives, to ‘progress’, they had to “become part of white society” which meant working and negotiating in the other’s language if necessary.

7.3.3 Memories of the cotton period

The settlement in the colony and the ‘start of the new era’ coincides with the prelude to the cotton cycle. This period, in the majority of the interviews, was remembered as an era of happiness and abundance when there “was more life and movement” (interviews 2010-2012). The collective memories of happiness are closely associated with the family unit. Almost all the Mocoví I interviewed stated that in that era “the family stayed together”, in clear contrast to the present situation in which the men migrate to other provinces in search of work while the women stay at the *paraje*¹⁷³. For example Pablo, a member of Santa Rosa’s community, remembered the era as follows:

“Cotton means something special before today. Cotton motivated the family, it’s what kept the family happy. During harvest time, the father, the son and the grandson and everyone would join in the harvest and it was money that came every weekend, it was a *sueldito* [tiny salary]. At its best it was a party.” (2012)

¹⁷² Although, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Qom also adopted certain creole practices and values, the process only occurred in the mid-1940s. It is just as important to remember that the Qom community in question maintained their language and control a much larger territory (see Ch 5; Citro, 2010).

¹⁷³ It is notable that almost all the women interviewed missed the harvest because they said that they worked on it as ‘equals with the men’. In addition, almost all of them noted with pride that they were “pretty – lovely – picking cotton” and mentioned how many kilos they could gather in a single day (interviews 2010-2012).

The exuberance that typifies memories of the cotton period provides a marked contrast to the prior austerity. In almost all accounts the wages that were obtained from working on the cotton harvest were a central factor in explaining the wellbeing during this period. That money did not just provide the ability to survive during periods of crisis, but also allowed them access to certain goods and environments such as dances and bars, where they came into closer contact with creoles (López, 2009). However, some aspects of these changes were also heavily criticized mainly by some members of San Lorenzo. This is the case with Juana, for example, who remembered that:

“Before, people started the harvest in February and the cotton harvest lasted until July. We had a period in which money could be made, to save for the times when we didn’t have anything. That money was enough for goods. Then people who took care of themselves had enough. Some, however, were a lost cause, they went to the bar and stayed there for three nights” (2012).

In addition to the salary, the prosperity of these years is often associated with the ‘help’ that the patrons, the creole colonists, gave them. For example, when I was talking about those years with Fernando he said,

“At first you don’t have anything, to get what you want you have to work. I was raised like my mother, as a harvester. Labor for cotton. Before it was easier for us to live, because with a proper little job, you could survive and earn what our work was due in a dignified manner. And it was also a little because we never gave up on the food from the bush; I mean the fruits and what we got from the *algarrobo*, the menthol and other things, the animals for meat. That helped us a lot because there was a lot of bush and the producers, who knew us, allowed us to go onto their lots to hunt the animals” (2012).

This ‘help’ was not just limited to the opportunity to *mariscar* on the property of the colonists, but also refers to loans or donations of different objects and supplies. This can be seen in the following account of Pedro, an old man more than a hundred years old who survived the massacre of Napalpi (see Chapter 6, Section 5.2.1):

“I got here in the 1920s or 1930s. Other people were here, they’re not any more, we’re new. I think I came in 1925. Before, people were naked. I went around in rags. I didn’t have anything. When they saw me, some of the colonists gave me shirts and old jackets. I had a lot of *gringo* friends. I worked with them a lot. I worked a lot on a monthly basis. There used to be a lot of work, a lot. But there isn’t any more. People bought [hired] me to plow the fields in the colony. I had a lot of friends. Then Fernández, a colonist from Santiago, helped me in the large field close to the school. He helped me with a hectare, it was pure bush. He came and asked me and I said that I didn’t have anything, not a plow, or horses, nothing.

‘Then we’ll help you with the tractor’, he said. He helped me. I had a few hectares of cotton. And when the cotton came, I sold it in Mesón and earned money. A lot of money! And I asked how much they

charged for the tractor and they said: ‘No, no, no, we won’t charge. We just wanted to help.’ They told me that I should buy horses with the money. And I bought two mules. I bought them from someone on the other side of the road, over there. They were colonists too. He sold me two mules with muzzles, reins and bits. I finished the harvest and they helped me again.” (2012)¹⁷⁴

As Pedro’s account shows, in Las Tolderías wage labor was not just a complement to production but, on the contrary, it was this work that allowed the Mocoví to get the ‘help’ they needed to practice agriculture on their own lots. So production for home consumption was a ‘reward’, a consequence of paid work rather than an alternative to it. This relationship between work and production was also noted by Richard Reed, an American anthropologist hired by the IAF to evaluate the communities who would participate in the development program mentioned above. In his report, Reed states that indigenous people

“Accept [the help] as a natural aspect of the economy, instead of a hiatus in the oppression they suffer (...) They accept the assistance and feel grateful. However, instead of seeing it as an opportunity to get out of the cycle of salaried work, they get accustomed to waiting for more help to come” (Reed, 1984 in Bray, 1989:19).

Without succumbing to Reed’s patronizing perspective, what I am interested in emphasizing here is that, in contrast to Pampa del Indio, in Las Tolderías commercial production has not become an alternative to paid labour and the ‘help’ comes mainly from the personal relationships the Mocoví establish with the colonists, rather than ties with the state apparatus. These differences are important in understanding why dispossession is perceived differently and why it has led to different positions.

Before moving on to the next section, I’d like to emphasize that, even when descriptions of this period often emphasize its prosperity, the effort and suffering the Mocoví went through at that time is also acknowledged. It is important to make clear that both young people and adults also remember the long working days. Mariana, for example, says the following:

“Cotton was important, but when it was hot the harvesters suffered. I know because I harvested. The boss picked us up at four in the morning and we started at five, quarter past five. We put up with thirst and hunger. We brought a piece of *torta* [fried bread] with us. And we started again in the afternoon. We ate, rested a while and continued all afternoon. We came back about seven in the evening, weighed the harvest on the scale and then the boss paid you. I didn’t like to harvest, but it was important.” (2012)

174 While Pedro shared his memories in the Moqoit language, one of his grandchildren translated them into Spanish simultaneously.

7.4 Perceptions of the advance of soybeans

During my visits to Las Tolderías, discussing the changes that have occurred due to the expansion of soybean production in the region, the ‘de-peasantization’ (Araghi, 1995) caused by the debt that the colonists have incurred and the subsequent crisis of cotton cooperatives (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.1) was usually the main topic of conversation. One afternoon, talking to José, who lives in the area known as Santa Rosa, about these issues he explained:

“There’s a problem. What’s happening is that the small colonists who harvested with the help of extra labor sold everything to the large colonists. The small colonists who were our patrons have now left because they got into debt or something and because bigger ones came and bought everything. Today the owners of the fields aren’t in the fields either. No-one lives in the fields any more, the only person in the field is the manager and the owners are the big colonists” (2012).

Narciso and Fernando used very similar terms in describing the changes that have taken place over the last decade:

“Before, we had neighbors. There was one called Mansilla, he was creole, a poor *Santiagoueño*¹⁷⁵ like us. He had to sell and then the *Cordobés*¹⁷⁶ man came and bought everything and left the countryside. Many had to sell their lots. Now the *Cordobés* has bought everything and made his own fields” (Narciso, 2012).

“People sold their fields, they left. The ones planting now are *Cordobeses* and when they plant they use their cure (agrochemicals). How can we defend ourselves if they’re the owners?” (Fernando, 2012)

Fernando’s question expresses the sense of inevitability that characterizes almost all the accounts of this period, which constitutes a key element in understanding the lack of mobilizations in the community. As Scott has argued “(...) resignation to what seems inevitable is not the same as according it legitimacy, although it may serve just as efficiently to produce daily compliance. A certain tone of resignation is entirely likely in the face of a situation that cannot, in the short run, be materially altered” (1985:324). In this regard, although on certain occasions the process was criticized, it was not challenged. For example, although the majority of those interviewed criticized the current poor working conditions none saw a real alternative. Narciso, for example, said:

“The difference is that now the colonists seem to have a ‘free-rider mentality’, maybe trying to get people to work in return for goods. The times have changed. It’s not like before when the workers arrived, came

¹⁷⁵ Someone born in Santiago del Estero province.

¹⁷⁶ Someone born in Córdoba province.

to an agreement and got paid. Now it's something else. Not like before. Before, when Saturday came they used to make arrangements and people would get paid" (2012).

In general terms the neoliberal restructuring and new agricultural model for the Mocovíes meant above all the loss of their previous employers and of the whole set of relationships associated with them. To some degree the fact that creole colonists were the first to be affected means that the process and its consequences are perceived by the Mocovíes as being beyond their power to change. As Angel said:

"You saw that today you can't farm like before. Today it's more to do with agrochemicals. Progress ate us up as it went along." (2012)

Just as important is the fact that the consequences are seen as something that does not just affect them. For example, with regard to the unemployment, the majority said that creoles are suffering just as much. José made the following observation:

"The other sad thing for us is that every fortnight trucks arrive full of people and other groups leave. Poor indigenous people and creoles have to travel for ten hours to Santiago. Around Santiago they're clearing forest to an incredible extent." (2012)

Of course, the inability to conceive of an alternative scenario is not the only explanation for the group's lack of mobilization. The greater presence of the state is undoubtedly another variable that should be considered. In Las Tolderías, in contrast to Pampa del Indio, many said that although there is less work at the moment, "there isn't as much poverty as before because now they receive state help" (interviews, 2012). The 'help' they refer to is mainly social security and pensions given to rural labourers on retirement (see Ch. 4). This situation is notably similar to that analyzed by Chatterjee (2008) who says that in the present day processes of accumulation by dispossession are only possible if the state intervenes simultaneously to counter some of its main effects, i.e. if the dispossessed are provided with alternate means of subsistence. The author says that "the forms of capitalist growth now under way (...) will make room for the preservation of the peasantry, but under completely altered conditions" (2008:53)¹⁷⁷. The comments of Pablo and Graciela from Santa Rosa seem to reflect this new dynamic.

¹⁷⁷ Tania Li (2010b) also suggests that the contemporary agrarian issue is characterized by the contradiction between what she describes as the 'politics of making live' and the 'politics of letting die'. However, this author believes that 'politics of making live' should not be seen as part of a 'master plan', but the result of the action of different social forces at a given moment. Li includes in these social forces unions, social movements, some state agencies and left wing political parties. Although this argument is important in understanding the interaction between the different actors and noting the multiple differences between

“Pablo: There’s less poverty because there’s more help from the state. Now there are pensions, and social plans. There’s no work, it’s just temporary. Otherwise you have to go to Santiago and they get taken and then don’t get paid or get paid less. Today it’s not easy. You come back with nothing.

Mercedes: Is it possible to farm?

Graciela: No, we couldn’t farm because there’s none of the right help. We all have land but no-one farms” (2012).

As is reflected in Pablo and Graciela’s account different state policies mitigate the effects of the new agricultural model, such as for example the loss of salaries, but they are not accompanied by policies to encourage rural production. This favours the proliferation of what Araghi calls the ‘semi-dispossessed’, i.e. “those who have lost their non-market access to their means of subsistence but still hold formal and/or legal ownership of their means of production” (2009:134). It is important to note that although state intervention (be it through compensation or social benefits) is an element to be taken into account, it does not necessarily determine the positionings of the subalterns. In this regard the greater or lesser persuasive effect these policies have on the subalterns depends in great measure on the way in which they perceive their role in the production system (Williams et al 2011). For instance the same policies that in Las Tolderías seemed to contribute to a certain acceptance of the processes have not placated social protest in other places such as Pampa del Indio.

7.4.1 The effects on the environment

In addition to unemployment, as noted above, the expansion of soybeans has caused major changes in the environment. As in other cases the increased crop-spraying and deforestation that come with this form of production created new problems and challenges for the community. Marcelo was the first to note that the spraying had affected his animals on several occasions.

“The poisons hurt you because now everyone is spraying by plane and it comes with the water. Two months ago they killed two or three plants with the poison. Last year they killed six plants. The animals eat the plants and they die. Because it’s all poisoned. But now, when they ‘cure’ (spray) the crops they let us know and then people take precautions, tie up the animals. They all come with respect.” (2010)

state actors, she does not explain why these demands, presented by different actors, have managed now, and not earlier, to take a central place in the state agenda and often become state policy. This is why, in the Argentine case, when the national government has implemented social policies to revert the effects of the agribusiness model on which the economic growth is based, Chatterjee’s focus is more appropriate. This point is also partially addressed in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3 entitled “Export-oriented Populism”.

Similarly, talking one day to Rodolfo about the spraying, he said:

“Now there are soybeans and sunflowers in the fields, sometimes when the wind comes from the south we have problems. It affects the garden and my health. But well, I protect what’s mine so it won’t be affected, because this is what I live on. The manager always comes by to ask how we are. Things get sorted out by talking” (2012).

Other members of San Lorenzo said that the spraying had contaminated the water they drank every day from a well but like the other comments they emphasized that “the manager always warns the families before spraying that they need to get enough water to last the month. So we do” (2010).

What all these accounts seem to have in common is the fact that, in contrast to Pampa del Indio where the Qom stated that the company and state had ignored their complaints, the Moqoit appear to continue to see the producers as ‘good neighbors’. So, the consequences of the fumigations were seen as ‘accidents caused by working people’ and thus weren’t a motive for confrontation. As Mariana said:

“You can’t say ‘Hey! I’m going to report you because you’re using planes.’ That’s their job. They do their job and also take care of the *paisanos*. Because we’re very small and depend on them” (2010).

In spite of the differences that I have thus far highlighted with the previous case study, it is interesting to observe that in both places many people considered that they did not have the necessary knowledge to judge the problems related to environmental degradation. Angel, for example, said the following:

“The planes flew and flew, above our house, spraying. They’re close by and around and we never noticed. The older *paisano* said ‘they’re poisoning us from the air,’ but people didn’t understand because it was a *paisano* saying it¹⁷⁸. Also, you heard technicians on the TV saying that they didn’t cause deformations or anything like that, that it was a lie... Over the years, maybe, you become more aware that it was a bad thing. As Las Tolderías is surrounded by people who do a lot of farming it might be that we started to see poor results, the consequences” (2010).

Antonio had a similar opinion:

¹⁷⁸ As was mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5, the use of the generic term *paisano* to describe indigenous populations, instead of more precise ethnic markers is closely related to the state’s policies of assimilation and also, as we have seen in this chapter, with tactics of invisibilization used by the indigenous peoples themselves (Wright, 2001; Lazzari, 2003; Ramos, 2005b; Citro 2006, 2010; Pizarro, 2006).

“We all know all about agrochemical products and what happens or gets ruined in the fields and it upsets us a lot. Because sometimes it rains, for example and the water runs and our children go out to play, like we did when we were children, and they get sick. But until now we hadn’t noticed the pollution. I know that a lot has been said about the damage to the environment, by glyphosate for example, RoundUp, other agrochemicals. Charata, for example, is a very productive community, with a very strong agricultural production and we still live in that environment. But I don’t know for sure whether it affected the environment or our people’s health” (2012).

This ‘technocratization of knowledge’ reinforced the naturalization of the situation even more, making a protest more unlikely. As Li says “questions that are rendered technical are simultaneously rendered non-political” (2007:7). This was made clear one afternoon when, talking to Fernando about whether it was possible for them to join other groups in the province to denounce the spraying, he said:

“Yes, we could, but until now we haven’t because the results aren’t clear yet. They aren’t clear because the children are sick but this hasn’t yet come to light. As soon as we know we’ll be able to rise up and shout about it to every corner of the land” (2012).

7.5 Intra-ethnic Tensions

So far, my analysis has tried to show that the collective memories of previous phases of capitalist development and the actual experiences of dispossession constitute significant variables in understanding how processes of accumulation by dispossession develop. So in this section I will focus on positions of subalternity, the third element that influences ‘local rationalities’ (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013). In general terms, I shall argue that the construction of memories and the evaluation of possibilities are not just generated by the relationship between the subalterns and the dominant groups but are also molded by the relationships that subalterns have with other subaltern groups (Ortner 1995; Gal 1995; Cervone, 1998). As Ortner has argued “many people do not get caught up in resistance movements, and this is not simply an effect of fear (...) or narrow self-interest” but is also due to “these political complexities” (1995:179), i.e. to the power relationships that exist within these groups. Following this argument, I believe that the analysis of the positionings of the Mocoví towards the new rural dynamics also requires an appreciation of their relationship with the Qom as well as clientalist relationships as the main mechanisms of negotiation (Li, 2010; Hodgson, 2011).

7.5.1 Tensions between the Qom and the Mocoví

The tensions between the Qom and Moqoit go back many years. One afternoon, speaking to José in his courtyard, he remembered some of the events that gave rise to the hostility between both groups.

“The militia used the Tobas, because they’re good trackers, to pursue the other Indians like the Mocovies. That was where the division between us, the Mocovies and Tobas, began. The Argentine army moved around this territory, which wasn’t a province, and named Toba *caciques* and Indian warriors ‘friends of the army’. They gave them the rank of captain, leading the trackers, an official role so they’d go to the front, commanding a group of soldiers. The Tobas knew how to track and find the hidden communities because they were Indians too... And so they surprised the Mocoví communities in order to attack them. Then the soldiers knew where to find them. As the Moqoit knew the Tobas and knew who was who at the front, that’s how the hatred between the Mocoví and Tobas began. So some Mocoví joined other militia groups to persecute the Tobas. That was where the Toba name originated, before we called them ‘*qom aria*’, which means ‘our people, another us’. And then, when the division occurred, when Tobas were used to persecute us and then Mocoví were used to persecute Tobas, the word ‘*nato qom*’ arose, which means ‘our aggressive brother’. Then came the Evangelicals in 1940, 1930, 1950. Then there was a new brotherhood between the Mocoví and the Toba but there was always some resentment. We don’t call them ‘*nato qom*’¹⁷⁹ any more but *Qom*.” (2012)

In spite of the time that has passed and the fact that occasionally they have joined forces to fight against their exclusion, these tensions have continued, influencing the relationships between both groups in different ways. For example, in a conversation I had with Miguel and Francisco, they remembered the conflicts that occurred during the First Assembly of Indigenous Communities. These meetings, which took place in 1986, aimed to draw up a project that would lead to the Law of the Chaqueño Aborigine (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5.3). As they remembered it, the Qom wanted to impose their vision of the content of the law and the organizational structure of the future IDACH. Miguel and Francisco’s words on the issue were as follows:

“Francisco: At that time the directors in charge of us were white. That began with René Sotelo. René Sotelo was brave, like Carlos Benedetto. We owe everything to Carlitos, he is the father of the aborigines because he won [made possible] the Law of the Aborigine.

Miguel: We were the ones who backed Benedetto, because the Toba didn’t like him. Because there was a leader, Nieves Ramírez¹⁸⁰, who wanted to be the General *Cacique*, he wanted to lead. And Benedetto wanted us to exist because we hardly existed as Wichí and Mocoví, Toba was all there was. Nieves Ramírez was Toba, he was the boss, the *cacique*, everything. And well, afterwards we divided, we’re the

¹⁷⁹ This is a transcription of a recording of the interview.

¹⁸⁰ Nieves Ramírez, from Pampa del Indio, was one of the Qom representatives on the commission formed to promote the Law of the Chaqueño Aborigine.

Mocoví, you're the Toba and you're the Wichí. You can do what you like, we'll be independent, but all because of Carlos Benedetto and our following him"

Francisco: The Toba didn't want us to join with Carlos Benedetto. He had his own way of running things because he was the only figure at that time. The Law of the Aborigine took us almost two and a half or three years. Do you know how much trouble there was? Nieve Ramírez didn't want it because it allowed us to choose [the leadership]; it wasn't just the bravest person any more"(2012).

Even though the Law of the Aborigine is considered a triumph for the Moqoit, most of them believe that in practice the IDACH is a political tool of the Qom. Due to the fact that they are a minority in terms of population and the presidency is chosen by a simple majority, they don't believe that it will be possible to lead the institution. Thus, for most of those interviewed this 'ethno-bureaucratic space' is not an environment through which they can satisfactorily channel their demands (Boccaro and Bolados, 2010). In Fernando's words:

"We don't get anything from the IDACH, if there was help it would be an opportunity to farm, even if it's just market gardening. But there isn't any word on that even. We don't know if they remember us or have forgotten. There might be an agreement between us, but the ones talking to the government never keep their promises. The people are discouraged by so much deceit, so much fraud. An assembly was held but when the time came to put it into practice, they say that it isn't the right time. After a year you can invite a family, two or three times, to go to an assembly but they've become timid about it because if you lied before they feel like they've been cheated. That's where my neighbors' mistrust arises, again and again" (2012).

This view of IDACH, as a political tool of other groups, is even shared by the Moqoit spokesman at IDACH, who said in one of our interviews:

"We're at a disadvantage, politically speaking. There's a disadvantage but that doesn't mean that we've stopped struggling or given in. But sometimes the strength of the Qom people is something the Moqoit don't have. As an institution, the IDACH doesn't answer for anything. It's as though there's a discriminatory attitude against the Moqoit people." (Antonio, 2012)

Far from being reduced to conflicts related to the direction of IDACH, the differences between both groups often reflect disagreements about how indigenous peoples should carry out their politics. On many occasions the conversations that started with a criticism of IDACH or that discussed the difficulties the Mocovies had within the institution, went on to question whether road blocks were a suitable method for them to use in the struggle. The relative position of power of the Qom over the Moqoit was shown by the former's capacity to put pressure on governments. In addition, in these narratives, the Qom were represented as generically being members of the UC. As Francisco said when he spoke about the Mocoví's lack of access to IDACH resources:

“There are differences with the Toba because they’re in the majority. It’s always like that. For example, when there’s help of, I don’t know, however many million pesos and they get more than us. We don’t have anything in this area, that’s why we have to rent. They win by simple majority, they put on a roadblock, everything. Not here. The Peasant’s Union didn’t get here.”

In this regard, many interviewees placed an emphasis on the difference that existed between the ‘work culture’ of the Mocovíes and ‘the political culture’ of the Qom, generally accompanied by heavy criticism of the forms of struggle that that ‘political culture’ represented. Angel, for example, said:

“There has never been a roadblock here, and there won’t be because from when they’re five years old aborigines go to work with their father in the fields, to harvest; they have a work culture. The Toba are more political, the Toba have another way. I don’t know whether you heard that trucks go through here, to the north, with clothes, goods, it’s always the same, because they’re always complaining. Here we have a work culture, because the people want to work” (2010).

As Ramos says “the manner selected to present claims or demands is the result of the diagnosis of the economic and political condition in which they find themselves” (2005:129). In this case, the ‘inevitability’ of the process and the inter-ethnic tensions seem to have contributed to the fact that the Mocoví believe it necessary to negotiate instead of opting for outright confrontation. In contrast to the case in Pampa del Indio, where some Qom stated that “in a system like this one has to hold marches, block roads and present petitions to be heard,” here the interviewees say that this isn’t necessary. As one of the leaders of Las Tolderías put it:

“I know communities that don’t do anything but block roads. If I go to Las Tolderías and call for a road block, they’ll reject it. As an indigenous leader I don’t agree with road blocks, but I understand that they’re often an option. But my point of view today is that my work is to knock on the doors of all the government offices. And if I can opt for dialogue, I’ll choose dialogue; and if I have to come later, I’ll come later, so the minister will meet me. That’s my objective as a leader, not going to the road with my brothers and saying ‘No, the minister doesn’t want to hear me’. I never liked confrontation, I like this. Going to bang on doors, to speak to the minister and set up a dialogue. So things are achieved without exposing ourselves to repression. If God really is everywhere, he’ll listen in Resistencia and in Buenos Aires. We have to go there to make a fuss, that’s why they put us at the front, to present projects and use the techniques. And that’s what I do, put myself on the white man’s level, use the same strategies so that my people can have something without having to block roads. We don’t need people to die to listen to us, we just need strategy, to find the right way.” (2012)

7.5.2 In the zone of promises

Nowadays the demands and claims of this community continue to be channelled through clientalist relationships maintained with the two main parties: the PJ and UCR. Opinions on these

practices within the community are ambivalent and contradictory, and they are criticized both when they are employed and when they aren't. So, for example, after talking for a long time about the main problems faced by the community, as we said goodbye, Pablo said:

“And I want to say something else. When the elections come, all the parties make promises. The Justicialists, the Radicals, IDACH. When there are elections, they come saying ‘Hello, cousin,’ ‘I know you,’ ‘Hello, everyone.’ We, the Moqoit have learned that the whites value the people who voted for them and cut off those who didn't. That's how rivalry is born. Being blood brothers, that form of discrimination shouldn't exist, but it does” (2013).

Pablo's words reflect a general perception among the community that clientelist practices were a negative consequence of the assimilation of the ways of white people. Thus clientelism appears as a political practice that has caused divisions and confrontation within the community.

Although the opinion of Pablo was shared by many people, at the same time, these practices are the source of legitimacy for the leaders of each neighborhood, i.e. “the mission of the political representative is to mediate the geographic and cultural isolation of some of the rural inhabitants, to overcome bureaucratic difficulties in the different government offices and obtain audiences with the highest authorities in order to present claims, conflicts and local needs” (Ramos, 2005b:26). The leaders are often criticized for carrying out these practices and ‘copying the whites’ but also for not doing them, or doing them inadequately. This is the case because, in spite of the asymmetry of power implicit in clientelist relationships, the leader of the community is supposed to have enough power to bring about change with the ‘whites’ (López and Giménez, 2006).

As one of the leaders noted:

“I work for the Justicialists [PJ]. We get together, we're going to be honest, but in exchange for things. We negotiate electricity, we negotiate other things. They don't vote for the bag of goods because it doesn't make sense. Then I say to the higher ranking politicians in other cities: the aborigines go to look for them at five in the morning rain or shine. Then, when there are pensions, I say ‘What do you think?’ And they say they'll give me five and I say that I want 30. And the next operation we get 30. I'm a Justicialist, but I'm not a turkey. If I have to say something to them, I'll say it to their face, with all my arguments. It's not like we wear the shirt and do what they say”.

The presumption that the person in charge should have the power to negotiate, means that when demands are not satisfied, it is the leaders, rather than the state, who are considered responsible.

For example, in Santa Rosa, many said that the lack of benefits or help for production was caused by the lack of contacts and experience of the current leader. Miguel said:

“We had a lot of help but the person managing things now doesn’t have relationships, he isn’t recognized. The president we have now has no skill or anything. Because you can’t just sit there, you have to speak out, you have to make yourself known.”

Similarly, it was held that the delay in installing electricity in San Lorenzo was the result of the ‘rebellious leaders’ who lack ‘contacts’. The leaders carrying out these practices, for their part, see their work as a sacrifice they are making for the community, which is often not remunerated. A leader who had decided to leave politics told me:

“I don’t want to do it anymore because it is exhausting, thankless, and people don’t appreciate it. There’s a lot of envy, lots of stuff... Then they regret it and come to see you again, asking: ‘Will you be president of the community again?’ And I say no, I’m happy to let them have it all wrapped up in a bow. One must understand personal ambition, everyone sometimes has selfish interests. And that person doesn’t want to rely on someone else and wants to be strong too and... what can you do? But they criticize you so much, so much that you say: ‘Well, guys that’s as far as I’ll go.’ Then we put on a front and say ‘I am Indigenous’, ‘We Indigenous’, but only to the outside world.” (2012)

Perhaps the tensions with the Qom, the perception of the IDACH and the subsequent consolidation of clientelist practices as the only way to channel demands have constrained the formation of more radical demands within this community. However, this does not mean that political clientelism cannot coexist with collective action. This can be seen, for example, in the following story told by Fernando:

“At the time of Perón indigenous people participated very strongly. The elders still speak about Perón, but they say he was patronizing. And the struggles were for land and work because that was when they talked about working class. Yes, work. Today the indigenous people ask for help, and it goes down badly. Because there’s no work there’s the bad habit of asking for a community food center, social help and the bags of goods and going and doing what you’re told, and it shouldn’t be like that, we don’t agree with it.” (2012)

Here, the disillusionment of the Mocovi seems to derive mainly from the situation that the communities are currently experiencing rather than being a direct consequence of political clientelism. It is also worth remembering that in Pampa del Indio clientelist practices also coexist with current resistance movements (Gay, 1990; Auyero et al, 2009; Escobar, 1997). In general terms, it could be said that the influence of clientelist networks on the mobilization or lack of resistance among social groups depends on the specific historical context being

experienced by a determined group and perceptions of it in terms of the possibility or impossibility of achieving change. In this regard, although clientelism could contribute to a group's acquiescence, it should not be considered the only determinant or its main cause.

7.6 Concluding remarks

The main objective of this chapter has been to analyze in greater depth the case study of those subalterns who, instead of resisting, participate in the reproduction of the process of accumulation by dispossession. More specifically, in this case study, I have tried to question the idea that acceptance of these processes can be explained only by the use of force or the provision of material incentives (Levien, 2013). Although these variables are important elements to bear in mind, the positions of the subalterns are the result of long term historical processes. Thus, in my opinion, the 'historical forms of socialization, far from being simple orthogonal processes of dispossession,' are the main variables that we should consider in order to understand how these processes are produced and reproduced. In this regard the focus on accumulation by dispossession requires that we place the subjects within the context of past and present relationships, and also consider the different tactics of opposition and negotiation that each group has developed historically (Roseberry, 1994; Hall, 2013; Citro, 2006).

In the case of the Mocoví of Las Tolderías, the loss of their traditional territory and their incorporation as rural laborers encouraged the early adoption of certain hegemonic values and practices without which it is impossible to understand the community's apparent conformity with the new dynamics. Finally, throughout these pages, I have tried to show that the acquiescence and negotiation of subalterns cannot be explained as a mere reaction to the activity of dominant groups. We should not lose sight of the fact that the positions of the subalterns are also the result of tensions and differences within the groups themselves (Ortner, 1995; Gal, 1995; Cervone, 1998).

Chapter 8

Some final thoughts

8.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have argued that the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ developed by Harvey (2003) helps us to identify a link between agrarian change and the deepening of the capitalist social relationships that occurred during the neoliberal era. However, its high degree of abstraction and the failure to analyse the role of the actors involved in the processes, especially subaltern groups, presents challenges for the analysis of empirical processes (Hart, 2002; 2004; Hall, 2013).

Seeking to help develop an approach that transcends deterministic readings of these processes, I started this work by asking the following questions: What kind of transformations are caused by processes of accumulation by dispossession? Are the processes limited to reformulating access to goods or do they transform social relationships between dominant and subaltern groups? How do these transformations occur? What are the roles and positionings of subalterns in these processes? Can accumulation by dispossession include acts of complicity by the subalterns? To try to answer these questions, I focused my analysis on the experiences and perceptions of the inhabitants of two indigenous communities with regard to the advance of the agribusiness model in Chaco Province, Argentina.

In this final chapter I intend to provide a brief summary of the argument of this thesis, identifying how my research might contribute to contemporary agrarian studies. Finally, I will suggest some areas where further research is needed.

8.2 Summary of the argument

The great majority of studies analyzing contemporary agrarian issues have used the concept of accumulation by dispossession to explain transformations in the neoliberal era (Harvey, 2003). Changes in the degree of access to natural resources have aroused particular interest, especially the phenomenon known as the ‘global land grab’, the privatization of large swathes of land for the production of export crops and/or extraction activities. These studies have been of great

importance in demonstrating the increased trend towards ‘commodification’, one of the main characteristics of neoliberalism (Hall, 2012:1188). However, most of this research, by explaining the processes as solely being caused by the needs of capital (global and/or national), has excessively simplified the new rural dynamics. In general terms it can be argued that in most cases the changes in rural areas are seen as being solely the result of the tactics of capital to overcome crises of over-accumulation. It could be argued that the studies of accumulation by dispossession are “thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity - the intentions, desires, fears, projects - of the actors engaged in these dramas” (Ortner, 1995:190).

Seeking to fill in these gaps, in this thesis I have sought to widen the perspective on processes of accumulation by dispossession, i.e. to interpret them as changes that promote greater material and ideological dependence on capitalist social relationships (De Angelis, 2001; Wood, 2007; Hodgkinson, 2012).¹⁸¹ If we are to approach these processes as changes, which include transformations in access to goods but also go much further, the starting point of the analysis ceases to be a function of the process of capital accumulation (overcoming the crisis of over-accumulation) or its nature (economic and/or extra-economic) and instead focuses on the actors involved (Harvey, 2003; Levien, 2013). This means a return to investigations – rather than assumptions – into the perceptions, experiences and aspirations of the actors involved, which include both dominant and subaltern groups. For this reason I have argued that a focus on ‘local rationalities’ provides a more suitable starting point for understanding the processes of accumulation by dispossession (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox; 2013).

The ‘local rationalities’ on which the subalterns base their actions are specific configurations caused by their position of subalternity, their memories of the prior phases of capitalist development and the actual experiences of power and dispossession to which they are exposed in their daily life (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox; 2013). It could thus be argued that the different ways in which the actors “practically engage with their world and make sense of their actions” reflect specific forms of exploitation, domination, loyalty, complicity and resistance, forged throughout a long historical process (Nilsen and Cox, 2005:8). Thus, to understand the

¹⁸¹ This can be seen in the two cases studied here, for example, with regard to the *marisca* practice. As we have seen in Chapters 6 and 7, the end of this practice did not occur following a change in the status of the fields but a change in the relationship between indigenous communities and creole producers.

positionings and development of processes of accumulation by dispossession, it is necessary to start by analysing the processes of socialization that have molded the ‘local rationalities’ (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013).

8.2.1 Accumulation by dispossession understood through local rationalities

8.2.1.1 Memories of prior phases of capitalist development

Why do some communities develop open resistance while others accept the dynamics generated by processes of accumulation by dispossession? Which aspects of these processes are resisted by indigenous communities, and which aren’t? (Turton, 1986). From the perspective of this work, an understanding of the positionings of the subalterns requires consideration of how these actors and their desires, objectives and needs have been transformed through different phases of capitalist development, without forgetting that this process was driven by the same social forces (Lebowitz, 2003). As Florencia Mallon has pointed out, “Only by excavating the archaeological layers of these struggles, embedded in successful and unsuccessful hegemonic outcomes, can we understand present-day institutions and conflicts” (Mallon 1995, 330).

In this work the memories of the Mocoví and the Qom of the cotton period provided a basis for understanding their perceptions and positionings with regard to the transformations that have occurred in the neoliberal period. As can be seen in the accounts presented in Chapter 6 many Qom who live in Pampa del Indio see the period as a time when there was significant state intervention implemented through policies promoting farms and family agriculture. From that point on, cotton production became the community’s principal means of subsistence and a symbol of the greater equality they had achieved with the creole population. In this community the new rural dynamics that occurred from the mid-1990s onwards are seen as the consequence of the change in the role of the state, or its simple absence. Thus the ‘lack of state help’, the ‘lack of support’ for the continuity of cotton production became the main foci of their demands and claims. The absence of the state, in this community, is perceived as the reestablishment of modes of exclusion aimed particularly at indigenous peoples: the state had ceased to recognize them as producers.

The memories of the Moqoit community of the cotton period demonstrate a different process of integration. The accounts that can be seen in Chapter 7 show that, in this case, inclusion during

the cotton period occurred mainly through the ‘help’ given by *criollo* colonists before state intervention. In addition, given that the Moqoit community had very limited access to land and up to the 1980s there were no programs encouraging production in that area, wage labor in the farmers’ fields was the main means of subsistence. Given that farming for family consumption never became their main source of support, the inability to continue with it is not seen as a new phenomenon. In contrast to Pampa del Indio, the changes that occurred during neoliberalism are seen as processes that primarily affected their former employers with the indigenous community only being affected indirectly. These are some of the reasons why the process and its consequences are perceived by the Moqoit as inevitable.

8.2.1.2 Experiences of dispossession

In addition to the memories of previous periods, I have also argued that the way in which subalterns perceive the changes introduced by neoliberalism is related to their actual experiences of dispossession. So, to explain why resistance has arisen in one community while another has acquiesced to the changes, we should also consider how the transformations started to occur in these rural spaces.

For the cases analysed here, it is important to take into account that in Pampa del Indio these changes occurred and became apparent after the establishment of a large company with the backing of the state. In spite of numerous complaints and reports of violations of different regulations, Don Panos did not just continue its operations, it also received state loans to expand its production at the same time as the state was reducing help to small producers. In addition, the new rural dynamics have made it difficult to continue with cotton production. As I mentioned earlier, this activity was not just the primary basis for reproduction of labor; it also provided part of the basis for the construction of the Qom identity that emerged from the intersection between state policies aimed at assimilating indigenous populations and integration policies that originated within the community with the encouragement of the *caciques*. The transformations that have taken place in recent decades could be seen as a return to the agro-export model, when the communities lived under the tyranny of a few large establishments that, with the complicity of the state, reduced these groups to a state of quasi-slavery (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3). All these elements – the visibility of the company, the complicity of the state, and the exclusion of

domestic production – have contributed to the emergence of different resistance movements in the community.

In the case of Las Tolderías, by contrast, the new rural dynamics appeared slowly through the gradual arrival of various different mid-sized producers who rented or bought land from the existing farmers. In this case, insofar as wage labor has been the main form of subsistence for members of this community since the 1920s, the new rural dynamics, although they caused significant changes, did not alter their practices entirely or greatly affect their identity. Essentially, even though they now needed to migrate to other provinces, they were still seasonal workers. In addition, in this case, the absence of the state in the cotton period has been partially reversed through the implementation of some social plans and benefits that serve to complement monetary income. It is also important to note that in Las Tolderías the relationship with the new producers, in contrast to Pampa del Indio, is not characterized by ongoing confrontation. This is shown, for example, in the comments about crop-dusting in which the interviewees showed that although their relationship is a distant one, the field managers usually let them know when they are going to be spraying (See Chapter7, Section 7.4.1). All these specific characteristics of how the process of agrarian reform takes place make it possible to explain to a great degree why the Mocoví have been more acquiescent.

Regardless of these differences, it is important to consider an aspect that both communities share, which is related to the ‘technocratization’ of knowledge, the deterioration of the environment and the use of certain production technologies. In both cases ‘technocratization’ of knowledge would seem to play an important role in the consent (be it partial or total) of these populations (Li, 2007). So, for example, the Moqoit interviewed felt that they didn’t know enough to judge the effects of spraying, while in Pampa del Indio some members of the UC did not believe that they could adequately judge whether the use of transgenic seeds was appropriate for the community or not.

8.2.1.3 Positions of subalternity

The last of the three dimensions that I have considered in my analysis of local rationalities was ‘the position of subalternity’. As I have argued throughout these pages, subalternity is not solely determined by the relationships of these groups with the dominant sectors, or with the state: it is

also molded by the multiple power relationships that exist within the subaltern groups themselves (Mallon, 1994b; Ortner, 1995; Sivaramakrishnan, 1995).

Power relationships within subaltern groups take place on different scales, i.e. they can occur between different members of the same community and different groups at provincial and national level. In the cases analysed here, for example, the acquiescence observed on the part of the Moqoit would seem to be influenced both by the local divisions between different political and religious affiliations and the differences between the group and the Qom at provincial level. In Chapter 7 we saw that the Moqoit who live in the Santa Rosa neighborhood receive more benefits than those in the San Lorenzo neighborhood. The same chapter also showed that the power differential between the Qom and Moqoit groups has reinforced clientelist practices as a mechanism for channelling demands.

In contrast, the greater degree of mobilization observed in Pampa del Indio also needs to be seen in the context of the greater influence of the PCR and, during the early years of the struggle, the presence of a charismatic leader, Mártires López, the first president of the UC. It is also important to remember that the weakening of resistance in the area occurred after a change in the UC's position. So, for many members of the CR, especially those who live in the immediate surroundings of the Don Panos estate, reversing the UC's position on the right type of production is of vital importance.

In addition to the relationships mentioned above, positions of subalternity are closely linked to the spaces opened up by multicultural neoliberalism, where many of the unequal and power relationships within the subaltern groups have become crystalized (Hale, 2002, 2005). The plurality of relationships that have contributed to the formation of subaltern status is thus reduced to certain specific aspects by which some subalterns become 'legitimate representatives' of certain groups. It could be argued that the new regulations promote the perpetuation of certain inequalities, silencing the power relationships and multiple different forms of oppression that also exist within groups.

8.2.2 Multiple objectives of the struggle

Stating that resistance emerges in a given time and place following the perceived or experienced effects of a relationship means recognizing that even when accumulation by dispossession has

become dominant, subaltern struggles will not necessarily be of the same nature (Turton, 1986). In other words, struggles against ‘commodification’ have not replaced struggles against ‘exploitation’ but rather can be seen as different positions taken by subalterns in accordance with their perceptions and objectives as part of a process characterized by the deepening of capitalist relationships (Li, 2000).

As I mentioned earlier, in the case of the Pampa del Indio the new rural dynamics are perceived in terms of ‘lack of state help’ so the inhabitants of the *parajes* have formed movements that are usually classified as ‘agrarian populism’ (Levien, 2013). This means that they focus a large part of their claims on obtaining subsidies, improving their salaries and prices, etc. However, the same process has also led to other actors with different perceptions and objectives, such as the IDACH representatives, adopting different discourses and strategies that are nonetheless also considered to be examples of ‘resistance movements against accumulation by dispossession’. Furthermore, the cases analysed here have shown that these positionings are never fixed and can both vary and overlap. As Lebowitz says: “In struggling against capital, accordingly, workers produce themselves differently – here, too, they ‘transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new languages’ ” (2003:182). This process has been demonstrated in a figure in this thesis based on the experiences of Qom members of the UC and the Consorcio Rural. So we have seen that struggles that initially aim at obtaining subsidies can be expanded to include demands for land or to propose mechanisms to reduce dependence on market relationships¹⁸².

Finally, it is important to make clear that just as the forms that struggle takes do not derive exclusively from the mechanism of capital accumulation; the greater or lesser power of these movements to cause disruption cannot be explained without taking the actors into account. The disruptive power of these resistance movements is linked to the political weight of the subalterns, the scale of their presence in the state apparatus and their role in the political and economic system. Secondly, the revolutionary capacity of the struggles will depend on how the subalterns experience these processes, i.e. whether subalterns “experience the crisis as object or as subject of decision” (Lebowitz, 2003:184). This is why we cannot make assumptions about whether the

¹⁸² This final case can be seen, for example, in the proposal by various members of the Consorcio Rural to form their own seed pool to reduce both the effects of variations in price and dependence on state programs.

presence or otherwise of a given type of resistance movement will be intrinsically more disruptive, as each case must be analysed within a specific context at a given place and time.

8.2.3 The role of the state in processes of accumulation by dispossession

As I mentioned in the previous section, understanding the positions and scope of subaltern struggles requires an analysis of both the role of the state and the relationship the subaltern groups maintain with it. In this thesis I have argued that although the state has had an important role in the promotion of processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003; Levien, 2013), its participation has not been limited to the promotion of these processes. On the contrary, as Chatterjee (2008) has noted, in the present context, one of the fundamental functions of the state has been to mitigate and/or reverse some of the effects generated by these processes so as to avoid the erosion of the structural bases of the system. In the Latin American context, and more specifically in the case of Argentina, some authors have described the role of the state as “export oriented populism” or “bio-hegemony” (Newell, 2009; Richardson, 2009; see also Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009). Both concepts seek to describe policies that the state must apply to encourage the implementation and maintenance of the agribusiness model as a basis for economic growth, while simultaneously maintaining the social order and its legitimacy. These policies include, for example, unemployment benefits, laws and regulations to reduce rates of deforestation and multiple regulations aimed at protecting indigenous communities such as a prohibition on sale of their land, etc. (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3). Without a doubt these policies represent advances, benefits and concrete opportunities for subalterns and their value should not be underestimated. However, it should also be taken into account that although these policies help to reduce the effects of rural change, they do not reverse current trends and can also be obstacles to a greater transformation¹⁸³.

In analysing the dual effect of the role of the state in processes of accumulation by dispossession, it is important to take into account that the actual policies that emerge from these attempts to reduce the ‘adverse effects’ of the model are never the result of unilateral action by the state. On the contrary these policies are concessions that arise from negotiations that the state establishes

¹⁸³ A clear example of the dual effect of these policies is the rural housing program. It is interesting to observe that the housing plans are usually implemented in urban centers rather than the *parajes* so that although they satisfy the needs and rights of subalterns, they also encourage and accelerate the rural exodus.

with subaltern groups. The type of policy and number of people who benefit from these programs depend to a great extent on the demands and negotiating power of each of the subaltern groups. This can be seen, for example, in the difference in the degree of access to support programs enjoyed by certain groups such as the Unión Campesina and those obtained by the Moqoit in the San Lorenzo neighbourhood in Las Tolderías.

By the same token we should take into account that whether or not these policies constitute a barrier to the mobilization of the subalterns also depends on multiple factors, which include but also range beyond state activity. It is important to remember that in the cases studied here, policies that provide alternative means of subsistence have not, in general terms, served to reduce mobilizations among the Qom community but have done so in the case of the Moqoit in Las Tolderías. In these cases I have argued that to understand these different effects one must take into account the perception of the role of the community in the production system. In the case of the Moqoit, where wage labor has historically been of greater importance than farming for home consumption, monetary help has had a greater influence, contributing to the lack of resistance. In contrast, in the case of the Qom, who are campaigning to continue in the role of cotton producers, state help that is not aimed at production seems to have less influence.

Finally, it is necessary to note that the implementation of these kinds of policies does not mean that ‘overt and covert forms of state violence’ do not also exist and continue to be implemented to contain the demands of the subalterns (Auyero, 2010). This was evident, for example, in the repression suffered by the population of Pampa del Indio in March 2014.

8.3 The contribution of this thesis

Analysing accumulation by dispossession from the perspective of ‘local rationalities’ (Nilsen, 2010; Nilsen and Cox, 2013) seeks firstly to shift the emphasis from macro processes to actual events on the ground (Hart, 2002; 2004) and secondly to counter ‘one-sided Marxism’ by emphasizing the roles of different social groups in developing these processes (Lebowitz, 2003; Cleaver, 1992).

This approach, by analysing the processes of accumulation by dispossession by taking into account the complex web of power relationships between subaltern groups and dominant groups and also those present within them, helps to revitalize political readings of new rural dynamics. In

part, the strength of this focus lies in its ability to track the plurality of interests within subaltern groups, which can very often be highly contradictory. It can thus register different voices, allowing a view not only of the subalterns but also ‘the subaltern among the subalterns’, under the understanding that the positions are unstable and ever-changing (Ortner, 1995; Woldford, 2010). The focus on local rationalities makes it possible to overcome ‘one-sided’ readings not just because it allows us to understand why subalterns struggle but also why it is possible to accept and contribute to the reproduction of these processes (Lebowitz, 2003:205).

In this work I have also tried to contribute to the formation of a body of study in rural sociology. In general terms, it could be argued that studies of rural sociology have placed too much emphasis on the experience of *criollo* communities at the expense of indigenous communities. On numerous occasions, indigenous experiences have been absorbed into the experiences of *criollo* peasants. These readings overlook the distinctive historical experiences of these actors¹⁸⁴. For this reason, an intention of this work is to encourage analyses focusing on the specific aspects of what might be called the ‘indigenous agrarian question’ in the neoliberal era¹⁸⁵ (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2009).

8.4 “He who treads in the Indian’s footstep returns and follows it”

As in this popular saying from Northern Argentina, the path I began with my research has not ended but rather opened new paths for future investigation. Below, I suggest two potential lines of research resulting from this thesis that could help to strengthen the ‘grounded perspective on accumulation by dispossession’ presented here.

The first of these is related to the role of the state in processes of accumulation by dispossession. As I mentioned before the state plays a dual role in these processes. On the one hand, it creates the necessary conditions for the displacement of small producers and rural workers while on the other it implements programs that seek to satisfy the basic needs or promote alternative forms of survival for these populations (Chatterjee, 2008:55). Although the state has been central to

¹⁸⁴ Some authors such as Bengoa (2003), in his article on 25 years of studies of rural Latin America, argue that currently there is a practical and academic shift from peasants to indigenous peoples, but in his vision an ‘indigenous’ identity is simply a strategic position adopted by peasants at a given time.

¹⁸⁵ Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2009, present seven contemporary agrarian questions: “the path-dependent agrarian question”; “the global reserve army of labour agrarian question”; “the class forces agrarian question”; “the decoupled agrarian question”, “the gendered agrarian question” and “the corporate food regime agrarian question”.

‘studies of accumulation by dispossession,’ thus far they have been focussed almost exclusively on public policies that encourage the displacement of subalterns. In contrast ‘the top-down interventions’¹⁸⁶ implemented to mitigate the effects of accumulation by dispossession and encourage the population to stay in the countryside have barely been considered (Li, 2010; Hall, 2012). An example of this could be the work of Michael Levien (2011; 2012; 2013; 2013b), one of the authors who has placed most emphasis on the role of the state in processes of accumulation by dispossession. In his characterization of the “neoliberal regime of dispossession” the state is reduced ultimately to being “a mere land broker for increasingly real estate-driven private capital” (2013b: 361). From this perspective, in the neoliberal era the interaction between the state and subalterns is reduced to measures of economic compensation that, according to the author, even when they are accepted by certain groups do not generate a consensus¹⁸⁷. Similarly, Strümpell (2014; see Chapter 2) another author seeking to illuminate the role of the state in these processes, analyzed how the state in the neoliberal era has directly and indirectly encouraged the dispossession of subaltern groups in India. Firstly, through policies restructuring the public steel industry in Rourkela, which deprived many people from access to employment in the public sector; and secondly by favoring the settlement of multinational corporations and allowing the displacement of numerous indigenous communities from their land in the hills west of Odisha. In contrast to Levien’s analysis Strümpell demonstrates the heterogeneity within the state, exposing the different ways in which the neoliberal reforms were implemented, but he proceeds without analyzing the policies implemented as a counterweight to the processes of dispossession.

I believe that two aspects of the role of the state in the processes of accumulation by dispossession require further analysis. Firstly, although it can be argued that during neoliberalism the relative autonomy of the state with regard to the dominant classes has weakened, it has not vanished altogether (Chatterjee, 2008). For this reason we should analyze in greater depth how the multiple and contradictory agendas of the different bodies that make up the state have affected the development of processes of accumulation by dispossession. Secondly, as I have argued throughout these pages, the actions of the state that make the reproduction of these

¹⁸⁶ Following Chatterjee’s analysis, the interventions to reverse the effects of accumulation by dispossession include credit programs and technical support for small producers, programs of transfers aimed at reducing poverty, guaranteed employment schemes in the public sector, direct provision of subsidised or free food etc.

¹⁸⁷ See especially Levien 2003b and Chatterjee’s critique from 2008.

processes possible involve more than the simple provision of compensation, benefits and/or services; they involve cultural work and forms of socialization that generate a certain degree of acceptance and these aspects should be investigated (Li, 1999; 2009).

One way to research both issues in greater depth could be to study the rationalities and the effects of the practices implemented by the technicians belonging to different state programs in indigenous communities. In this case, instead of focusing the analysis on the perceptions and experiences of subalterns, the study would seek to analyze the following issues: What kind of policies linked to rural development are being implemented by the different state organisms in the territories where the dispossession occurs? How are these policies interpreted and implemented by the technicians? What kind of relationship do they establish with indigenous populations? What kind of rural status do these practices and discourse help to foster? What aspects of the processes of dispossession do they seek to counteract? and what is the effect of the technicization of knowledge in the reproduction or propagation of certain agricultural models? This line of research would make it possible to observe the daily interactions between the state and the subalterns as well as the actual influence of programs in reproduction and/or resistance to processes of accumulation by dispossession.

The second line of research is related to clientelist practices within the communities and their links to processes of agrarian change (Mosse, 2001). During my stay in Chaco, a common complaint among technicians and some members of the indigenous communities was the negative influence of clientelist networks in the implementation of alternative rural development practices. According to the people interviewed, these networks often encourage the agricultural practices developed by major businessmen with links to political parties. According to these accounts, the clientelist relationships function as channels for the introduction of transgenic seeds and other supplies in the community, facilitating the reproduction of a specific kind of agriculture and discouraging other practices. This leads in turn to other questions: How does the presence of these practices influence the development of processes of accumulation by dispossession? Have the form and meaning of clientelist practices varied over the history of these communities? What changes have there been?

Both suggested lines of research would complement the study presented here through an analysis of the perceptions and positions of the other actors involved, as well as their numerous interconnections.

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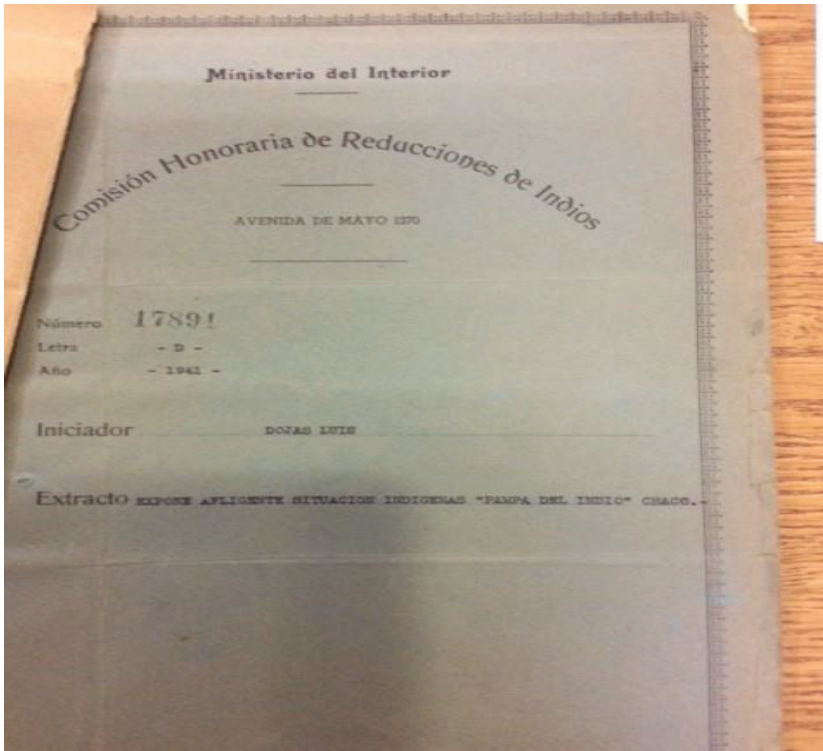
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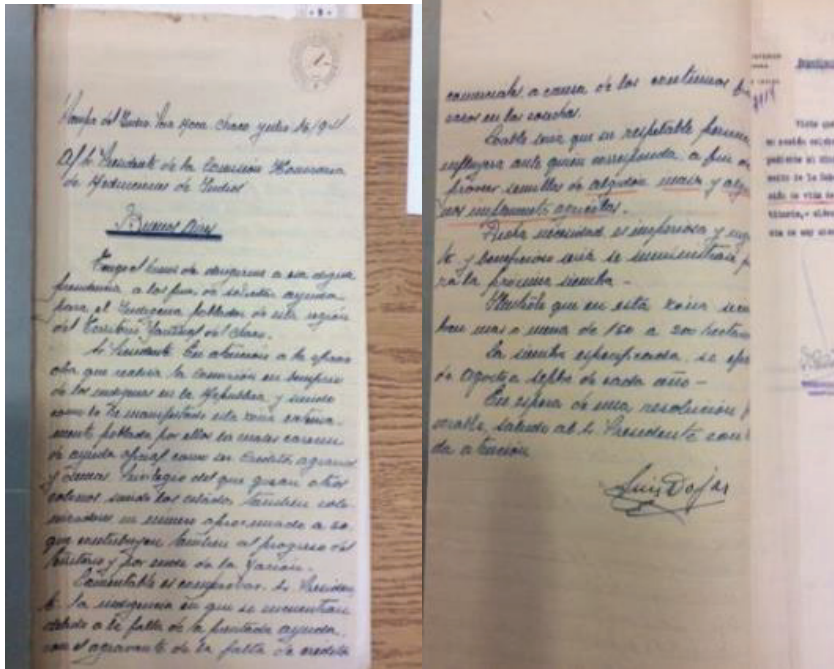
Appendix to Chapter 5



(Photo taken by the author)

Ministry of the Interior. Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians

Number 17891. Initiator: Dojas Luis. Extract: A Description of the Shocking Situation of the Indigenes in "Pampa del Indio" Chaco.



(Photo taken by the author)

“Pampa del Indio, July 16/1941

To the President of the Honorary Commission for Indian Reservations,
Buenos Aires

I have the honour of addressing the distinguished President in order to request help for the indigenous population in this region of the National Territory of Chaco.

Mr. President: With regard to the efficient work carried out by the commission to benefit the indigenous peoples of the Republic: As I have stated, this area is extensively populated by them but they lack official support such as agricultural loans and other benefits, privileges that the other colonists do enjoy, said colonists numbering at least 50, contributing to the progress of the Territory and thus the Nation.

It is sad, Mr. President, to witness the poverty that reigns in the absence of this support, which is aggravated by the lack of commercial loans due to the continuous failure of harvests.

It would be praiseworthy if your respectable personage could influence the appropriate persons to provide cotton and maize seeds and also agricultural tools.

Said need is essential and urgent and it would be greatly beneficial to satisfy it by the next planting season.

For your information: in this area, between 150 and 200 hectares can be planted.

The planting in question can be carried out between August and September of each year.

In anticipation of a favourable response, I salute Mr. President with all due respect. Luis Dojas.”

Pampa del Indio August 19, 1941

The undersigned, being in the Police Station of the Colony, calls for Mr. Luis Dojas to appear for confirmation and for these purposes to register with the Notary Secretary Teofilo Martínez.

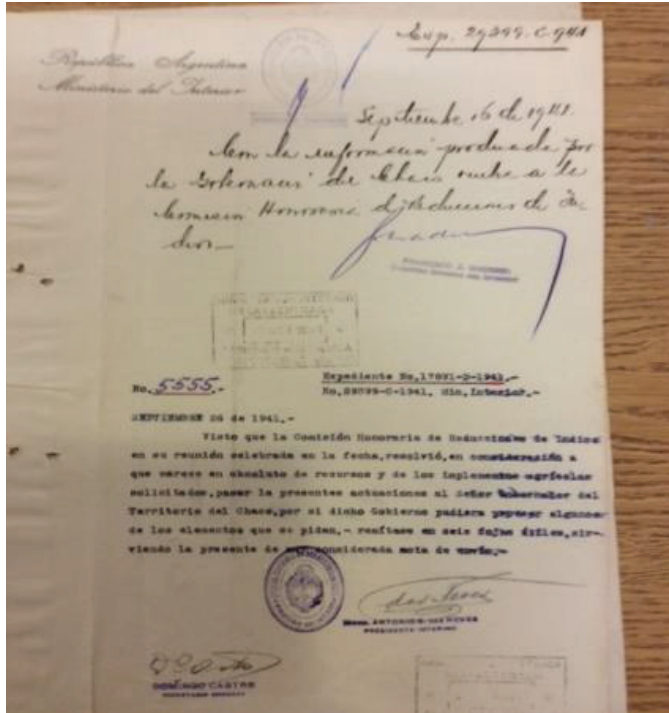
Signed: Avelino Virili, Police Officer

In the same place and on the same date the person stated above, having previously sworn before the law that his identity is Luis Dojas, of Syrian nationality, forty-four years of age, that he has lived in this country for twenty-nine years, that he is single, and that he can read and write, appeared to make a statement. A salesman by profession, he is domiciled in Pampa Chica under the jurisdiction of this Colony. On this occasion, he was given to read the letter that was sent to the President of the Honorary Commission for Indian Reservations. Asked if it was his and whether he endorses its content, as well as whether the signature at the bottom was his, he answered that the letter in question, which he had read, is his and that he endorses its full content and that the signature at the bottom is definitely his own, and that he uses it on all his documents. To other questions asked of him, he replied that the indigenous people who populate 'Pampa chica' as well as 'Pampa Grande' are suffering from poverty. Some of them have ploughed their land but lack the seeds they need for cultivation and also agricultural tools, so are in indispensable need of official help. Thus the act was ended. Signatures of Dojas, the Secretary and a Police Official.

Presidencia Roca, August 28, 1941

With the ratification carried out the claimant Luis Dojas, a salesman from Pampa del Indio, presents the present file to the Head of Police, stating that the undersigned on two occasions travelled to the aforementioned colony and personally confirmed that indigenous families are suffering from poverty and thus urgently need official help. Many of these families currently have their land ploughed but lack any form of seeds for cultivation, others have land but lack the agricultural tools, in addition to seeds, to work them. Many other indigenous people, mostly families, lack land and currently live from hunting, subsisting on animals and forest fruits, for which reason it is essential to help the aboriginal population of the Pampa del Indio area. Signed

Avelino Virili, Police Officer



(Photo taken by the author)

September 16, 1941

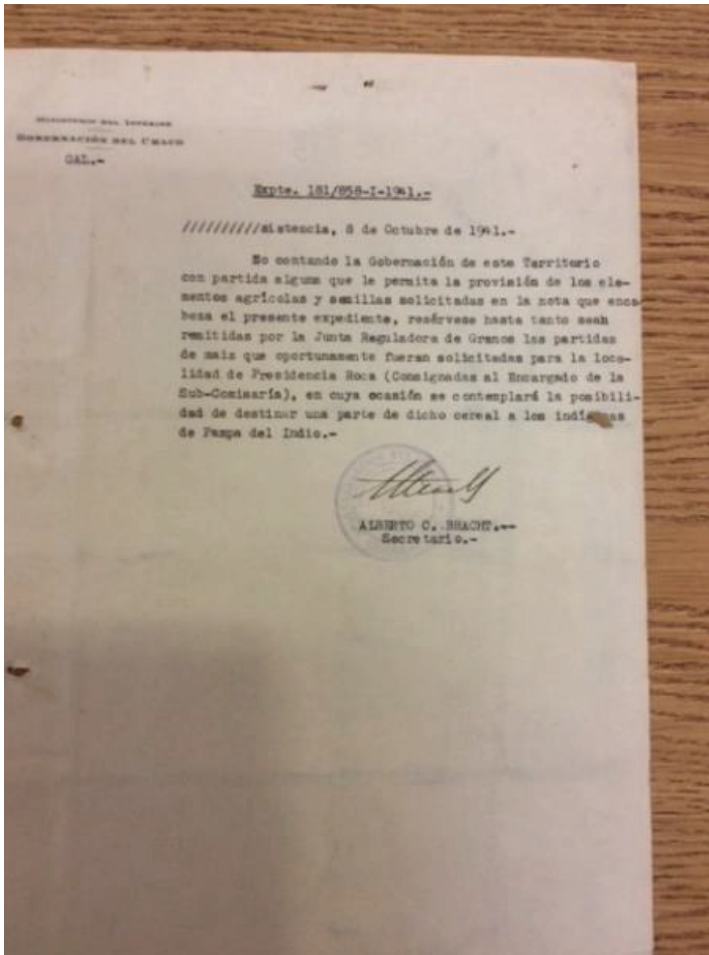
With the information produced by the Government of Chaco, return to the Honorary Commission for Indian Reservations.

Signed: the Director General of the Interior

September 26, 1941

The Honorary Commission for Indian Reservations, in its meeting held on this date, has decided, given the absolute lack of the agricultural resources and tools requested, to pass these documents to the Governor of the National Territory of Chaco, in the hope that said Governor will be able to provide some of the elements requested.

Signed: Interim President



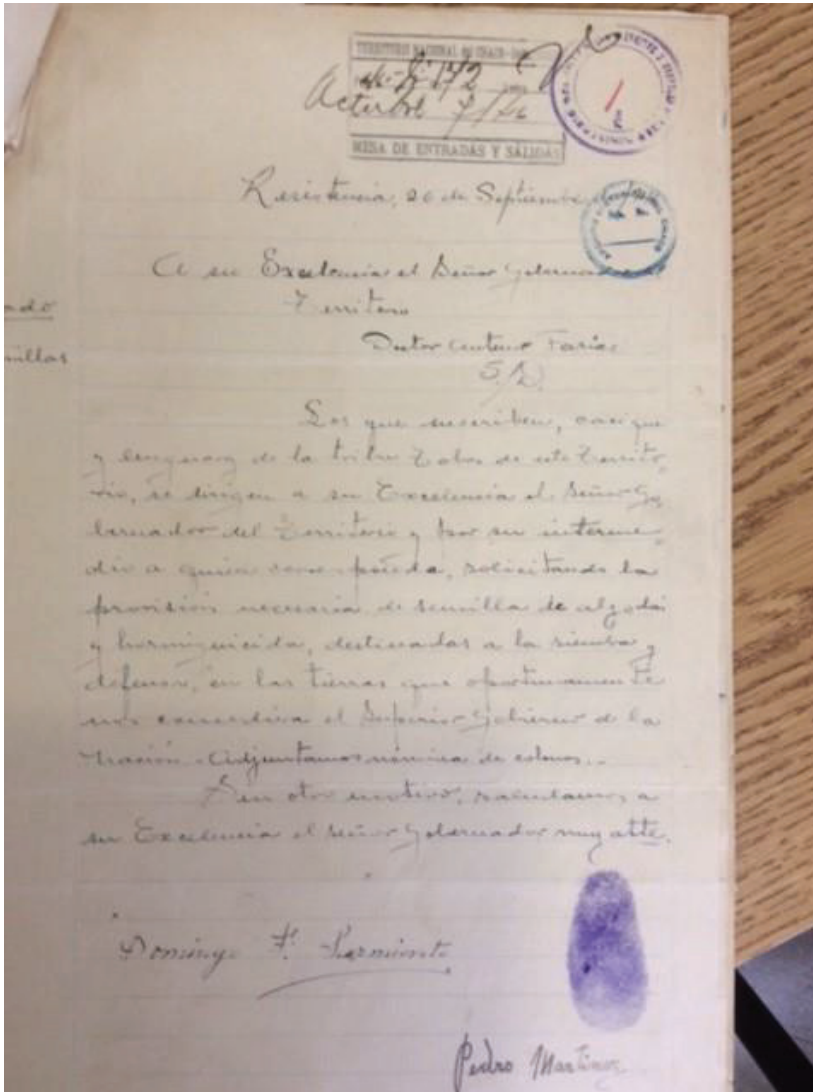
(Photo taken by the author)

Resistencia 8 October, 1941

As the Government of this Territory has no supplies that would allow the provision of the agricultural tools and seeds requested in the note at the top of the present file, it is convenient to wait until the Regulatory Grain Council sends the supplies of maize that were duly requested by the town of Presidencia Roca (assigned to the head of the Sub-department) from which it may be possible to assign a portion of the cereal to the indigenous people of Pampa del Indio.

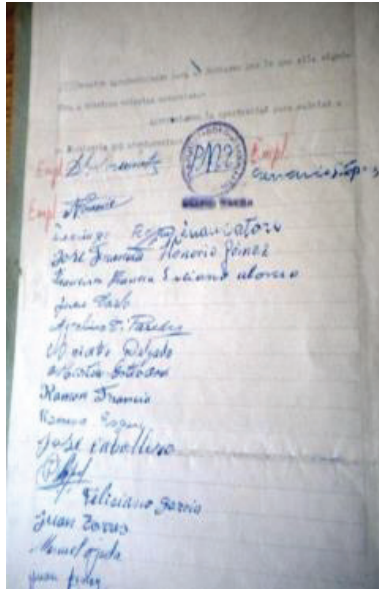
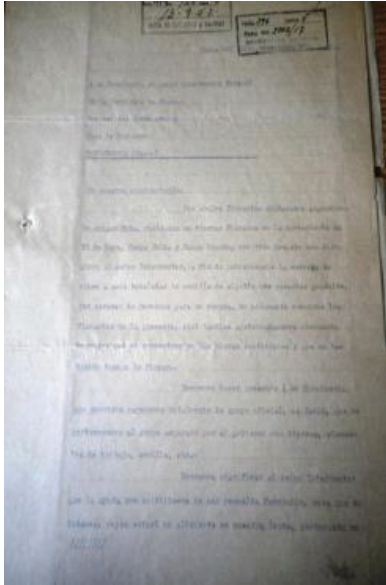
Signed Alberto Bracht, Secretary.

Request for seeds 1946



(Photo taken by the author)

Request for seeds (1955)



(Photos taken by Cesar Gomez)

Appendix to Chapter 6

Satellite view of Don Panos (2013)



Don Panos establishment (2012)



(Photo taken by the author)

The irrigation system, Don Panos 2012



(Photo taken by the author)

Pampa del Indio 2012



(Photo taken by the author)

Peasant Union 2012

(Nora's House)



(Photo taken by the author)

Mosquito (agricultural sprayer) Peasant Union



(Photo taken by the author)

Peasant Union meeting 2011



(Photo taken by Sil Pacetti)

Meeting to discuss the use of agrochemicals (2012)



(Photo taken by the author)

Appendix to Chapter 7

Satellite view of Las Tolderías (2013)



(Photo taken by the author)

Entrance to Las Tolderías

Soybean field



Deforestation



(Photos taken by the author)

Santa Rosa



(Photos taken by the author)

Soybean field (Santa Rosa)



Asociación Comunitaria Las Tolderías



(Photos taken by the author)

Asociación Comunitaria Las Tolderías

Disc harrow purchased through the IAF program



Hunting Prohibited



(Photos taken by the author)

San Lorenzo



(Photos taken by the author)

San Lorenzo



Pump for water supply



(Photos taken by the author)

Sculpture portraying the three ethnic groups (Qom - Moqoit - Wichí)

San Lorenzo



(Photos taken by the author)

**Errata for
The Silences of Dispossession**

*The Dynamics of Agrarian Change and the Politics of
Indigenous People in Chaco, Argentina.*

Maria de las Mercedes Donato Biocca



Thesis for the degree philosophiae doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

I hereby declare that only formal errors have been corrected in this version.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Biocca', is written over a horizontal line.

(signature of candidate)

May, 2015

Errata

Page 10 “Confederación Rural Argentina” corrected to “Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas”.

Page 68 Missing year: “Polanyi [1944]” – corrected to “Polanyi [1944] 2007”

Page 71 Missing word: “The conquest of The Pampas region”- corrected to “The conquest of The Pampas and Patagonia region”

Page 74 Misspelling: “Pleoplea” – corrected to “Peoples”.

Page 82 -Footnote 71- Wrong page number: “see page 52” corrected to “see page 71”

Page 84 -Footnote 73- Misspelling word: “rational life” corrected to “national life”.

Page 88 Misspelled Abbreviation “WCL” corrected to “ILO”.

Page 100 Misspelled Abbreviation “WCL” corrected to “ILO”.

Page 121 Misspelling: “recipients” corrected to “receptors”.

Page 125 “Minister for the Economy” corrected to “Minister for Industrial Development”.

Page 200 Wrong number: “1890” corrected to “1990”

