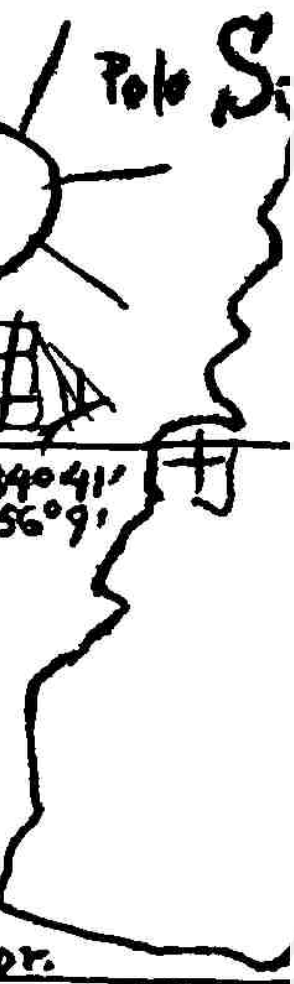


Alternautas

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter



Alternautas - Vol.7 - Issue 2 - December 2020

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“Culture War” against Brazilian universities: how budget cuts and changes in tertiary education policies are affecting the academic community - *Valesca Lima & Sue A. S. Iamamoto*

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic blog that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development thinking.

It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counter-balancing mainstream understandings of development.

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Preface

Welcome to the seventh volume of *Alternautas*!

We are proud to present to readers this new issue of *Alternautas*, including two mini dossiers, one on Neoliberal education in Latin America and the other one including translations of Norma Giarracca's main work on Argentinian rural studies, as well other thought-provoking articles.

In this issue, we continue to publish critical research and alternative intellectual perspectives about Latin American development processes. This is particularly important as Latin America is still facing substantial impacts and challenges in the context of the Covid19 global pandemic.

The post-pandemic reality appears even more diffuse and distant, aggravated by the incapacity of current governments, their economic and institutional instability to provide assistance during the emergency, the exacerbation of extractivist policies and their related socio-environmental conflicts during the pandemic in various countries of the region, but also by the political and scientific struggles around vaccination access and health policies. Something that in effect confronts humanity with a “catastrophic moral failure”, when the vaccines as a tool that could help end the pandemic may also “become just another brick in the wall of inequality between the world's haves and have-nots”¹.

At this time of historical uncertainties, a critical look at the past is more than necessary. The authors of this new volume contribute to this common objective through their works, research, and thoughts on the realities of the countries of Abya Yala.

¹ Tedros Adhanom, «WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks at 148th Session of the Executive Board (Speech)», 2021, <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-148th-session-of-the-executive-board>.

The mini dossier on Neoliberal education in Latin America presents three articles discussing the challenges and controversies regarding new policies adopted in primary and university education in the region. In *"Culture War" against Brazilian universities: how budget cuts and changes in tertiary education policies are affecting the academic community*, Valesca Lima and Sue Iamamoto critically analyse the financial and political measures taken under the Bolsonaro government in Brazil affecting academic freedom and autonomy, exacerbating violence against students and strengthening a process of privatization. From a not very different perspective, in *No savings, just pain: School closures and "reform" in Puerto Rico*, Rima Brusi, invites us to an encounter with Carmen, a teacher currently retired from the municipality of Cayey in Puerto Rico. Through her story, she discusses the austerity measures implemented after Hurricane Maria occurred in 2017 and their impact on public schools closures, most of them located in the rural sector, exacerbating the economic hardship of the affected population and increasing inequality rates on the island. Finally, the last piece of the dossier is a translation of Daniel Mato's work on *The multiple forms of racism and the challenges it poses to higher education systems*, where the author analyses the historical and structural roots of racism that still affect universities in the region, and the possible responses and solutions to revert this situation.

In *Speak out or stay silent? A study of oil company-community relations through the political ecology of voice*, Adrian Gonzalez develops a conceptual framework based on the political ecology of voice to explore the reality of meaningful participation, specifically the ability of local citizens to report environmental pollution incidents, in the Peruvian Amazon. The next article is a translation of Milton Santos' lecture on *Globalisation: Its Exclusions of Poor and Black Populations*, during the Black Awareness Day and the Zumbi dos Palmares celebrations, at the José Bonifácio Cultural Centre in the city of Rio de Janeiro, held on November 17 and 18, 1997. Professor Milton Santos gave at this occasion a lecture in which he addressed contemporary issues of organisation and progress for the Afro-Brazilian community.

Finally, the issue ends with a mini dossier gathering several translations of Norma Giarracca's work on the sociology of rural studies in Argentina. In the first piece, *Norma Giarracca: Working Toward "A World Where Many Worlds Fit"*, Pablo Lapegna introduces Norma as profoundly committed to social justice and respect for the "subjects" of her research. According to the author, she fitted many worlds in the relatively small world of rural sociology and made its branches extend beyond disciplines, countries, and perspectives. She has been sorely missed since 2015, but

the seeds she planted keep sprouting and growing. The next three articles are translations of Norma Giarracca's main contributions: 1) *Three food production logics: Are there alternatives to agribusiness?*, by Norma Giarracca & Tomás Palmisano; b) *Social Sciences and Rural Studies in Argentina during the 20th century*, by Norma Giarracca; and c) *Latin America, new ruralities, old and new collective action*, by Norma Giarracca..

Several common themes unite the authors in this latest issue, highlighting the importance of social organizations as denouncing actors, creators of spaces for dialogue, and contingency strategies.

The year 2020 also leaves us with lessons learned as individuals, peoples, social organizations, and academia. Organized action marks change. Bolivia gave us the example, after 11 months of the interim government, headed by Jeanine Peña, on October 18th, 2020, the Bolivian people elected Luis Arce, candidate for the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), as president in the first round with more than 50% of the votes. And to close the year with new hopes, the emblematic triumph of the Argentinean feminist movement, with the approval of the law that allows the interruption of pregnancy up to 14 weeks, marks the way for a better future for women in the Abya Yala.

As a team, we also have good news, our goal to amplifying the voice of the *Alternautas* community so that it is stronger and louder is making progress. *Alternautas* is now moving further forward in the process of indexation; therefore, we hope it will be available as an Open Access Journal by the end of this year. This will provide improved capacity and visibility for these critical voices, which are crucial to academic, activist, and policy-making debates on race and ethnicity issues, amongst other matters, across Latin America and globally.

We invite readers and contributors from across the *Alternautas* community to suggest other ways in which we may advance the enormous work ahead of us. We start the ball rolling by announcing the launch of our next [Special Issue on Critical Perspectives on Covid19 in Latin America](#) for this coming semester. This special issue will open a critical dialogue on the effects of the pandemic, how states and markets have responded to it, and how different actors, groups, and organisations have attempted to advance more progressive agendas in the wake of it.

Although this next Special Issue is of critical and timely importance, we are always open to discussing supporting alternative ideas and projects.

Stay safe and healthy.

The Alternautas Editorial Team,

Ana Estefanía Carballo, Michela Coletta, Gibrán Cruz-Martínez, Emilie Dupuits,
María Eugenia Giraudó, Rebecca Hollender, Valesca Lima, Angus McNelly,
Paulina Méndez, Nicholas Pope, María del Pilar Ramírez Gröbli, Philip Roberts,
Läetitia Saint-Loubert, Diego Silva, Johannes M. Waldmüller

From a virtual Abya Yala, December 2020.

VALESCA LIMA & SUE A. S. IAMAMOTO¹

"Culture War" against Brazilian universities: how budget cuts and changes in tertiary education policies are affecting the academic community²

After the 2018 presidential election that was filled with political tensions and aggressions, Jair Bolsonaro began his administration focusing on new laws that would allegedly 'reduce' criminality and 'fix' the economy. Soon, however, he announced his intention to pursue a campaign promising to eliminate "cultural Marxism" from Brazilian public universities. "Cultural Marxism", also described as the "culture war", is an integral part of the conspiracy theories of the contemporary right against progressive ideas. As a distorted allusion to Gramsci's theory of hegemony and competing political views, the campaign against "Cultural Marxism" has ended up endorsing the persecution of the (perceived) leftist indoctrination of schools and universities.

The declared war against the tertiary education sector in Brazil comes together with severe budget cuts to the federal education system, increasing the threats to academic freedoms and episodes of violence targeting students and academic staff and a scheme to open public universities to private sector investment and management. These cuts are part of broader neoliberal policies that directly attack social rights by transforming them into commodities. In the case of Brazil, these policies not only undermine a public, high-quality and free higher education system, guaranteed by the 1988 Federal Constitution, but also public-oriented scientific research, funded by the federal government.

¹ VALESCA LIMA is postdoctoral research fellow at Maynooth University specialising in governance, housing policies and social movements. SUE IAMAMOTO is a researcher in the Department of Political Science, at Federal University of Bahia.

² This article was originally published in: <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2020/9/9/culture-war-against-brazilian-universities-how-budget-cuts-and-changes-in-tertiary-education-policies-are-affecting-the-academic-community>

In this article, we discuss the assaults on Brazil's higher education system, the significant pressure on the autonomy of public universities, the limitation of funding for specific disciplines, the consequences of the current policies for the internationalisation of Brazilian universities, and the threats to local science and innovation that have caused concern for scholars and students.

Quality of Brazilian Universities

In a speech during a public event in December 2019, President Bolsonaro criticized Brazilian public universities, saying that students do "everything but study" adding that there no Brazilian university among the 200 best in the world. His criticism was directed to public universities, considered inefficient and "ideological" by his government. However, government criticism against Brazilian higher education productivity is unsubstantiated. Even if one considers ranking systems a valid measure of educational standards, when compared to its neighbours, Brazilian universities dominate the list of best universities in Latin America and hold six of the top ten places in 2018, according to Times Higher Education's World University Rankings.³

Brazilian universities have contributed to the advance of knowledge across the country and are favourably recognised abroad despite the structural lack of funding for education.⁴ According to the report "Research in Brazil", commissioned by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), a major research funding agency, Brazil is the 13th largest producer of research publications internationally and the country's citation impact has increased by 15% between 2011 to 2016. Research produced by Brazilian scholars has also had impacts outside academia. In one example, an innovative Tilapia fish skin dressing was developed by the Federal University of Ceará to help with the reconstruction of

³ Times Higher Education, 2019. Best universities in Latin America 2019 [WWW Document]. Times Higher Education (THE). URL <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-latin-america> (accessed 2.7.20).

⁴ Suzigan, W., Albuquerque, E. da M., 2011. The underestimated role of universities for the Brazilian system of innovation. *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 31, 3-30.

human skin when it has been burnt. This innovation has been successful across the world and has even been sent to be tested in space by NASA.⁵

In fact, Bolsonaro's agenda aims at privatizing public universities (through projects like Future-se, as we will explain below) and increasing the private education sector. Therefore, we should compare the quality of Brazilian public and private universities. According to the latest governmental assessment, 68% of the public universities have the highest grades (4 and 5), while only 18% of the private sector reached the same threshold.⁶

The private sector concentrates 75% of the higher education enrolment, while the public sector has only 25% (INEP, 2019). This disparity is due to a large increase of private universities in the last decades, which made cheap and low-quality undergraduate courses profitable. The process of enlargement of the private sector started in the administrations of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (both from the Workers' Party, PT), which subsidised private higher education through the expansion of student loans (Student Finance Fund, FIES) and offered tax incentives in exchange for scholarships to students from low incomes (University Programme for All, ProUni).⁷

In PT administrations, these policies were combined with a relative expansion of federal higher education institutions. Often considered "ivory towers", public universities have become more inclusive in recent years as a result of previous PT affirmative action policies that successfully addressed underrepresentation of students enrolled from low income, black and indigenous populations.⁸ While these students showed the same or better performance than other students⁹ and the educational

⁵ Tosi, M., 2019. Pesquisadores cearenses participam de equipe internacional para cirurgia com pele de tilápia. *O Povo*.

⁶ Época, 2019. Sete a cada dez universidades federais têm notas máximas em índice de qualidade do MEC. *Época*.

⁷ Macedo, R.G.M., 2019. Políticas educacionais e a questão do acesso ao ensino superior: notas sobre a deseducação. *Cadernos de Campo* (São Paulo 1991) 28, 26–31; Costa, H.B. da, 2019. *Estudantes do Prouni na crise do lulismo*. *Plural* 26, 289–311.

⁸ Vieira, R.S., Arends-Kuening, M., 2019. Affirmative action in Brazilian universities: Effects on the enrollment of targeted groups. *Economics of Education Review* 73, 101931.

⁹ Valente, R.R., Berry, B.J.L., 2017. Performance of Students Admitted through Affirmative Action in Brazil. *Latin American Research Review* 52, 18–34.

standards of public institutions were maintained, these policies had an effect on the demography of the public universities. For the first time, many poor and black families saw their children reaching higher education. Nevertheless, already under the Rousseff and Temer administrations, between 2015 and 2018, public universities suffered from severe cuts in their funding.¹⁰

It is against these same public universities (which were still in the process of expanding inclusion while limited by harsh financial constraints) that Bolsonaro's administration focused its criticisms. While budget restrictions were already happening before, Bolsonaro presented an orchestrated attack against these universities, combining increasing cuts with ideological persecution, the restriction of the universities' autonomy and a series of legislative initiatives that intend at privatizing the activities of these universities, as will be explained below.

Bolsonaro's assault on the freedom of thought and autonomy of public universities

Despite those and many other achievements, the current government views public universities as key strongholds for the political left and has been attacking universities to justify the government's contingency budget plans. In April, Bolsonaro proposed withdrawing funding for humanities and social science faculties, stating that the government would fund only subjects that would generate an "immediate return to taxpayers."¹¹ Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub also threatened to withdraw funding from three federal universities, accusing them of creating disorder (*balbúrdia*) and not focusing on academic performance, despite evidence to the contrary.¹² Whilst neither of these policies were permitted by the Brazilian

¹⁰ Vieira, V., 2015. Governo corta 47% dos investimentos previstos para as federais - Educação - Estadão. O Estado de São Paulo.

¹¹ Bolsonaro on Twitter. 2019. "O Ministro da Educação @abrahamWeinT estuda descentralizar investimento em faculdades de filosofia e sociologia (humanas). Twitter. URL <https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro/status/1121713534402990081> (accessed 1.18.20).

¹² Mano, M. K.; Possas, M.; Azize, R. L.; Iamamoto, S. A. S. , 2019. Ataque do governo às universidades federais é tristemente ideológico. Blog do Sakamoto. <https://blogdosakamoto.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2019/05/01/ataque-do-governo-as-universidades-federais-e-tristemente-ideologico/> (accessed 1.18.20).

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constitution, they served to create an environment of insecurity and continuous threat to academic freedom. This was noted by the Scholars At Risk "Free to Think" *2019 Annual Report*, which documented the negative impact of violence and coercion restricting inquiry and freedom of expression in Brazilian universities.¹³ It was the first time Brazil had appeared in the report.

In May 2019, the Ministry of Education withheld R\$5.8 billion for education, using austerity as a justification. These cuts affected all federal universities equally and since the wages and pensions of civil servants were legally protected, they had a direct effect on the daily operational costs of universities. Electricity and water service bills, contracts with outsourced workers (such as cleaners and security guards), and materials such as stationery and laboratory could not be paid. Many universities threatened to close their teaching and research facilities. Brazilian civil society responded to these cuts with massive protests and tens of thousands of people turned out on the streets to in defense of public education.¹⁴

More than just a political ideology that is hostile to any form of critical pedagogy – in particular the work educator Paulo Freire, author of the famous book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Bolsonaro's administration defends profit-maximisation models and privatisation of public universities. After suspending the budget, the government launched the programme "Future-se", a legislative bill designed to increase the "financial autonomy" of public universities, to enhance their relationship with the private sector and relieve the government of their funding. One of the main features of the bill is to create an endowment fund with the participation of the private sector to support teaching and research activities. The universities that participate in the programme would be able to access this fund, besides receiving additional funding from the Ministry of Education and scholarships from CAPES. In exchange, the universities would have to abide by productivity targets and key performance indicators. This would result in a reduction of their administrative autonomy because they would have to subscribe to management contracts with foundations and non-profitable organisations to handle funds and execute research and teaching activities.

¹³ Scholars at Risk, 2019. Free to Think report 2019. Access: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2019/>

¹⁴ Kaiser, A.J., 2019. Brazil's Bolsonaro dismisses "imbecile" students as he faces biggest protests yet. The Guardian.

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Another feature of the bill includes the donation of the buildings and facilities of public universities to these funds, which would be managed privately to generate revenues. Although the government promises to send the bill to the National Congress February 2020, the programme has already rejected by the majority of the governing bodies of federal universities in late 2019.¹⁵

Probably because of this rejection, Bolsonaro's administration decided to alter the rules of how the rectors of the federal higher education institutions are selected in December 2019. This provisional legislation, which has immediate effect but also needs to be approved by the National Congress in one-hundred-and-twenty days otherwise it expires, facilitates the nomination of politically aligned governing boards of federal universities by the government.¹⁶

Brazilian public universities are still marked by big social gaps, as the majority of the people attending have higher incomes. Even if racial and class-based quotas succeeded in rebalancing inequalities in public universities, the rollback of affirmative action policies looms on the horizon as the recent cuts to funding for student halls, alimentation, transport and study scholarships, and other policies that allow low-income students to go to university demonstrate. In this sense, market-oriented logics within the education system tend to reinforce inequalities and prevent access to universities for minority populations.

Internationalisation

In the Future-se program, the internationalisation of higher education program is focused on making universities responsible for their own funding, including securing money from private sector companies, following the same model of some of the Ivy-League universities, such as Harvard University. This would remove the responsibility of the state to fund universities and it would reinforce competition by highlighting the importance of international reputation and productivity. This

¹⁵ Cafardo, R., Mengue, P., 2019. Maioria das universidades federais rejeita Future-se, do MEC - Educação - Estadão. O Estado de São Paulo.

¹⁶ The rector is the principal director of Brazilian public universities. Rectors are usually appointed from a triple list prepared by a consultation of the academic community, which selects the winner. The president is under no obligation to that person appointed by the academic community, but it is traditional they do so. The provisional legislation intends to take away the power of universities to choose their own rectors.

resembles models of internationalisation based on dominant practices from the Global North, especially North America.

Bolsonaro's government agenda for higher education has had an impact in at least three internationalisation programs: (1) the *Programa Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (Languages Without Borders, IsF), which supported students and academics to learn a second language; (2) the *Programa Institucional de Internacionalização* (CAPES/PrInt - Internationalisation Program), which supports the consolidation of strategic plans for the internationalization of third level institutions; and the (3) *Programa de Doutorado Sanduíche no Exterior* (CAPES/PDSE - University Exchange Doctoral Programme), which funds doctorate scholarships abroad.

Created to be an extension of the now redundant mobility programme, *Programa Ciência sem Fronteiras*, the IsF gave more than 818,000 college students and teachers the opportunity to learn a second language. However, it was severely criticised by the Education Minister, Abraham Weintraub, who declared that the program was "inefficient". Created to support students and scholar in mobility programs abroad so they could learn a second language before leaving the country for their studies, the IsF was suspended in 2019 and no substitute was left in its place. In this sense, there is still no serious foreign language foundation in the Brazilian education system. The funding for CAPES–PrInt was frozen in May 2019 and 20% the vacancies planned for 2019 were rescinded. This means that less visiting academics will be visiting Brazilian universities until 2023, when the program is expected to end. Similarly, the CAPES–PDSE had cancelled or temporarily suspended several scholarships and the scholarships that are available cannot be offered to new candidates. Whilst some funding was released again at a later date, only university courses with highest marks in the CAPES evaluation system had their funding reinstated. Given the complexity of the internationalisation of higher education in Brazil, the formulation of policies to support internationalisation must make it more equitable and accessible for every citizen.¹⁷

¹⁷ Guimaraes, F.; Finardi, R; Casotti, C; 2019. Internationalization and Language Policies in Brazil: What is the Relationship? *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada* 19, 295–327.

The dismantling of Brazilian education and the "brain drain"

In a scenario where investment in research and postgraduate education is not a priority, it is unsurprising that talented and promising academics decide to leave Brazil permanently to pursue their career in other countries. This only benefits developed countries that absorb high-qualified Brazilian talents such as postdoctoral researchers and professors. The research funding crisis deeply affects Brazilian scientists for years and this is not exclusive of Bolsonaro's government. For example, in 2018 during Temer's administration, the federal budget for science was cut by 44%.¹⁸

But last year was particularly difficult for Brazilian science. First, the suspension of funding for the universities' operational costs threatened researching facilities, such as laboratories and libraries. Second, the two main governmental agencies that fund science - CAPES and CNPq - suffered cuts in their budgets that seriously undermined their capacity to pay scholarships and research budgets (i.e. equipment, supplies and grants). Part of the Ministry of Science and Technology, which was subjected to a suspension of 42% of its budget in March 2019,¹⁹ CNPq had a budget deficit of R\$300 million in 2019 that was only rectified in October 2019, when the National Congress and the Ministry of Finance authorised an extra budget for the agency so it could keep paying its eighty thousand or so scholarships.²⁰ CAPES, linked to the Ministry of Education, faced similar difficulties to pay its ninety thousand or so scholarships for graduate students. During 2019, more than eight thousand scholarships were frozen.²¹

This situation contrasts with the past two decades during which science and graduate level education received increasing support. Between 2003 and 2014, the enrolment in Masters and PhD courses increased from 48,925 to 203,717, according to official

¹⁸Mega, E.R., 2019. Financial crisis looms at Brazilian science agency. *Science* 365, 731-731. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.365.6455.731>

¹⁹Folha de Sao Paulo, 2019. Corte orçamentário de 42% em ciência e tecnologia preocupa entidades - 03/04/2019 - *Ciência - Folha*. Folha de Sao Paulo.

²⁰Moreno, A.C.M., 2019. Após 8 meses de avaliação, Ministério da Economia libera verba extra para o CNPq pagar bolsas de pesquisa. *G1*.

²¹Rodrigues, M., 2019. MEC anuncia desbloqueio de 3.182 bolsas de pós-graduação de cursos com alta avaliação. *G1*.

numbers. In 2013, the budget for the Ministry of Science and Technology peaked at R\$9.5 billion, double what it currently is.²² The previous policy of expanding academic and scientific resources clashed with the current austerity in these areas, which also led to the recent suspension of the recruitment of new teaching and research staff in public universities. The results have been severe. Today, people with Masters and PhDs suffer with the highest rates of unemployment in Brazil.²³ Since 2016, prominent scientists have been leaving the country claiming that there is no funding to do leading research.²⁴ The situation even more grave given that most of the scientific development in the country is carried out by graduate students, funded by government scholarships, which are now continuously under threat.

Conclusion

This article examined the threats to the higher education community in Brazil. The hostile environment created by the current administration is increasing political and financial pressures on scholars and students. The justification for the attacks on education is an alleged need to eliminate the "cultural Marxist" rhetoric and make universities more productive institutions. Aside from the futility of such a discourse, what is real about the anti-cultural Marxist rhetoric is that Bolsonaro's administration is against critical studies, especially if they are related to race, gender and feminism. These attacks, together with the decreasing investment in tertiary education, are a new facet of an educational policy agenda reframed through a neoliberal lens. It involves the incorporation of Brazilian universities into institutional models of evaluation that have been established by developed countries, where universities are measured through quality indicators that often ignore the reality of their context and local practices.²⁵

²²Alves, G., 2018. Recuperar orçamento da ciência é desafio para governo Bolsonaro- *Ciência. Folha de Sao Paulo.*

²³Roscoe, B., Soares, I., 2019. Desemprego entre mestres e doutores no Brasil chega a 25%. *Correio Braziliense.*

²⁴Ciscati, R., 2016. Porque a cientista Suzana Herculano-Houzel decidiu dizer adeus ao Brasil. *Época*; Silveira, E., 2020. Fuga de cérebros: os doutores que preferiram deixar o Brasil para continuar pesquisas em outro país. *BBC News Brasil.* Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-5110626>.

²⁵Leite, D., Genro, M.E.H., 2012. Avaliação e internacionalização da educação superior: Quo vadis América Latina? *Avaliação: Revista da Avaliação da Educação Superior (Campinas)* 17, 763-785

The assault unleashed against Brazilian universities is an expression of intolerance, which clashes directly with a need to maintain the free and independent academic environment. Aggressive far-right rhetoric against progressive ideas have been eroding conditions of security, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and causing high levels of stress and uncertainty for scholars and students. Even if erratic and contradictory, the current national policy for Brazilian public universities causes huge concerns. The cuts in funding prevent universities to function at minimum levels of quality, with serious impacts on research outputs and on the quality and international interest in Brazilian research. The consequences of the funding crisis is already being felt by scientific research community, with the suspension of scholarships and the limitation of attendance at international conferences. Bolsonaro's government seriously attacks Brazilian scientific research and higher education as public policies, which have taken decades to consolidate and were only starting to become inclusive.

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Ciscati, R., 2016. Porque a cientista Suzana Herculano-Houzel decidiu dizer adeus ao Brasil. Época; Silveira, E., 2020. Fuga de cérebros: os doutores que preferiram deixar o Brasil para continuar pesquisas em outro país. BBC News Brasil. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-51110626>.

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RIMA BRUSI¹

No savings, just pain: School closures and "reform" in Puerto Rico ²

It is Wednesday, but the *barriada* Santo Tomás is quiet. Its streets are empty, except for some cars that line the treeless sidewalks: a two-door white Mirage, from sometime in the eighties, with a large dent on the driver's side; a red Corolla, this one from the early nineties, maybe, one of its doors gray but otherwise pristine, detailed even. I don't see anybody, but my companion Carmen, knows better; She turns to look behind us and calls out: ¡*Buenas!* (*Hello!*)

An elderly woman, her faded print house dress camouflaged against the beige tones of her balcony, responds, more quietly: *Buenas*.

—¿*Está abierto el portón, verdad?* (*The gate is open, right?*)

Unlike many Puerto Ricans, including myself, Carmen actually pronounces the d's and s's at the end of words. She says the entire word, pronouncing each letter slowly, purposefully: *estás, verdad, maldad*.

Si, mira a ver. Le tienes que dar un jaloncito. (*Yes, just check, you have to give it a little tug.*)

After a light pull, the gate to what used to be the elementary school Ramón Frade opens, and Carmen and I step inside. I walk behind her.

She looks around. ¿*Sabes? Esta es la primera vez que vengo, desde que la cerraron.* (*This is the first time I come here, since they closed it, you know?*).

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² This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2020/9/23/no-savings-just-pain-school-closures-and-reform-in-puerto-rico>

A former teacher, Carmen retired shortly before Puerto Rico's Department of Education (DEPR) closed her school. Her eyes and cheeks are teary. Her walk is, however, resolute, and she leads me to the stairs of the small main building— past the enclosed basketball court, past the pigeons and the chickens, past a small desk laying face down—and starts to climb the stairs.

The stair walls had been decorated by children, teachers and parents. The landing still has motivational mantras painted in Spanish, surrounded by red and yellow flowers: *I'm special. I'm successful. I'm creative!*

The Ramón Frade León Elementary school is located in the Barriada Santo Tomás, a small neighborhood in the municipality of Cayey, Puerto Rico. Santo Tomás is one of the 742 Puerto Rican communities that belong to the category of "comunidad especial", established by Law 1 of 2001 to define and target for investment those neighborhoods with the highest poverty, illiteracy and unemployment levels³. The Ramón Frade school served neighborhood children as well as children from other Cayey neighborhoods: its good reputation meant that it always had a wait list. The closing was announced⁴ in 2017, before hurricane Maria, and finalized in 2018, shortly after the hurricane, as part of the reforms proposed and implemented by then secretary of Education Julia Keleher. Parents, teachers and the community at large, including students from the nearby University of Puerto Rico campus, wrote letters, organized protests, and visited government offices, but it was in vain. Keleher has since resigned (and been indicted⁵ of a number of federal charges, including theft of government funds and wire fraud) so her turn as secretary of education lasted less than three years. Her participation in the design and implementation of educational reform in Puerto Rico, however, started much earlier. In 2007, while working for the

³ Law Num. 1, 2001, *Ley para el Desarrollo Integral de las Comunidades Especiales de Puerto Rico*.

⁴ La Perla del Sur. "Alcalde de Cayey califica como atropello cierre de escuelas," May 9, 2017. <https://www.periodicolaperla.com/alcalde-cayey-califica-atropello-cierre-escuelas/>.

⁵ Remezcla. "Puerto Rico's Former Education Secretary Julia Keleher Indicted on Federal Fraud Charges ... Again," January 17, 2020. <https://remezcla.com/culture/puerto-rico-education-secretary-julia-keleher-indicted-federal-fraud-charges/>.

United States (US) federal Education Department (ED), Keleher was in charge⁶ of overseeing Puerto Rico's Department of Education (DEPR) and its relationship with the US federal government, including financial management of federal funds and compliance. She then secured contracts with the DEPR under governor Fortuño (2008-2012), governor García Padilla (2012-2016) and governor Roselló (2016, ousted in a popular uprising in 2019.) During his mandate, Roselló made her secretary of education – the equivalent to Minister of Education in other parts of the world.



Barriada Santo Tomás, Cayey, 2019. Photo by the author.

⁶ Keierleber, Mark. "Complicated Crusader to Accused Federal Conspirator: Ex-Puerto Rico Education Secretary Julia Keleher's 'Surreal' Journey." <https://www.the74million.org/article/complicated-crusader-to-accused-federal-conspirator-ex-puerto-rico-education-secretary-julia-kelehers-surreal-journey/>.

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School closures had been an explicit part of the government's agenda for a while, albeit in different designs and embedded in different narratives. Under governor Fortuño (who now works as a lobbyist⁷), the emblematic education project involved consolidating schools into bigger, renovated or rebuilt buildings, a process that maximized the use of ARRA federal funds to hire outside companies to do, not only the work of reconstruction, but also that of maintenance, an agenda that often hinted at eventually implementing this same "public-private alliance"⁸ discourse to day-to-day school administration itself. This "public-private alliance" concept, another emblematic project of the Fortuño administration and sometimes described as a "hook for privatization", was enshrined in a new law⁹ and a new public agency in 2009. More than "school closures", the talk at the time revolved around the terms "modernization" and "school consolidations."

Closures kept occurring under governor Garcia Padilla (2012-2016,) who declared Puerto Rico's debt "unpayable" in 2015¹⁰. By then, the narrative had shifted to one that blamed closures on the economic crisis and reduced enrollment due to migration. Part of the strategy then was to put the closed school buildings up for sale, a policy that was renewed during Roselló's administration but never had clear results¹¹. Between 2014 and 2015, 135 schools were closed, and bills proposing the creation of charter schools (then still deemed unconstitutional in Puerto Rico) were presented in the Puerto Rican house and senate floors.

⁷ Virella, Aiola. "Fortuño defiende su gestión con Escuelas del Siglo XXI." Metro. Accessed May 4, 2020. <https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2020/01/12/fortuno-defiende-gestion-escuelas-del-siglo-xxi.html>.

⁸ "Escuelas Para Siglo 21: Gancho Para La Privatización (Vídeo)." Accessed March 29, 2020. <https://www.noticel.com/ahora/20120427/escuelas-para-siglo-21-gancho-para-la-privatizacion-video/>.

⁹ Law 29, June 8 2009, "*Ley de Alianzas Público Privadas*"

¹⁰ Corkery, Michael, and Mary Williams Walsh. "Puerto Rico's Governor Says Island's Debts Are 'Not Payable.'" *The New York Times*, June 28, 2015, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/29/business/dealbook/puerto-ricos-governor-says-islands-debts-are-not-payable.html>.

¹¹ "Roselló Actualiza Proceso Para Traspasar Escuelas Cerradas Iniciado Por AGP." Noticel. Accessed May 3, 2020. <https://www.noticel.com/educacion/ahora/politica/20170509/rossello-actualiza-proceso-para-traspasar-escuelas-cerradas-iniciado-por-ag/>.

An unelected Fiscal Oversight and Management Board (FOMB, known locally as “La Junta”) was imposed by the U.S. Congress¹² shortly after Garcia Padilla’s announcement and charged with Puerto Rico’s debt restructuring and fiscal planning. It is unclear exactly how many schools were closed, and why, during each administration prior to the current one (2016-present,) but according to the FOMB, over 480 schools had already been closed between 1990 and 2016¹³, mainly due to inadequate physical facilities and low levels of enrollment, and stood at 1332 in 2016¹⁴. Active, operational public schools went from 1,515 schools in 2006 to 855 in 2018, partly due to lower enrollment numbers (from 544,138 to 306,652) related to out-migration, declining birth rates and other demographic factors¹⁵.

Some of the very first austerity measures announced or foreshadowed by the FOMB targeted Puerto Rico’s public schools and universities¹⁶, and closures picked up pace when governor Roselló, who won the election in 2016 with a platform that included the argument that the 72 billion debt was actually payable, named Julia Keleher his secretary of education. By then, Keleher had been formally connected with educational reform in Puerto Rico, in one way or another, for nine years and two administrations, Roselló’s being the third¹⁷. Under her now formalized leadership, hundreds of schools were closed, and a comprehensive educational reform was passed and signed into law, shortly and swiftly after the island was hit by hurricane Maria in

¹² The full name of the bill, signed by president Obama into law in 2016, is “Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act” (PROMESA).

¹³ Rosario, Frances. “Cerrarían Otras 300 Escuelas Para El 2020.” *Primera Hora*. Accessed June 4, 2020. <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/notas/cerrarian-otras-300-escuelas-para-el-2020/>.

¹⁴ Lovera, Patricia Sulbarán. “‘Esto es una desolación’: la crisis educativa que obliga al cierre de 179 escuelas públicas en Puerto Rico.” *BBC News Mundo*, May 10, 2017, sec. América Latina. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-39864858>.

¹⁵ Hinojosa, Jennifer, Edwin Meléndez and Kathya Serevino Pietri. 2019. “Population decline and school closures in Puerto Rico.” Center for Puerto Rican Studies, https://centrop.r.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/PDF_Publications/centro_rb2019-01_cor.pdf, accessed on May 2 2020.

¹⁶ Brusi, Rima, and Isar Godreau. “Dismantling Public Education in Puerto Rico.” In *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*, 234–49. Chicago: Haymarket, 2019.

¹⁷ Bonilla, Yarimar, Rima Brusi, and Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan. “6 Months After Maria, Puerto Ricans Face a New Threat—Education Reform,” March 21, 2018. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/colonialism-and-disaster-capitalism-are-dismantling-puerto-ricos-public-school-system/>.

2017. Explicitly described as a set of changes that strengthened “school choice”, the new law –reminiscent of educational reforms under and after the Chilean neoliberal dictatorship¹⁸ and post-Katrina New Orleans–¹⁹ decentralizes the system, giving regions more “autonomy”, allows for the creation of charter schools, and makes legal the use of school vouchers that public school students can use to go to private schools. These “more autonomous” educational regions are now under the “mentoring” of a non-profit, Puerto Rico Education Foundation, that receives funding from conservative sources such as the Tenacre foundation and the Walton family and that in 2017 was linked to attempts to double the salary of secretary Keleher, who already had one of the highest salaries of educational leaders in the world. Most of the closures (65%) occurred in rural areas of the island.²⁰ The DEPR has not been able to provide a precise number, but some experts have estimated the number of closures between 2017 and 2019 as well over 400,²¹ roughly a third of the schools Puerto Rico had before 2016, and the DEPR itself has offered the 438 figure as its own estimate of the closures under secretary Keleher as of March 4th, 2019.²²

¹⁸ Cavieres, Eduardo. 2011. “The Class and Culture-Based Exclusion of the Chilean Neoliberal Educational Reform.” *Educational Studies* 47 (2): 111–32.

¹⁹ Saltman, Kenneth J. 2015. *Capitalizing on Disaster: Taking and Breaking Public Schools*. New York: Routledge; Buras, Kristen. 2014. *Charter Schools, Race, and Urban Space: Where the Market Meets Grassroots Resistance*. New York: Routledge.

²⁰ Hinojosa, Jennifer, Edwin Meléndez and Kathya Serevino Pietri. 2019. “Population decline and school closures in Puerto Rico.” Center for Puerto Rican Studies, https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/PDF_Publications/centro_rb2019-01_cor.pdf, accessed on May 2 2020.

²¹ Observatorio de la Educación Pública en Puerto Rico. <https://www.upr.edu/iii-cayey/project/observatorio-de-la-educacion-publica-cierre-de-escuelas-y-aprovechamiento-academico/>; Dols, Monique. 2019. “Puerto Rico’s privatizers are finally getting what they deserve.” *Jacobin Magazine*, July 16, 2019. <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/07/julia-keleher-puerto-rico-schools>

²² Yaritza Rivera Clemente. “Cerradas 438 escuelas.” *El Vocero de Puerto Rico*. Accessed June 5, 2020. https://www.elvocero.com/actualidad/cerradas-438-escuelas/article_ae7b3506-6572-11e9-888b-fb82b7c14831.html.



Ramón Frade students pose for a group photo in 2016. Used with permission.

In spite of her being hailed as a top-notch technocrat who made data-driven decisions, Keleher provided notoriously little data to stakeholders like parents, teachers, and concerned citizens. The “school reform law” she designed in collaboration with federal Education secretary Betsy DeVos’s office also contains little in the way of data used to justify decisions. On the few occasions when she offered criteria for closures, she emphasized three: 1) deteriorated physical facilities; 2) low academic achievement; and 3) low enrollment numbers.

However, Cayey’s Ramón Frade Elementary was one of many schools with characteristics that seemed to contradict Keleher’s (notoriously vague²³) closing criteria:

1. The modest buildings were in good shape and the grounds were well kept, partly through the efforts of a special committee of very engaged parents and funding proposals written by the staff;

²³ “Dónde Están Los Criterios Para Cerrar Escuelas?” Accessed April 4, 2020. <https://www.noticel.com/educacion/ahora/la-calle/top-stories/20180428/donde-estan-los-criterios-para-cerrar-escuelas/>.

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2. the school had not only full enrollment²⁴ but a waiting list, in spite of being located in one of the poorest *barrios* in town. Moreover, when the DE eliminated their sixth grade class (many teachers believe this was an effort to reduce their enrollment numbers and justify the coming closure,) the (famously competent) principal added a kindergarten class that immediately filled up;
3. perhaps most relevant to the kind of “data” secretary Keleher had always hailed as crucial to measure the value of schools, Ramón Frade Elementary boasted some of the best standardized testing scores in Puerto Rico: 85-89% proficiency in Math , 70-75% proficiency in language arts, well above the island averages of 36% and 48% respectively, and above my own son’s elementary school in the Bronx, 62% and 59%. The very department that closed Ramón Frade Elementary down in 2017 had named it a top school and an “escuela de excelencia” in Puerto Rico the year before.

²⁴ The school had a teacher-student ratio higher than Puerto Rico’s average. The staff believe that that was part of what allowed them to be so effective and address the needs of and necessary accommodations for their students. Their beliefs are supported by the literature. See for example Diane Ravitch’s *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools*. (New York: Vintage,2015.) And although this article was written before COVID-19 made its appearance, it is worth noting that post-COVID, larger teacher-student ratios now make even more sense.



Students, parents, teachers and neighbors protesting Ramón Frade’s closure. The signs read: You have no right to close down my future(L) and “If there’s no justice for the people, there will be no peace for the government: it’s that simple.” (R) Used with permission.

Ramon Frade students were transferred to a school with scores of 15% and 38%—lower than Puerto Rico’s average. More worrisome for Carmen and other teachers, Frade’s special education population is already struggling with ensuring the accommodations they need in their new schools—an ongoing problem with many school “consolidations” on the island, a territory where 40% of the student body needs special education services, a big contrast to the 14% average²⁵ in the U.S.

All of this is not to say that test scores should be the main criteria, or even a criteria, in determining school closures in Puerto Rico or elsewhere, but rather to demonstrate how the logic for school closures offered by secretary Keleher, her supporters, and the ideology they represent, is actually not consistent with their actual decisions. Random

²⁵ NCES. *The Condition of Education - Preprimary, Elementary, and Secondary Education - Elementary and Secondary Enrollment - Children and Youth With Disabilities - Indicator May (2019).* Accessed March 16, 2020. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp.

or not, there's little evidence to go by in terms of what their real reasoning was. We do know, however, that the "school reform law" written in coordination with the US federal department of education, and passed shortly after hurricane Maria hit the island, explicitly paves the way for two traditional "school choice" mechanisms: vouchers and charter schools, including sectarian schools. And as it happens, at least four²⁶ out of the top ten debt holders benefiting from austerity measures on the island (measures and cuts they support so that Puerto Rico can "service" its debt) have connections with the charter school industry in the U.S.

The narratives deployed to justify and reinforce neoliberal educational reform in Puerto Rico²⁷ are very similar to those used in other bankrupt or cash-strapped places in the United States and elsewhere: fiscal mismanagement, population decline, lack of academic achievement, administrative incompetence²⁸. But the logic and impact of school closures, charter schools, and voucher programs are better explained as part of an overarching economic and ideological package²⁹ that incentivizes public-private partnerships and collaborations (the formal name given to charter schools in Keleher's bill is, in fact, "escuelas alianza", "alliance schools") in all aspects of the public good (such as housing, health and education) and that ultimately exacerbates existing inequalities, creating abundant profit for those at the top and increasing economic hardships (and, ironically, decreasing actual "school choice"³⁰) for those at

²⁶ These are: Baupost (Decagon); Stone Lion Capital; Canyon Capital Advisors; and Oak Tree Capital Management. Citi Group, a bank who underwrote a large portion of Puerto Rico's bond debt and owns debt itself, also has connections with the charter school industry. See "Who Owns Puerto Rico's Debt, Exactly? We've Tracked Down 10 of the Biggest Vulture Firms." Accessed March 16, 2020. <https://www.cadtm.org/Who-Owns-Puerto-Rico-s-Debt-Exactly-We-ve-Tracked-Down-10-of-the-Biggest>.

²⁷ E.g. Feliciano, V. "Es necesario el cierre de escuelas" in *El Nuevo Día*, April 13, 2018. <https://www.elnuevodia.com/opinion/columnas/esnecesarioelcierredeescuelas-columna-2414208/>, accessed March 7, 2020.

²⁸ Green, Terrance L., Joanna D. Sánchez, and Andrene J. Castro. 2019. "Closed Schools, Open Markets: A Hot Spot Spatial Analysis of School Closures and Charter Openings in Detroit." *AERA Open*, May 20, 2019.

²⁹ Buras, Kristen L. *Charter Schools, Race, and Urban Space: Where the Market Meets Grassroots Resistance*. Routledge, 2015.

³⁰ Starr, Karen, 2019. *Education Policy, Neoliberalism, and Leadership Practice: A Critical Analysis*. New York:Routledge.

the bottom³¹. Crisis situations such as unpayable national or local debt or “natural” disasters overwhelm the population and therefore provide perfect opportunities to push these and other neoliberal reforms faster and more violently.³²

The failure of this type of broad “reform” to help distraught economies recover has been widely denounced³³ and thoroughly documented³⁴. Even the International Monetary Fund itself has admitted³⁵ as much. Indeed, perhaps the most basic reason given for school closures, both in the reports commissioned by bond holders and by Keleher’s department, was that closing schools would generate badly needed savings³⁶ for the bankrupt territory: ironically, the department itself, now under an interim secretary after Keleher’s resignation and arrest by the FBI on charges of corruption, confessed the closures did not generate the anticipated savings³⁷.

The government’s “comprehensive public school directory” (data.pr.gov) lists nine elementary schools in Cayey in 2018. By the time I visited, in the Fall of 2019, seven of them had closed (I visited six of these), and groups of residents, teachers and activists were still waiting for answers to their requests to repurpose some of the now empty buildings for community use.

³¹ Lipman, Pauline. 2013. *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

³² Klein, Naomi. 2008. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Picador.

³³ Krugman, Paul. The Austerity Delusion. *The Guardian*. April 29, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/ng-interactive/2015/apr/29/the-austerity-delusion>, accessed March 7, 2020.

³⁴ See for example McKee, Martin, Marina Karanikolos, Paul Belcher, and David Stuckler 2012 Austerity: A Failed Experiment on the People of Europe. *Clinical Medicine* 12(4): 346-350; Brewer, Rose M. 2012 21st-Century Capitalism, Austerity, and Black Economic Dispossession. *Souls* 14(3-4): 227-239; Klees, Steven J. 2008 A Quarter Century of Neoliberal Thinking in Education: Misleading Analyses and Failed Policies. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 6(4): 311-348; Valenzuela, Juan Pablo, Cristian Bellei, and Danae de los Ríos 2014 Socioeconomic School Segregation in a Market-Oriented Educational System. The Case of Chile. *Journal of Education Policy* 29(2): 217-241.

³⁵ Neoliberalism: Oversold? *Finance & Development*, June 2016 <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2016/06/ostry.htm/>, accessed March 7, 2020.

³⁶ Recommendations from bondholders to reduce the budget for education in Puerto Rico notwithstanding, Puerto Rico allocates \$8,400 per pupil, well below the US average of \$10,667. See: NCES Blog | January 8, 2018, accessed March 16, 2020. <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/2018/01/08/default>.

³⁷ EFE. “El Cierre de 250 Escuelas No Ha Generado Los Ahorros Que La Junta Esperaba.” Accessed June 5, 2020. <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/notas/el-cierre-de-250-escuelas-no-ha-generado-los-ahorros-que-la-junta-esperaba/>.



Carmen visits her old school, Ramón Frade León. Photo by the author.

Carmen is perhaps fifty-something, petite, with a luminous face and a gentle demeanor that makes you feel at ease right away. She is wearing jeans and a yellow blouse. She looks polished and carefully, albeit casually, made up in the manner many Puerto Rican women do when sad, or grieving; not as a way to conceal their grief but rather as a way to deal with it, to face it with a soft but unequivocal dignity.

She tells me many people think Cayey was hit harder than many other towns, probably because it voted for the PPD (Popular Democratic Party,) the current opposition party in what has been, for many years, basically a two party system. This statement is hard to either prove or falsify, because the lists and numbers offered by the DE are famously incomplete (to this day, they have not been able to provide a precise number of closures) and because closed schools vary in size and geography.

But it is certainly true that in Cayey alone I visited six closed elementary schools in 2019. This is consistent with the mayor's count. According to the last official list of projected closures I could find, only two Cayey schools were originally scheduled to be closed. Some of the schools, like Ramón Frade itself, are abandoned, rat-infested, the classrooms—including Carmen's— full of guano and debris. Others, like the Agustín Fernández Colón school, have been turned into administrative buildings.

Carmen showed me documents, such as a successful proposal to participate in an island-wide program that allowed their school to have a fully equipped computer classroom and access to teacher workshops that teachers in a different town had earlier described to me as “much better and useful than the ones provided by the Department of Education itself.” She shared personal stories, such as the struggles of her own granddaughter, a student with special needs, to get the accommodations she needs at her new school³⁸. She told me stories of demoralized neighbors who no longer had the school that, like so many others, had been the very heart of their community, their main, or even only, source of pride.

Sad or not, we still had to eat, so I took her to lunch. After some small, happier talk about her family and her religious faith, to lighten the mood, she felt silent for a few moments, then looked up to face me:

¿Dónde está el ahorro, she asked, si aquí lo que hay es dolor?

Where are the savings, when all we have here is pain?

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³⁸ Last time I spoke with Carmen, over five months after the events I describe here, her granddaughter's situation had not been resolved, in spite of Carmen's continuous, relentless advocacy.

“Who Owns Puerto Rico’s Debt, Exactly? We’ve Tracked Down 10 of the Biggest Vulture Firms.” Accessed March 16, 2020. <https://www.cadtm.org/Who-Owns-Puerto-Rico-s-Debt-Exactly-We-ve-Tracked-Down-10-of-the-Biggest>.

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DANIEL MATO¹

The multiple forms of racism and the challenges it poses to higher education systems²

Racism is an ideology according to which human beings are classifiable into "races" and some of them are "superior" to others. In Latin America, this ideology dates back to the colonial period. It is constitutive of the establishment of postcolonial republican States, continues in force, and its consequences especially affect the people and communities of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Although in many of the "Latin American" countries (an expression that at least silences the existence of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples), openly discriminatory behavior towards indigenous and Afro-descendant individuals and communities is less common than in the past, at no time has it ceased to exist, and in some countries has even flared up in recent years.

This ideology permeates the hegemonic forms of common sense in all societies of the region and is permanently reproduced through various institutional norms, mechanisms and practices. Educational systems and the mass media play key roles in these processes, although these are not the only social areas in which this occurs.

In them, as in other social spaces, racism is not only expressed and exercised through "visible" social practices, which is what the expression of "racial discrimination" is

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usually limited to. It also operates through disadvantages accumulated over centuries, the existence of which has been "naturalized". These disadvantages are the result of inequities and forms of inequality and exclusion of an economic, political, and socio-cultural nature, which are reproduced and multiplied through both prejudices and forms of "common sense", as well as through institutional norms, devices, and practices. The idea of "structural racism" is useful for referring to this set of factors in a comprehensive way. However, as discussed later in this text, it is analytically insufficient in serving as a basis for the design of concrete intervention initiatives that are potentially effective in eradicating racism from Higher Education systems.

Throughout history, colonial and postcolonial states have used education as a means to affirm and legitimize their dominance over indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples³. But for several decades, critical positions have been developing in a growing number of universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Latin America. Some of them go beyond the argumentative and guide specific practices in the areas of institutional construction, management, teaching, research and social connection⁴. This article seeks to contribute to the analysis of the different ways in which racism operates in Higher Education systems and the challenges it poses.

Racism and Higher Education

In Latin America, universities and other HEIs have played important roles both in the process of building homogenizing representations of the populations of the respective countries, and in the transformation of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples into objects of study, even against their will. They have done so from Eurocentric research approaches that produced disqualifying representations of their

³ The expression "Latin America" was not part of the lexicon of the independence movements of the early nineteenth century. The idea of "Latinity" and its application as an adjective was proposed in 1836 by the French intellectual Michel Chevalier. "Latin America" as a compound name first appeared in a book by the Colombian intellectual José María Torres Caicedo in 1865 (Ardao, 1980).

⁴ In this text, as in other previous ones, I use the expression "social bonding" in a generic way to refer to what in different institutional settings and work orientations, according to the cases, is usually named as "university extension" (expression that in some cases are accompanied by adjectives such as "two-way", or others), "action research" (in some cases also proposed as "participatory"), "service learning" (in some cases specified as "solidarity"), "dialogue of knowledge", "volunteering", and "university social responsibility", among other forms of university action (Mato, 2015).

"races", ways of life, worldviews, future projects, knowledge and ways of producing them.

Advancing towards the eradication of racism in Higher Education has to be achieved in all areas of each of the respective societies. At the educational level, technicians and professionals are trained to occupy social, economic and political positions of great influence in the respective societies. Among other professionals, universities and other HEIs graduate teachers play key roles at all levels of educational systems. They also train professionals in social communication, sociology, political science, and related fields that play key roles in guiding public opinion trends. For these reasons, it must be added that universities and other HEIs not only constitute spaces for technical and professional training, but also for training citizens and public opinion.

Fortunately, in an increasing number of universities and other HEIs in Latin America, various intervention modalities have been deliberately oriented to transform not only the universities and other HEIs, but also, and comprehensively, the Higher Education systems (including those institutions, and also the norms, public policies, and institutional practices of public bodies with competence in this field), so that they respond appropriately to the needs, demands, and proposals of the multicultural societies which they form part of. It is a large set of very diverse experiences, some of which are developed in and from "conventional"⁵ institutions, intercultural institutions, and "own" institutions of indigenous or Afro-descendant organizations. It is beyond the scope of this text to offer a complete explanation of the characteristics of these experiences, their advances and challenges, and the collaborative relationships that they increasingly maintain among themselves, which have been documented and analyzed in some collective publications that offer specific studies on numerous particular cases (Baronnet and Bermúdez Urbina, coords., 2019; CGEIB, comp., 2004; Di Caudo, Llanos Erazo and Ospina Alvarado, coords., 2016; Hernández Loeza, Ramírez Duque, Manjarraz Martínez and Flores Rosas, coords., 2013; Mato, coord., 2008; 2009; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2019).

⁵ In this text, as in previous ones, I call "conventional" the universities and other HEIs that have not been created to respond to demands and proposals from indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants.

The multiple forms of racism and the challenges it poses to higher education systems

To advance towards the eradication of racism in Higher Education, it is not only necessary to differentiate between racism and racial discrimination. It is also necessary to refine the analysis of the broad and relatively imprecise set of problems that are often referred to by the expression "structural racism". In order to design effective actions aimed at eradicating racism, it is necessary to analytically disaggregate this concept, without intending to establish some kind of absolute truth in this regard, but for operational purposes. This disaggregation could vary depending on whether one seeks to intervene in the field of Higher Education, or in other social spaces.

In order to intervene in the field of Higher Education systems, it is operationally useful to understand that there are structural factors, which are not specific to their systemic scope and which cannot be resolved in / from this, or at least not only in / from this, but that does not mean that its importance can be ignored; on the contrary, it is necessary to find ways to contribute to responding to them.

Examples of this type of factor are the historically accumulated disadvantages that stem from the dispossession of the territories of indigenous peoples that began during the European invasion and colonization, and continued in the post-colonial republics. This forced them to move, and in some cases they were forcibly displaced by military forces. As a consequence, they were deprived of their food sources and shelter, and were forced to seek new forms of livelihood. In many cases, they were also forced to work in mines, mills and estates, in extremely disadvantageous conditions. Similar problems have affected Afro-descendant communities who, after fleeing slavery, or when slavery ended, established territorial areas of subsistence (quilombos, cumbés, or palenques, among other denominations, in various countries) from which in many cases they were later expelled. With variations in form, these types of problems continue to affect communities of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, as a consequence of the advance of agricultural and mining operations, urban and tourist developments, and other activities that also usurp their territories, destroy and / or contaminate rivers and wetlands, throughout Latin America. The limited advances in the recognition of territorial rights of these peoples achieved in some Latin American countries are generally insufficient to ensure the sustainability of the ways of life of these communities. Furthermore, the defense of these rights against the voracity and violence of powerful economic sectors often

demands permanent actions by the respective communities, which are frequently criminalized by the States (UN, 2002, 2005).

These factors, in addition to health problems, difficulties in accessing justice, health services and quality basic education, usually motivate forced displacement of these populations or their members towards urban centers. Their insertion in these contexts usually occurs under even more disadvantageous conditions than those suffered by other social sectors affected by precarious conditions and economic poverty. This is generally due to their status as migrants relatively lacking in practical knowledge about their new places of residence, as well as sufficiently effective social support networks, and also - of course - due to cultural differences, and sometimes also linguistic differences.

These complex processes with a long historical evolution have different types of consequences, but in relation to the educational field they are expressed, for example, in the fact that illiteracy rates, as well as those of incomplete primary or secondary education, register higher values among the indigenous and afro-descendant peoples than those corresponding to other sectors of the population of each of the countries of the region. In this sense, these types of problems generate inequality and exclusion, and constitute structural causes of the low participation of indigenous and Afro-descendant people among students, teaching bodies, authorities and officials of universities and other HEIs.

There is relatively little that can be done directly and immediately from universities and other HEIs to reverse these problems. On the other hand, it is possible to contribute to doing so from a longer term perspective, through the training that these institutions provide. Students of all the races must learn about these historical and contemporary processes and understand and value the need to respond to them. It is necessary to dedicate research initiatives to the study of these problems and to the design of responses to them. It is also feasible and recommended to develop university social bonding programs aimed at strengthening the affected communities, and together with them, the primary and secondary educational institutions that serve them. With this task, it is also possible to establish the headquarters of universities and other HEIs in localities close to the communities of those towns. Additionally, affirmative action programs should be created that stimulate and favor the entry, successful training and graduation of students from these towns, as well as the incorporation of teachers and officials from these same origins. These types of

measures can contribute to responding to these problems of structural racism, even if they are not sufficient for solving them.

Some universities and other HEIs in various countries in the region have been developing valuable initiatives of the type mentioned for some time. But they usually do it with limited resources, without categorically demanding from governments the budgets necessary to sustain them. In this sense, there seems to be a serious omission. Both governments, universities and other HEIs seem to forget that ensuring educational opportunities for people and communities of these peoples, at all levels, under equitable conditions, and that are appropriate to their contexts and interests, constitute rights established in multiple international conventions and in the national constitutions and laws of most countries in the region⁶. Advancing in this direction may be more viable if, in addition to focusing on socially structural problems, efforts are made to resolve those of a systemic and institutional nature.

There are other factors that can be characterized as systemic, as they are specific to the norms, policies and practices of each higher education system in particular. The systemic factors that ensure the reproduction of racism are generally not evident. For example, current regulations establish the need to have a university or higher education degree to teach in institutions at that level, which in principle can be considered a "normal" requirement. The problem is that this type of regulation prevents wise people from indigenous peoples who, despite not having a title, for example, are the best, if not the only ones, who manage ancestral knowledge of therapeutic uses of certain plant species, or of management and improvement of some seeds and tubers. These types of regulations also result in, when these people are allowed to teach, them not being recognized and paid as teachers on equal terms with those who hold university degrees.

These types of provisions express the monocultural nature of Higher Education systems, which despise valuable knowledge for not being academically certified and in doing so not only deprive Higher Education systems of them, but also reproduce forms of "invisible" racism. The existence of these types of ethnocentric,

⁶ See especially:

- Organización de las Naciones Unidas (1967) Convención Internacional sobre Eliminación de Todas las Formas de Discriminación Racial <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>
- Organización Internacional del Trabajo (1989) Convenio sobre pueblos indígenas y tribales (Convenio Nro. 169) https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/es/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169

monocultural and therefore racist norms, contrasts with the search for these types of knowledge, and specialists in them, by pharmaceutical and agro-industrial corporations, which dedicate efforts to obtain and patent them for their benefit.

Something similar, and even more serious, occurs with respect to the best speakers of the languages of indigenous peoples. Thanks to initiatives by teachers and researchers who are aware of the value of these specialists and to the support of officials and authorities, solutions to these systemic problems are being tried in some universities and other HEIs, but, although valuable and potentially generating long term solutions, these initiatives are only compensatory. There should be appropriate standards at the systemic level.

Similarly, systemic and institutional regulations and cultures have constrained the training spaces of many disciplines to learning in the classroom, wasting valuable opportunities that arise outside of them. However, in some careers it is almost inconceivable to graduate without interning in non-university settings. The fields of Agronomy and Ecology are perhaps the best example of this type, although in them it is also possible to train only within classrooms and laboratories, without doing field work. Practice-based learning processes are also vital in the training of medical and dental professionals. Although in these cases the practices are often carried out exclusively in "academically" controlled spaces, such as doctor's offices, laboratories or operating rooms. But in certain specialties of these fields in some universities, efforts are made to complement training with field experiences, and in some countries the so-called "social service" is a requirement to graduate in these disciplines. In a good number of cases, these types of activities are carried out in communities of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. This in itself does not necessarily mean that racism issues have been resolved. On the contrary, given the work guidelines, in many cases they end up reinforcing it, but in others, these experiences open up paths of knowledge, awareness and commitment.

It is necessary to strengthen these types of positive experiences, and also to train all teachers and students in these disciplines to ensure that all experiences of this type, and not just some, are positive for the eradication of racism. To respond to these types of challenges, it is not enough to have initiatives at the level of departments, faculties or institutions, because their actions are subject to evaluations by evaluation and accreditation bodies. It is necessary to have appropriate systemic regulations, which not only rhetorically recognize their importance and value, but also foresee

ways to accredit them as part of the training courses and ensure the availability of resources to carry them out.

Except in some innovative universities, curiously, in the curricula of most humanities and social sciences fields it is less common to see training modalities beyond reading and classroom work, than in the aforementioned professional training. However, the development of learning experiences in the field and in practice, and collaborative work with various types of communities (including those of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants) constitute work modalities that have been gaining ground for several decades in a number of growing careers in these fields. However, it frequently happens that these innovative forms of learning (innovative not only from a didactic point of view, but also epistemological, ethical and sensitive) are usually developed somewhat contrary to systemic regulations and institutional study plans. This type of obstacle ends up demanding extra workloads for teachers and students that are not recognized by the institutions, because these in turn do not have the validation of the evaluation and accreditation bodies.

Finally, there are other types of factors specific to the designs and institutional practices of each university or HEI in particular. Examples of these types of factors that can be characterized as institutional racism are those associated with the degrees offered by each institution, their study plans, and institutionally creditable learning activities, among others. There are few universities and other HEIs that design and offer degrees and study plans that are relevant to the cultural diversity of the territories in which they are established, and even fewer offer educational opportunities relevant to the needs and demands of village communities and indigenous and afro-descendants peoples. This is especially worrying in the cases of some disciplines such as health care, in which intercultural training is only very exceptionally offered. In Latin America, where according to the most recent census data, 8% of the population recognizes itself as a member of some indigenous people and 21.5% does so as an Afro-descendant, most of the Medicine and Nursing professionals graduate without Having training on the representations of health and disease of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, they also do not receive training on their therapeutic practices, and sometimes on diseases that are endemic to these populations.

The analytical differentiations between structural, systemic, and institutional factors, explained in previous paragraphs, should not make us lose sight of the fact that all of them are articulated among themselves. Nor can it be ignored that these factors are updated and reproduced through the practices of numerous social actors whose

existence and practices are not limited to the field of Higher Education, especially regarding structural and systemic ones. Just as examples, it is worth mentioning that in the configuration of these factors and the challenges they pose to the Higher Education systems, according to case studies, actors as diverse as the mass media, ranking companies, political parties, business chambers, pharmaceutical and agro-industrial corporations, professional associations of the most diverse branches, and/or teaching unions, among others, participate in direct or indirect ways from universities.

In order to advance towards the eradication of racism, it is necessary to do so in educational systems, and particularly in Higher Education, for the reasons explained at the beginning of this text about its significant incidence in various social fields.

In order to design modes of intervention that eradicate racism from Higher Education systems, and with it from the respective societies, it is necessary to analyze in a disaggregated way the social representations, norms, mechanisms, institutional practices and other factors that permanently update and reproduce it and the social actors involved in these processes.

Moving forward with these purposes in universities and other HEIs may be more feasible than achieving it directly on a systemic or structural scale, but it is not enough. The magnitude and complexity of the problem requires directing efforts beyond the academic sphere, it is necessary to influence public opinion and political decision-making instances. But, at the same time, if we do not succeed in eradicating racism in Higher Education, we will hardly succeed in doing so in each of our societies as a whole. For these reasons, the final declaration of the 3rd Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, among other recommendations, explicitly commissioned "Higher education institutions must guarantee the effective enjoyment of these rights [by indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples] and educate the population in general, and particularly their communities, against racism and all forms of discrimination and related forms of intolerance."

Cultural Diversity, Racism and Interculturality in the 3rd Regional Higher Education Conference

The Regional Higher Education Conferences (CRES) constitute the mechanism for concerting public and institutional policy recommendations for this most ambitious and influential level of education available in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To date, three of these conferences have been held. The first of these was held in Havana, Cuba, in 1996, the second in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia in 2008, and the third in Córdoba, Argentina in 2018. Each of these conferences has brought together the higher education authorities of all the governments of the region, as well as the authorities of a large part of the universities of these countries, specialists in the subject, leaders of union and student organizations. Each of these meetings produced a declaratory final document and a set of recommendations.

In recognition of the problems affecting Higher Education discussed in previous sections of this text, as well as the advances referred to above, the final statement of the 2nd CRES highlighted the problems derived from the monocultural nature of Higher Education and the need to advance in the types of transformations that were already underway. But the final document of the 3rd CRES⁷ went further and also emphasized the need to eradicate racism and racial discrimination (Mato, 2018a).

Due to its importance, it is worth quoting a relatively long extract of the main recommendations of the 3rd CRES Declaration:

Higher education policies and institutions must proactively contribute to dismantling all the mechanisms that generate racism, sexism, xenophobia, and all forms of intolerance and discrimination. It is imperative that the rights of all population groups discriminated by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality and forced displacement be guaranteed.

It is necessary to promote cultural diversity and interculturality in equitable and mutually respectful conditions. The challenge is not only to include women, people with disabilities, members of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and individuals from historically discriminated social groups in higher education institutions, but to transform them to be socially and culturally relevant.

These changes must ensure the incorporation in the institutions of higher education of the world views, values, knowledge, knowledge, linguistic systems, forms of learning and ways of producing knowledge of these peoples and social groups.

⁷ The Final Declaration of CRES 2018 is available at: <http://espacioenlaces.org/declaracion-cres-2018/>; recuperado 14-12-2019.

It is inescapable to recognize and value the epistemologies, learning modes and institutional designs of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, peasant communities and other socio-culturally differentiated ones.

There is a significant historical debt of Latin American and Caribbean states and societies to indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. Although their rights are recognized in numerous international instruments and in most national constitutions, there is an alarming deficit in their effective enjoyment, even in higher education. Higher education institutions must guarantee the effective enjoyment of these rights and educate the population in general, and particularly their communities, against racism and all forms of discrimination and related forms of intolerance.

It is essential to promote and facilitate the learning of the languages of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and their effective use in teaching, research and extension practices. The training of bilingual intercultural teachers for all levels of the educational systems is a priority duty of higher education.

The challenge is to put these recommendations into practice in all universities and other HEIs in Latin America, and more broadly in the Higher Education systems of the respective countries. This entails important challenges for all the actors in the Higher Education systems of the region and demands expanding and deepening the work in networks of mutual collaboration that, increasingly, has been developing since the end of the 1990s (Mato, 2018b). Along with this, it is necessary to systematically work on promoting public reflections and debates on the subject, as well as educating the population in general and particularly all the actors of the educational systems, especially those of Higher Education, against racism, with the leading participation of students and referents of communities and organizations of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

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ADRIAN GONZALEZ¹

Speak out or stay silent? A study of oil company-community relations through the political ecology of voice²

“[T]o try to lift the pipeline, we had to immerse in that water without any protection ... under the instruction of engineers, they told us that we had to try to reach it, so we did immerse there without any clothing, only underwear and it was full of crude oil, it was thick” (A Cuninico indigenous resident in the Peruvian Amazon describes their 2014 oil spill remediation work).

This powerful opening testimony, corroborated by other residents to me in the summer of 2015, highlights one of the many challenges that natural resource extraction poses, particularly in the Global South. A wide array of scholarship has shown that Global South resource rich countries are hindered by weak institutions (Mehlum et al., 2006), an absence of strong governance (Doro and Kufakurinani, 2018) and endemic corruption (Gonzalez, [2016a](#)). This ‘natural resource curse’ (Natural Resource Governance Institute, [2015](#)) has not only led to lower levels of economic development (Adams et al., 2019), but also resulted in far higher levels of social conflict and environmental pollution (Byakagaba et al., 2019). Research in sub-Saharan African (Lundgren et al., [2013](#); Obida et al., 2017; Amnesty International, [2018](#)) and Latin American (Bebbington and Bebbington, 2011; Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor, 2015; Bebbington and Bury, 2018) contexts typify these developmental challenges.

In these difficult national environments, the local interaction between resource extractive companies and local people is difficult. The absence of state civil

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development such as educational and medical facilities and transport infrastructure, can leave communities dependent on the support of extractive industries through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Gonzalez, 2016b). This dependency (Taarup-Esbensen, 2019), often exacerbated by the important local economic role that extractive industries play, can in turn increase the likelihood of societal division and possibly conflict (Aaron and Patrick, 2013). It also highlights the unequal power relations between extractive industries and local communities (Kemp and Owen, 2013) and the struggle which societal groups can face in holding economic actors accountable for mismanagement issues such as pollution.

Efforts to counteract these harmful effects have seen an attempt to improve extractive company and community engagement practices within different international standards (Wilson et al., 2016). To that end, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has developed the concept of “meaningful stakeholder engagement.” This can be defined as:

“ongoing engagement with stakeholders that is two-way [sharing opinions and perspectives and listening to different viewpoints to reach mutual understanding], conducted in good faith [active and honest participation to find common ground], responsive [companies appropriately addressing adverse issues like environmental pollution through timely remedial action] and ongoing [continuing throughout the lifecycle of a project]” (OECD, 2015 p.9).

This concept is evident from several policy mechanisms which can be used by extractive companies and also the state to proactively engage with local people. These include local communities actively managing biodiversity or natural resources through community monitoring programmes (Costa et al., 2018), a mechanism which can improve sustainability in conservation efforts (Holck, 2007) and generate empowered participation in decision-making (Constantino et al., 2012). Further mechanisms that strengthen participation and inclusion include prior consultation and the ability of citizens to provide free, prior and informed consent to local development projects (Barrera-Hernández, 2016). Extractive company respect for, and adoption of free, prior and informed consent, can conceivably reduce the likelihood of social conflict and reputational damage (Hanna and Vanclay, 2013).

This article, based on recently published PhD research (Gonzalez, 2018a), aims to explore the reality of meaningful participation, specifically the ability of local citizens to report environmental pollution incidents. It will start by setting out the political ecology of voice (PEV) theoretical framework developed for the PhD research

(Gonzalez, 2015) and the methodology and case study information, before summarising the research findings and what they tell us about meaningful participation, voice, accountability and power.

Exit, voice and political ecology; establishing the PEV theoretical framework

In 2013, I commenced a PhD in Human Geography with the aim of exploring why certain Global South oil producing countries suffer from such high levels of environmental pollution in comparison to other Global North producers. I focused my research on an investigation into the ability and willingness of local people to report environmental pollution issues via a case study of Peru's Loreto Region. The study was conducted through the development of my PEV theoretical framework, which integrates the voice theory of the twentieth century political economist, Albert Hirschman, with political ecology.

Albert Hirschman was one of the twentieth century's most influential economists who authored numerous texts into development economics and political theory. The initial foray of my PhD research into consumer accountability of business led me to examine Hirschman's theories of exit and voice which were outlined in his 1970 book *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations and States*. According to Hirschman, consumers are faced with two possible actions when responding to declining standards caused by business or states. The first is to *exit*, whereby consumers stop buying a firm's products or members leave an organisation (Hirschman, 1970). It is described as an impersonal, indirect, silent, private decision (Hirschman 1970; 1995). The second action is *voice*, where consumers or organisation members as individuals or collective groups, vocally express dissatisfaction to mobilise wider public opinion (Hirschman, 1970). Broadly, it is a public, messy action due to the different gradients that encompass it; from faint grumbling to violent protest. Voice is an active action, though it can occur silently e.g. muted remarks (Zuindeau, 2009), through horizontal and vertical situations such as speaking with one's peers, and conversations with higher level actors such as REI managers (Ravnborg and Gomez, 2015; O'Donnell, 1986). Hirschman considered exit to be closely interlinked with economics and voice with politics and public action, though this was not exclusive (Hirschman 1970; 1981; 1982; 1992).

Hirschman's exit and voice theories have been widely contextually analysed, e.g. on media citizenship see Ramana (2013), highlighting their usefulness as evaluative tools

(Picciotto, [2015](#)), but never within an environmental pollutant scenario. It became clear to me that there was scope for this to occur, particularly surrounding voice. In situations where public interest (Hirschman, 1982) or public happiness is affected, such as a food hazard, automobile safety problem (Hirschman, 1981), or as PEV contends, an environmental issue (Gonzalez, [2015](#)), vocalisation is more relevant as people are motivated to defend their quality of life. People's strong group loyalty (Hirschman, 1970) and livelihood attachments (Groves, 2015) such as employment or family connections are also key drivers of vocalisation. This is particularly true when one considers time horizons, in which it is unlikely for people to exit without first vocalising their concerns, indicating that exit is often an action of last resort or one pursued by the wealthy (Hirschman, 1978) or those with weaker livelihood attachments. For Hirschman's voice theory to be successfully reconceptualised into an environmental context, it was necessary for it to be integrated into a framework that could provide relevant contextual and analytical parameters. Political ecology became a clear choice.

The wide array of approaches and contributions to the field make any attempt at defining political ecology difficult (Greenberg and Park [1994](#); Ingalls and Stedman, [2016](#)). Nevertheless, at a broad level, this interdisciplinary framework seeks to understand the relationship between society and nature and the causes of socio-environmental inequality and injustice (Bryant, 2015; Ingalls and Stedman, [2016](#)). Within political ecology, there are several important aspects that provide a degree of coherence and which are also important for reconceptualising Hirschman's ideas in this environmental scenario.

The first is its focus on politics and therefore power relations which play a fundamental role within the framework (Ahlborg and Nightingale, [2018](#)). Political ecologists highlight the struggle for access and control of resources between actors operating at different scales and in different spaces (Bebbington, 2012; Spiegel, 2017; Gehab and Suhardiman, 2019). The link between politics/power and scale and space make the latter important features of the field. Scale is seen as an ongoing process of societal conflict through which environmental, social and political change is politicised (Harriss and Alatout, 2010). Meanwhile, political ecology research into specific localities such as peri-urban (Karpouzoglou et al., 2018) or frontiers (Willow and Wylie, 2014) show how they can be used by powerful actors to regulate and control areas of land or resources (Clapp, 2004). Lastly, political ecology acknowledges that the causes of socio-environmental issues operate in a temporally

dynamic environment. In other words, these ‘moments in temporal trajectories’ (Mathevet et al., 2015 p.2) change over time. Political ecology and these four underlying elements, power, scale, space and time, provide important analytical detail and help to contextualise Hirschman’s voice theory in this environmental pollutant scenario.

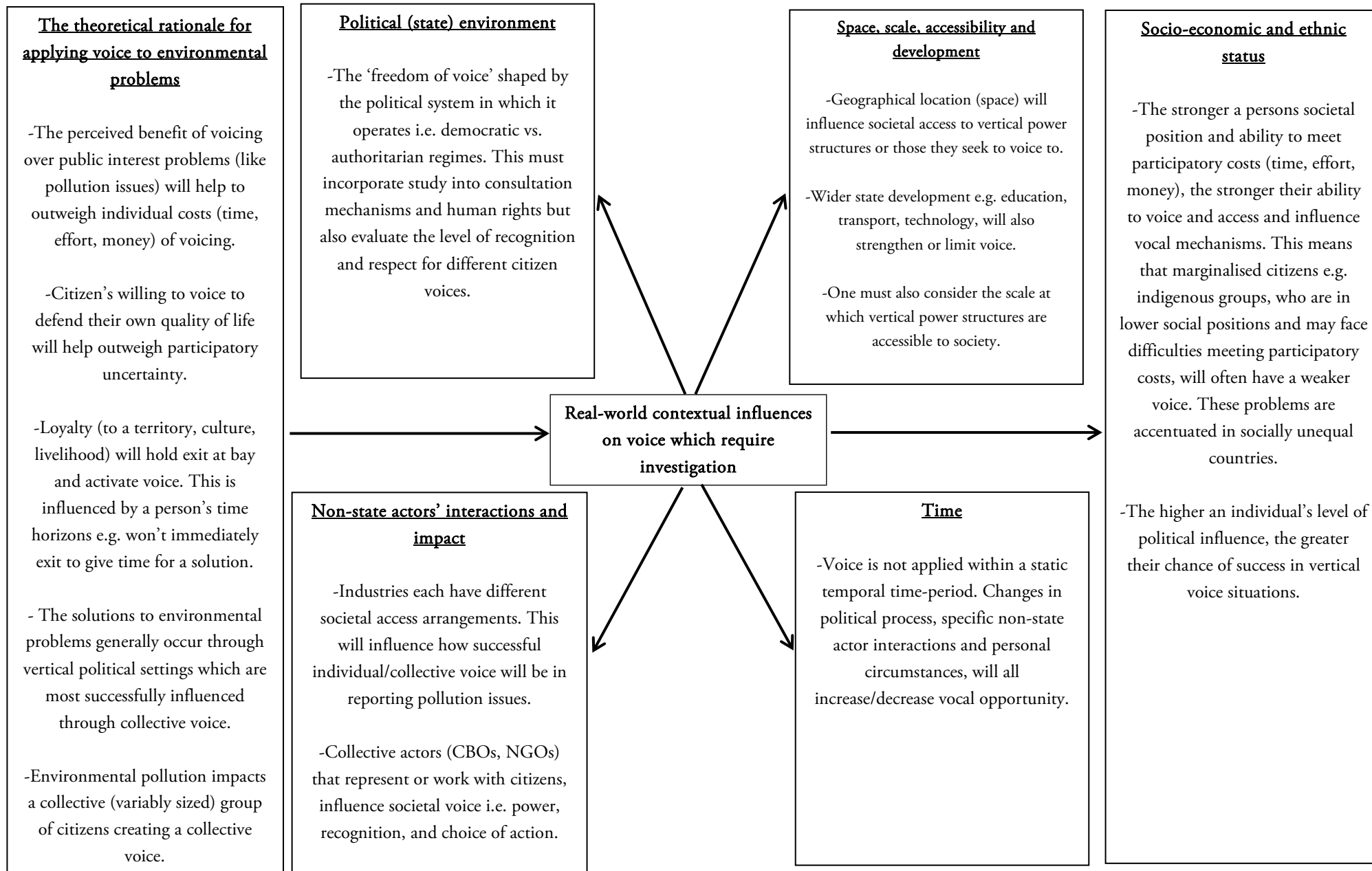
PEV can be defined as the study of a specific political, economic, social and geographical environment in which different stakeholders e.g. citizens, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations, utilise their voice over an environmental issue (Gonzalez, 2015). Consequently, voice can be understood as an active expression of protestation against disagreeable issues (Gonzalez, 2018b) and can occur in several ways. There is *individual* voice, in which a person seeks to enact change solely through this act. There is also *collective* voice, which in the context of environmental issues is most often used. This is not only because environmental issues affect a varying number of people, but also that engagement with vertical voice actors like the state or extractive companies is best achieved collectively in order to try and mitigate hostility from the state or other actors (Okonta and Douglas, 2001; Barrett, 2014). One must also reflect on who is vocalising and their multiple voices present within the environmental management sphere. There is *individual* or citizen voice and *institutional* voice stemming from actors such as extractive companies or the government. The third is *collective* voice, including community-based organisations such as religious or student movements, trade union and non-governmental organisations. So, while actor has a different voice, they are interconnected and have a predominant impact on citizen voice, how it is heard and by whom (Gonzalez, 2015).

The articulation of voice is affected by the specific environment in which different actors are situated. This contextual environment has been illustrated in Figure 1 below. This includes the political environment and whether a country is democratic or authoritarian which influences the “freedom of voice” (Gonzalez, 2018b). As Hirschman himself evaluated, ‘it is easier to participate in a public protest when one only loses time through the act of participation than when one thereby risks losing one’s head’ (1982, pp.4-5). PEV must also investigate the impact that socio-economic and ethnic influences have on voice. Studies indicate that active participation is easier for middle-class and high earners, who can more easily afford the participatory costs (money, time and effort) than low-income households (Crisp

et al., 2016). Marginalised citizens will also struggle to be heard or have their voices recognised by vertical voice actors (Saffari, 2016).

Space, scale, accessibility and development are also important to consider. Socio-economic issues are more acute for rurally located citizens, where access to vertical voice structures e.g. government representatives, is more challenging and virtual connectivity is often poor or non-existent (Gonzalez, 2019). PEV research must also reflect on non-state actors' interactions and impacts with citizens. Each company will have their own access and dialogue arrangements with local people which may see them seek to quash societal concerns via 'special favours' (Hirschman, 1981 p.241) such as improved CSR projects (Hoelscher and Rustad, 2019) or utilise repressive reprisals against local groups (White et al., 2018). Meanwhile, community-based and non-governmental organisations can help strengthen and empower citizens through capacity building initiatives (Ulleberg, 2009), mobilise local communities (Vijayakumar, 2018) and scale up their political voice (Perreault, 2003) to achieve different objectives such as environmental justice. Conversely, these actors also risk dispossessing local people of their voice, whose ideas and concerns can become lost in this wider movement and its aims (Cook et al., 2017), an issue exacerbated by the weakness that citizens have in forcing downward accountability of these actors (Andrews, 2018). Lastly, PEV acknowledges that these contextual influences on voice occur in a temporally fluid environment and at different scales and spaces (Gonzalez, 2015).

Figure 1: The political ecology of voice (PEV) (modified from Gonzalez, 2015 p.479)



Methodology and case study information

Field work was conducted in 2015 for three and a half months in Peru's Loreto Region. This is the largest region in Peru and is geographically more extensive than Germany. It has a population of over 1 million people, 45 per cent of whom reside in the regional capital Iquitos. The remainder dwell in over 2,000 smaller, remoter river-edge communities (Brierely et al., [2014](#)). Peru's on-shore oil operation is heavily concentrated on the Loreto Region which has been predominantly exploiting oil from two Blocks, 8 and 1AB/192 since 1969 and 1971 respectively. In 2014, these two Blocks accounted for 39.2 per cent of Peru's national oil production highlighting their significance (Orta-Martinez et al., [2018](#)). These oil Blocks, alongside the North Peruvian pipeline, which transports crude oil from Loreto to the refineries on the Pacific coast, have been a major source of ongoing contamination. Wide research documents the significant environmental and health implications for indigenous communities resulting from oil production (Amnesty International, [2017](#); O'Callaghan-Gordo et al., 2018; Rosell-Melé, 2018). Meanwhile, the pipeline, built in the 1970s and operated by the state-run company Petroperu, is in a chronic state of disrepair and has been the cause of numerous oil spills (Photo 1). In 2016 alone, seven oil spills occurred, which led to an estimated 10,000 barrels to be spilt (Law in Action, [2017](#)) and the closure of the pipeline until September 2017. Oil spills continue to plague the pipeline, including a recent 8,000-barrel spill which Petroperu attributed to vandalism (Cespades, [2018](#)).



Photo 1: An indication of the pipeline's chronic state of disrepair and the impact that the Cuninico oil spill has had on the surrounding environment (Photo given to me by a Cuninico resident who himself received it from a Petroperu worker and used with their permission, June 2014).

This paper focuses on Cuninico, one of two case study communities explored in my PhD, and their relationship with the state-run company Petroperu. Cuninico is home to roughly 500 indigenous Cocama (also spelt Kokáma) located on the banks of the River Marañón in Urañas district, Loreto province, situated roughly 11 hours away by speed boat from Iquitos. In June 2014, the village were affected by a roughly 2,000-barrel spill from the North Peruvian pipeline, which burst into its dredged floatation channel before polluting the Cuninico, Marañón and wider river systems.

Data were obtained through semi-structured anonymised interviews, supported by interview participant observation (Elwood and Martin, 2000). The interviews took place with Cuninico residents as well as other relevant people such as human-rights defenders, journalists and community-based and non-governmental representatives. Despite my best efforts, no current oil industry representatives from Petroperu were willing to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted through an interview guide and with the aid of a paid local interpreter. Each participant was given a coded

category based on their broad professional occupation, ethnicity, geographical location and number of the organisation and interviewee (see Appendix 1). A Google internet search enabled me to initially contact several community gatekeepers who could provide access to potential case study sites. Altogether, 110 interviews were conducted with 105 interviewees. 29 interviews took place with Cuninico residents. Interview transcripts were produced by a team of paid UK translators and analysed through QSR Nvivo software via a coding process (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998), supported by a loose research storyline based upon the PEV theoretical framework.

Contextualising meaningful participation

To understand this study of meaningful participation between Petroperu and Cuninico fully, one must acknowledge the wider PEV context (see Figure 1) in which it operates. There are several key parts which are important to summarise. The first is the political or state environment which has an integral impact on the “freedom of voice” and the ability of citizens and other stakeholders to vocalise concerns without fear of reprisal. Broadly, speaking, democratic countries offer a safer freedom of voice in comparison to authoritarian countries. In Peru, the military’s significant role in shaping national politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has transformed into a consolidation of democratic norms and principles since the election of Alan Garcia in 2001. This is evident in Peru’s 1993 constitution, which sets out various civil rights and responsibilities under Title 1, Chapter 1, Article 2, which in turn are protected and enforced through the Office of Ombudsman. At a regional level, Peru is also a member of the Organisation of American States and accompanying mechanisms.¹ Internationally, it has also ratified various relevant treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (ratified 1978), Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1990) and the ILO’s Indigenous and Tribal People’s Convention, 1989 (ILO Convention 169) (ratified 1994) (Gonzalez, 2018b; [2018c](#)).

Consequently, one would expect Peru to have a strong freedom of voice. However, when one contextualises the focus onto the freedom of voice surrounding natural resource exploitation, a far suppressive and dangerous political environment is evident. This situation is primarily driven by the state’s advancement and protection of a highly racialised, neoliberal agenda, which seeks to exploit natural resources in

the Amazon and wider Peru at the deliberate expense and dispossession of ingenious people (de la Cadena, [2001](#); Gonzalez, [2018b](#)). This agenda's impact on meaningful participation becomes evident. A 2017 visit by the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights concluded that a 'lack of meaningful participation and consultation with communities affected by business operations is another main source of social conflict' (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [2017](#)). Despite Peru's law of prior consultation and environmental impact assessments mechanisms, local people are denied the opportunity to provide free, prior and informed consent to development projects, an issue also evident in other Latin American countries (Schilling-Vacaflor, [2016](#)). Meanwhile, opponents of this agenda are delegitimised and attacked by the state through draconian surveillance, judicial harassment and physical violence (Latin American Andean Report, [2010](#); Front Line Defenders, [2014](#)), a situation contributing to ongoing civil society deaths (Global Witness, [2018](#)).

The pursuit of this agenda and the suppression of critical societal voices is also evident when one considers rural Loreton societal access to environmental justice through the state i.e. through legal or judicial mechanisms, and the accountability of economic actors for pollution. A 2019 PEV study of this issue found that the state is notably 'absent' from Loreto's rural communities where civil infrastructure such as legal, educational and medical facilities are sparse and often non-existent and accessibility to the state through river transport difficult (Gonzalez, [2019a](#)). The national and regional government have little interest in providing this civil development, instead offering "*token gestures [such as tin roofs] that don't really affect the way the whole economy operates in Loreto*" (NGO1R1) or equally, disrupt extractive development. This situation is exacerbated by rural poverty where average income is often less than \$1 a day (Brierley et al., [2014](#)) making boat trips to the regional capital too expensive. Meanwhile, discrimination also means that elected political representative have little interest in visiting or communicating with indigenous communities, weakening their trust in the state and forcing them to rely on informal governance networks e.g. volunteer police or judges, that exacerbate rather than improve state access for rural communities.

Consequently, for indigenous communities like Cuninico, accessing state-based environmental justice is not only challenging but sees the state unwilling to support or recognise these societal claims. Indigenous Peruvian people remain excluded to environmental citizenship rights. This "shadow environmental citizenship" leaves

communities reliant on non-state actors like non-governmental organisations or their indigenous federations and fuels more radical or unorthodox voice actions such as oil pipeline blockades by people seeking access to or recognition of environmental injustice (Gonzalez, 2019a).

Inaccessible and suppressive; the reality of Cuninico's meaningful participation with Petroperu

As noted in the contextual outline, Peru has been criticised for its lack of meaningful participation and it is no surprise to find that its state-owned oil company is failing to adhere to this concept. Prior to the 2014 spills, Cuninico interviewees confirmed that Petroperu had never visited the community. “*We don't know them*” (IRC16), leading to an unbalanced “*contradictory*” relationship (IRC17). This is surprising given that the North Peruvian pipeline, constructed almost two decades after the founding of Cuninico in 1959, passes in relative proximity to the community. Moreover, Petroperu personnel are located at the pipeline's pumping station no.1 in San José de Saramuro, only three hours away from Cuninico by speedboat, a relatively short travel time given Loreto's vast size.

This testimony indicates a complete absence of meaningful participation or dialogue of any kind between Cuninico and Petroperu which would have significant repercussions in crisis situations. In the case of the 2014 spill, the community were unsure who operated the pipeline or the procedure to follow. Quite by accident, they were able to contact the company via a telephone number located on the back of a Petroperu sponsored school textbook given to the Ministry of Education for distribution in Loreto. It is evident that were it not for the spill, Petroperu would have continued to remain disengaged from Cuninico. Further analysis of the event indicates that this was built on a wider platform of exploitation and discrimination that echoes the country's historic ‘silent racism’ (de la Cadena, 2001).

Throughout the approximately four-month remediation period, Cuninico interviewees confirmed that Petroperu engineers refused to provide the community with any information about the spill such as water quality results, how the spill could affect residents, a timeframe for completion or the diagnosis and treatment of sick oil labourers, described shortly (Gonzalez, 2018a). The community leader was deliberately misinformed that the oil water near Cuninico was in fact “*vegetable oil*” (IRC2). However, my photographic evidence of oil at three different sites along the

River Cuninico, adjacent to the village, disputes this claim (see Photo 2). Despite the impact on the village's food and water, the company provided Cuninico with only limited provisions for five months (August-December 2015), which left community members eating contaminated fish “*out of necessity*” (IRC7) and drinking boiled rain or river water. Access to clean water remains an ongoing issue (Fraser, [2016](#)).



Photo 2: A close-up photograph taken in May 2015, of one of three oil sites on the River Cuninico, approximately 30-minutes up-river from the village (Photo taken by researcher, May 2015).

The greatest indicator of mistreatment was the company's employment of approximately 150 Cocama in remediation work. On a wage of 150 soles a day, equivalent to \$45 in today's currency, a group of these indigenous community members had:

“to try to lift the pipeline, we had to immerse in that water without any protection ... under the instruction of engineers, they told us that we had to try to reach it, so we did immerse there without any clothing, only underwear and it was full of crude oil, it was thick” (IRC13; see Photo 3).

Other residents, on a cheaper wage of 80 soles (\$24), were tasked with scooping oil into buckets using a funnel, which often spilt oil onto their bodies as the thin white protective overalls they were given offered inadequate protection and routinely

ripped. Petroperu subsequently provided them with gasoline to wash it off their bodies. Interviewed residents also alleged that the company knowingly employed four under-age children aged between 15 and 17 years old in the remediation work. According to one of the minors:

“I started working gathering the rubbish. But at the end that wasn’t what I was doing. I was supposed to gather all the rubbish, but at the end I was working with the oil, getting it out of the waterfalls I sank my body up to the waist, half my body I sank to pick that up and give it to my other partners to fill up the barrel” (IRC100).

Unsurprisingly, resident workers reported significant health problems including allergic reactions and boils, numbness and weakness in their bodies, stomach problems, sore and locked joints, fevers, pain and blood from urinating and breathing difficulties (Gonzalez, 2018a).



Photo 3: Cuninico residents inserting removing one of the wooden timber frames the supports the North Peruvian pipeline. The absence of heavy lifting equipment and limited white protective overalls are clearly visible (Photo given to me by a Cuninico resident who himself received it from a Petroperu worker and used with their permission, June 2014).



Photo 4: Cuninico interviewees allege that four under-age children, some of whom are in this photograph, were knowingly employed in the exploitative remediation work (Photo given to me by a Cuninico resident who himself received it from a Petroperu worker and used with their permission, June 2014).

However, it became clear that this offer of employment was conditional based on community silence. According to Cuninico's Catholic priest, Petroperu sought to "negotiate silently ... without anyone's knowledge" in order to conclude a deal to "hide everything" (CBO4R3) and prevent wider knowledge about the spill. Residents were initially told to remain silent about the spill or lose their employment opportunity. Given their economic poverty, they took these blunt threats "seriously" (IRC7) which left them, as Petroperu hoped, feeling "scared," "afraid to talk ... [and] silent [with] ... only three or four people ... who spoke up and defended the village" (IRC7)' (Gonzalez 2018a, p.326). The establishment of this 'climate of fear' continued through further threats made during remediation work (Gonzalez, 2018a). Oil worker interviewees recounted that Petroperu told them to not criticise their working practices or question the company in any way. One interviewee, IRC13, was fired for questioning the company about the contamination. Given these circumstances,

people “*didn’t say a word*” (IRC7) and “*kept quiet*” about their employment conditions and “*endur[ed] it*” (IRC6). The climate of fear was only broken by the strong, resolute resolve of the community leader and their trusted links to the Catholic Church. These trusted links had been built through their engagement with two parish priests, who had worked in Cuninico for over thirty years, providing educational and civil development support. Their involvement, supported by their partners including Cuninico’s indigenous federation, enabled the village’s story to be told and begin the ongoing process of holding Petroperu accountable for the pollution event and exploitative employment practices. Crucially, they have provided access to transnational legal justice that transcends the challenge of gaining environmental justice in Peru (Peru Support Group 2016; 2017).

At the time of my interviews in May 2015, residents reported that Petroperu had failed to communicate with the whole community since leaving Cuninico in December 2014, instead meeting the community leader intermittently at pumping station no.1 at José de Saramuro. Meanwhile, recent research by Transparency International indicates that Cuninico residents continue to suffer from adverse health issues including cramps, stomach ache, colic, allergies and miscarriages in women, symptoms indicative of heavy metal poisoning (Amnesty International, 2017).

Conclusion; speaking up or staying silent in Peru’s Loreto Region

Through PEV, this article has briefly charted the reality of meaningful participation in Peru’s Loreto Region, focusing on Petroperu and their relationship with Cuninico. It has shown that there is no semblance of ongoing meaningful participation or any form of dialogue, which significantly reduces the community’s ability to report and hold the company accountable for pollution issues. This is exacerbated by Petroperu’s deliberate efforts to silence the village by preying upon their economic poverty and dependency on the company for work. Whilst this climate of fear was broken by strong resolute leadership and connections to trusted non-state actors, this is not always the case. Cuninico’s Catholic priest described how one other community, José de Saramuro, suffering from an oil spill a week earlier than Cuninico, decided to not speak out for fear of losing their manual labour jobs at pumping station no.1 (Gonzalez, 2018a). The struggle between speaking out over pollution, injustice and exploitation and economic necessity and wider survival is ever present and ongoing.

This situation is exacerbated by the wider challenges presented within the PEV environment. Not only is there a restrictive freedom of voice but rural communities are affected by shadow environmental citizenship exacerbating the use of radical acts or necessitating the support of non-state actors. Both of these actions can present complications. Radical acts can enable injustice issues to be noticed and achieve resolution. For example, Achuar mobilisations in Loreto helped lead to the Dorrissa Accords which stipulated the reinjection of produced water by Pluspetrol in Blocks 8 and 1AB/192 and rural civil development (Orta-Martinez et al., [2018](#)). However, state failure to abide by these agreements (in this case the civil development objectives) causes a cyclical resumption of radical action by local people trying to hold them to account. Meanwhile, the reliance on community-based and non-governmental organisations can improve meaningful participation through their support for community monitoring activities (Gonzalez, [2019b](#)). The situation becomes more complex when communities seek environmental justice through non-state actors. Different community-based and non-governmental organisations will each have their own ideas of what “justice” entails such as private financial agreements with extractive or legal action (Cultural Survival, [2015](#); BBC News, [2018](#)). This leads to a multiplicity of environmental justice claims in Loreto which do little to equalise it or combat shadow environmental citizenship, particularly as non-state actors do not uniformly operate with every rural community (Gonzalez, [2019b](#)).

Overall, in Loreto’s PEV environment, the absence of meaningful participation by state-run Petroperu is symbolic of the wider political state’s detachment and discrimination shown to indigenous citizens. Sadly, the reports of minors employed by Petroperu in 2016 remediation work (Davies, [2016](#)) indicate that Cuninico’s experiences are not unique and that the company has shown little interest in improving its operational practices away from the systematic abuse of indigenous people who will face a struggle between speaking out or staying silent.

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Appendix

Coding structure:

Cuninico

Coded as: **Indigenous resident of Cuninico n (IRC n):**

IRC1-IRC29

CBO

Coded as: **CBO n representative n (CBO nRn)**

- **CBO4R3**. Catholic Church Priest from The Apostolic Vicariate of Iquitos working in the Marañon River Basin.

MILTON SANTOS¹

Globalisation: Its Exclusions of Poor and Black Populations²

This is part of the of Black Awareness Day and the Zumbi dos Palmares celebrations, at the José Bonifácio Cultural Centre in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where the first Kilunge Afro-Brazilian Book Fair was held on November 17th and 18th 1997. In addition to the launch of several new titles by Afro-descendant authors, or books specifically on the black issue, the poet Elisa Lucinda also participated in the event, and she presented her show entitled "The Similar".

Professor Milton Santos also gave a lecture at the event, in which he addressed contemporary issues of organisation and progress for the Afro-Brazilian community.

I'm very flattered by this invitation, and by the kindness of the Director of the José Bonifácio Cultural Center. First of all, for the pleasure of being able to visit this place, which is a perfect example of something that we have to protect. And secondly, for the pleasure of being able to speak here. When Hilton Cobra called me, I asked him, "What should I say?" Because I'm not an expert especially on the black or the race issue. I've not conducted systematic studies on the issue of race or blackness in Brazil, or anywhere else for that matter. So, I said to him, "Isn't it a mistake for you to invite me to speak here?" And he, with the kindness that he's well known for, insisted and convinced me to do it. So, what I'm going to present today is yet another testimony

¹ MILTON SANTOS was a Brazilian geographer and geography scholar who had a degree in law. He became known for his pioneering works in several branches of geography, notably urban development in developing countries.

² This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2020/11/4/globalisation-its-exclusions-of-poor-and-black-populations>. This text has been translated by Nick Pope from the original reproduced in: SANTOS, Milton. As exclusões da globalização: pobres e negros. *Thoth*, Brasília, n. 4, p. 147-160, 1998.

from a black man, who has always lived knowing what it is to be a black man, but also with cautious and tempered ideas about what the problem actually is.

First of all, I'd like to caveat by saying that I consider myself to be an 'outsider' intellectual – something that's quite rare in Brazil. I don't belong to any party, I don't belong to any group (including any group of intellectuals), I don't subscribe to a particular creed, and I don't participate in any political militancy.

So, I wanted to start with a few questions: "What does it mean to be a citizen? What is it to be a full individual? Does being a middle-class mean being a citizen? What does it mean to be a citizen in Brazil?" And finally: "Are black people citizens?"

What does it mean to be a citizen? Citizenship is a slow, hard achievement. Citizenship is a concept originally produced in Europe, crafted over centuries, and which resulted in the creation of democracy and the establishment of each individual as a kind of natural and effective opponent of the State – the citizen -, supported by laws and a set of inalienable rights.

Forgiveness: democracy has never been fully achieved. What we saw by the end of the war until around about 30 years ago, was a *quasi*-democracy, within which *quasi*-citizens lived.

This idea of citizenship arose, interestingly, at the same time that technical progress was being made in Europe, in turn, facilitating the expansion of capitalism. Thus, technical progress appears to be a threat to the individual's self-actualisation and fulfilment. It threatens fulfilment because, at the same time, philosophical ideas emerge that later transformed into political ideas and actions, on both sides of the Atlantic: these were the revolutions that took place in the United States, England, and France.

Countries like ours, Brazil, have never really understood or known the figure of the citizen. What we call here by that name makes a mockery of the idea of 'citizenship'. I prefer to insist on the fact that in Brazil, the recently expanded middle classes have never actually become citizens. The middle classes have always wanted to retain their privileges – and privilege is the enemy of citizenship – but the poor and all minorities have never even had rights. In such a way that the expansion of the middle class in Brazil turned out to be a condition for citizenship *not* to be created. Especially because the expansion of the middle class is parallel to the explosion of consumption and the replacement of the idea of the *citizen* by the idea of *consumer*. We can see today the joy, the contentment with which even apparently enlightened people praise the

Consumer Code. The Consumer Code is an achievement, but it's an achievement that replaces the notion of citizenship. Now, consumption is an emollient, it's something that softens people, that imprisons them through old age, that summons them to fashion and a taste for objects, and that glorifies, not exactly principles, but results.

What I want to invoke by that is a particular history, like the one the Brazilian develops from the non-existence of citizenship. When it was possible for this idea of citizenship to assert itself, what happened was actually the complete opposite: that is, the affirmation of the idea of consumption and the desire to be a consumer, which is exceptionally large in Brazil. In developed countries, people consume, especially since the fifties, and in the United States a little earlier; but they also defend the position of the citizen, while defending themselves against this invasion of consumption. They would be less than perfect consumers, because in their search for a defence against consumption; whilst we are more than perfect consumers, because we do not defend ourselves against consumption. And consumption is the greatest fundamentalism in today's world, and it's certainly the greatest of them, since we are all reverent and obedient to consumption, much more than to any religion. It also brings with it difficulties in relation to the liberation of spirit and expansion of our consciousness.

It's because of this that it's difficult to create, in countries like this, full and complete individuals. Or strong individuals. But what makes a strong individual? A strong individual is someone who's strong *within* themselves, based on an understanding of what the *whole* is and what each person consists of in the face of the world; knowledge that the world is in motion, it's becoming, it's the future. The individual within the world must actively participate in the production of that future, recognising what destiny is. Now, this strong individual is embedded with an inherent contradiction in the way that they produce themselves in the world, because the production of consumerism is stronger.

The absence of strong individuals should be a fact of intellectual work, since the strong individual is necessarily critical – critical of himself, critical of the environment, critical of the history that is being made. This complete and full individual, or this *strong* individual, is in a position to produce democracy, because democracy is the permanent criticism. But there is a big difference between a strong individual and a citizen. The difference is that I can be a strong individual, as many who are here certainly were during the authoritarian regime. But they were not citizens, because citizenship needs laws, legislation, and a constitution that ensures

that the strong individual is able to continue expanding their fortress, their completeness, and that ensure that society is made up of individuals who are given the rights that allow them to continue to be even stronger.

There's a difference, then, between being a strong individual and being a citizen. Being a strong individual is an everyday production repeated but also modified, since the history and life of each one of us takes place in a continually changing world. Therefore, through their exercise of criticality, that this individual has to be aware of the world on a daily basis in order to relate themselves to the rest of the world. I, myself, also have to change as a complete individual and as a strong individual. And that is how societies evolve and get better.

Now, under these conditions, being middle-class does not equate to being a citizen – in the Brazilian case, even less so. I believe that one of the reasons for the backwardness of Brazilian politics, the difficulties we have in terms of political parties and forming coherent political agendas that add up to a national project, also comes from Brazil's history. Brazil's history of the consumer and its triumph – whilst citizenship was defeated, consumption became victorious – and the fact that Brazilian political regimes, after the attempt to install democracy, were regimes commanded by the middle classes. This has meant that discussions about poverty in Brazil are residual. Poor populations even seem to appear, within a huge part of discourse on the left, as ornamental, as superficial, even as something decorative. There's no real concern for the poor, the oppressed, or minorities.

And who knows if this has something to do with the level of Brazilian intellectuality, or not. Because being an intellectual is, or should be, primarily, to do with worrying about those below. It's evident that being intellectual also means there's a willingness to see things in full, as a whole, in such a way that both the "Baghdad" of the powerful as the "Baghdad" of the poor was not from the intellectual's time.³ The intellectual emerges from the era of making sense of society as a whole, and from there they take sides with the poor. But defence of the poor cannot precede understanding society as a whole, because otherwise this thinking would not be effective. From a political point of view, it would provoke a general breakdown within society. My criticism is based on knowledge of the way that society moves as a whole.

³ Although the translation is not clear, 'Bagdä' (Baghdad) is typically used to refer to something far away.

For Brazil, I'll repeat, there are no citizens, since those who could be citizens due to their education, don't even want to be. There must be some middle-class people in this room who certainly don't behave in this way, but who have seen the behaviour of relatives or of the middle-class as a whole, that fully accept the idea of presenting themselves to a public office with a letter or a phone call. Whoever goes to a hospital, to a health clinic, without saying first to the hospital administrator, the doctor, or the employee: "Look at the name on the stamp there. So and so is my cousin". One of the biggest problems for blacks in Brazil is that black cousins do not have someone important they can call.

Blacks are oppressed, not only in this society as it's been built, but in the society of how it can be built. Starting from this central idea, I want to point out some things that we should think about. It could start with a list of situations that reflect the type of citizenship of blacks: of job opportunities, of lower pay, of unemployment itself, of the same opportunities for social, economic and professional advancement. Blacks also removed and relocated, put in a lower position within the typology of space, blacks also discriminated against in flows and circulations from the national to the urban level, not only because of the price of movement, but because of the opportunities available to blacks in each location. Because my location in the country or in the city has to do with the price of displacement, and blacks, living in criminalised places, have difficulties in ascending to places that they are excluded from and prohibited from entering.

It is curious to hear, even today, that education is a way out for blacks and the poor, when we know that education, through its very core, is unequal, the educational system is unequal. So, they say to us: "Let's study, let's improve", and point out: "Look at Dr. So-and-so, he studied and improved". The reality is nothing like that! If Dr. So-and-so studied, or improved, then it's chance, or a set of social conditions that allowed him to do so, but not through the educational process. The solution is not in education. And health? It's a shame in Brazil. A medical field dominated by elites, which has contempt for men and, in the case of blacks, treats them as things instead of humans.

But all of that has already been said before and written about, and I don't know why it continued to be part of the black discourse. What I mean to say is that the discourse is no longer effective. We must invent other, more imaginative discourses, closer to contemporary history, more effectively, with more force, because asking a society that has been desensitised for centuries – and that is becoming increasingly insensitive

with the expansion of the idea of consumption – that is sensitive to a part of the population considered naturally inferior. I believe that this is a waste of time and it is the wrong political path.

Perhaps we should remember other things in the world today, such as these new rights that have been created through the information age, such as copyright and the right to exercise individuality. I believe that this is also a problem, in what many see as a lack of esteem. What really exists is an inexistence of a right to exercise individuality. Artists discovered this long before university scholars. In fact, the academy is becoming less and less capable of producing a thought, incompetent to take care of anything, such as minorities or poor people. It's increasingly repetitive and lacking. It would have to look towards the spontaneous movement from those below it for inspiration to give new energy to its work.

I won't cite numbers either, as I am convinced that this is worth very little. So, I brought with me a statistical series. These series are very frequent in master's and doctoral theses. But they don't *do* anything, if I'm not able to give each column a historical value, and each column inserts a different historical reality. But I use the series quietly in my work. We all do. That's how we promote ourselves, that's how we get jobs at universities, that's how we become known and, sometimes, famous. But what can I do with a series of statistics – for example, on the black question – in Brazil if I'm not able to interfere in history in concrete terms, not only of blacks separately, but of Brazilian society? It's not the time to use up our energy exhaustively on exclusive knowledge building around the black condition. Instead, it's time to take into account of black presence in relation to other presences in Brazil.

Racism, prejudice, discrimination. It's been the central topic of 40,000 different academic conferences. Now, I have to seriously question if I'm going to get stuck in this grammatical discussion between what is preconception, discrimination or racism, and their differences – rivers of ink have been spent on these topics, and the university smiled happily whilst reading this literature – so, what more can I do with this? What I want is for us to change things up, starting with my home, which is the academy, with its attitude towards this fundamental problem in Brazil. What I am going to propose now, and it will be the centre of what I am going to say next, is that what the issue is, it's 'sociality'. That is: how people live together in society, the ways of living together, the sociability to run alongside this 'sociality', which is also shown through territory, through space.

When we arrive in this space, we are not only faced with houses that look similar, but we should wonder about what sociability and what 'sociality' exists *within* these houses *between* people. So, I would propose three basic data so that we can study this question. I said that I am not an expert. I am not an anthropologist. I do not have adequate training cast these ideas. But what I am reflecting on is my experience, which is also the experience of others, because no one lives in isolation. So, there would be three basic data sets that allow us to work on this issue. A basic data is what I am calling 'corporation', another is what I am calling 'individuality', and the third is what we call 'citizenship'. What exactly do we seek to define by introducing these words? 'Corporation' is made up of objective data, 'individuality' of subjective data, 'citizenship' of political data.

Sorry to mention my personal case now. But I have a high level of education and I can give a lecture like this. For this reason, I imagine that I'm a strong individual, but I'm sure that in this country I'm not a complete citizen. I cannot be a citizen if I'm not treated like a citizen, and if I'm not treated like a citizen, I'll rarely be treated as a strong individual.

Social formation was put forward in an incomplete way by Marx, perfected by Lenin, put to bed by the Communist Party of Soviet Union, and then reborn again through the studies of Italian and French, and some Latin American Marxists, notably from the northern part of South America. Because at that time, when Marxism was a fashionable way of thinking, Mexico was not so powerful – and Mexico is in North America. And these scholars were in Mexico and Venezuela. Socio-economic formation studied the way each country developed from its territory, its economic, social, cultural history – but also without forgetting international relations, studied alongside and incorporating references of time, or, the world. The dated world, not the world taken blindly. A dated world, because the world is the reason for what is done in each place and in each time.

Even so, we were hampered in the analysis of Brazil's reality, because Brazilian Marxism is a Marxism of the mode of production, and not of social formation. The mode of production is a historical reality, but it is not a geographical reality. Geographical reality is economic and social formation. The theories that in Latin America and Brazil tried to explain the Latin American and Brazilian reality, such as the infamous dependency theory, are theories about the mode of production, and not about social formation. So the analysis should be done in three stages: the past, as an inheritance; the present, as the situation; and the future, as a perspective.

In a country like Brazil, our inheritance means that we have a civic model that is subordinate to the economic model. It has always been like that. At all times, the economic model subordinates the civic model. Just look at the crises of the Brazilian economy and the slogans coming from the top-down, stating that those who do not agree are unpatriotic; and this is even echoed by the opposition. Here we see the weight carried by the economic model, as opposed to the civic model. I believe that the history of blacks would have a lot to benefit from if it were rewritten from the lens of the civic model.

The subalternity of the civic model has, for example, meant that the debate around pensions in Brazil has been neglected, similarly around the debate on public services. This debate has become impoverished in Brazil because old people are asked to take care of themselves, and society just accepts this heinous demand, facilitating the installation among us of the project according to which Brazilians will quietly watch a genocide of the population – because it is what is happening. The programmed abandonment of the old, the programmed abandonment of the poor, the programmed abandonment of the blacks are three genocides that are part of the current political process and for which the voices of the opposition parties are practically absent, because they accept the debate in terms of what is handed to them.

That's why discussions about the poor, minorities, blacks become fragmented. I no longer speak of women, because women fight *within* the dominant social class. That is not the case for blacks and I do not accept this comparison between the two. Women have made tremendous progress, which has been well deserved. But the struggle they now have is within the ruling class. Blacks don't even have the means to fight, they do it from *outside* the ruling class. Then the press and certain types of intellectuals come to talk to us about minorities. But there's no such thing. There are different minorities that must be studied in light of our history.

All of this is frustrated today because of market democracy. The threat is that all these differences will widen. Because of this, blacks should not wait for the possibility of a return to growth in Brazil. If Brazil grows again, blacks will be in an even worse position: on the one hand, because they don't have connections and someone to call, and this is one of the central facts in Brazilian society today; worse still, because they don't have access to education in order to prepare themselves for the world as it's changing; and worse still, and above all, because the world that is emerging doesn't concern itself with the welfare of society as a whole, but it prefers to focus itself in certain parts of society and it disaffects others through advertising.

I'll now speak of another element central to Brazilian society, which, incidentally, is a common fact throughout the world, but which in Brazil, for the reasons I mentioned, acquires enormous importance. I'm speaking about the death of politics. Nowadays, it's not governments who do politics; it's done by the big companies. They decide on public budgets, how they are structured and how they are used. At all levels: at the federal level, at the state level and at the municipal level. Just look at this battle between the municipalities to attract large companies to their territories, who have the effect of disorganising life in each place they come to. They disorganise in every way possible. First, because they arrive demanding tax breaks and incentives, and, when they eventually do settle, they force a transformation in the nature of 'sociality', to labour structures that work for them, but that crush the labour structures based around local culture, local territory, local history. They look for an indispensable order so that they can achieve their prosperity, and they create disorder around everything else. That's why Brazil has become an ungovernable country. That's why our cities are no longer governed. This ungovernable status came precisely from the fact that politics is no longer done by politicians, nor of the State, but it is done by large companies.

Luckily, there is another place where politics is also done in Brazil. And to be sure, it's not in the middle class, even though every day we keep looking for it to comfort ourselves, forgetting that we rhetorically say the complete opposite – from our collective concerns. Politics is made by the poor. The poor make politics every day, and this is one of the great fortunes of Brazil, and this will be amplified when intellectuals realise they should be concerned with the poor populations of this country.

This death of politics is clearly demonstrated by the fact that elections are not a democratic exercise, but a place of electoral consumption. In such a way that candidates who have money to campaign, do so. It's marketing, but there's no strategy. So, that the polis appears as a market and the here and now is devoid of strategy. This is a general phenomenon worldwide, but it is acute in countries such as Brazil. This is compounded by the fact that geopolitics has ceased to be a fact of generals and diplomats, but has been entrusted to economists and advertisers. It's because of this that the individual is weakened in this atmosphere dominated by the market. And the recession, which appears to be a remedy to solve various crises, is by its very nature a source of increasing inequalities, in which the weakest in society are put in an even more vulnerable positions.

I have been thinking that, in the current world, making progress in how we produce consciousness will occur because of the expansion of organisations, but also from disorganised protests. These organisations, in one way or another, are limiting movement. Organisations, by their definition, put a brake on innovation, as the organisation begins by electing its leaders, whose behaviour at one time or another differs from the behaviour of those they lead. In such a way that I imagine – and this is a proposal of conversation with blacks in Brazil – if there would be no reason to, at the same time, stimulate organisations, because it is essential to do this, but also to classify them, because organisational behaviour is closely linked to the way they composed. On the other hand, to see how blacks, in addition to black movements, which are not the same thing, move, or would like to move. Obviously the answers will be different in cities like Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, but I believe that this is important to remember.

It's also important to remind ourselves that a good number of black organisations in Brazil are linked to the State machinery, and there is difficulty in managing them; while others are propelled by institutions that have a global view of the world. I refer clearly to, and I won't beat around the bush, to all organisations subsidised by the Ford Foundation and those that act in unison with them. I'm analysing them, and I'm not going to refer to any of them in particular, mainly because I don't know them well.

I also want to refer to a certain tendency of a certain leadership to try and be included as an individual in the middle classes. To be sure, his own inclusion in a part of society that, by definition, is not concerned with the production of his own conscience, and that, therefore, is a diversion from the central objective. I'm saying this to insist on the need to incorporate into our intellectual work, which is the only think that I can do – and I would like this to be done by even more people -, the understanding of what Brazil is, and what blackness in Brazil is. I don't believe that the comparisons, now so strongly made in relation to other anti-black countries, are valuable. What are the lessons I have from South Africa? What are the lessons I have from the USA? Undoubtedly I'm uneasy about the historical perspective, and it would be better if the result of this analysis could be replicated in how politics is conducted. But politics can only be done based on a Brazilian reality, because we are, first of all, Brazilian. Africa is a reference, but we are not Africans. North America is a reference, but we will not repeat its history. The history in which we situate ourselves and which we are going to remake, is the history of Brazil.

I believe that the invitation to do it differently is part of a diversionist agenda, that is to say that it reduces the knowledge of the problem and it produces a few more authors, who are paid trips to attend these famous international conferences that are expensive and useless. It's the reason why I didn't accept being here in this meeting that has brought together so many of our comrades, and it's why I refused to participate as an important member of the committee of this organisation that was established a year ago in the United States, bringing together eminent figures from Brazil, South Africa, and the United States, to produce another book. [*Reference to the Seminar Overcoming Racism - Brazil, South Africa and the United States in the 21st Century, held in Rio de Janeiro from 2 to 4 September 1997. (NE)*]

It's about a process for making flower water that we all know so well within this country, and that is now done outside of it. I understand that people agree to participate in these things, because they are offered an opportunity to contribute, to get to know the global issue better, but there should be no illusion about it. When they invited me to be a part of this, I told them: "Now, I know how it works today together with international relations. I know perfectly well how things are organised at the international level, especially in the postmodern period, when people who think differently are invited to speak. The person comes and speaks. However, the vast majority of those attending want something else, but they still clap, because it is part of postmodernity, while resources continue to go to organisations that reproduce whatever central intelligence decides". So I said to them, "Would you give me the means to be able to talk to the black movements? Would I have any participation in organising the meeting to be held in Brazil in September?" "No, you can't do that! We want you side by side. At most, we publish an article of yours...". I really don't need that anymore. But this is one of the problems with the so-called globalisation of the Brazilian black struggle. There's globalisation of the black struggle, yes, but our central issue is the political issue, and everything we do has to be done in the direction of politics, because the solutions are there. The strong individual, endowed with conscience to be a citizen, needs politics. They are strong within themselves, but being strong in the face of society is conducted through politics, through the creation of laws that guarantee his strength.

Well, I'm going to stop here. I thank Milton Cobra for inviting me, I wanted to have this conversation a long time ago. I know it has displeased everyone, in one way or another, but it doesn't matter, that is my role. The intellectual is not a vaudeville artist, I didn't come here to show my legs, but to show my ideas and defend them. But

I don't want to be right either. I'm not sure I'm right, but I have a duty to express what I believe, no matter what the cost. This is an opportunity that I longed for, this is my way of engagement. I am here today, and I will be at other times to discuss issues like this. Thank you very much.

PABLO LAPEGNA¹

Norma Giarracca: Working Toward “A World Where Many Worlds Fit”²

In 1998, I was in year three of a five year Licenciatura in Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires. I was also gainfully sub-employed, selling printers at the branches of a music and appliances chain store at various malls in Buenos Aires. Bored to exhaustion with the job (occasional gigs collecting household survey data on electoral preferences were not very exciting either), I asked my high school friend Emilio Teubal if he had any leads on sociology jobs. To be precise, I rather asked him to ask his mom, Norma Giarracca. I knew she was a sociologist and had always been intrigued by the groups of young students meeting at Emilio’s parents’ house (Norma and renowned agrarian economist Miguel Teubal). Shortly after, Emilio got back to me with mixed news. His mom did not know about any jobs, but she said I should talk to her and sign up for her seminars at the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, the College of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. Luckily, I did, and eagerly took in the lessons on rural sociology and social movements that I learned in her courses and seminars.

In 1999, I applied for a student fellowship to research roadblocks in northern Argentina within one of Norma’s projects on rural protests and agrarian social movements (I was directed by Carla Gras, now a leading Argentine scholar on rural sociology and agribusiness studies). I worked in Norma’s team, the Grupo de Estudios Rurales, until I left Argentina in 2005 to pursue a PhD in Sociology in the United States. Along the way, colleagues working side-by-side (figuratively and literally, as our office was not much bigger than six square meters) soon became friends. I had the privilege of being part of a sort of rural sociology family – which, like any family, was not exempt from quarrels.

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² This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2020/12/4/norma-giarracca-working-toward-a-world-where-many-worlds-fit>

I indulge in sharing my personal trajectory simply to highlight that Norma Giarracca was a sociologist, a researcher, a public intellectual, and an author, but also the leader of a guild of sorts. I am in debt for the training under Norma's leadership (which, in turn, was allowed by free and public higher education), which allowed me the privilege of spending the ensuing twenty years of my life (and counting!) making a living out of teaching, reading, writing, and talking about sociology.

In 2015, Norma unexpectedly left this world. She was only seventy years old. The ripples of sadness emanating from Buenos Aires reached out to the many countries where she cultivated friendships and research partners (including Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia) and reverberated throughout Latin America and around the world. Norma left a mark wherever she lived, emanating her contagious energy and commitment, whether while doing sociological research or spurring political intervention. Her life and that of her husband and research partner, Miguel Teubal, are indeed deeply intertwined with the ebb and flow of Latin American politics. Both Norma and Miguel were deeply involved in the political struggles of their time, and she was part of the group that worked in 1973-74 at the Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería. The Secretary of Agriculture was led by agronomist Horacio Giberti, who unsuccessfully pushed for a program of land redistribution during the brief administrations of Héctor Cámpora and Juan Domingo Perón. When the military took power in Argentina in 1976, Norma and Miguel fled state terrorism and, after relatively brief stays in Uruguay, Spain, and England, they settled in Mexico, where they lived from 1978 to 1984. In Mexico Norma got enrolled in a Master at the UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), where she delved into the debates about the fate of the campesinado, pitting the followers of Alexander Chayanov and the Russian populists ("campesinistas") against the Marxist scholars who argued that the peasantry tended to dissolve, as they either became rural workers or capitalized farmers ("descampesinistas").

Norma, Miguel, and their children Emilio and Julián returned to Argentina in 1984, after the military stepped down from power in 1982 and democratic elections were held in 1983. During Argentina's "democratic spring" ("la primavera democrática" as this period is often referred to) she played an instrumental role in recreating the teaching and research missions of sociology, as many prominent social scientists had been either killed by the dictatorship or had left the country for good. She occupied leadership positions at CONICET (Argentina's main scientific agency) between 1984 and 1988, and was one of the founding members (and then director) of the

Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani (a.k.a. “el Gino Germani”), a prestigious research center in social sciences at the University of Buenos Aires, UBA.³ Together with fellow sociologist Susana Aparicio they built the area of rural studies at the School of Social Sciences at UBA, which became a veritable powerhouse of rural sociology in Argentina. They established partnerships with universities in “el Interior” (the somehow disparaging term that people in the city of Buenos Aires use in reference to the rest of Argentina), and trained dozens of teachers, researchers, and activists (often times these roles converged in the same person).⁴ At the Gino Germani, she created GER, the Grupo de Estudios Rurales, where she assembled research groups and trained a new generation of rural sociologists (a teaching and research cluster that became the GER-GEMSAL, adding the study of Latin American social movements to the rural focus of the group).

Norma also played an important role in the vibrating area of Rural Development within CLACSO, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences, through which she deepened and extended her relationships with Latin American rural sociologists. She also liked to venture beyond academia and collaborate with practitioners, public intellectuals, journalists, and artists to create work (either in the form of publications, presentations, or exhibitions), with the ultimate goal of pushing forward transformative ideas and feelings that could contribute to a better world—or, as her admired Zapatistas would put it, “para crear un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos,” that is, “to create a world where many worlds fit.”⁵

The last time I had the chance to talk to her was in 2013. I visited her at her house during one of the usual trips to Buenos Aires during the summer of the Northern hemisphere. She was her usual self, speaking passionately about the latest developments in politics and rural life and harshly criticizing those who, in her view, were being complicit with the twin evils of extractive agrarian capitalism and state-centered institutionalized politics. By then, she seemed to be less excited about social research and more invested in becoming a public intellectual. She regularly published opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines, forcefully intervening on public debates about the socio-environmental impacts of agriculture and mining in Argentina and Latin America. Her tireless tirades drew from the ingrained lessons of sociology to sensitize urban middle classes about the problems of rural Argentina and the pleas of

³ See Giarracca 1992 for an assessment of this period.

⁴ For more details, see Giarracca and Aparicio 2017 [2001].

⁵ For additional information on Norma’s biography and her intellectual journey, see Teubal 2017.

its peasant and indigenous populations. As it is stated in the introduction to the book *El campo argentino en la encrucijada*: “In Argentina, the urban media tends to turn its back on the agricultural sector, about which there is great ignorance, especially with regard to the majority of the population, i.e. small producers, peasants, rural workers, indigenous farmers, who, with their families, are the main inhabitants of almost three-quarters of the Argentine territory occupied by this sector” (Giarracca and Teubal 2005: 19, my translation).

In a country like Argentina, where agriculture occupies a prominent place in economic and political terms, Norma instilled in her students the importance of understanding and researching about (but also with) *campesinos* and *campesinas*, smallholders, rural workers, and indigenous peoples. A common commentary that you would receive upon sending her a draft was: “Where are the actor’s voices!? We need to hear more from them!” Or, as she put it in an article with Karina Bidaseca: “to incorporate the voice of speakers... is not a concession that the sociologist establishes with the subjects... is a constitutive part of the sociological discourse, we need the interviewees in the approaches, in the research practices, in the texts” (2017: 290). The interests and hopes of the subordinated actors of Argentina’s ruralities, in short, were front and center among her preoccupations, intellectually and otherwise. As Miguel Teubal explains (in the Introduction to a [freely available book](#) published by CLACSO and compiling most of her influential works), there are two questions that cut throughout Norma’s work: “How to contribute to the struggles of the subaltern sectors in capitalist societies to overcome the living conditions in which they find themselves? How to overcome the processes of exploitation and environmental deterioration caused by the process of ‘development’ that is taking place in the world in general?” (2017: 19).

I am grateful for the opportunity of writing this introduction to this special issue of *Alternautas* and very glad to see some of Norma’s articles published in English. The contextualization of where and when these pieces were published speaks volumes of what may be called Norma’s “politics of publication.”

“Three food production logics: Are there alternatives to agribusiness?” exemplifies a common practice in Norma’s work, namely, to collaborate with up-and-coming social scientists in crafting sophisticated analysis and offering new perspectives on old themes. This piece with Tomás Palmisano is an excellent testament to the synergies emerging from those collaborations. The text characterizes three logics of food production (peasant, farmer, agribusiness), offering a contribution to the scholarship

that moves beyond dichotomous or Manichean portraits of Argentine's agriculture. The chapter offers a useful typology that describes these three logics of production and how they articulate their understandings of land, use of technology, orientation of their production, and type of labor they use. Quite tellingly, this text was one of the chapters of the book *Actividades extractivas en expansión. ¿Reprimarización de la economía argentina?*, edited by Norma and Miguel Teubal. The chapter is extremely useful for understanding Argentina's contemporary agrarian social structure. But it also outlines the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new political alliances among different actors by showing that, in the early 1990s, family farmers established coalitions with the campesinado and other subordinated actors. This convergence is markedly different from the family farmers-agribusiness alliance that emerged in the late 2000s. The chapter shows, in short, that this alliance is contingent and other "historical blocs" are possible (on this pro-agribusiness alliance, see the book edited by Norma Giarracca and Miguel Teubal *Del paro agrario a las elecciones de 2009: tramas, reflexiones y debates*).

"Social Sciences and Rural Studies in Argentina during the 20th century" is a masterful piece that "maps" the research about agriculture and rural life. The text is an exercise in reflexive sociology à la Bourdieu, where the construction of the object of study demands a critical assessment of the perspectives and assumptions of other researchers and their intertwinement with the state and the political context. Originally published in a book on theory and methodology applied to rural studies (Giarracca 1999), the chapter adroitly combines the insights of sociology, anthropology, human geography, history, and political economy to outline the field of rural studies and its history. Norma divides the field into four periods, going from the pre-professionalization of rural studies (between 1900 and 1956), to then analyze the works during social sciences' institutionalization (between 1957 and 1976), when researchers debated the contributions of dependency theory, empirical investigations focused on the stagnant productivity of the Pampas, and some scholars incipiently introduced the "peasant question" in Argentina. The analysis of the period under a military dictatorship (1976-1983) shows how rural studies survived under the auspices of private centers and international agencies, when many scholars fled the country or suffered the consequences of political repression. The fourth period under scrutiny covers the years between the return of democracy in 1983 and the publication of the book, showing - among other things - the overlap between people conducting rural studies and public policies and agencies.

“Latin America, new ruralities, old and new collective action” originally was the introduction to an edited volume, *Ruralidades latinoamericanas: Identidades y luchas sociales* published by CLACSO. Norma led CLACSO’s Working Group on Rural Development from 1997 to 2001 and the book reflects CLACSO’s efforts to build and nurture a network of research centers, groups, and virtual libraries connecting critical researchers across the region and the world, cutting across national boundaries (to wit: many of the chapters included in the book are comparative studies of social movements in two Latin American countries). The book collected the work of young scholars who received CLACSO fellowships to carry research on the topic “Globalization, transformations in the rural economy and agrarian social movements.” This text offers a magisterial overview of the rural transformations in Latin America in the decades prior, with a special emphasis on how subordinated actors in the countryside responded to these changes by way of protesting but also migrating to new latitudes or organizing their own autonomous spaces. The introduction also discusses some of the perspectives and authors that will greatly influence Norma’s work from the 2000s and on, namely, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Toni Negri, and Alan Badiou.

“From agro-industrial development to the expansion of ‘agribusiness’: the case of Argentina” is a work that would be extremely useful to non-Spanish speakers or those unfamiliar with Argentine history, since the chapter situates the place of agriculture in the country’s political economy. The chapter was co-authored with Miguel Teubal and, quite tellingly, was originally part of the book *Campesinato e agronegócio na América Latina: a questão agrária atual*, edited by renowned Brazilian geographer Bernardo Mançano Fernandes. The chapter, in other words, is pitched for a Latin American but also a global audience. The text is transitional in two senses. First, it is an empirical analysis of social changes in Argentina, as the country went from public policies based on Keynesian and nationalist principles to a globalized orientation of agriculture guided by neoliberal ideology. Second, the piece is also transitional in that it suggests a change in Norma’s intellectual trajectory, as she starts to incorporate a “decolonial” perspective based on the ideas of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others, which she will definitely develop after 2010 (see the section “Perspectivas desde el Sur. Colonialidad del poder, otros bicentenarios,” “Perspectives from the South. Coloniality of power, other bicentennials,” on Teubal 2017). Combining the insights of rural sociology and political economy, Giarracca and Teubal reconstruct the Argentine transition from an agro-industrial model of development (with small farmers occupying a subordinated but integral part of an agrarian economy oriented

towards internal consumption) to a neoliberal, export-oriented, and GM soybean dependent model – what Giarracca, Teubal, and others will later call “extractivism” (see Giarracca and Teubal 2013). They show that in the agribusiness-dominated model of late, transnational companies acquire a greater autonomy vis-à-vis other actors of the food system. This is why they criticize the perspectives that characterize this new phase as a “networked rurality,” since this metaphor suggests a flat relationship or downplays the asymmetries that define this new agro-industrial reality. Put differently, the new agribusiness model might well be a network but one with powerful nodes that depend on economies of scale and put finance front and center –thus excluding family farming, smallholders, rural workers, and peasants.

Norma Giarracca had a deep and wide trajectory as a social researcher, especially as a rural sociologist. But she mostly published in Spanish, and thus her work is not readily accessible to many readers around the world. I am deeply grateful to the compañeras and compañeros of *Alternautas* to offer other researchers the opportunity to access the many insights of Norma’s work. Her winding trajectory hints at her intellectual curiosity and her openness to new perspectives – she was also a fan of music and often sought to connect social research and artistic expressions, for instance, asking her son Julián Teubal to join in research trips and then using his pictures on exhibits during book presentations or academic events, or coordinating a study linking music and protest (Bidaseca, Lapegna, Mariotti, et al. 2001). Norma was deeply committed to social justice and had the utmost respect and appreciation for the “subjects” of her research. She often had brusque manners, but also an immense generosity. She fitted many worlds in the relatively small world of rural sociology and made its branches extend beyond disciplines, countries, and perspectives. She has been sorely missed since 2015, but the seeds she planted keep sprouting and growing.

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NORMA GIARRACCA & TOMÁS PALMISANO¹

Three food production logics: Are there alternatives to agribusiness?²

Departing from the global development of ‘agribusiness’, three distinct logics of production can be identified in the agricultural sector and in food production in particular: 1) peasant, 2) agribusiness, and 3) farmer or *Chacarrera*³ (in Argentina). This last logic of production, in our hypothesis, maintains some interesting characteristics that have not yet completely disappeared but are at risk of disappearing in the medium term. This typology assumes different relations with the land, fundamental differences in production and labour processes, in production outlooks, and in the type of capital intervening, etc. Even if in our country⁴ for historical reasons the peasant form of production has not had a marked significance, it has recovered importance amidst the indigenous populations’ processes of land recovery, together with the many *criollos* displaced from commercial agriculture that are also implementing this mode of production, encouraged by the guidelines from the international organization *La Vía Campesina*.

The peasant logic of production

The peasant maintains a relationship of unity between family/work/land that enables a familial occupation, a valuation of the land as an instrument for work and a productive process with few capitalist components such as agroindustrial materials

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² This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2020/12/4/three-food-production-logics-are-there-alternatives-to-agribusiness>. This text is a translation by Ana Carballo of the original: Giarracca, N. y Palmisano, T. (2013). Tres lógicas de producción de alimentos: ¿Hay alternativas al agronegocio? En N. Giarracca y M. Teubal (coord.) *Actividades extractivas en expansión: ¿Reprimarización de la economía argentina*.

³ In Spanish

⁴ *Translator’s note: Argentina*

and inputs or machinery. First, we must distinguish the peasant logic of production integrated to capitalist markets that prevailed in the decades of agrarian reforms or state interventions where food was produced for internal markets. This is the case of Mexico and many other countries with a peasant or *campesina* tradition during the period of import substitution industrialization (ISI). Later, some forms of production will emerge from other social movements towards the end of the twentieth century (the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil is paradigmatic of this case) that will have a relative autonomy from capitalist markets. In the first case, authors, especially Armando Bartra (1979), proposed a differentiation of the peasant and capitalist forms of production that clarified various issues. First, that while in the capitalist mode of production labour is immediately subordinated to the capitalist process of valorisation (where the exploitation of workers is inherent), in the peasant mode of production, labour is only valorised through a series of mediations when it enters the circuit of capitalist markets. There, the authors demonstrate encounters between peasants and capital in a series of registers emerging mainly from historical processes of each country. Yet, the production market in an unequal exchange is the meeting point for the valorisation of peasant labour, which is added to other exploitation mechanisms inherent to labour markets (semi-proletarianization) or in the food or inputs markets.

This discussion is no longer a preoccupation for peasant studies in the twenty-first century. The valorisation of peasant labour is no longer seen as interesting because it is considered that both productive and commercial processes occur in spaces with relative autonomy from capitalist markets. And this happens both because neoliberal capitalism is not interested in peasant production as a source of food for local or national populations and because peasantries emerging from social movements towards the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century have sought to create their own markets to stock and exchange their products. Agroecology is not only a mode of production of peasant movements (especially those organized within the *Via Campesina*) but also includes its own commercial networks. In a recent work (*Vía Campesina*, 2010), it is presented as a key concept that redirects towards an interdisciplinary approach to explain the functioning of agroecosystems. It implies principles to guide agricultural and productive practices to cultivate food and fibers without agrottoxins. Miguel Altieri, an important political ecologist cited in this work, states its main principles:

- To increase the recycling of biomass and achieve a balance in the soil

nutrients;

- To ensure favorable soil conditions, with a high content of organic and biological matter;
- To minimize the nutrient loss of the system;
- To encourage the genetic diversification, as well as that of species, at a farm and landscape level;
- To increase the biological and synergistic interactions amongst the different agroecosystem components.

Finally, it is argued and to sum up,

‘that for the social movements within the Via Campesina, the concept of agroecology goes beyond ecological principles of production. To their agroecological vision, a series of social, cultural and political principles and goals is added. In this vision, for example, there cannot exist an ‘agroecological latifundio’ or ‘agroecological plantation’ that produces biofuels for cars instead of food and products for human beings. For us, then, agroecology is a fundamental pillar in the construction of food sovereignty and security’ (Vía Campesina, 2010:16).

Yet, not all peasant communities use agroecology. It is a principle but it cannot be an imposition and this is clear in the diversity of modes of production that can be found in the regions articulated around the *Vía Campesina*.

Agroecology is an ancestral practice within indigenous communities and of recent application in the *criollo* peasant communities. However, there are common characteristics amongst them that have persisted throughout time: a) The chief of production has under their control the decision of what and how to produce; b) even when recently more technological aids have been introduced, the locally produced ‘techniques’ prevail (or in many cases, those by the producers themselves); c) use value is more important than exchange value and; d) the agronomic practice is subjected to the function of preserving the land as an instrument for labour and to integrate the family to the peasant labour, independently of the agroecological use.⁵

⁵ Land both for peasants as for indigenous people is conceived as a territory in the most full and diverse sense of the word: as a jurisdiction; as a geographic space; as a habitat or systemic group of resources essential for the collective existence; as biodiversity and the ancestral knowledge connected to it; and as spaciality socially constructed linked to collective identity (Toledo Llancaqueo, 2005).

The agribusiness logic of production

From the establishment of neoliberalism, a model of agriculture and livestock production has been expanding in Argentina, whose characteristics make it similar to other extractive dynamics in the country and around the world. Specifically, agribusiness is the rural expression of the neoliberal civilizing model. This implies a profound transformation of the productive structures and of the actors that work in and on them.

The Argentinian case is paradigmatic for the enormous expansion that this form of production has had and it is for this reason that we will refer particularly to its characteristics. Perhaps the first one to highlight is the requirement of production at a larger scale than in the past. From the 1970s there has been a recorded decrease in the number of Agricultural Holdings (AHs) in the country. While the 1969 National Agricultural Census recorded over half a million of AHs, this number had fallen to 333,533 in 2002 and the trend appears to have continued despite the lack of official reliable data. As it can be imagined, this process was accompanied by an increase in the average surface of land holdings across the country (a characteristic that will be detailed further below). Not only in the Pampas region, which will be the main stage for the expansion of the 'star' crop of this model, soybeans, but the scale of these units grew too in other regions. In these areas, crops that required high technological investments and much more spacious plantations than usual were introduced. Their establishment was favoured by policies of agricultural tax deferrals that increased in the 1990s⁶ and introduced new products oriented to the external markets or to sectors of high purchasing power. In this manner, in regions where the average surface of the land holdings was around 5 hectares (ha), land holdings with surfaces over 25 ha. increased, with higher levels of investment both in the type of crops and in the technology applied (mainly in watering systems).

With this process of land concentration, there is also a strengthening of the understanding of land as a commodity whose symbolic value is entirely embedded in the business possibilities it offers. Both the patrimonial and territorial understanding

⁶ The agricultural deferments are a series of tax exemptions regulated by Law 22.021 sanctioned during the last dictatorship (1979) and extended during the nineties. This legislation provides businessmen that invest in agricultural holdings requesting high levels of capital payment assistance and exemptions to VAT, income tax, import duties, etc. Most of the entrepreneurial projects that were established correspond to productions oriented towards the external market or high purchasing power.

of the land lose meaning in the face of a marketized notion of the land which, in a context characterized by the expansion of agribusiness activities, implies a constant pressure to displace other notions of territory (peasant, indigenous, farmer, etc.). This process has at least two clear dimensions. First, the economic dimension which has seen a constant increase of land prices, both for rent and for purchase. In practical terms this means more difficulties to access land for those with lower purchasing power and better possibilities for those with large businesses that can take advantage of the economies of scale and of strategies of hoarding of land for rent to sustain their privileged position.⁷ This process excludes many and increases the downward trend of number of works per hectare, principally those of family group that lose importance in relation to the salaried workers. This trend includes those connected directly to the production, the subcontractors⁸ or the outsourcing of workers through intermediary companies. That is, the contractual relations of salaried workers are erased and there is an accentuation of modes mediated by subcontractors and outsourcing of workers (See Aparicio, 2005).

The second dimension of this process is the escalation of rural violence. Physical injuries and even death are the result of territorial disputes unleashed by the logic of agribusiness. The expansion of the agricultural-pastoral land surface over the lands of peasant and indigenous communities has been enacted both through more silent displacement – in which the populations are displaced without much conflict either through scams or manipulation – and also through more violent forms, where public and private institutions react to families and organizations resisting displacement pushing forward a territorial reconfiguration that favours those with concentrated interests (GER 2004, GEPCyD 2010). At this point we should also highlight the violence over animals when moving from the old agricultural practices to the modern ‘pig, poultry and beef factories’.

⁷ For a detailed description of this process see Teubal and Palmisano (2013).

⁸ In the literature, the concept of ‘subcontractor’ has a double meaning. On the one hand includes those that provide ‘cultural’ agricultural services (labelling, sowing, spraying, harvest, pruning, weeding, etc.) to different producers and on the other hand, to those who own machinery that also have their own lands (rented or owned) in production. In this case, we refer to the first meaning.

Another important characteristic of the agribusiness logic is the expansion of strategies of vertical and horizontal integration from the biggest land holdings, encouraged by the incorporation of new technologies – in many cases patented – by transnational companies. The role of foreign capital increased particularly in two sectors. On the one hand, the provision of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) became a key area where companies entered the market along with the expansion of the agribusiness logic which offered the technological breakthroughs of the ‘transgenic revolution’.⁹ On the other hand, many local companies started processes of internationalization, particularly visible in the second sector that we will analyse: food processing and commercialization. Here, the majority of the local companies received foreign investment that restructured their share capital, at the same time as market concentration increased both in food production and commercialization, locally and internationally (Teubal and Rodriguez, 2002). In the case of agricultural products, foreign direct investment was more limited and in the majority of cases it was connected to mergers and shares traded in different stock exchanges.

Even if some of the agricultural activities that characterize agro-industrial models (Giarraca and Teubal, 2008) maintain their productive forms even if in a smaller, more concentrated market; in parallel specific strategies are developed to incorporate them into the agribusiness logic. Perhaps the clearest example is the sugar cane production industry, in which many sugar mills were acquired by transnational companies connected to agrofuels. In this case, the biggest ‘technological jump’ is in the higher echelons of the food chain production, adding a new step. In this way, the necessary investments to distil biofuels are added to those connected to land acquisition processes and the renewal of machinery (Mariotti 2011)¹⁰.

Added to these material technologies, there is a continued emphasis on the integration of different stakeholder networks into the agricultural food production chain. At first glance, these proposals appear to offer a mechanism of democratization within the agribusiness logic of production. Yet, this network-focused scheme hides the hierarchical nature of the socio-economic contexts in which large companies operate. The apparent equality of the reticular model proposed by think tanks may be thought of as a clear manifestation of the ‘monoculture of the naturalization of

⁹ See Perelmuter (2013).

¹⁰ By 2013, a conflict between the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Tucumán, on the issue of pollutants generated from this production.

differences that hide hierarchies' (De Sousa Santos 2006) for the rural world. By highlighting the appearance of a relationship among equals not only the primacy of the large corporations is naturalized, but also the universe of possible actors is reduced to those that demonstrate a business-oriented profile that adapts to the desires of the market.

In sum, the perspective that underlies the agribusiness logic is one that displaces the role of agriculture as a food or raw materials producer to one that is mandated by commodities. The international markets, of which the Chicago Board of Trade is the highest expression, are the ones that dictate the crops that must be produced to meet the world demand that in the vast majority of cases is completely disconnected from the needs of the local communities. More than this, the strength of these commands is such that it can even transform the eating habits of an entire country. Such is the case, that between the years 2000 and 2007, the consumption of soybean oil in Argentina grew by 224.5% becoming the most consumed oilseed product. Similarly soy lecithin replaced animal fat in most of the flour based food products (biscuits, breads, sweets, etc), a situation that has meant that the Argentinian population consumes daily genetically modified foods without any identification.

The farmer or *chacarero* logic of production or 'process agriculture'¹¹

Finally, we want to refer to the last logic of food production: 'not peasants, nor agribusiness', updating anthropologists Archetti and Stölen's (1975) expression coined in the seventies to refer to *chacareros* or farmers as 'not peasants, nor capitalists'. We are referring here to the producer that in Argentina connects us to the colonization processes of the end of the nineteenth century and beginnings of the twentieth and that, with the democratic changes in the country, moved from land leaseholder of large landowners to become a small and medium landowner dedicated to food production. In our country, this mid-level agricultural producer shared the characteristic of serving both the local and the international market for export. This combination was possible because of the different institutions that regulated the sector and that disappeared in 1991 with the 'Deregulation Decree' of Menem-

¹¹ We thanks Engineer Alfredo Galli for the interesting and inspiring conversations on this issue.

Cavallo. The characteristics of this producer included using family labour (like peasants), with a minimal use of agro-industrial inputs (especially agrochemicals¹²) and a staggered mechanization with strong technological innovation of the sector according to its needs, supported by the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA).

For the *gringo*¹³ colonist the land had a sense of a strong family patrimony that allowed the reproduction and education of the family and to pass it on to the next generation. Even if with the deregulation of 1991 and the approval of genetically modified seeds in 1996 (Menem-Solá) this farmer subject became a *sojero* (the “small producer” of the soybean system)¹⁴, the original farmer (food producer) persists in other products. In a book from a few years ago, our research team titled the history of producers in Santa Fe’s South as ‘From colonists to *sojeros*’ (Giarraca and Teubal 2005). Here, we explored this transformation process forced by the economic policies of the 90s that left many agricultural producers outside the market.

Is there today a *chacarero* food producer? Can we speak nowadays of this logic of food production as a contemporary one? This question is a central one, not only for the future of agriculture and food production in our country, but fundamentally because it is a political question. In fact, if the model of extractive activities becomes so consolidated with the advance of new technologies that the agribusiness logic colonizes all the agricultural spaces available with soybeans, genetically modified corn, feed lot in the cattle industry, etc., we will be in a situation very difficult to revert, and a very complex one not only in terms of ‘food sovereignty’ (the right to choose what we need) but also in the political power map of Argentina whether power is being held via land, capital or agricultural yield accumulation. For now, given the conditions of the so-called ‘technological advances’ we can confirm that there is a large portion of agricultural producers that are connected to food production and are not involved in the expansion of agribusiness. In our research, we refer to this sector

¹² The great agrarian expansion of 1880 to 1930 happened without agrochemicals, which started to be introduced towards the end of this period. The increase in the use of agrochemicals in Argentina jumped from 10,000 liters per year in the 1970s to 270 millions of liters in 2010 of which 200 millions are of glyphosate.

¹³ In the Argentinian countryside colonists of immigrant background are colloquially known as *gringo*.

¹⁴ We write “small producer” in inverted commas because we consider them to be contradictory, if a producer focuses on producing soybeans, then this producer cannot be considered a ‘small’ producer, except in relation to other soybean producers.

as ‘process agriculture’ to distinguish from the previously discussed characteristics of the economic logic of agribusiness. We consider that this is still an important sector of agricultural production, especially in certain regions of the country. Looking at the path of evolution of the agrarian structure in the country (Fig. 1 below) we can understand that the potential of this category is still high.

	NAC 1947	NAC 1960	NAC 1960	NAC 1988	NAC 2002
Small AH	79.91	80.42	79.6	74.54	69.51
Medium AH	14.27	13.81	14.31	18.20	20.73
Large AH	5.82	5.77	6.09	7.26	9.76
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 1 – Relative weight of Agricultural Holdings by classification according to different census.

We cannot estimate what has happened in the years since 2002, because the 2008 National Agricultural Census (NAC) cannot be used (see Giarracca 2011). Yet, given the trends towards land and capital concentration imposed by the agribusiness model, it is expected that the first category of AH¹⁵ – small – will be reduced by many points. However, its relative importance, and that of the medium AH is still significant, especially outside of the Pampa region. We do not sustain, however, that the entire category is connected to the ‘process agriculture’ because there are many ways of incorporating land holdings into the logic of agribusiness without losing land ownership, but there is a part of this category that belongs to the logic of production that we are trying to characterize.

The AHs that still maintain the ‘process agriculture’ in regions where for climatic reasons (rain) genetically modified seeds can be used are very few, not to say non-existent. We should analyze food production, but without the 2008 NAC it is a very difficult task to accomplish. Yet, in regions that produce other types of food – as or more important than grains and oilseed – such as horticulture, orchards, legumes, etc., can be easily found in areas outside of the Pampas region .

¹⁵ Translator’s note: AH (Agricultural Holding) is Explotación Agropecuaria in Spanish.

We consider that this sector, cornered by agribusiness (and by mining), contains the elements that can help in the configuration of a different agriculture for our country. These characteristics were clearly present in the decades of the twentieth century when agricultural production was consolidated, not only of grains but of other edible and non-edible products. This is to say that as a mode of production, it is embedded within the historical collective memory of the sector. It is not about imposing modes of production that are disconnected from the country's customs and traditions. Here lies the importance of showing some of the features of this third 'sector', seen as a continuum where some of these characteristics can be present to a lower or higher degree but that qualitatively distinguish it from the agribusiness.

These points, again, are gradual and we will show some examples of concrete processes in our country, to show how even with the variation in some of these there is still a difference when compared with the peasant and the agribusiness logics of production.

1. It is the head of the AH (individuals or small associations, like cooperatives) that makes the basic decisions of what, how and where to produce. This is based on the assumption that there is a particular type of knowledge the producer has connected to their experience that will lead them to make the best decisions for themselves and their communities (included the national community);
2. Crop rotation and, if possible, with cattle farming. Again, here is where the producer knows the advantages and disadvantages of specific productive combinations;
3. Diversification of production, both agrarian and of cattle farming. The diversification at a small scale is what ensures the micro-biological natural processes that avoid or reduce the need for agrochemicals;
4. All these characteristics by themselves lead to a higher use of labour. That is, they generate employment that can be family oriented or hired at a small scale (for harvests for example).

This model 'updated' to this century cannot be maintained without a strong political will (which is demanded by important sectors, both those affected and those that were not) but also by a new institutional structure that provides funding, technical

advice (not propaganda of the latest corporation technology), infrastructure, and other ways of promoting exports, etc. But it is also necessary to pick up the pieces of cooperative markets; producers again, have a wealth of knowledge and experience in this area but it is surely out of date. It is not the same to export in 1970 than it is in 2015, yet there are many experiences that the federations of small producers and cooperatives know very well, from the now famous exporter cooperatives of grains to Canada (Abramovich and Amarilla 2011) to other Latin American forms. Without these weavings, the ‘market’ (meaning the large economic corporations) prevents the functioning of these systems. The advantages in comparison to agribusiness are clear: on the one hand, the conservation of land as a resource, and on the other hand to restore healthy conditions for the agrarian and rural population, while at the same time diversifying production, producing food and recovering food sovereignty.

	Logics		
	Peasant	Farmer - <i>Chacarero</i>	Agribusiness
Relationship with land	Territorial – Working instrument - Pachamama	Patrimonial	Commodity
Use of techniques Technology	Use of external techniques combined with traditional knowledge	Gradual incorporation of technology in relation with the family based workforce available. Mechanization with a low level of technology and agrochemicals.	Intensive use of technology. High level of agrochemicals
Produce destination	Local and regional markets	Internal and external markets	External markets
Labour use	Family workforce	Combination of familiar and salaried workforce	Salaried and contractors

Figure 2 – Relative weight of Agricultural Holdings by classification according to different census.

Some reflections as concluding remarks

It is clear that the advances of the agribusiness logic puts a mortgage on the territory of our country, makes the land a non-renewable resource and anticipates a dramatic end for Argentina, that had one of the most fertile fields of the planet. Yet, there are still other agricultural systems that with adequate encouragement can produce food, preserve the soil, generate employment and produce surplus for exportation. These can coexist adequately with peasant systems and with indigenous communities, without a need to engage in land-grabbing and they can also collaborate in local and regional markets.

The question that we have left is how to revert the tremendous expansion of the agribusiness logic, with its tendencies to non-rotation, monocropping and an export orientation, together with the social, environmental and particularly health consequences for the population that it brings about. It is a question that it is difficult to answer, when all the public policies tend to encourage this logic and discourage other systems.

At its core it is a cultural issue, a knowledge and power matrix that values what comes from a supposed 'modernization' and de-hierarchizes other forms or systems that do not require the inputs that the large corporations impose to the 'market'. This 'grave sin' – not to enter at a mass level in the international market of agroindustrial inputs – make these forms, what in modernizing language is termed 'backward'. If we add to this the Argentinian society modernizing 'vocation', particularly that of the big cities, we will understand why it is so difficult to include these elements in the discussions. We normally sustain that what the official discourse with their enlightened intellectual argues corresponds to the debates of the mid-twentieth century: developmentalism, the role of science within it, the modernizing motors of development, the sectors capable of introducing cutting edge technology, etc. All these elements were a part of the liberal hope of 'development' (hardly achieved by the periphery countries) and also of the critical theory that sought to 'develop the productive forces'.

Between the end of the second world war and the second decade of the twenty-first century many processes have wrecked the promises of modernity and shaken its three pillars: science, law and power (De Sousa Santos 2006). Modernity and all its semantic constellations: development, technological innovation, education as a tool for progress and the very concept of progress are in terminal crises if we consider the economic and social forces in USA and Europe in this last stage. It is no longer an

economic or financial crisis, but, as we can easily see in those who resist within territorial struggles, it is a civilizational crisis. Paradoxically the news that now appear as hinges to new civilizational eras are emerging from the South. A Southern epistemology is created, where concepts such as food sovereignty, land rights, *buen vivir*, nature rights, etc are located, generating a performative thinking demonstrating that another world is, in fact, possible.

Even when in Latin America these other worlds are relatively significant, in Argentina, the impact of the extractive activities hides them and makes them invisible. It is because of that that from the critical thinking we are proposing to make space for the discussion and engagement of those involved in these small experiences. These are realities that spawn from the decisions of the peasant movement towards agroecology, to the unwavering struggles of the indigenous peoples for their ancestral territories, through the agricultural systems defined as process agriculture such as the agriculture and cattle farming system in the Famatina Valley (See Giarracca and Hadad 2009).

We know because we not only have research experience on these sectors, but also with the involvement in the design of transformative public policies¹⁶, that to modify the colossal expansion of the agribusiness more than the will of the actors involved is needed. There is a need for public policies that lead that change. But it is also true that most of the time, the public policies that are detrimental to the majority of people and to the territories end when those who are involved in 'street politics' manage to put a limit to the 'hegemonic order'. Let us remember that the first policies of neoliberalism - such as the privatization of all the social assets in Argentina - were reverted after the great 'Rebellion' of 2001-2002 when the financial capital took over the savings of the Argentinian people and people expressed their contempt to this form of governing. This goes to say that when a large sector of the population understands the large agribusiness corporations are appropriating common goods such as soil fertility for their own benefit, despite the large social suffering it creates, we may again be able to put limits to this hegemonic extractivist order.

¹⁶ Norma Giarracca participó en la Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería durante los años 1973-1974 cuando el Ing. Horacio Giberti emprendió con el Ministerio de Economía una indiscutida política a favor de la distribución de la riqueza agraria que terminaría con la muerte del presidente Perón y la renuncia del ministro de Economía, José Gelbard.

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NORMA GIARRACCA¹

Social Sciences and Rural Studies in Argentina during the 20th century²

Introduction

This work intends to provide a broad overview of social science contributions in the study of Argentinian agrarian processes and rural contexts. It is intended as a way of organising the literature without too much of a focus on its theoretical or methodological underpinnings. Regardless, the mere fact of selecting some works and not others involves decisions that are not exempt from some kind of academic evaluation. This is evident particularly in the last period in which, surprisingly, I found an abundant and heterogenous production.

However, it is not my intention to conduct an analysis that includes putting into hierarchies theoretical value of this production or the influence that this material had over political decisions during each period. This task starts, slowly, with some contributions aimed at evaluating the conceptualisations of a discipline (Llovet, 1996) or an issue (Barsky, 1997). We can also find my own reflections about how the crisis of theoretical paradigms affected Rural Sociology (Giarracca, 1997).

I have collected the material and started ordering it according to thematical axes that were dominant in the debates during each era, and, in second place, I address some reflections about the institutional hurdles that these social disciplines went through in each stage. All of this is preceded by a general overview of the period.

The “social perspective”, which in the title of this work is expressed as “Social Sciences”, supposes an epistemic discussion that is not my intention to address here;

¹ This text is a translation from the original: GIARRACCA, NORMA (1999). “Las ciencias sociales y los estudios rurales en la Argentina durante el siglo XX.”

² This article has been translated by M. Eugenia Giraudó. This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2021/1/26/social-sciences-and-rural-studies-in-argentina-during-the-20th-century>

I simply started from empirical decisions, conditioned by my own professional practices. I put works on Sociology, Social Anthropology, Human Geography, History and Political Economy in this category.

For equally empirical reasons, four periods are delineated to locate and contextualise the identified material. The first is marked by an academic event: before and after the emergence of Social Sciences as institutionalised disciplines; the other three, are marked by political events in our country.

The first period includes the first six decades of this century, previous era to which is considered the “professionalization of the Social Sciences”. In it I include authors that, without being academic “professionals”, had a significant influence in the following development of the social disciplines referred to here.

The second period covers from the end of the 1950s – which is the moment of institutionalisation of the Social Sciences as university degrees – until 1976. It was a very productive stage, that entailed one of the most fruitful periods of Argentine university, as that of the work of top-level technical teams of the state (see Giarracca, 1991).

In the third period we consider the years of the ‘military process’ and is an attempt to acknowledge the systematic dismantling of study centres and working teams that functioned in universities and state agencies. Additionally, the organizational attempts of the end of the dictatorship are recovered.

Finally, the last period, that I take as a bloc for practical reasons, could be subdivided around agrarian process as well as to rural studies. Regarding the first point, it is the moment of agriculturization, particularly the soybean peak. Later there is a productive retraction and the most impactful political measure of this part of the century occurs: economic deregulation (1991). Moreover, it is the moment of normalization of universities, re-organised in groups, generating resources from masters and scholarship programmes. It is also the period of emergence of MERCOSUR, of the height of neoliberal policies but also of academic networks, expansion of information technology, etc. It is a complex period: because of the changes in the country as a whole, because of the novelties in the agrarian world, and for the turns in the frameworks to understand them. It would imply a job in and of itself and, in that sense, this first organisation of the material could be of great use to that end.

To end this introduction I would like to point out the organisation of the text in connection with the bibliography. The reader will find two types of bibliographical references: 1) the bibliography that is connected to the text in its character of a Sociology of rural studies – with author and year in between brackets – and which is found at the end of the article under the title “Cited bibliography”, 2) the bibliography about rural studies that is found in-text or at the end of the paragraph, with the indication of authors and dates but always with a reference to the “General bibliography”.³ Under this last subtitle the reader will find at the end, as an annex to the book, an alphabetical organisation of the authors that during this century have contributed to know and understand the agrarian productive processes and the rural worlds in its social and cultural complexities. It was my intention to select the most representative pieces of work from each period or each author. Even if there are some absences, errors, and involuntary confusions in the selection, typical of any organisational action and classification, it is a first task that can stimulate its continuation and improvement.

First period: agrarian social thinking (1900-1956)

From the end of the 19th century until the 1930s, the Argentine agricultural sector generated important surpluses that led to dazzling economic progress of the country. This expansive period, based on a “capitalist agro-exporter” mode of production, was favoured by international conditions that stimulated external demand of the Pampas region, both by the high process of agricultural products as for the settlement of populations in the extensive and fertile available lands. There was a process of horizontal expansion, in which production increased because of the incorporation of new lands. When this resource was exhausted, the expansion rhythm slowed down considerably.

During this stage, the main problems to be solved made discussions – both academic and political – to turn around the necessary elements for the beginning of production in these lands that were being incorporated to the advancement of the frontier line: settlement of labour apt for agriculture, colonisation, and property of land. Labour

³ Por motivos de extensión y pertinencia, al final del presente artículo, bajo el título común de “Bibliografía”, se incluyen conjuntamente la bibliografía citada en él y las referencias explícitas a la “Bibliografía general” (extenso anexo final del libro). Para conocer la “Bibliografía general” a la que hace referencia el párrafo, véase la publicación original. [N. de los Ed.]

saving technologies were provided as a way of solving said problems, what contributed to establishing a productive structure that – when international conditions changed – responded with a retraction.

A stage thus began that was known as the Pampas stagnation that lasted until 1970s. Indeed, the hardest moment extended from 1930 to 1960; from this last date the situation began to improve, even when difficulties remained to maintain the country's relative participation in world's trade of grains, meat, and oilseeds. This inability to respond to international demands, and simultaneously the increase in supply of other producing nations, did not allow the country to continue being as productive as it might be. In relative terms, the stagnation persisted.

Given the role that the agricultural sector plays in the historically established accumulation model and, within it, the relevance of exports, the stagnation of the Pampas region shook society to its core. Moreover, the strong link between the sector and the rest of the economy manifested in the political economy orientation developed by the state. In the same period, regional economies underwent severe production crises that generated different types of state interventions as well as diverse social consequences.

During this period, we need to refer to “agrarian social thinking” more than production in Social Sciences. And it is so, simply, because these scientific disciplines did not exist in the way we know them today. The “profession” of social researcher had not emerged, that is, full-time university or institutional positions that allowed the economic sustenance of social analysis. In this way, “agrarian social thinking” was created by economic and political leaders and by technocrats in state agencies.

The debate in the beginning of the century was marked by positivist thinking. This influence was so strong that the idea of progress as an unlimited process dazzled thinkers of all strands. Several authors, influenced by socialist thinking, asked themselves about the reasons why some sectors could not access progress, but did not question the origin or nature of these processes. The crisis of 1930 marked the end of this idea of unlimited progress. The period of relative stagnation of the Pampas economy gave origin to different positions and debates.

In his book *Argentine Agriculture and Ranching in the period 1930-1960*, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz synthesised the position of one of the most powerful sectors within agriculture, that represented by the Argentine Rural Society (*Sociedad Rural Argentina*). In this work the author argued that the increase in yielding would only

be achieved through a better technification of agriculture. The country, according to Martínez de Hoz, was stuck in technical isolation, in the rear of progress, because of the 1930s crisis, then because of the war, because of the policy developed by the Peronist government, and because of the erroneous price policies and financial and fiscal measures that unfavoured the sector.

Other authors took different positions, more structuralist ones; they came, usually, from the socialist field. In that sense, Lázaro Nemirovsky conducted an exhaustive study (his doctoral thesis) about prices and profit margins obtained by large landholders (*terratenientes*), to support his argument about the need for changes in the social structure, capable of overcoming the stagnation.

Juan L. Tenenbaum, professor of the Agrarian Economy Cátedra at Universidad de La Plata, in his book *Economic Orientation of the Argentine Agriculture* published in 1948 demonstrated the change occurred from 1930, year in which the crisis began to be felt in full. He was in favour of the agrarian-pastoral system over the pastoral-agrarian one because, in his opinion, it ensured a more stable economic regime. His arguments tended to demonstrate the need for an agrarian-industrial development as the only possibility for overcoming an exhausted stage. The prologue of his book, written by Luis Reissig, proposed:

His thesis coincides with the political thinking that should prevail in the stage of a progressive democracy. The world opens to a succession of deep reforms, among which, the agrarian and the industrial will have to occupy a vanguard place in the development of the new world (1948:7).

During 1943, Carl Taylor visited the country invited by the Ministry of Agriculture and Ranching. Taylor was a North American expert in agrarian productive organizations and the fruit of his work was his book *Rural Life in Argentina* considered a “classic” by sociologists and rural anthropologists. The author visited the majority of agrarian areas of the country, interviewed more than 120 people representative of the sector, talked to journalists, union leaders, ministers, producers, hourly-paid workers, and university professors. His work – unfortunately never translated to Spanish – manifested one of the most important Latin American debates of the time: the role of the medium family exploitation (farm) in the development of capitalism. This author, an official at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, regretted in his book the little dissemination of the farmer model in our country; one of his conclusions argued that the main obstacle to its implementation was the predominant property system.

The theoretical and methodological influence of Carl Taylor was notorious for several years.⁴ Proof of this were the works published by the Direction of Rural Economy of the Ministry during 1940 and 1950: the work by Vicien and Del Castillo, *Agrarian Social Regions*, published in 1943 and updated in 1952.

Moreover, during those same years, the Group of Rural Sociology emerged within the Ministry of Agriculture. The analysis of that first team that worked under that name recognized not only the influence of North American Rural Sociology, but of Human Geography strongly developed in France.

At the same time began a flourishing of Social Sciences as institutionalized scientific disciplines.

Here we ought to highlight the important effort of the founder of the degree in Sociology at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Gino Germani, not only to open up the space of this discipline in the Argentine university, but in the scientific sector more generally. During the 1940s several courses in Sociology and Economy were created in different universities, the Institute of Sociology was created in UBA and the first evidence of the European influence in social thinking appeared. Towards the end of the 1950s, university degrees in the main social disciplines began to be created. In spite of all the difficulties that universities suffered, from then on, a systematic production of these disciplines began (see Giarracca, 1991 and 1992).

Second period: the institutionalisation of Social Sciences (1957-1976)

This second period was characterised by the alternation between civilian and military governments. In the economic sphere, the growth model based on import substitution began to show signs of exhaustion and there were no policies capable of solving the continuous crisis in the balance of payments. While industrialisation showed clear evidence of disarticulations and contradictions among different elements of the industrial bourgeoisie, it still allowed for intervals of redistribution that can be placed within those moments of democratic space of our society. The industrial reactivation was corresponded with an increase in the imports of capital goods, industrial sectors lobbied to keep a low exchange rate and this was unfavourable to export sectors, among which the agricultural and pastoral sector was the most important one.

⁴ See, in this same book, the chapter "Carl Taylor's thinking", of Floreal Forni.

At the agrarian level, during almost all the period the main preoccupation surrounded the relative stagnation of production in the Pampas and the most appropriate policies to overcome this situation. The overproduction crisis of regional economies had significant consequences at the level of the conflictual productive structures and the social sectors involved. There was an important restructuring of trade unions in the region and social conflict was exacerbated.

During the 1960s, there appeared, on one hand, new and significant contributions from Social Theory. And on the other hand, a rich debate between neoclassic and structuralist economists. This confrontation was present in all of Latin America but had certain particularities in this country given its specific agrarian development within the region.

The thought of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a clear example of the structuralist thinking, argued for the need to transform the agricultural sector into the necessary role that this sector played in the development of nations. Development which, according to ECLAC, should be based on the industrial sector. That is, the agricultural sector had to be made to fit the needs of industrial development, key axis of growth and general wellbeing.

ECLAC pointed out two elements of the Latin American agricultural problem that needed to be carefully considered: a) the slowness of growth linked to specific agrarian structures, and b) the organisation of property and land tenancy. Both elements deserved careful studies in the majority of countries in the region. At the theoretical level, structuralism tried to incorporate and formulate concepts capable of recognising the Latin American reality and opposing, in this way, to the automation and universality of the development process implicit in the neoclassical thinking.

Opposed to structuralism, neoclassic thinkers abstracted the social context in which production took place. This school was based on a solid intellectual tradition and the most significant representative for Latin America was Theodore Schultz.

For Schultz, the differences within Latin American agricultures reflected the degree of contribution to economic growth that each of them provided. He characterised traditional agricultures in terms of its own rationalisation and proposed their modernisation through the availability of new means of production of high profitability. The solution to the problem was addressed in terms of individual decisions and not of the general context that limited these decisions.

For neoclassic thinkers, public policies in Latin America were inspired by industrialist principles and had generated that agricultural prices were systematically inferior to “shadow prices”. Capital flows to the sector were discouraged and prices would go down. In this way, neoclassic theorists concluded, there was a decrease in the profit rate that limited the investment decisions of the producer.

In the same period, simultaneous to the debate between neoclassic and structuralist economists, new contributions from Social Theory emerged. These new trends, that we will characterise in a general way as “*dependentistas*”, proposed, like the Economics structuralism, to understand Latin America with its own theoretical parameters. The analyses of Gunder Frank, Theotonion Dos Santos, Pablo González Casanova, Ruy Mauro Marini, challenged assumptions of North American social theories and provided the debate in the academic and the political arena.

The influence of Marxist theory of uneven development and theory of imperialism is found in any of the variants of the dependency school. Astori (1984) holds that the dependency school provided a criticism to the dualist focus that predominated in the sociologic bibliography of the time and hierarchised the conditions of functioning of capitalism related to the world system with an identification of the contradictions associated to this expansion.

In the analytic scheme that considered certain spaces of capitalist expansion as needed by others – capable of generating higher levels of exploitation – it was used to both the relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries as well as for relationships between regions of a same country with different levels of development. The theorisation of an “internal colonialism” was used as a mandatory point of reference to explain the social and regional disarticulations of Latin America, opposing this analytic perspective to the “rural-urban continuous” that had been used by functionalists in previous years.

Towards the end of the period, the influence of theories that debated “the peasant question” increased. Studies about the peasant persistence of disappearance were in their majority conducted in countries where the problem of small-scale production was central. In our country, Social Anthropology had had a poor development, and, with few exceptions, there was not a line of peasant studies. However, the rich discussion that was being proposed in other countries sparked interest in anthropologists and sociologists. Evidence of this were two publications of significant dissemination that were published in 1972 and 1974, respectively. It is: 1) *The study of the peasantry*, a compilation of contributions by North American Social

Anthropologie with a prologue by anthropologist Leopoldo Bartolomé,⁵ and 2) the Spanish translation of *Theory of peasant organisation*, by Alexandre Chayanov, translated and with a prologue by Eduardo Archetti. From these reflections about the theoretical paradigms, we will try to situate the production from this period.

Those years represented a time of great social and political effervescence in the country. There were top level academic centres in universities, and technical teams (with some conceptual autonomy) were proliferating in the apparatus of the state. There was also a small number of private research centres that were created after the University intervention of 1966. Among them we can name the Insitute Di Tella, the Centre for Research in Social Sciences (CICSO) and the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CEUR).

The themes that were the focus of Social Sciences were: 1) the stagnation of production in the Pampas; 2) renting and possibilities of production of medium-size production in the Pampas region; 3) the crisis of regional crops; 4) the problem of the agrarian labour force; and 5) producers' trade unions.

The first of these topics was debated mainly by economists and agrarian engineers. The neoclassic interpretations of stagnation came from economists in the Argentine Rural Society and are published in the *Annals of the Argentine Rural Society* or the newspaper *La Nación*. In these texts there was an explanation of the slow growth of production in the Pampas because of unfavourable government policies towards the agro-pastoral sector. Policies such as fixed prices, exchange rates, export taxes, and other fiscal measures that discouraged investment and created stagnation.

Unlike the first ones, the so called “structuralist” economists did not look at the stagnation problem as a “sectoral” issue vis-à-vis the state but based their analysis on the role of the landholder of the Pampas as an economic agent of capitalist development. Some of them highlighted the resistance of these producers to introduce more intensive production methods. They considered that large landholders did not act as capitalists in search of profits. This thesis was developed by Aldo Ferrer and Horacio Giberti.

Within the “structuralists”, another sub-group of authors was attempting to demonstrate the capitalist rational of extensive exploitations (Guillermo Flichman).

⁵ See the chapter ‘Social anthropology and rurality in Argentina’ by Hugo Ratier and Roberto Ringuélet.

Usually, authors that debated the stagnation of the Pampas from this position were Horacio Giberti, Aldo Ferrer, Oscar Braun, Edith Obschatko, Alain de Janvry, Guillermo Flichman, Miguel Teubal, and Alfredo Pucciarelli (even when this last one published his work in the eighties). Decisively, many of these economists did not escape the influence of the neoclassic theories, but asked themselves problems and questions from theoretical spaces influenced by different strands of “critical theories”.

The role of medium-size producers in the development of the Pampas and the discussion about the fate of tenants led to research and publications. For example, the work by Daniel Slutsky about “The social aspects of the rural development of the Pampas”, published by the journal *Desarrollo Económico*, questioned the interpretations that held that most tenants had been able to access the purchase of lands.

The majority of these works took as a starting point and reference the analysis conducted by the Inter-American Committee of Agricultural Development and the Federal Council of Investments (CIDA-CFI). This report highlighted the level of land concentration and presence of the small holding in the Argentine agricultural sector. The information that was analyzed, based on the Agricultural Census of 1960, as well as the historic-structuralist approach, lasted over decades in the studies of the country’s agrarian question.

During the mid-1970s, most of the regional crops went through a crisis of different nature; the rural exodus persisted and by the end of the decade producers from these regions were looking to organise in unions different to the traditional ones. These issues were the main focus of working teams within the state.

The Federal Council of Investments (CFI) hosted interesting research teams that produced robust reports of the Argentine North-Eastern region, among other names let us remember sociologists such as Daniel Slutzky, Victor Brohderson, Gustavo Tesoriero, who worked on the productions of cotton and tobacco.

Another cluster of work took place within the Group of Rural Sociology of the Department of Agriculture and Cattle where, from 1969 and until 1976, a group of sociologists, economists and agronomists began a series of publications about small producers and agricultural workers in the northern regions. Some of the sociologists that participated in this group, that continue to be present in academic rural studies, are Susana Aparicio, Mercedes Basco, Norma Giarracca, Diego Piñeiro y Susana Soverna.

The Department of Economics of INTA Castelar was developing the programme Information System for the Supply Plan of Products and Inputs of Agricultural Origin (SIPNA). It consisted in the description of productive systems, with the aim of planning production based on markets.

To these empirical works, that contributed to generating an abundant and qualified information on the sector, we should add others with research addressed from a theoretical and historical perspective. In that sense, CICSO was home to a significant number of sociologists, anthropologists, historians and economists that contributed to the analyses of the agrarian social structure, the regional unbalances and the class structures. In these issues we can locate the following authors: Oscar Colman, Alfredo Pucciarelli, Nicolas Iñigo Carrera, and Mercedes Basco. Them, like many other participants of the seminars, benefited from the classes and group discussions coordinated by Miguel Murmis.

The debate over the viability of the small family exploitation brought together studies from Social Anthropology. Many of the works on the issue were presented in a congress of the Association of Agrarian Economy, in the province of Tucumán, during 1974. In this direction it is worth mentioning about the issue the studies from Hebe Vessuri, Esther Hermitte, Carlos Herrán and Leopoldo Bartolomé. Simultaneously, another important anthropologist, Santiago Bilbao, along with a group of agronomists, were conducting the task of organising and accompanying the functioning of the first cooperative of agricultural production in the country: Campo de Herrera, in the province of Tucumán. This initiative that, early on, articulated theory and action, was supported by the technical expertise of Engineer Roberto Fernandez from Ullivarri and by the valuable intellectual production of Bilbao on issues of peasants and rural labour.

Even if the working conditions of agricultural labour were studied, it did not include as many technicians and researchers as that of small agricultural producers. From the classic work of G. Gallo Menoza and J. Tadeo, *Labour in the agricultural sector*, studies were developed on the precarity of rural employment (Rural Sociology of SEAG), migrations (Carlos Reboratti, Cristina Sabalain, Mario Margulis), the deficient labour conditions and seasonal work (Hebe Vessuri, Nicolas Iñigo Carrera, Floreal Forni).

Neither did the study of the union of agricultural sectors issue received exhaustive attention. However, it is worth mentioning works such as that of Liliana Kuznir and Nidia Margenat, about the Agrarian Federation, and those by Francisco Ferrara and

Leopoldo Bartolomé, about the Agrarian Leagues. The search for an interpretation of the political phenomena of the sector did not have many adherents during those decades. The work of Francisco Delich about the study of social and political struggles of sugar cane peasants in Tucumán, published as *Land and peasant conscious in Tucumán*, attempted to link the economic conditions and the structural position of the small agricultural producer with their Peronist political identity. Lastly, we should remember a study about the pre-political forms of organization by marginalised sectors of the poor areas of the countries, Isidro Velasquez, pre-revolutionary forms of violence, signed by the sociologist Roberto Carri. Influenced by the analyses of the time, specially by Eric Hobsbawm and Franz Fanon, he linked the “social vandalism” of the countryside in the Chaco region with the conditions necessary for radicalised political action.

In this period there were three other publications that I have intentionally left to address in a particular way because, in my opinion, they synthetize significant theoretical debates and allowed to open up the conceptual discussion about highly relevant issues. The first was a work directed by the sociologist Miguel Murmis that was known as the study about marginality and that originated several articles from the issue 69/2 of the *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología* from the Di Tella Institute and in other following issues of the same journal. These publications started from the theoretical formulations of Marxism and discussed the validity of certain concepts for underdeveloped realities. But the theoretical debate was accompanied by extensive empirical studies about the north, about different productions and social actors, that marked a highlight in the style of works in the field of Rural Sociology in our country.

The second publication to which we refer to is that of E. Archetti and K. Stölen, *Family Farming and capital accumulation in the Argentine countryside*. This work recollects the contributions of Russian economist Alexandre Chayanov, discusses the concept of peasantry and, through fieldwork in Santa Fe, characterises the Argentine colonist and conceptualises them as a family business susceptible of conduct a process of accumulation, which would differentiate it, according to the authors, of peasant units of production.

Lastly, the book by Guillermo Flichman, *The soil's rent in capitalist development* synthesises the academic production of the period. He used large part of the information available for different regions of the country and, supported by the theory of rent, interpreted the forms taken by capitalist development in the Argentine

agricultural sector. While this work was published in 1977, outside our country, we consider it a “golden end” to a period that, even if it had many shortcomings, left an important contribution to the study of the agrarian issue.

Third period: ‘Process’ (1976-1983)

The social and political context in which this period was developed was characterized by the unusual concentration of power that allowed the implementation of policies which implied profound transformations of society. The opening of the national economy to international competition, the financial policy that aggrandised this sector and the debt crisis of several economic sectors, to name just a few of the economic policies of the “juntas”, were implemented along with the strongest and most systematic social and political repression of Argentine history.

In what pertains the agricultural sector, this period sees a significant jump in production of certain products of the Pampas, a process that was known as the “agriculturalization” of the Pampas region. This change occurred at the same time as the expansion and transnationalization of the input industry (seeds and agrochemicals), and a significant change in productive systems. The regions outside the Pampas also underwent considerable changes, such as the expansion of products and capital investments from the Pampas, support to new export products and the emergence of new social agents.

But let us see what happened during these years in the centres and institutions where studies on the agricultural sector was taking place. In the university, the modules that had been consolidated in the previous decades disappeared. It is important to point out that, even if this was a process that began in the last period of the government of Isabel Perón, it was accelerated and culminated with the military government. The School for Graduates in Agricultural Sciences that worked in INTA-Castelar was closed, the working groups inside the State apparatus were disarmed, both in INTA as in CFI and the working group on Rural Sociology at SEAG, and the Agrarian National Council was eliminated. The outlook would not be complete without mentioning the persecution, disappearance and exile of several specialists, as well as the disappearance, death or exile of union, social, and political leaders of the agrarian sector.

After the height of violence, there was a transition period in which there was an attempt to continue or begin some lines of work and research. They were attempts

to keep contact and discussions going among professionals that remained in the country, to which aim there were internal seminars or small meetings. They tried to share the bibliography that was available from abroad and to build environments of discussion and reflection.

In the Group of Rural Sociology of SEAG, after the disassembling of the team that had been working together since 1969, a small group began to regroup and began a study on the mini holding in different regions of the country.

The Centre for Studies and Research on Labour (CEIL), an Institute belonging to the National Science and Technical Research Council (CONICET), was a place for regrouping of sociologists that had worked in other centres and that, directed by Floreal Forni and with the support of scholarships and subsidies from the Council, provided interesting studies about regional labour markets, labour conditions, female and child labour, and about machinery contractors in the Pampas Region. Rural sociologists that today have prestigious academic or professional positions took advantage of the scholarships and the right environment (exceptional for that time) to complete training and postgraduate degrees. The Centre for Social Science Research (CISCO) was developing historical research and retook a line of analysis of the social structure.

In the meantime, the Argentine Institute of Development (IADE) organised seminars with the participation of those who attempted to follow the debate about the agrarian issue.

In this reminder, that attempts to highlight the effort by social scientists that remained in the country to maintain open the possibility for thinking and debating, we should also point out the role played by the seminars and the journal *Desarrollo Economico* of the Institute of Economic Development (IDES), the tutorial course in the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the group that was known as the Centre for Agrarian Study and Promotion (CEPA), a place of encounter and debate for sociologists, economists and agronomists settled in different regions and with diverse or little institutional affiliation.

From 1981-1982 there was an identification of the need and possibility to increase open exchange, to integrate to theoretical debates in other countries, and, particularly, to update the bibliography. An important event in this sense was the V International Congress on Rural Sociology that took place in Mexico in 1980, where

specialists that remained in the country reconnected with their colleagues spread around the world.

From that point onwards, seminars and courses had more participants, fieldwork was conducted again, there were studies in different modules in universities outside Buenos Aires (Rosario, Comahue, Posadas). In these spaces the lack of human resources forced a fruitful interdisciplinary integration, because the challenges of the time required to privilege the analysis of the issue over the academic specialisations. In the National University of Rosario (Universidad Nacional de Rosario), for example, through an agreement with national and provincial agencies, the sociologist Silvia Cloquell began a work around the technical change in producers from the Pampas that was done with agrarian engineers.

During these years, some researchers continued to develop their research in social issues, in private centres with funding from international agencies that allocated special funds to Latin American countries suffering from repressive regimes. Some of these centres also explored the agrarian issue. In the Centre for Social Research on State and Management (CISEA), through a series of studies conducted by Jorge F. Sábato about the Pampas region, a team was composed that in the last period of the “process”, began a complete analysis of the transformations of the Pampas agriculture. This group was directed by the economist Martín Piñero and brought together several researchers that had returned to the country.

Also CEUR worked on regional issues, while in the Centre for Population Studies (CENEP) geographers, economists and sociologists began works on the different regions of the country. Lastly, during that time, the Centre for Education Research (CIE) incorporated the rural issue through the educational problem, using an interesting and novel methodological approach: participatory research.

The research from these teams began to be published and diffused when our country began to once again go through the Constitutional avenue and are in the bibliography of this article.

Fourth period: A return to democracy (1982 - until the present)

In December 1983, us, Argentines, we recovered through elections the hope of recreating a citizenship that had been lost during the dark years of the “Process”. The erosion that the war with the United Kingdom generated, the economic recession,

international pressure and the important role played by human rights organisations, were some of the elements that persuaded the military government to call to national elections. President Raúl Alfonsín governed a country where, with time, the structural changes that were foreseen in the previous period would unfold, and would give the thorough meaning to the terrible repression initiated in 1976. The economic recession, the external debt, the change in property relations, the beginning of the hegemony of the neoliberal narrative, the transformations in the labour world, provoked – not only in this country but in all of Latin America – what ECLAC called “the lost decade”.

Regardless, and almost paradoxically, the agricultural sector had been growing in an uneven and unequal way. Some subsectors increased their production due to new technological packages and changes in the orientations of the market (they began to export). Others, generally linked to the domestic market, stagnated and decreased their levels of activity. The boom in cereals and oilseeds was taking place due to the production of five crops from the Pampas. From the 1980s, the heterogeneity of growth was clearly evidenced when analysing the increase of the subsectors and the evolution of relative participation of each of them.

In general terms, the changes in productive levels was taking place, basically, due to the success of the soybean complex and production linked to the vegetable oil industry as well as export products. As for the regions outside the Pampas, certain crops grew, particularly: dry beans, apples, rice, tea and tobacco for export markets. In the last years horticultural and citric production grew.

But the most important changes were given in the social structure of agriculture, a situation that was reinforced with the decree of deregulation during the government of Carlos Menem, towards the end of 1991.

Towards the end of the 1980s, small and medium producers around the country began to feel a series of economic measures with a strong tendency towards concentration, that would unfold with mighty force during the 1990s. Taxes increased, services were privatised, financial costs went up, etc. A large part of the sector was accumulating debt, and even associations of indebted producers began to organise scared for their properties.

Simultaneously, mid-decade, other forms of facing production were beginning to emerge, with different forms of acquiring capital. Two mechanisms were present: investment funds and planting pools. Producers would give their lands to these

organisations that would deal with production attempting to manage at a large scale both the purchase of inputs and the selling of the produce. Moreover, they were exempt from paying the fixed costs of the farm and the maintenance costs of local administrations.

The differences among investment funds were significant: they could be groups of producers getting together for one or two seasons, or investments from capitals external to agriculture, or large investments with consultancy companies and banks in large scale operations. Faced with these more developed systems, some researchers fear a significant concentration process, but others believe that inflow and outflow of capital to the sector would not end in important changes in the property relations. Regardless, there are also large capitalists that purchase large extensions of land (Soros, Benetton, etc.) and the formation of “economic groups” is noted.

A possible division in the period, in the framework of the agrarian processes, would be in 1991, when the government of Carlos Menem, through a decree of necessity and urgency ended with the whole institutional network that had supported the agricultural social structure since the beginning of the century. In my opinion, during these times at the end of the nineties, the Argentine agricultural sector is going through, with certain delay, changes as deep as those experienced by the rest of the Argentine economy.

The so called “regional economies” suffered the impact of deregulation, the emergence of “markets” in regions crossed by traditional local powers, with the capacity to influence the national government through the political party apparatus and legislators, is not simply an ‘economic’ situation as it is sometimes proposed. Those who suffered the most with the regional changes were rural workers and peasants. The unemployment rates of the provinces affected by these austerity measures are high, and subsistence settlements are also found in provinces which would provide rural labour.

Faced with these circumstances, the state, advised and financed by international organisations, began to design social programmes that would address the increase in levels of rural poverty. This is the time for support to small producers, the Agricultural Social Programme, and the management and implementation of a big programme financed by the World Bank oriented towards the most vulnerable sectors (PROINDER).

On the other hand, during the open period in 1984, there was a recovery of university spaces through entrance examinations and the generation that had remained in exile during the previous period returned to the country, who joined the professionals that had remained here. However, neither the university system nor the scientific one provided the conditions for social scientists to settle and remain. The low salaries, lack of entrance examinations, the fallback of CONICET after 1989 and all kinds of difficulties that emerged in universities, where the reasons that lead many people in Social Sciences to work as consultants in international organisations or non-governmental organisations.

In many cases they did both – working in universities or in CONICET and doing consultancy work – which, in my opinion, deepens an interpretation of discursive styles that has been recurrent in our disciplines.

On the other hand, private research centres continued to work until 1989. From then on, the external support and those received by the UCR government were withdrawn; some moved to University of Buenos Aires (CISEA; CEUR), others were transformed into consultancy companies (CEDES and CEPA). The exception was FLACSO, which went through a period of crisis during the first years of democracy towards one in which it received larger support and remained as a centre for postgraduate studies and research. Simultaneously, the Fundación Banco Patricios, University Di Tella and several universities in the suburbs of Buenos Aires opened their doors.

Lastly, there are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), that had different behaviours during these years. The one that had the biggest impact during the first democracy years (as per our analysis) was Compared Interdisciplinary Studies of the Andean Region (ECIRA), which later became the Andean Centre of Research and Education (CADIF). The novelties that ECIRA brought were organisational as well as the articulation that was established with UBA. In fact, it was a research and development programme financed by Italian cooperation that provided different results. In its first period, it was directed by anthropologist Alejandro Isla, who imprinted a very particular style; it was an UBA programme installed in Jujuy that provided material of intellectual rigour. Moreover, he created a development programme in the Valley of Amaicha (Tucumán), even if, while conducting this, the group was not able to overcome the difficulties and conflicts that this type of interventions usually entail.

During the first years, ECIRA/CADIF published, in my opinion, one of the most achieved attempts to bring together action and Social Theory: *Andean North*. This

was a magazine with excellent illustrations that combined interviews and life stories with interesting reflections, bringing the debate to social actors in the Argentine North-West. Only seven issues were published, but the experience marked a working style that, unfortunately, was never reproduced. Later, CADIF, no longer with affiliation to UBA and with a different direction, changed its working style and was transformed into an NGO with a functioning that resembled more those organisations.

Together with CADIF, there are other NGOs linked to the rural sector and the environment, with uneven production of material, as relevant to our objectives. Several of them are strongly connected with the Agricultural Social Programme (PSA) from the Department for Agriculture, Cattle, and Fishing (SAGPyA) (the most important social policy for the agricultural sector from the Menem government), due to the fact that PSA is run by a technocrat that emerged from said sector. The material produced by this sector, with some exceptions, circulates in a restrained way and it is probably the most under-represented group in the annexed bibliography.

To sum up, the material on agrarian and rural studies from this period is dispersed, in large amount unpublished, and, consequently, has a limited distribution. It is worth asking if these conditions emerge from the lack of interest on the issue by the whole of the Social Sciences or the lack of organisation from disciplinary communities (journals with unpredictable publication patterns, few seminars and congresses, etc.).

In the previous paragraphs I highlighted several centres or offices where relevant material is produced and saved. We can sum this up:

- Research programmes in national universities; they can include postgraduate taught degrees and, consequently, the production of masters' theses or simply the production of the research teams with researchers and students; in recent times doctoral thesis were also included. In this category we will also include CEIL, because even if it is not a university centre, it is financed by the state (CONICET) and most of its members are university teachers.
- Private research centres that worked until recently or continue to work.
- International organisations and state agencies that require from consultants' socio-economic works to develop public policy.
- Non-Governmental Organisations dedicated to development programmes in rural areas.

The rigour and academic quality of production is not necessarily the product of any of these places in particular. However, research with production of data were paradoxically more frequent in universities and in CEIL than in other institutions. I argue that it is a paradoxical situation because even if universities have been poorly funded and, at the same time, have dedicated a very meagre percentage of their budgets to research, teams based there conducted expensive fieldworks.

The different methodological-theoretical perspectives that we can find by reviewing part of the material, have much to do with the themes covered, since, unlike with previous periods, there was more thematic diversity linked to new analytical perspectives. This organisation, that explores issues and analytical perspectives at the same time, produces an eclectic result, with non-exclusive categories when it refers to authors. However, I present it this way as much as it allows to link the new debates of the period with the new methodological-theoretical contributions. In my opinion, this thematic diversity and theoretical flexibility is the main characteristic of the period and what I intend to highlight.

1. In the first place there are those studies that persist in their structural perspective. They try to note the changes in the productive and socio-economic structures of the sector. Previous works hierarchised land, property, tenancy and levels of capital; the new ones recovered the role of institutions, public policies, and, in some cases, focused on the social relations that these structures were holding. The influence of new trends in French regulationism and the renewed contributions from Political Economy provided more complexity to this kind of works. At the same time, many were produced under the influence of neoliberal economic models, especially those of international organisations.

Within this first type we can situate the studies conducted by the research programme that, at the beginning of the period was directed by Martin Piñeiro and then by Osvaldo Barsky at CISEA. This programme attempted to identify the changes in the Pampas region up until the 1980s, focusing and searching for explanations in the technical sphere but without dismissing other socio-economic issues that allowed the productive jumps of the time (see the three publications compiled by Barsky, 1988).

In that same direction other works can be included, also about the Pampas region, elaborated by CEPA (see CEPA, 1983 and 1990), that allowed an interesting debate about the socio-economic trends that marked the productive changes. Researchers at CEPA, unlike those at CISEA, held that the institutional-economic tendency

indicated that the small and medium farm was in risk of disappearing, while others highlighted the “farming” characteristic of the agricultural process.

During our time, at the end of the period, the debate remains but now among researchers within the same research centre: FLACSO. Indeed, Osvaldo Barsky (coordinator of the Rural path in FLACSO’s Master’s degree), along with Alfredo Pucciarelli and Mario Larruada keep an interesting debate about the concentrating trends in agriculture with Eduardo Basualdo, from the economics department of FLACSO (see the debate in *Realidad Económica*, N. 134, Vol 34.). Once again, while Basualdo crates and organises new data and checks that, at the level of property relations, concentration of land is continuing, Barsky continues to assert that there are no tested tendencies about the disappearance of the middle sectors (based on census data). It is interesting to point out that this debate, that began with the break of dawn of the recovered democracy, continued throughout the period. It was expressed in articles and seminars that brought together scholars of the field. In that sense, the most memorable one is that organised in 1993 at the Faculty of Social Sciences at UBA and which was called “The Argentine agro, today” (remembering that of 1985), where researchers participating in this issue were protagonists of an energised debate.

Most of the technical reports written by consultants for SAGPyA are located in this structuralist perspective and were conducted by agronomists, economists and sociologists. Generally, they diagnose certain productions, regions, or socio-economic problems. Of the long list of reports of all kind created in this institutional framework, and published in Agricultural and Fishing Statistics, of the Department of Agriculture, Cattle, and Fishing, Sub-Department of Agricultural Economy, in 1994, I have selected and included in the general bibliography those reports signed by authors who are experts in the socio-economic areas, with academic background. That is, I tried that the works cited keep some of the rules of intellectual work appropriate to Social Sciences.

In general, these works are of technical character, descriptions and diagnoses of production, commercialisation, financing problems, etc. Among the authors are specialists with long careers in rural studies such as economists Edith Obschatko, Juan Ínigo Carrera, Sergio Levín, María del Carmen González, Graciela Gutman, etc. There are also sociologists such as Mercedes Basco, Ignacio Llovet, María del Carmen Borro, Susana Soverna, Clara Craviotti, Roberto Benencia, etc.

There is another group of works, that we situate within this first category, that created typologies or took for their characterisation a particular socio-economic sector (peasants, rural workers, etc.). All of these put emphasis in the transformations of the economic scenarios to the sectors where they act, assigned to the modifications of a social regime of accumulation that occurred during the 1970s.

We situate here the creation of typologies of producers defined before and after the Agricultural National Census of 1988 with the purpose of identifying changes in the agrarian structure. In general, these were research projects on the social structures that complement the structural position of the producer with other analyses that highlight the capabilities of actors that cannot be explained from structures (see IPDERNOA, 1992, and Giarracca and Aparicio, 1991).

There are also the works that focus on a particular type of producer: the peasants, capitalised family farmers, etc. For example, the analyses about ‘contractors’ conducted by Ignacio Llovet in the CISEA team; publications with this same orientation in CEIL; works on peasants written by economists or agrarian engineers (Mabel Manzanal, Raul Paz, Petro Tsakoumagkos, etc); works about family farms by sociologist Silvia Cloquell and those written by researchers at the National University of Misiones.

A decade ago there was a debate about the attributes that characterise small producers such as peasants and their relative importance in the agrarian social structure (see Giarracca and Manzanal, 1990).

Lastly, in this group I situate the studies on rural work that are linked to networks of labour studies (ASET) that have a great influence from the French regulation school. These studies present strong links between the “accumulation regimes” and changes in the labour world (see works on labour from CEIL in Bibliography, particularly Forni, Benencia, Neiman and Aparicio, 1988; Benencia, 1992; Benencia and Formi, 1996)/

To sum up, in all of these works the logic of changes is navigated in the deep restructuring that our society experience since mid-1970s. Without neglecting the external trends, the emphasis is on those who receive such tendencies and how they do it, without drifting away from their structural positions. Generally speaking, these studies have a great amount of secondary information and creation of quantitative data.

2. In the second group I situate those sources that have emphasised in their analyses the structural relations but those conditioned by trends that go beyond national borders. They can have as a starting point structuralist approaches, but they are characterised for proposing the national issue as 'cases' of international trends. While in the first group theoretical assumptions are strongly connected to internal social dynamics and forces, here the issue is observed from the perspective of an increasingly interconnected world.

During the previous period it was frequent to find authors that proposed the limitations that agribusiness presented as a form of organisation in the Argentine countryside. During the 1980s, evidence was beginning to show the impact of agro-industrial expansion around the world. Our country could not escape these trends given the neoliberal policies that were being implemented. We locate in this category studies that were constructing the issue of agro-industrial expansion, the agrifood system or linking local phenomena with globalization.

From these approaches it is possible to analyse a particular agro-industrial system, but there is always a pre-existing set of conceptualizations (assumptions in the sense of Alexander, 1997) that lead to new ways of looking at the agrarian sector, much more linked to (articulated with) both the rest of the economy as well as to the globalized economy.

Miguel Murmis, in his article "Some issues for discussion in Latin American Rural Sociology: re-structuring, unstructured, and problems of excluded and included", of 1994, argues, as the Brazilians do, that it is possible to talk about the 'qualification' of agriculture, as a new way of analyzing agriculture, not like a sector, but like the scenario for articulations with the rest of the economy. From these perspectives, it is important to analyse both those who enter as well as those who are excluded of these processes of agro-industrialisation.

Among this second group of studies we can situate both economists and sociologists and geographers that early on began to propose the incorporation of Argentina to the strong agro-industrial expansion happening at the world scale. The work by economists Miguel Teubal and Graciela Gutman was pioneer in this trend. Both authors had worked with methodologies of agro-industrial and agri-food complexes and systems in Mexico and Venezuela, respectively, and applied them before anyone else in our country (see Gutman and Gatto, 1990, and Teubal, 1995).

Simultaneously, sociologists and geographers contributed to these studies proposing a focus on relations, conflicts and negotiations among unequal actors within the space of CAI.

We can mention, among these lines, the studies that were conducted about the fruit agro-industry in the Río Negro valley conducted by sociologist Monica Bendini and her collaborators; by the geographer Gerardo De Jong and the economist Ernesto Bilder, all of them researchers of the National University of Comahue. There are also the works about agro-industries in North-East and North-West Argentina – rice and sugarcane – conducted in a first period by Susana Aparicio, Norma Giarracca, Susana Soverna, and Maria Isabel Tort within CEPA. We can also find a programme coordinated by Alejandro Rofman in CEUR that studied agro-industries and that in recent times continues their analyses incorporating the impact of Mercosur.

A team of the Faculty of Agronomy has also incorporated the changes that MERCOSUR creates in the rice industry (Lilian Pagliettini). Moreover we find the work on beer barley by Teubal and Pastore and on the poultry complex from Patricia Davalos (see all of these authors in the general Bibliography).

Graciela Gutman conducted agro-industrial studies as consultancy works for SEAGYP, introducing these methodologies in the technical report of the public sector (Gutman and Rebella, 1989).

Moving into the nineties, agro-industrial studies generated the enthusiasm of young researchers trained during this period and that began to systematise and comment the works conducted through the 1980s (see Martinez IBarreta, Pucciarely and Posada, 1994).

Within the agri-food issue we can include, besides the contributions by Teubal and Gutman, those of Graciela Ghezan and Monica Mateos from the National University of Mar del Plata (see Ghezan and Mateos, 1994). During the last years, from different institutions, a series of publications emerged about the horticultural activity, that included elements linked to the food problem, with new forms of agricultural organisation emerging from the Bolivian migration, etc. (see Benencia, 1997). These studies also contained a lot of secondary information and creation of primary quantitative information. Moreover, there is a great comparative component in their analysis due to the fact that, as we mentioned before, the methodology of “agro-industrial systems or complexes” is applied with few variations for different productions and in different countries. Moreover, sociologists and anthropologists

incorporate qualitative data that brings the readers closer to the social worlds of the actors being studied.

3. The impact of the crisis and the turns of social theories after the 1970s were lesser on Rural Sociology and Anthropology than they were in other thematic fields (Political Studies, Cultural Studies, for example).

In this third category we will include all of those works that identify these impacts in different ways and degrees. In general, these are interpretative studies, with more emphasis on “understanding” than explaining, which means a different place for the researcher. Indeed, the understanding of meanings that subjects produce is, basically, a communicational experience and requires the participation of the researcher and of someone else to produce it.

In these studies the search for “actors”, “agents” capable of producing senses, representations of the social world to which the researcher is no stranger to, is identified. It is no longer the “structure” what provides intelligibility to relations and processes, but social reality is conceived in terms of symbols (e.g. signs and representations), which meaning (e.g. sense and value) we want to understand.

The material that is included in this category is due to the work, basically, of anthropologists and sociologists. On the other hand, even if with certain slowness, political scientists are approaching rural studies and we know of at least one contribution from this perspective. In general, these types of studies require fieldwork, of certain ethnography capable of getting the reader closer to the social worlds and lives of rural populations. However, it is also possible to work on scenarios with the participation of actors that generate conflicts, negotiations, arrangements, with journalist sources, texts (declarations, adverts, etc.). A good example of a mixed handling of material is the work by political scientist Jose Nun in an essay, from a few years ago, on the milk agro-industry (see Nun and Lattuda, 1991).

In general, a good part of anthropologists and sociologists are working from these perspectives. The references to the theory of action, to Anthony Giddens or Pierre Bourdieu are no longer an exception in rural studies. The works by British anthropologist Norman Long in the University of Wageningen, Netherlands, contributed to consolidate what was known as “the actor’s perspective”. The outlook began to be positioned on actors and their actions; concepts such as “family strategies”, “collective actions” began to circulate.

The new social movements of wives of indebted producers or others that ended in union organisations or cooperatives, also sparked the curiosity of researchers. The rural woman and the expansion of the struggle over rights, over space in democracy

for ethnic minorities (Mapuches, Kollas, etc.) were opening as themes in these methodological theoretical perspectives. Issues such as culture, ethnic, gender, or social identity, are explored by sociologists and anthropologists. The questions of biculturalism as facilitator or obstacle to economic modernisation circulate, not only on academic spheres, but also among NGOs. Moreover, this approach aims to open up space among debates on “rural development” where structuralist views are still dominant.

Academically, these perspectives allow young sociologists and anthropologists, trained in careers where new social theories prevail, to become interested in rural studies and develop their work in these areas. I situate within this category the previously cited work by Nun, those by the Research Programme coordinated by anthropologist Mauricio Bovin of the Faculty of Social Sciences of UBA and University of Paraná, the work by anthropologist Hugo Ratier, researcher of the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of UBA; works about transformations of family fruit farmers in Rio Negro conducted by an interdisciplinary group (that includes a philosopher) of University of Comahue. I also include our own work about collective action in the rural world (Rural Study Group of Institute Gino Germani); theses and essays from the Postgraduate Programme of the National University of Catamarca, particularly those by anthropologist Cynthia Pizarro. There are also the works by Jose Luis Grosso, the anthropologist Alejandro Isla, and the contributions by Silvia Cloquell about the environment from an actor’s perspective.

Young researchers in programmes and working groups mentioned earlier have written postgraduate thesis and research reports that are particularly good examples of these new perspectives on the agrarian social worlds (see Cynthia Pizarro, Fernando Balbi; Valeria Hall; Inés Alfaro; Paula Gutiérrez, Leandro Bertoni, among others). The use of “life histories” helps to understand the life and worlds of the social actors that are protagonists of collective action (see Bidaseca, 1998).

These “understandings”, in many occasions complemented structural analysis with quantitative data (triangulation). These interesting combinations emerged generally in works of sociologists Floreal Forni, Roberto Benencia, Guillermo Neiman, Susana Aparicio, Carla Gras and in those of almost all who use interviews with actors involved in their research. Not always does the use of interviews lead to interpretation of the researcher, as they can also appear as examples or testimony of something that is argued from the data.

4. I wanted to establish a residual category, much more eclectic than the previous ones, that includes topics that refer to problems that have aggravated in recent times. I am referring to studies on poverty, the rural woman and the environment. In effect, the significance of these issues generated more interest by those studying during the 1990s that are in search for theoretical-methodological approaches that contribute to a rich analysis and of how to institutionalise them in academic fields. Here, it is not possible to establish links between “themes” and “approaches” because in the approaches to these issues we find positions that are both structuralist as interpretivist.

In fact, on the issue of rural poverty, Miguel Murmis has not only contributed theoretically as well as rigorous data analysis (see Murmis, 1996), but he brought together an interdisciplinary discussion in a special session during the Congress “Poverty and the poor in Argentina” that took place at the end of 1997 in the National University of Quilmes. In this session papers were presented on rural workers, poor peasants, migrants, workers with multiple jobs, and it was proposed to create a network on the issue.

The topic had been studied a few years before by the economist Mabel Manzanal, who published a first diagnosis about the problem in 1993 in *Strategies for the survival of the rural poor*.

As it was mentioned before, on the issue of rural poverty there is a particular interest from the World Bank, which develops a programme (PROINDER) within the Secretariat of Agriculture. Within such programme there were important reports written that compiled the studies on poverty and the rural poor and that provided a good synthesis from very useful categorisations (see Craviotti, 1995, Soverna, 1995, Benencia and Karasik, 1995).

From a political economy perspective, Miguel Teubal links poverty with both the accumulation model, and particularly with the income distribution, as well as with the agri-food system that modified substantially the conditions for access to food of large social sectors.

On the gender issue, the contributions come from sociologists and social anthropologists as well as historians and agronomists. During the Seminars “History of women and gender studies” that usually take place in the Centre of Gender Studies, very interesting interdisciplinary debates take place. Because the published work is sparse, in the general Bibliography I have included namely those works presented in the last Seminars, even when other works presented in earlier seminars which are significantly less. The work by Cristina Biaggi, *The woman as agricultural*

producer in Argentina, presented in the last seminar at the National University of Tucuman in 1996, provides a general overview of women's work in the countryside through the analysis of census data of 1988. We can also find works about the role of women in discourse around the modernization of the Pampas, about the health issue, female peasants, etc.

Besides these studies, there are articles published with a gender perspective that attempt to address the subordinate position of women both in the workplace as in the family setting (see Basco, 1992; Racedo, 1988; Bravo and Garrido, 1993; Giarracca, 1994 and 1998; and Bendini and Bonaccorsi, 1998).

The environmental issue generated the interest of economists, geographers, and sociologists, either if it is taken as a central issue, or as an aspect to be considered in general studies. Teams directed by geographer Carlos Reboratti in the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature (UBA) and by sociologist Silvia Cloquell in National University of Rosario created some interesting work. In fact, Carlos Reboratti knows how to bring in his analysis other disciplines relevant to the issue but without forgetting that the 'problem' is the relationship between men in society with nature. In that sense, the contributions by biologists and ecologists with whom he works provide content to these studies without losing, overall, the 'social perspective'.

On the other hand, the work by Silvia Cloquell demonstrate the richness of the "actor's perspective" in these issues. They demonstrate how the logics of the decisions made by producers, in connection with the environment, are constructed from their social and economic conditions. In that sense, the proposal by Cloquell is very useful to complement the visions of "ecologists" as social actors.

The studies by economist Pedro Tsakoumagkos puts certain limits to the radicalised positions of an ecological Political Economy and contribute to the question of environmental impact assessments in development projects (see Tsakoumagkos, 1988 and 1992). Lastly, there are working teams directed by biologists or ecologists that introduce social perspectives in their analysis but, because of disciplinary issues, I did not take into account for this bibliographic organisation.

Finally, I should point out that I regret to leave out the work of historians that, in one way or another, is present in the previous ones. To include them would have involved a work in itself, since I consider historiographic work since 1984 to be of a higher fertility as that of other disciplines. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that contemporary historians changed the images of agrarian processes in this country

and, as a result, contributed to change the questions of the present. Regardless, many historians that have helped me, in my role as a teacher and researcher, to think of the development of the Pampas and the construction of the rural society of Tucuman, are included in the general bibliography.

Some final thoughts

During the century that is ending, both social thinking and Social Sciences, institutionalised after the 1950s, were attentive to the big agrarian problems of each period and participated in their debates.

And this is not irrelevant, as a conclusion, if we consider how were the conditions for the production of thoughts, ideas, and debates during this century that is ending. The tension between “democracy-authoritarianism” or between “institutionalisation – lack of funding” ran through the spaces of creation of social thinking of the past century. Many excellent studies were never published, or re-edited, or translated (like that of Taylor).

However, as we have seen in previous pages, the issues relevant to agricultural production, to development, or to the life of people, have been explored, even if only by a small group or few people. The possibilities of diffusion and circulation of these studies is another problem and deserves to be considered within a broader construction of a Sociology of Social Sciences.

These last lines address the impacts of Rural Studies in the social construction of economic, social, and cultural worlds of the Argentine countryside. And the question can be presented if we take a “constructivist” theoretical perspective of the social world. That is, if we begin from the point of recognising our participation as social actors in the university, as technical specialists, in the state, or as members of development programmes in the social construction of rural worlds, then we will understand the meaning of the question. The studies organised and presented in this article were not, according to this perspective, ignorant of these constructions.

In relation to the institutional affiliation of authors, several aspects contribute to this position: they circulated through different environments – universities, state offices, international organisations – and did not find significant differences in discursive style or the proposals generated in one place or the other. It is not possible to seriously argue that there were discussions external or marginal to these institutions.

Several of the authors cited in the text or appearing in the bibliography were (or are, today) in decision-making roles in agrarian policy: Horacio Giberti, Lucio Recca, Felipe Sola, just to name the most recent ones. Sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers participated in the creation of public policies, design of censuses, or in development programmes. With the restrictions proper of any period of repression, many of us went through, at some point, the spaces of public administration. Most of the “agrarian” authors debated, in general terms, within “modernising” positions, that proposed the introduction of technologies that would incentivise higher productivity, a business logic, public policies to improve credit, working conditions, and markets for small producers, etc.

The main debates at the beginning of the century can be summed up with the following questions: How can we create amazing agricultural development to include the middle sectors and workers? What general policies are limiting development? In the following years the debate created by Taylor circled around the possibilities of extending the farmer model and limiting the power of large landowners. From the 1950s onwards the technological issue took centre stage.

With the institutionalisation of Social Sciences, the debates became more academic but always connected to the problem of development and its main actors. The issue around the landowner of the Pampas had strong political connotations and was pushed forward by intellectuals from different theoretical positions. But these debates did not correspond to situations of expansion in agrarian conflict.

And this is an important difference with other Latin American intellectual productions where you can find both radical positions as well as those that modified the ‘common sense’ around the normalcy of power relations. An example of this lies on the significance of the idea or concept “agrarian reform”: for most Latin American countries this was already in the 1970s a public policy like any other, incorporated to the language of ‘common sense’, while in our country it would translate as a measure that required a social revolution and it was almost a dangerous concept.

The agricultural processes and social structures of our country had characteristics that disincentivized radical theorisations of social change. First, the historical prevalence in numbers of an agrarian middle class; second, the political ‘invisibility’ of rural workers, that is, the failure in constructing a privileged social actor for change.

For positions with strong grounding on orthodox Marxism, *chacareros* and farmers, and the Argentine Agrarian Federation represented the “petty bourgeoisie” and were not interesting social actors for models of social change. Rural wage workers – even though they reached similar numbers to those of the Steel Workers Union – rarely led any collective action and were not considered political subjects to be studied.

For these reasons, the agrarian debates of authors in any of the critical theory variants always had as point of reference the “landowner from the Pampas” and their most political face: the Argentine Rural Society (SRA). However, as we have seen, there has not been any consensus around the role that this actor played in the capitalist development and almost everyone recognised its modernising role. Very few argued about SRA as a traditional, landowning subject.

To sum up, the relevant rural studies of this century were, both in numeric terms as in terms of their political impact, those elaborated from a “modernising” perspective (from any theoretical position).

The more “reformist” variants that incorporated social issues of farmers, peasants, and rural workers, had to open up space among the criticisms of positions influenced by the traditional left and the political opposition of those who held power. Some of our “authors” tried to demonstrate through thinking and through action that the ‘modernising’ and ‘reformist’ positions were not necessarily incompatible.

But some of those who tried to produce new theoretical-political views or to take on democratising reforms from the state or from agencies, like INTA, were marginalized or expelled from their government or university positions and suffered the repression of the 1970s: jail and exile. That is, to align with those who questioned the hegemonic order and tried to modify them “here and now”, from the perspective of the social actors, had to pay, in our country, very high social and personal costs.

Today, unlike previous times, hegemonic neoliberal speech appropriated the idea of “modernization” giving it a single sense. The challenge for Rural Studies, that maintain critique as an essential element, consists in being theoretically superior to this fallacy and to articulate the idea of modernization with multiple and diverse avenues. The task is as complex as it was thinking about modernisation with social reforms in other times. The economic discourse is, for the time being, the one that shapes meanings and a linguistic assertiveness that turned “the only way out” into “common sense”. But, as we saw during the fourth period, we have a diversity of studies and social actions that support the old idea of Pierre Rosanvallon of

“experimental society”, a world that is not finished and is always in transformation. The battlefield of knowledge, as was defined by Long (1992) takes on meaning in this image of the social that is not sown, it is open.

I would like to end this work with a recognition to the ‘subjects’. During the whole article I emphasised the institutional conditions of production. However, the area of academic Rural Studies exists because of certain subjects more than because of institutions. In fact, I think that institutional weakness to develop Rural Studies during this century and even today, as been compensated with subjects that created it, from universities, public agencies, or modest research centres.

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NORMA GIARRACCA¹

Latin America, new ruralities, old and new collective action²

Introduction

ECLAC characterises the six-year period from 1998 to 2003 as the “lost six-years” for the region. In this sense, they refer to the poor performance of the main economic variables and recall what was known at the end of the 1980s as the “lost decade”. The neoliberal discourse argued that, after the structural reforms put in place during the 1980s and 1990s, economies would grow and popular sectors would receive the spilling-over effects of that growth (the famous *trickling down*). It did not go like that: the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the region shows a consistent decline since 1998, which reaches a critical point in 2002 due to the repercussions of the Argentine crisis. But this country was not the only one that showed the consequences of the “market policies” imposed by multilateral organisations and accepted by the local political leadership; Uruguay, Venezuela, Haiti and several countries in the Caribbean show negative annual rates of GDP growth and those that grow do so to very small degrees (ECLAC, 2003).

Since the 1980s, public policies in Latin America have tended to reorient state intervention, liberalise the economy, and open to international trade, taking wages as an adjustment variable. This way, unemployment rates grew and working conditions of those who kept their jobs became more precarious. Orthodox public policies – such as the Austral Plan (1985) and the Convertibility Plan (1991) in Argentina, the mega-stabilisation of Bolivia (1985) and a series of stabilisation programmes such as those by Collor de Melo and Cardoso in Brazil between 1986 and 1999, and in Mexico between 1987 and 1994 – set in motion the institutional mechanisms that led to a transformation that was unprecedented during the 20th century. Affected

¹ This text is a translation from the original: Giarracca Norma (1999). “Las ciencias sociales y los estudios rurales en la Argentina durante el siglo XX.”

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agriculture and populations suffered the consequences of such macro-institutional changes.

Reca and Echeverría (cited by Spoor, 2002) argue that the participation of the agricultural sector in Latin America in its entirety went from representing 15% of GDP in 1970 to 10% during the 1990s. Apparently, in purely productive terms, the performance of agriculture was not better after deregulation and opening to external markets. According to specialists, there are no substantial differences between production and export trends compared to previous periods with strong state intervention, such as the sixties and seventies, but there are other sources of vulnerability that seem to emerge as a result of the opening to external markets, such as those derived from international volatility and internal distribution (Spoor 2002: 382-383).

In other words, the performance of macroeconomic variables did not improve and the social consequences were atrocious. In fact, the setback in the participation in national wealth of the broad majority was systematic for two decades: the “lost decade” – the eighties – and the nineties. But, in the latter, the indexes that measure poverty and extreme poverty grew on such a scale that the creators of the model designed and launched the famous “relief” programmes that managed to reduce them in recent years.

A report from ECLAC on the Social Panorama of Latin America 2002-2003 shows that, even if the percentages of population in poverty went down from 48.3% to 43.9% between 1999 and 2002, in absolute terms there is an increase of 20 million people living in poverty and the number went from 200 to 220 million. The same occurs with levels of extreme poverty. Perhaps the most dramatic case is that of Argentina, whose leaders followed to the letter the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indebting the country, giving away its natural resources and deregulating the economy. As a consequence, they created one of the most profound crises in national history: between 1999 and 2002, the poverty index almost doubled (from 23.7% to 45.4%), while people in extreme poverty multiplied by three. In reality, Latin America was not the only one who suffered the consequences of the neoliberal model; the growth of the world economy was lower between 1980 and 2000 – a golden age of liberalism and deregulation in the name of growth – than during the seventies and eighties, a period of regulation and protectionism (Cassen, 2003).

In this scenario, collective action takes place and new social actors emerge. Many of these new experiences have to do with the rural and agrarian world. According to NACLA's Report on Rural Movements (2000), in many parts of Latin America rural social movements have taken centre stage in their nations' politics. And this phenomenon is not exclusive to countries with a strong tradition of peasant struggles, like Brazil or Mexico, but it is also the case in countries with a significant history of urban labour struggles, such as Argentina, where new actors emerge, but necessarily articulated with the urban or industrial world.

At the end of the 1990s, protest became global and focused on international organisations that promoted these transformations (World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc.). Additionally, between end of 1993 and 1994 in many countries of Latin America there was innovative and significant resistance that recovered the experiences and struggles that had been developed since the beginning of the aforementioned decade.

In my opinion, at this moment it is possible to record three events that traversed the continent North to South (or South to North). First, the emergence of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, in the same moment as the country entered NAFTA (the North America Free Trade Agreement). This placed within the resistance space a new political thinking, for the first time with distance from the State, centred around autonomy and with a discursive logic closer to "expressive" aesthetics than to the "scientific" one used in the old leftist speeches. As Alain Badiou says, "the irruption of Chiapas fixes a measure – a distance – from the Mexican State; shows that such State can be identified and limited by a new form of political action" (Badiou, 2003: 13).

The development of information and communications technology enabled new forms of circulation for financial capital, one of the pillars of the new model, but also allowed for action at a distance from resistance groups. Perhaps the paradigmatic example of this situation was the spreading of the ideas of Zapatismo and its huge impact throughout a world population that was living with a certain unease about the 'de-humanising' advance of neoliberal capitalism. Today, many of the ideas of Zapatismo circulate in academic, cultural, and artistic spaces and find several allies in the European urban social world. In fact, the first Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism – which took place in Chiapas at the end of July 1996 on the initiative of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) and had the presence of almost fifty

resistance organisations from around the world – is considered the most important precedent of the series of protests that was known as the anti-globalization movement.

The second event occurs in Argentina and it is almost simultaneous with the Zapatista uprising. It was in one of the poorest provinces of Argentina, Santiago del Estero, which has a very high proportion of rural population. The rebellion began in its capital city, where people's livelihoods depend on public administration or services oriented towards agriculture. The '*pueblada*' happened against the provincial state authorities and protested by burning buildings and going after corrupt politicians. This episode, in the middle of Carlos Menem's government, is remembered as the '*santigueñazo*' and it is very important as a precedent for the 2001 crisis. From then on, the rate of electoral abstention in the province rose to 50% and a period of politicisation of the population began that led to a ferocious political and social persecution by the provincial power. This situation developed into a crisis in 2003 when the government tried to cover the murder of two young men because of its involvement in the crime.

Once again, people took over the streets, although this time in a pacific way, demanding justice, and political change. This irreconcilable relation between civil society and government representatives characterised Argentine politics since those initial moments in 1994. The events of 19th and 20th December 2001 marked the peak moment of this cycle at the national level. Despite the open process initiated with the government of Nestor Kirchner – which generated great expectations – the tension between “representatives-represented” and the questioning of the idea of ‘representation’ – key in liberal democracies – are central to the ideas of many of the new political forms that have emerged since then.³

The third event takes place in Ecuador. In fact, in June 1994, a few months after the events in Mexico and Argentina, indigenous people from the whole territory called for a mobilisation that stopped the country for two weeks. As Nina Pacari (1996), lawyer and leader of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador, CONAIE) argues, the protest was organised against the Law of Agrarian Development, a key piece of the

³ Electoral abstention in a country with mandatory vote went from a historical level that remained below 20% to 32% in a series of elections in the last year, with the exception of the presidential election.

plan of structural adjustment implemented by Sixto Duran Ballen: “The law approved by Congress called for the elimination of communal lands in favour of business agriculture, as well as other measures that favoured the interests of large land-owners. Everything affecting indigenous people, peasants and small farmers of Ecuador was ignored” (Pacari, 1996: 23). In the following years, the indigenous movement converged with other movements, non-indigenous and urban, leading to the creation of the Pachakutik Movement, that during the nineties dabbled in the field of partisan politics. It was followed in 1997 by the removal of President Abdalá Bucará, the Constitutional Assembly of 1998, and the removal of President Jamil Mahuad in 2000 (Dávalos, 2003). Finally, towards the end of 2002, the Pachakutik Movement led the electoral alliance that allowed the electoral success of Coronel Lucio Gutierrez, but within a few months of forming a government, its members withdrew.

This dynamic process that took place over a decade transformed the destiny that historically was given to the indigenous people of Latin America and, once again, marked a key point in the political thinking of the region. Despite being a majority in several of our countries, native peoples never before had proposed to govern. Ecuador and then Bolivia put this issue on the regional agenda.

To this list of protests, resistance from peasants and indigenous people, *‘puebladas’*, strengthening of organisations, and a number of other events that occurred in this period, we could add the Movement of Rural Workers Without Lands of Brazil – as well as the numerous peasant unions in this country, such as the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Confederação Nacional de Trabalhadores na Agricultura –CONTAG), the National Peasant Federation of Paraguay, the peasant and indigenous populations of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Argentina. Most of them joined an organisation that grouped them together – the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organisations (Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo - CLOC) – and, through it, into the international organisation Via Campesina.

In a similar way, a struggle over the preservation of natural resources unfolds throughout the continent in encounters of peasant organisations and small urban centres, such as the cases of Cochabamba and the protest against the privatisation of water in the southern region of the province of Tucuman in Argentina (Giarracca and Del Pozo, 2004). Mapuche populations in the South of Argentina protested against the installation of a mining company, alluding to what it would imply in

terms of water waste; peasants and native communities in Bolivia were opposed to the export of Bolivian gas to the United States through Chile and led a rebellion that ended the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada. In a similar direction, sociologist Bernard Duterme warns that in Chiapas the privatisation of public goods will transform the tension between indigenous people and the state into a confrontation between the latter and transnational corporations over the natural richness of the region (Duterme, 2004).

New demands and new aesthetics began to circulate in a significant way from one side of the continent to the other, while the main actors, who coincided in incorporating demands over natural resources to the historical claims over land, were not necessarily aware of one another. With the first years of the 21st century, the struggle over natural resources is being consolidated as central and the concept of “territory” is replacing that of “land”, as it includes and adds the richness of the subsoil.

The encounter between peasant and indigenous organisations in continental and international federations, the territorial mobility of some leaders and the universal principles of political order – such as “food sovereignty”, respect for biodiversity, respect for gender equality, human rights – shaped the newness, created new senses and challenged us to think from new paradigms (see Via Campesina).

An additional paragraph should be dedicated to the process generated in the Mexican countryside in recent years. “The countryside cannot take it any longer”, together with many other peasant and indigenous populations, reacted to the agrarian devastation that NAFTA created. In addition to these, there were peasant struggles such as those of Atenco, Estado de Mexico, against the destruction created by the Texcoco airport; those of the Montes Azules communities, in Chiapas, against evictions; those of Tepoztlán, Morelos, against a golf course; and those of ecologist peasants of Guerrero against transnational lumbering and in demand of the release of their prisoners (Bartra, 2003). [...]

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