The Agrarian Question of Extractive Capital:
Political Economy, Rural Change, and Peasant Struggle in 21st Century Paraguay

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the impact of contemporary capitalist globalization on class relations, class conflict, and economic development in the Paraguayan countryside. It offers a political economy analysis of agrarian change, situating this analysis in the wider historical context of the protracted transition to democracy between 1989 and 2008, the rural class structure of the country, the changing character of contemporary agro-extractive capitalism, and the long-standing class struggle for redistributive land reform. Particular focus is placed on the combative but still highly fragmented peasantry and on the "parliamentary coup" that took place in June 2012, as this event reveals the major fault lines of the balance of class forces in the countryside, in particular the commitment of a compact and coalesced, dominant agrarian class and political elite in Congress to preserving the country's unequal distribution of land and wealth. By examining the Paraguayan land reform impasse under the short-lived government of Fernando Lugo (2008–2012) through an interactive state-society framework, this dissertation attempts to locate the sources of current social and political conflict in the country, and the demands of rival social groups. In doing so, it argues that the rise and fall of Lugo occurred in the context of structural legacies from the Stroessner era (1954–1989) that have remained largely unchanged and that coexist today with an expanding agro-extractivist development model.

This dissertation also challenges the recent hailing of agricultural biotechnology as a panacea for food insecurity and rural poverty in countries of the global South. Based on an empirical investigation of the neoliberal soy regime in Paraguay, the present study documents how the profound transformation of this country's agricultural mode of production over the past two decades, spurred by the neoliberal restructuring of agriculture and the bio-revolution, has jeopardized rural livelihoods. Drawing on the concept of "agrarian extractivism", the study demonstrates how the transgenic soyization of Paraguay's agriculture has led to an increased concentration of landholdings, as well as the displacement and disempowerment of peasants and rural labourers who have been rendered surplus to the requirements of agribusiness capital. At the same time, the consolidation of this new agro-industrial model has fostered a growing dependence on agrochemicals that compromise environmental quality and human health. Agrarian extractivism has also reshaped the political terrain of the countryside; the class struggle for land and agrarian reform has now expanded to include struggles against the deleterious operations of extractive capital.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction 1.1

The turn of the new millennium opened a new chapter in the history of capitalist development in Latin America. On the one hand, the exclusionary and concentrating consequences of neoliberalism[1] provoked massive anti-neoliberal mobilizations throughout the region—exemplified in the various mass street actions that brought down governments in Peru (2000), Argentina (2001), Bolivia (2003 and 2005), and Ecuador (2000 and 2005)—culminating in the rise to office of left and centre-left governments that were unabashedly opposed to the neoliberal trajectories mapped out by their predecessor governments.[2] On the other hand, the political reorientation of the Latin America scenario occurred alongside shifts in the region's political

[1] For the purposes of this dissertation, neoliberalism ought to be understood not as "a core set of ahistorical neoclassical economic policies", often cited as the 'Washington Consensus' but, rather, as "a historical, class-based ideology that proposes all social, political, and ecological problems can be resolved through more direct free-market exposure, which has become an increasingly structural aspect of capitalism" (Marois 2005: 102–103). From this class-based perspective, the purist theory of free-market economic fundamentals that provides the bedrock for neoliberal ideology should be understood as a "flexible toolkit for justifying the project for restoring capitalist class power", rather than as aguide to the actual policy practice of states during this period (Brabazon and Webber 2014: 437; also see Harvey 2005). In the Latin American context, "neoliberalism failed miserably in terms of its declared objectives of increasing economic efficiency and improving human well-being. However, seen as a political project for the formation or restoration of capitalist class power, neoliberalism has been tremendously successful" (Webber 2011).

[2] The so-called "pink tide" wave in Latin America began perhaps with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (1998) and continued in Chile (2000), Brazil (2002), Argentina (2003), Uruguay (2004), Bolivia (2005), Ecuador (2006), Nicaragua (2006), Paraguay (2008), El Salvador (2009), and Peru (2011). This process of regime change has resulted in the formation of what some scholars see as the beginnings of a post-neoliberal state (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009; 2012; Petras and Veltmeyer 2009; Webber and Carr 2013). For a comprehensive review of this literature, see Yates and Bakker (2014).

economy and its relationship to world markets, particularly as related to an impressive global commodity boom driven by China's increased demand for natural resources.[3]

The convergence of these two dynamics—which could be thought of as the "double boom" of the 2000s: a global commodity boom and a regional "political boom" as described by Hogenboom (2012a)—ignited a shift in the region's development discourse and practice, whereby governments integrated an intensified export-orientated extractive model for economic growth, with new social policies based on poverty reduction and redistribution of earnings.[4] In fact, governments across the heterogeneous field of Latin American politics adopted controversial policies of "progressive neo-extractivism" (Gudynas 2009; Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Veltmeyer and Petras 2014), in which commodity-driven development is linked—at least rhetorically—to the expansion of anti-poverty programs that are largely credited with raising 41.4 million people out of poverty and 25.4 million out of extreme poverty (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012: 10). The controversy attached to this model, however, stems from the fact that this "new extractivism" is much like the old extractivism, destroying the environment, generating social conflict, and eroding indigenous and citizen rights.[5]

[3] The economic impacts and political implications of the so-called "China effect" on Latin American exports are well discussed by Fernández Jilberto and Hogenboom (2007), Jenkins et al. (2008), Cypher (2010), Jenkins (2010, 2011; 2012), Hogenboom (2012b).

[4] Between 2000 and 2011 the percentage of primary products in total exports for South American countries rose from 40.9 per cent to 60.9 per cent (ECLAC 2007, 2013), "allowing states to accumulate sufficient resources for the redistribution and the design of new social policies" (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012: 6).

[5] On the dynamics of these conflicts in the extractive sector within the context of Latin America, see the special issue on social movements and natural resource conflicts in *OSAL* (2005); Webber and Gordon (2008); Bebbington (2012); Saguier (2012); and the various case studies in the edited volume by Veltmeyer and Petras (2014).

The commodity boom of the early twenty-first century has pushed the traditional boundaries of what has historically been considered extractivism—hydrocarbons and mining. Now the alarming rate of clearing of forests and grasslands to permit the agricultural production of soy and other plant-based biofuels has shifted the definition (Farthing and Fabricant 2019: 5). The concept of "agrarian extractivism" has become an increasingly recurrent term in the Latin American extractivist literature for understanding the new dynamics and trajectories of agrarian change and challenging dominant discourses, which characterize present-day forms of capitalist agriculture as *industrial* agricultural development (Teubal and Giarracca 2014; Alonso-Fradejas 2015; Gudynas 2015; McKay 2017). While the latter would imply value-added processing, sectoral linkages, and employment generation, the term agro-extractivism reveals the very extractive nature of capitalist agriculture by highlighting the various dimensions of social, economic and environmental exploitation and its negative implications for rural development (McKay 2017). This conceptual distinction has important implications for our understanding of the current meaning of the classic "agrarian question" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010a, 2010b), particularly in the context of contemporary land grabbing, "flex crops", and the increasingly corporatized agro-food system (Borras et al. 2012; McMichael 2012; Otero 2012).

Written within this global and regional context, this dissertation offers a critique and contribution from the Paraguayan experience, where the national model of development is increasingly becoming characteristic of this precise type of "agrarian extractivism" related to the production and export of genetically modified (GM) soy. At the same time, the socio-environmental degradation stemming from it has unleashed new forces of resistance (Palau and Kretschmer 2004) which, in tandem with the country's unresolved land issue (Pastore 1972; Riquelme 2003),

has expressed itself in an increasingly volatile and virulent fashion, as clearly evidenced in the June 2012 "Curuguaty massacre" and associated "parliamentary coup" against Fernando Lugo.[6] In many ways, it could be argued that the "coup" in Paraguay was the start of a region-wider pendulum swing back to the right, signalling the receding of the "pink tide" and end of the progressive cycle.[7] Against this backdrop, this study aims to determine the class dynamics of agrarian extractivism and resistance in the Paraguayan process of rural transformation**,** and what insights can be drawn from this national experience that are relevant to the current regional debates on neo-extractivism and the field of critical agrarian studies within the Latin America.

1.2 Problematics of the agrarian question

As defined by Edelman and Wolford (2017: 962):

> Critical Agrarian Studies are simultaneously a tradition of research, thought and political action, an institutionalized academic field, and an informal network (or various networks) that links professional intellectuals, agriculturalists, scientific journals and alternative media, and non-governmental development organizations, as

[6]A similar procedure was used to topple Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

[7]The right turn in Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012), Argentina (2015), Brazil (2016), Venezuela (2018), and Bolivia (2019) all shared similarities, especially an oligarchy in charge of the media that opportunistically found ways to amplify corruption charge against sitting presidents. Only in in Argentina did this work as an electoral strategy; in the other four countries something between a coup and an impeachment removed the left from power. Only in Venezuela did the left managed to hold tenuously to power (Hetherington 2020: 243n27). For a broad comparison of contexts, see the NACLAC Roundtable on "21st Century Golpismo" (Pitts et al. 2016).

well as activists in agrarian, environmentalist, agroecology, food, feminist, indigenous and human rights movements.[8]

The Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) has sought to re-examine the classical Marxist analyses of the "agrarian question", particularly those by Kautsky, Lenin, and Chayanov.[9] These debates revolved around discussion of the agrarian question firstly as a *process*, whereby the penetration of capitalist relations into the countryside would lead to both the commodification of labour and accumulation based on increased productivity. Central to critical agrarian studies, therefore, is understanding the ways in which agriculture is transformed under capitalism.[10] The classic agrarian question posed by Kautsky interrogated the extent and ways in which capital takes hold of agriculture, revolutionizes it, and establishes new forms of production and of poverty (Banaji 1980, 1990; Kautsky 1988). Other classic texts by Marx (1990[1887]), Engels (1950[1894]), and Lenin (1964[1899]) contributed to what is now referred to as the classic agrarian question, formulated by Byres (1996) as the problematics of politics,

[8]The scale and breadth of this "network of networks" was brought home to me during my participation at the 5th BRICS Initiative in Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS) Conference, held at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Moscow, on 13-16 October 2017. "Over the course of four days, over 100 scholars and activists from around the world discussed and debated various themes related to the rise of emerging economies and the implications for national, regional and global agrarian transformations. This included examinations of new forms of (agro) extractivism, the dynamics of social and environmental resistance, and a series on agrarian questions of labour in comparative perspective across the BRICS and other countries in the Global South."

[9] To date the ICAS series has published ten "little books on big ideas" written by outstanding scholars in the field of agrarian studies, including Henry Bernstein (2010), Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (2013), Philip McMichael (2013), Ian Scoones (2015), Marc Edelman and Saturnino M. Borras Jr. (2016), Raúl Delgado Wise and Henry Veltmeyer (2016), Peter M. Rosset and Miguel A. Altieri (2017), Jennifer Clapp and S. Ryan Isakson (2018), Walden Bello (2019), and Ben White (2020).

[10] This section draws from an introductory draft chapter for a forthcoming volume on the topic which I am currently co-editing with two colleagues.

production and accumulation and further revised by Bernstein (1996, 2004, 2006, 2009) as the agrarian questions of capital and labour, of which, for Bernstein, only the latter remains relevant in the current context of a "globalizing" capitalism. In 1899, Kautsky (1988: 297) wrote:

> Agricultural production has already been transformed into industrial production in a large number of fields, and a large number of others can be expected to undergo this transformation in the immediate future. No field of agriculture is completely safe. Every advance in this direction must inevitably multiply the pressures on farmers, increase their dependence on industry and undermine their security.

In the contemporary period, there is no doubt that capital is indeed penetrating, taking hold of, and revolutionizing agriculture, albeit in variegated and uneven ways at different paces and trajectories across places. So-called "industrial" capitalist agriculture has become the dominant model for agricultural development to combat rural poverty and feed the world, as promoted by the most influential development institutions (World Bank 2007). This has generated many debates concerning the socio-economic, political, and ecological implications of the agro-industrial model vis-à-vis alternative models based on cooperative, smallholder or peasant agriculture and with agroecological farming methods. This includes both old and new debates pertaining to the role and viability of peasant farming in generating a surplus and for feeding the world (McMichael 2009); the persistence or disappearance of the peasantry based on socio-economic or demographic factors of differentiation (van der Ploeg 2018);[11] between farm size

[11] The terms "peasant" and "peasantry" are highly contested term and concepts in the literature. A fairly straightforward definition of a peasant is "an agricultural worker whose livelihood is based primarily on having access to land that is either owned or rented, and who uses principally their own labour and the labour force of other

and productivity (Woodhouse 2010); as well as the biophysical contradictions of the capitalist agro-industrial model (O'Connor 1998; Weis 2010). This dissertation examines the nature and character of industrial capitalist agriculture, as well as the ways and extent to which industrial capital has penetrated and transformed agriculture.

The extractive character of "industrial" agriculture is revealed, pointing to an emerging literature which refers to these dynamics of agrarian change as agro- or agrarian extractivism—a concept which offers both analytical and political utility in the debates regarding agricultural and rural development and agrarian change. The extractive character of industrial capitalist agriculture must be understood within the changing modalities of accumulation based on industrial and extractive capital. While both modalities depend on the exploitation of labour and nature, the latter requires increasingly less labour as it is based on various combinations of financialized, high-technology, resource-seeking extractive capital (i.e. foreign investment in the extraction of natural resources) and the appropriation of resource rents. Rather than unlimited supplies of labour (keeping wages low) being transferred to the industrial sector for a productive and social

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family members to work the land" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009: 3). For Bernstein (2006: 454), however, "nothing is gained, and much obscured, by characterizing contemporary small farmers as 'peasants.'" Such a view, in my opinion, is both analytically, but principally, politically inadequate in making sense of the series of important peasant, smallholder farmer and rural labour movements that have emerged throughout Latin America during the era of neoliberal globalization (Petras 1997, Petras and Veltmeyer 2011, Vergara-Camus 2014). Those who self-identify as "peasants" today often have diversified livelihood strategies within the household, have become semi-proletarians, temporary or seasonal labourers, seasonal migrants, and engage in highly mechanized capital-intensive farming, among others. As a concept or subject, peasant is better understood as a cultural or political category, not as a class-in-itself analytic (Edelman 1999: 191). In Spanish, campesino is often translated as "peasant", though in Paraguay it is again as much an identity category as a class one (Hetherington 2020: 223n1). In this study, the terms "peasant" and "campesino" are taken in a loose definition to mean landless and near-landless tenants and farmers, farmworkers, and other rural wage labourers and rural semi-proletariat.

transformation, the current period of extractive capitalism is generating surplus populations whereby "labour is surplus *in relation to* its utility for capital" (Li 2010: 68; emphasis in original). In other words, rather than having a labour reserve which could keep wages depressed and whereby capital accumulation is largely dependent on labour exploitation, the current conjuncture is characterized by "one in which places (or their resources) are useful, but the people are not, so that dispossession is detached from any prospect of labour absorption" (Li 2010: 69).

Extractive capital is most prominent in developing countries, though the United States and Europe are also undergoing a process of deindustrialization and erosion of the middle class as manufacturing industries move to regions with cheaper production costs, such as China. Since the emergence of neoliberal globalization in the 1980s, developing countries have experienced falling manufacturing shares in both employment and real value added, eroding the gains they made from import-substitution policies in the 1950s and 1960s—–referred to as "premature deindustrialization" (Rodrik 2016). This coincided with a process of "reprimarization" (Cypher 2010), or the expansion of activities associated with the extractive-based primary sector, facilitated by neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization and further fuelled by several converging factors which strengthened the role of extractive capital in these economies. These include the commodity price boom that was "unprecedented in its magnitude and duration", doubling real prices of energy and metals from 2003 to 2008, while food commodity prices increased by 75 per cent (Erten and Ocampo 2013: 14); new demands for raw materials from emerging economies such as the BRICS; the financialization of land and the agro-food sector (Clapp and Isakson 2018); and the increased demand for "flex crops" such as

soybeans, sugarcane, maize, and oil palm which have multiple and flexible uses as food, feed, fuel and industrial material (see Borras et al. 2016)—all of which should be understood in the context of the global land grab as land-based deals skyrocketed across the globe (White et al. 2012; Borras et al. 2012). This rush for natural resources and changing dynamics in the global political economy represent a shift from industrial to extractive capitalism based, predominantly, on the exploitation of natural resource wealth rather than on the exploitation of labour (see Veltmeyer 2016).

It is within this context that we must understand the new ways in which capitalism is transforming agriculture, its extractive character, and the social, economic, and ecological implications of this dominant development model. While the concept of agrarian extractivism is yet to experience its own "literature rush", in the term applied by Oya (2013) to the associated topic of "global land grabbing", the term undoubtedly represents something of a new research agenda in the field of critical agrarian studies, as evidenced, for example, in title of the fourth International Conference of the BRICS Initiative for Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS): "Agro-Extractivism Inside and Outside BRICS", held in Beijing, China, on November 28–30, 2016.[12] A further indication of this emerging research agenda are two empirically grounded dissertations—on Bolivia (McKay 2017a) and Guatemala (Alonso-Fradejas 2018)—recently completed by graduate students at the Institute of Social Science (ISS) in the Hague, which has long been an important centre for the political-economic study of the agrarian question.

[12] For a brief discussion of the conference, see Kurakin (2017).

1.3 Research Questions and Approach

Framing my to the aforementioned literature "within a broad agrarian political economy framework, where research questions focus on the processes of agrarian transition and how the questions of capital and labour are solved or not" (Oya 2013: 1547), the central research question guiding this dissertation is the following:

- How and to what extent is the development and expansion of the agro-industrial soy complex transforming agrarian social relations in the Paraguayan countryside in the contemporary context of new forms of extractive capital penetration?

Here Raju Das's (2007: 351) introductory article to the special issue on "Peasant, State and Class" in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (JPS) is worth quoting at length, because his clear statement highlights the main themes informing the research objective of the rest of this dissertation:

> The first concerns the different forms taken by state interventions on behalf of capital, and their impact on the peasantry. A second examines the other side of this same coin, and looks at the way peasants have opposed and subverted government action/activities, with particular reference to the nature and effectiveness of grassroots resistance to the state. The third addresses the ideological underpinnings of political action undertaken by peasants in their conflict with the state, especially the efficacy of mobilization and resistance confined to particular localities.

Reformulating the above themes as a set of auxiliary questions in relation to contemporary dynamics of agrarian extractivism in Paraguay:

(i) What are the different forms of intervention taken by the Paraguayan state on behalf of agro-extractive capital, and what impact has this had on the peasantry?

(ii) How and to what extent do different forms and particular strategies of resistance, adopted by the new peasant movements, influence the nature, pace, extent, and direction of agro-extractive implementation processes and outcomes?

(iii) What are the material and ideological underpinnings of the different forms of political actions and strategies of resistance undertaken by peasants in their conflict with the Paraguayan state and the forces of agro-extractive capitalism and extractive imperialism?

Paraguay provides an excellent case study to examine the problematic of this research. Indeed, the Paraguayan case is one of the clearest examples of the extractive dynamic of transnational agribusiness capital in Latin America. The particularities of the country's development model have made it the country of transnational "agro-extractivism" *par excellence*: as a percentage of gross annual production, Paraguay exports more soy than any other country in the world (Ezquerro-Cañete 2016); in 2019, exports of soybeans and derivatives total $2,654 million equivalent to over 55.4 percent of the country's agricultural export basket (CAS 2020: 52). Today, soy is produced on over 60 per cent of the total arable land (MAG 2019), covering more

than 3.5 million hectares and reaching a record harvest of 10.6 million metric tonnes for the 2019-2020 agricultural season (*ABC Color*, 7 July 2020).[13] Also, Paraguay is, perhaps, the most appropriate case study in the region for highlighting the limitations of the dominant "agriculture-for-development" policy agenda of the World Bank (2007). As noted by Kregg Hetherington (2009: 656n8), Paraguay is the only Latin American country to fit within the World Bank's category as an "agricultural economy" (which is otherwise dominated by Sub-Saharan Africa), in accordance with its "three worlds" approach to development (World Bank 2007: 31).[14]

By answering the first (auxiliary) question, this study pays particular attention to the "type of large-scale farming and agribusiness [that has benefited] from [the neoliberal restructuring of the countryside], and how the different class fractions within the peasantries have been affected and have reacted to this restructuring" (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a: 242). Empirically, the central focus of this enquiry will be to assess to what extent the Paraguayan government has supported large-scale capitalist farming and agribusiness, and to what extent it has supported peasant agriculture and improved rural labour conditions (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a: 241).

The second and third question takes seriously the questions of "agency" of peasants and other working classes; after all, peasants and other working classes make their own history. Although as Marx already warned, they do not do it just as they please and under circumstances they choose (Marx 1963; see also McMichael 2008, Borras 2009: 21). Here it is worth briefly

[13] https://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/economia/2020/07/07/record-en-soja-pero-se-pierden-us-430-millones/

[14] "Three clusters of structurally different economies emerge, each with distinct challenges for agricultural policy making… In the agriculture-based economies… agriculture contributes significantly to growth, and the poor are concentrated in rural areas. The key policy challenge is to help agriculture play its role as an engine of growth and poverty reduction" (World Bank 2007: 30).

highlighting some of the weaknesses of the "identity" approach, which was overwhelming favoured for the study of Latin American social movement studies in 1980s and 1990s. One of the most demonstrative examples of this tendency, in the specific case of Paraguay, is Cheryl Lynn Duckworth's (2011) *Land and Dignity in Paraguay* which rejects class conflict as a mode of analysis (Duckworth 2011: 155) but without adequately demonstrating why access to land, the central issue of Paraguay's peasant and indigenous movement, is better "framed" by aspirations to dignity. Duckworth eschews a class analysis, presenting instead—in very abbreviated and elliptical form—her own preferred "dignity perspective", one that presumably (and apparently from her subsequent analysis) draws attention to the historically rooted institutional context for the actions taken and strategies pursued by the social movements that emerged in the 1990s.

Kregg Hetherington's (2011) astonishing *Guerrilla Auditors* is an altogether different animal, offering a finely-grained, intimately detailed ethnographic analysis in the best tradition of great agrarian anthropologists such as James C. Scott (1985, 1990) and Eric Wolf (1969).[15] Hetherington's contribution to the land question in Paraguay is noteworthy for its erudition and sophistication and has been the subject to well-deserved praise (e.g., Folch 2012; Gill 2012; Setrini 2013; Balán 2014; Gustafson 2015). In an otherwise highly favourable review of Hetherington's excellent text, Lesley Gill laments the lack of "a more detailed discussion of the internal differentiation of the peasantry, in the context of neoliberal reforms and the expansion of soy bean cultivation" (Gill 2012: 1641). Gill's observation is a shrewd one, and it speaks directly to a key preoccupation within agrarian political economy, as highlighted in the "mission statement" of the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, which is to investigate "the social relations and

[15] James C. Scott calls *Guerilla Auditors* "radical scholarship at its deepest and most searching."

dynamics of production, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both historical and contemporary."

The question of peasant resistance will also help address the uneven coverage within the Marxist-inspired Latin American peasant studies, which have focused primarily on high-profile cases—e.g., La Vía Campesina, the MST in Brazil, the Zapatista movement in Chiapas (Vergara-Camus 2014)—and had yet to fully consider Paraguay's *campesino* movement. The lone exception, within the English-language literature at least, is James Petras's (1997) insightful, panoramic survey of left resurgence in rural Latin America over the course of the 1990s, which includes analysis of the Paraguayan National Peasant Federation (Federación Nacional Campesina, FNC), albeit within a comparative rather than single-case basis. One possible explanation for this uneven coverage is put forth by Tom Perreault in his survey of academic literature on Latin America social movements which concludes with the following observation: "academic research often creates something of a path dependency, in which existing scholarship attracts (and begets) more like-minded scholarship. As a consequence, there are very likely more Anglophone geographers at work in Oaxaca than in Paraguay and Uruguay combined" (Perreault 2008: 1377). This is one gap which this dissertation aims to fill, by introducing and examining several Paraguayan campesino organizations that have not been the subject of scholarly analysis before within the field of critical agrarian studies: the Organización de Lucha por la Tierra (OLT), Coordinadora de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indígenas del Paraguay (CONAMURI), Coordinadora de Trabajadores Campesinos y Urbanos (CTCU), as well as the aforementioned FNC.

Two analytical focuses seem to offer appropriate strategy for approaching the research questions examined in this study. One is to focus on the external factors—the changing global dynamics of extractive capitalism, the neoliberal restructuring of the global agro-food system, the raise of corporate agribusiness, renewed global land grabbing, and so on. The other is to focus on the internal evolution of social forces within Paraguay, the dominant class alliances, and the formation of new social movements. In other words,

> one must establish an ordering of processes in order to provide a framework for understanding the overall process. That means identifying the initial large-scale shifts and the political and social action… that influenced the direction of historical changes (Petras and Vieux 1996: 5).

In this regard, the analysis offered in this dissertation will

> adhere to an analytical approach which is both *materialist*—the tenet that the mode of production and the behaviour of actors determined by the rules of reproduction play a major role in configuring society—and *historicist*—the tenet that there are no universal, transhistorical definitions of human thought and action, but rather that these activities must be understood in their hieratical context (Spronk and Webber 2015: 2–3; emphasis in original).

Within this historical materialist framework, it is important to begin by identifying within the period in question (circa 1990–present) "the major historical changes that served as a catalyst for

subsequent changes" (Petras and Vieux 1996: 5). Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation will address these conjectural and contextual issues in some considerable depth.

The approach followed in this dissertation, therefore, resembles the Marxist inspired approach favoured by, among others, Cristóbal Kay (2015) for studying the agrarian question.[16] As argued by Kay (2015: 79),

> the historical materialist method and concepts such as class formation and conflict, social and economic differentiation, social and political consciousness, processes of capital accumulation, forms of transition between different socio-economic formations, creation and appropriation of surplus value, processes of exploitation and domination, bring into sharper focus the key contradictions and problems facing the rural economy and society (Kay 2015: 79).

It is, of course, not the case that historical materialism is able to explain everything; certain problems may require other approaches, such as the innovative feminist, ecological and post-colonial perspectives (Kay 2015: 80). As recent studies in the field of critical agrarian studies have argued, some eclecticism is helpful for gaining a more comprehensive view and deeper insight into the problems we wish to analyse (Wolford et al. 2013: 199; Kay 2015: 80). In this light, it is helpful to adopt something of a mixed martial arts perspective, as advised by Bruce Lee, one must "absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own."

[16] For a survey of the trajectory of the historical materialist analytical framework as it has been used in critical agrarian studies, see Akram-Lodhi and Kay's two-part article in JPS (2010a, 2010b).

1.4 Methodology

It goes without saying that whatever approach is used it should be empirically informed. Recent agrarian studies have raised concerns regarding the methodological assumptions pervasive in much of the land grab literature. Many of these problems relate to epistemological and methodological issues such as the lack of coherence between questions and methods, sources with different quality, or short and poorly designed fieldwork oriented to add details to "pre-cooked conclusions" often based on relatively simplified conceptualisations of capitalist dynamics influenced by neo-populist discourse (Oya 2013). Moreover, the fixation on area-orientated analysis focussing on "messy hectares" (Edelman 2013: 485), and the quest for "killer facts" (Oya 2013a: 1534) tends to obscure important questions about the agrarian political economy related to the development of agrarian capitalism and rural social reproduction (Edelman 2013; Oya 2013a, 2013b). In light of these issues, Oya (2013b: 512) reminds us of the importance of:

> being patient and spending more time to collect high-quality evidence on process, actors and impact and systematically dealing with biases, lies, imprecise figures and mistakes that are unfortunately common in any research dealing with land use, labour and production in developing countries.

In a similar vein, Gerardo Otero (2016), in his critical but appreciate review of McMichael's (2013) *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, cautions against the use of ad hoc data from a

variety of sources, including "grey sources", and argues for the use of more systematic and rigorous empirical research methods.

Drawing selectively from the "triptych of complementary but distinct epistemological approaches" within critical agrarian studies (Akram-Lodhi 2018), this dissertation combines an agrarian study of socioeconomic structural change with a meticulous analysis of large farm-level agricultural datasets, and a detailed political ethnography of peasant activism. As Akram-Lodhi (2018) puts it "in peasant studies agrarian political economy framed the central research questions, quantitative data provided the 'what', and ethnography provided the 'why'." The result is a combination of quantitative data on Paraguayan agriculture production and qualitative analysis rooted in the perspectives of a wide variety of participants but, admittedly, slanted heavily in favour of positions held by peasant organizations, which reflects the scholar-activist spirit of this study.

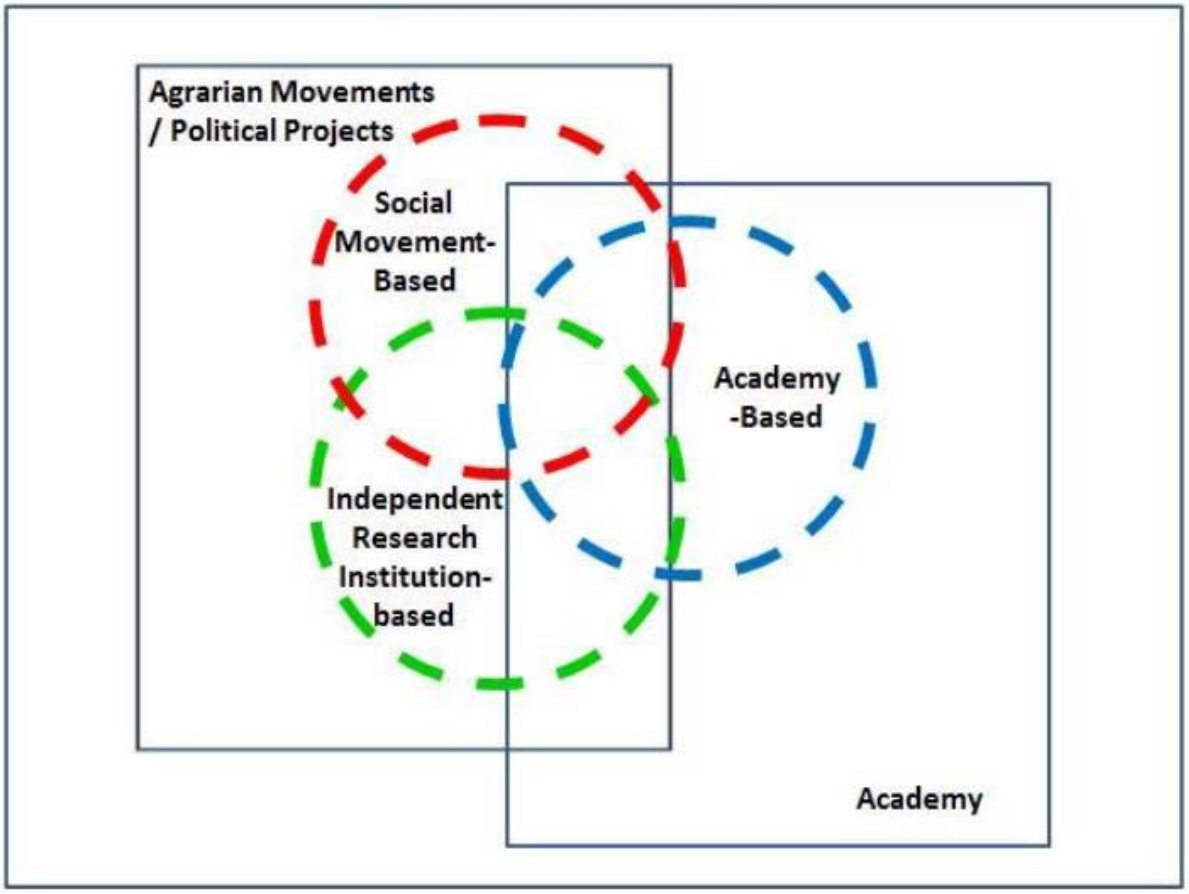
1.4.1 Scholar-activism

The research design for this study is based on a collaborative academic-activist research approach, inspired by a new generation of agrarian scholar-activists, including Johnathan Fox (2006), Charles R. Hale (2006, 2008), Marc Edelman (2009), and Saturnino M. ('Jun') Borras (2016), described by Haroon Akram-Lodhi as "the quintessential activist-academic in international rural development" (Akram-Lodhi 2013: 158). My analysis shares with this approach a commitment to—and indeed a celebration of—"embracing any existing relationships with social movements, collaborating with movements in every step of the research process, and producing research products that are accessible and useful for movement participants", as well as

the contention "that such involvement weakens or invalidates research by sullying the objectivity of the researcher" (Granovsky-Larsen 2014: 3–4). The practice of "activist scholarship", therefore, entails "rigorous academic work… which is *explicitly and unapologetically connected to political projects or movements* (Borras 2016; emphasis added). The resulting dissemination of findings is intended to highlight and support the organized peasant movement in Paraguay. Nevertheless, it is important to be mindful of avoiding simple reproduction of the "official narratives" of social movements (Edelman 2009, Wolford 2010). Following Edelman's balance of being "sympathetic to and yet critical of the movements with which we research" (Edelman 2009: 246), the discussion offered in this dissertation will consider some of the divisive and debilitating internal dynamics of the movement (see chapter 6 in particular).

There are three types of scholar-activists in this broad sense (see Figure 1.1): (1) scholar-activists who are primarily located in academic institutions who do activist work and are connected to a political project or movement(s); (2) scholar-activists who are principally based in social movements or a political project and do scholar-activism from within; and (3) scholar-activists who are mainly located in non-academic independent research institutions who do activist work and connect with a political project or movement(s) (Borras 2016).

Figure 1.1 Scholar-Activists



Source: Borras (2016).

Located within the first of these three models, this study hopes to respond to Borras's (2009: 21) call for "academics and researchers to engage with development practitioners and activists for a transformative and mutually empowering co-production of knowledge and mutually reinforcing dissemination and use of such knowledge." By working closely with people in struggle, this research will bring analytical and theoretical insights that would not be possible through attempts to study a social movement at arm's length (Hale 2006: 98). As Borras (2009) warns,

> Theorising without grounding in political realities: political relevance, political urgency, existing balance of political forces, and so on, maybe important academically, but in the end will not matter much for those who are actually suffering on a daily basis and to those who are at the forefront of struggles to change their conditions.

However, far from representing a novel and innovative approach to the field of rural sociology in Paraguay, this study draws inspiration from the country's long tradition of the scholar-activism and committed social researcher—"*sociologos comprometido*" (*Última Hora*, 8 March 2012).[17] This approach goes back to at least the 1980s when "a new movement of scholar-activists, led by the Paraguayan sociologist Ramón Fogel, dedicated themselves to revealing the destructive nature of the [soy] industry and the abuse of their countrymen" (Blanc 2015: 147). I worked closely alongside Fogel throughout my fieldwork, during which time I was a visiting scholar at the Centro de Estudios Rurales Interdisciplinarios (Centre for Interdisciplinary Rural Studies, CERI) with which I continues to collaborate (e.g. Ezquerro-Cañete and Fogel 2017, 2018).[18] CERI provided institutional and personal support throughout this research, and introduced me to key researchers on agrarian transformation such as Quintín Riquelme (CDE) and Luis Rojas (BASE IS).

[17] https://www.ultimahora.com/el-paraguay-pierde-un-sociologo-comprometido-n509546.html

[18] Founded in 1986, the CERI is a national leader in agrarian research, having to its credit several institutional agreements and cooperative ventures funded by diverse external agencies, and an extensive series of publications on rural development.

1.5.2 Data and data collection

Historically, in Paraguay and elsewhere in Latin America (see, e.g., the introduction of Barraclough 1973: xiv–xix), one difficulty in examining agrarian structure and land tenure is the fact that most of the official statistics are, for various reasons, "polluted" or partial accounts of the more complex reality. There is also the issue of outdated data. The distribution of land, for instance, can only be determined from agrarian censuses, the last two of which were conducted in 1991 and 2008 (MAG 2009). The next agrarian census is reported to have started in June 2019, with the support of a US$15 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, and is anticipated to incorporate the new operational guidelines of the FAO's World Census of Agriculture 2020 (FAO 2015, 2018),[19] which has been designed to facilitate the monitoring of progress toward the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (*ABC Color*, 24 April 2019, 1 June 2019).[20] Regrettably, however, the new census will likely not be available until 2021. Thus, this dissertation will necessarily have to rely on somewhat outdated figures for land tenure. My intentions moving forward with this project will be to incorporate the 2020 Agrarian Census—once it is made available—into the historical and theoretical discussion laid out herein and mobilise the updated version of this document for future scholarly and activist purposes.

[19]The FAO Program for the World Census of Agriculture (WCA) provides a methodology to frame and organize agricultural census initiatives in each country. The program started in 1950 and ever since has supported countries to carry out their national agricultural census. Organized in decadal rounds, e.g., 1996–2005, 2006–15, each country is encouraged to carry out at least one census per round.

[20] https://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/economia/en-junio-haran-el-censo-agropecuario-1697756.html https://www.abc.com.py/opinion/censo-agropecuario-para-que-1819760.html

Secondary data used in this study include published and unpublished materials: books, journal articles, conference papers, government documents, newspaper accounts, and videos. The evolution of Paraguayan food and agriculture production during the period 2013–2019 is well documented in an excellent set of series of annual publications put out by the Asunción-based research centre BASE Investigaciones Sociales since 2015—*Con la soja al cuello* [*Up to the Neck in Soy*] (Palau 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Much of the data presented in chapter 5 will be based on the statistics provided in these publications. For earlier agricultural data, I will draw on the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's 2008 agrarian census (MAG 2009). In addition, data from the annual reports of the national statistical office, Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC), will be used for a variety of socio-economic indicators.

The primary database used to inform the research for chapter 6, on land conflicts, will be the monthly *Informativo Campesino*, published by the Centro de Documentación y Estudios (CDE);[21] the Land, Human Rights, and Agribusiness Observatory maintained by BASE IS),[22]the chronicle of protests kept by the Social Observatory of Latin America (Observatorio Social de America Latina, OSAL), a renowned research programme of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO);[23]the main Paraguayan dailies (*ABC Color*, *La Nación*, and *Última*

[21] Many previous studies on Paraguayan land conflicts have also relied on the CDE archive (e.g. Petras 1997; Nagel 1999; Fogel 2001; Riquelme 2003).

[22] Starting from the inauguration of Lugo's government in 2008, BASE IS began monitoring land struggles, creating a database that feeds on journalistic information, whether business, community, and media organizations.

[23] Between 2000 and 2012, CDE was in charge of the elaboration of the chronologies of the social conflict in Paraguay carried out within the framework of the Social Observatory of Latin America (OSAL), which was one of the programs of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO). The creation of this regional program was extremely important, both in terms of collecting and systematising information about the social and political conflicts that took place in Latin America, as well as in terms of analyzing these processes and theoretical reflection

Hora); and the Brazilian observatory, *De Olho nos Ruralistas*. The archive entries from these various sources usually contain information on the date, location and type of conflict, number of households involved, responsible organisations, amount of land at stake, evictions, detentions, degree of violence, nationality of contestants, and resolution, if any (Nagel 1999).[24] The database covers 519 land occupations initiated between 1990 and 2019.

I supplement this dataset with a sociological strategic analysis that takes the form of interviewing the "actors" involved in collective action. Taken together, the various methodological approaches used in this chapter to analyze the development and resistance dynamics of agrarian extractivism in Paraguay constitute the principles "structural-strategic analysis" which assumes:

> (i) that identifiable and identified patterns in both development and resistance dynamics reflect the working of underlying 'structures' (identified by the existence of limited variations in identified patterns) that are 'objective' in their effects on individuals according to their location in the system; and (ii) that the forces of change released in the development process reflect and must be understood in terms of the collective actions of these individuals in their strategic response to these conditions. This dictates a methodological requirement of interrogating the subject or

---

on the subject. The development and publication of conflict chronologies in 19 countries was a valuable contribution for all those interested in knowing the struggle processes in our countries, both students and academics and members of trade union, social and political organizations. At the same time, it contributed to the formation and consolidation of teams in each of the countries dedicated to observing, recording, and analysing conflict in a systematic and sustained manner over several years. Unfortunately, in 2013 CLACSO discontinued the publication of OSAL timelines.

[24] It is worth stressing that the dataset derived from the compilation of these various sources is just an approximation to reality, since not all occupations and/or evictions obtain media visibility.

> ‘actors’ involved in the development process. This means supplementing a structural analysis within a political economy theoretical framework with a sociological strategic analysis that takes the form of interviewing the ‘actors’ involved in collective actions.
>
> (Veltmeyer 2020: 3)

From this perspective, the interviews conducted for the purpose of identifying the subjective dimension of the forces of resistance mobilised against the advance of agribusiness and agro-extractive capital included: Marcial Gómez, Secretary General of the *Federación Nacional Campesina* (FNC); Magui Balbuena, founding member of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones de Mujeres Trabajadoras Rurales e Indígenas* (CONAMURI), Lidia Ruiz, leader of the *Organización de Lucha por la Tierra* (OLT); and Ester Leiva, former leader of the OLT and founder of the *Coordinadora de Trabajadores Campesinos y Urbanos* (CTCU). In addition to personal interviews, I will also draw on secondary analysis of archived interviews. For example, “revisiting” (Crow 2014) the extensive in-depth interviews conducted by the Asunción-based social research centre, BASE Investigaciones Sociales, in the immediate aftermath of the parliamentary coup of June 2012 (Duré, Ortega, Palau, and Rojas 2012).

As Javier Auyero demonstrates in his penetrating study of two Argentine women’s experiences during two protest episodes in that country, narrative and story-telling are indispensable, “not only in creating the possibilities for collective action… but also in constructing the experiential meanings of events during and after the fact and thus the self-understandings of those who, on either side, participate in them” (Auyero 2003: 11). For Auyero, “the stories that actors tell after

the event not only speak about the ongoing political construction of the uprising (the 'social construction of protest') but also speak to the protesters' hopes, expectations, emotions, and beliefs at the time" (Auyero 2003: 11). However, "rusty, bent, and unpredictable… they are," these stories remain among the "few keys" we have that can "help us to understand the ways in which people make sense of collective struggle" (Auyero 2003: 12). In-depth stories told by activist of their experiences during and immediately after periods of struggle are also one of the best ways of getting a grip on the transformative imaginations of activists during these periods, their visions of the new society they are seeking to establish (Webber 2011: 47).

An appropriate way of honouring these stories and memories of struggle is to leave them unaltered. I therefore quote extensively from these interviews throughout the latter half of this dissertation to allow for those engaged in the struggle for land, with decades of activism and militancy under their belts, to speak in their own voices. These extended quotations from activists are the "poetics of struggle and lived experience," the "utterances of ordinary folk," and the "cultural products of social movements" that provide us with "the many different cognitive maps of the future of the world not yet born" (Kelley 2002: 9–10, quoted in Webber 2011: 47).

1.5 Outline of the chapters

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, including this introduction and a conclusion. This opening chapter has been an introduction to the study, including a discussion of the problem, the research question, the research design, and the significance of the study. Each chapter reviews particular debates which relate to specific areas of contention within the wider political economy

literature on the agrarian question, and each can be read in their own right as a contribution to these particular debates.

Chapter 2 ("Neoliberal Corporate Food Regime: Agrarian Change in Latin America") lays out the relevant global and regional context for this study by outlining the major productive and social transformations in global and Latin American agriculture brought about by neoliberalism in the era of globalization and agrarian extractivism. Regional and international comparative glances can help provide more critical questions about, and probably some answers to, the particularities of Paraguayan trajectories of agrarian change.

In Chapter 3 ("Land for the Few") the development of Paraguay's agrarian structure and land-based power relations are analyzed historically through several phases of transition—from independence in 1811, through the War of the Triple Alliance fought from 1864 to 1870 and the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner from 1954 to 1989, until the protracted transition to democracy in 2008. From this historical analysis, the chapter also provides an analysis of the historical evolution and modern reconstitution of the *latifundio* in Paraguay. I engage in theoretical discussions on the nature and role of the state in the historical development of capitalist agriculture, as well as the type of class alliances between national landed class, agrarian bourgeoisie, and foreign capital.

Chapter 4 ("A 'Coup' Foretold) analyzes the politics of agrarian change during the Fernando Lugo, from his historic elections in 2008 which ended over 60 years of rule by the Colorado Party—the world's longest ruling party at the time—to his impeachment and removal from

office via a parliamentary coup, instigated by the landlord class. The focus on the Lugo government is particularly relevant for two reasons. First, since democratization, it was the government that had raised the highest hopes for achieving substantial reforms in agrarian policies, including redistributive land reform and support policies for small-scale producers. Second, the ousting of Lugo from office reveals the inordinate level of influence exerted by the landowning elite on Paraguayan politics, the increasingly solid alliance that has been forged among national political elite and the multinationals that dominate world trade in agricultural commodities, as well as the very feeble nature of Paraguay's democracy.

Chapter 5 (From 'White Gold' to 'Green Deserts') takes a step back to access the current model of agricultural development. The concept of agrarian extractivism is further developed and refined to take account for the specificities of the Paraguayan case. It is argued here that this type of agro-industrial development parallels that of an extractive enclave, disconnected from sufficient value-added processes and employment generation activity due to a lack of forward and backward linkages with the rest of the economy, with a high intensity of environmental degradation, and social exclusion of the rural majority.

Chapter 6 ("Biting the Hand that Starves You") turns to the most important social actor challenging the state and the political elite: the campesino movement, with a particular emphasis on three of the most important national peasant movements—the Federación Nacional Campesina (FNC), Organización de Lucha por la Tierra (OLT), and Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones de Mujeres trabajadora Rurales e Indígenas (CONAMURI). The chapter looks at the movement's historic struggle for land and how this struggle has changed as a result of the

dynamics of agrarian extractivism discussed in the preceding chapters. Their agendas, repertoire of collective actions, degree of organizational and political influence, and geographic spread over time are examined. In each of these aspects, the movement's current situation is presented, positions clarified, dilemmas identified, and challenges put forward.

The main objective of the concluding chapter will be to summarize the study and highlight its primary contributions to the Paraguayan rural sociology and critical agrarian studies. This final chapter will underscore the importance of challenging dominant discourses which characterize present-day forms of capitalist agriculture as *industrial* agricultural development and offer suggestions for additional ways in which scholars may take up notions of agro-extractivism to the very *extractive* nature of capitalist agriculture.

Chapter 2

The Neoliberal Corporate Food Regime: Agrarian Change in Latin America

2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the relevant global and regional context for this study by outlining the major productive and social transformations in the world food economy, brought about by the neoliberal agrarian restructuring that ushered in the corporate food regime. Consequently, I begin by locating such transformations within the process of capitalist restructuring of global agriculture and the deepening of extractive imperialism on a world scale. A food regime perspective allows the current world food system to be situated within a broader historical understanding of geo-political and ecological conditions (McMichael 2009, 2013), and sets the scene for discussing the new dynamics and trajectories of agrarian change in Latin America brought about by neoliberalism in the era of globalization. In the second section, the extractive character of "industrial" agriculture is revealed, pointing to an emerging literature which refers to these dynamics of agrarian change as "agro- or agrarian extractivism"—a concept which offers both analytical and political utility in the debates regarding agricultural and rural development and agrarian change.

2.2 The neoliberal corporate food regime in Latin America

Food regime analysis emerged in the 1980s to explain the strategic role of agriculture and food in the construction of the world capitalist economy (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Through this lens we can identify a "stable period of capital accumulation associated with particular configurations of geopolitical power, conditioned by forms of agricultural production and

consumption relations within and across national spaces" (McMichael 2009: 139). The current world food regime emerged from the collapse of the previous American-dominated and state-regulate industrial food regime—labelled by Walden Bello as the "Bretton Woods agrifood regime" (Bello 2009: 24)—that lasted between 1945 and 1973.[25]Since the late 1970s, the neoliberal turn has led to a major concentration of capital and power in the agrarian sector, creating a new global food regime in which, some scholars have argued, the state is subordinate to corporate capital.

Rather than engage in a semantic dispute over whether this third regime should be labelled as the "corporate food regime" (McMichael 2009) or the "neoliberal food regime" (Pechlaner and Otero 2010), I use the terms interchangeably here—as well as the combined term "neoliberal corporate food regime"—to emphasize both the increasing control of corporate capital over the rural economy, while at the same time still acknowledging that "states continue to be central to the deployment of neoliberalism" (Otero 2012: 285) through engaging in "neoregulation" involving the facilitation of policies for agribusiness transnational corporations (ATNCs), particularly in biotechnology, to advance their position in Latin American markets (Otero 2012). Next, I provide a general overview of the transformations of the current global food regime and highlight some major trends in the international relations of food production and consumptions since the neoliberal turn.

[25]The first food regime emerged out of the industrialization and urbanization processes in Europe of the late nineteenth century and was largely dominated by Great Britain. It started to erode with the outbreak of the First World War, and finally fell apart with the Great Depression.

The most dynamic elements of the corporate neoliberal food regime, as discussed by, *inter alia*, McMichael (2009), Otero (2012), and Akram-Lodhi (2012, 2017), can, broadly speaking, be summarized as follows:

(1) The formation of new profit frontiers associated with (i) the rise of "flex crops and commodities", that is, ''crops with multiple uses (food, feed, fuel, fiber, industrial material, etc.) that can be flexibly interchanged" (Borras, Franco, Isakson, Levidow, and Vervest, 2016) such as soybeans (Oliveira and Schneider, 2016), sugarcane (McKay, Sauer, Richardson, and Herre 2016), oil palm (Alonso-Fradejas, Liu, Salerno, and Xu, 2016); (ii) the new technical frontier of agricultural biotechnology (genetically modified organisms or GMOs) which plays a strategic function in the way that corporate agribusiness is attempting to recondition human, animal and bacterial life in order to quicken the reproduction of capital—this new moment in the commercialisation of food systems has given rise to what Cambridge geographer David Nally terms "accumulation by molecularisation" (Nally 2011; explored further in chapter 5); (iii) the financialization of agriculture (Clapp and Isakson 2018).

(2) At the point of production, the dominant producer model of the corporate food regime is the fossil-fuel-driven, large-scale, capital-intensive industrial agriculture megafarm, which in turn requires, through enclosures and market imperatives, deepening the simple reproduction squeeze facing small-scale peasant petty commodity producers around the developing world, as world market prices for farm products fail to cover the actual costs of production at the farm gate (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010).

(3) At the point of consumption, the current food system has been constructed on a dramatic social and distributional contradiction leading to a world of the "stuffed and starved" (Patel 2007). That is, a global subsistence and health crisis, in which, on the one hand, record production co-exists with record hunger: 2 billion people experiencing protein-calorie and micronutrient malnourishment; and, on the other hand, rising obesity and obesity-related illness associated with the nutritional deficiencies of diets composed of "junk foods", fast foods and processed foods. A recent global comparative risk assessment study published in the authoritative medical journal, *The Lancet*, attributes 11 million deaths (over 20% of all deaths among adults) in 2017 to suboptimal diet, making dietary risks responsible for more deaths than any other risks globally (Afshin et al. 2019).

While predominantly offering us a broad-brush picture of the global agro-food system, the food regime analysis "can be particularized at the regional level" (McMichael 2013: 96). Downscaling analysis to the meso-level, we see that Latin America's insertion into the global food regime has had major impact on the composition and the degree of concentration of the region's export basket. According to ECLAC, the weight of the agricultural sector in the region's exports rose considerably, from 17% in 2000 to 26% in 2016 (ECLAC 2017: 127). Table 2.1 highlights the profound reconfiguration of the region's export basket during this century and, in particular, the growing weight oil seeds and meats, which were the categories that saw the greatest increase in their share of regional agricultural exports between 2000 and 2015 (ECLAC 2017: 136, 138).

At the global level, the region continues to be a major supplier of agricultural products.[26] The region's share of world agricultural exports increased from 10% in 2000 to 13% in 2015—more than double the regional share of world exports of all merchandise, which stood at 5.6% in 2015 (ECLAC 2017: 126). In terms of spefic commodity exports worldwide, in 2016, the region accounted for 84% of raw cane sugar, 67% of soybean meal, 55% of not roasted or decaffeinated coffee, 51% of chemical non-coniferous wood pulp, 49% of soybeans, 38% of frozen poultry meat, and 32% of maize and frozen meat of bovine animals (ECLAC 2017: 142). Another market niche that is becoming ever more attractive in the face of a rapidly ageing global population is that of "functional foods", i.e. foods that, in natural or processed form, contain items which offer health benefits beyond nutrition (ECLAC 2017: 145).

The weight of agricultural shipments in the region's total exports has risen significantly, as has the region's share in global agricultural exports (although to a lesser extent). The region has become increasingly self-sufficient in agriculture: it runs no significant trade deficit in any category of products. Yet when disaggregated, the analysis reveals great discrepancies among subregions and countries. Few countries can be regarded as agricultural export powers, and they are located essentially in South America: that subregion accounts for nearly 80% by value of the region's agricultural shipments, and two countries alone (Brazil and Argentina) are responsible for more than half of those shipments (ECLAC 2017: 149).

[26] For the purposes of this chapter, the ECLAC definition of agricultural products includes food (including fishery and aquaculture products), the forestry sector and other animal and plant products, such as hides, skins, wool, flax, silk and cotton.

Table 2.1 Latin America and the Caribbean: 10 main agricultural products exported to the world, 2000 and 2016 (Billions of dollars and percentages of total agricultural exports)

2000			2016		
Product	Amount	Percentage	Product	Amount	Percentage
Coffee, not roasted, not deracinated	5.06	8.0	Soybeans	25.25	11.7
Soybean meal	4.06	6.4	Soybean meal	16.03	7.5
Soybeans	3.31	5.2	Raw cane sugar	9.48	4.4
Bananas, including plantains	2.45	3.9	Coffee, not roasted, not deracinated	8.73	4.1
Raw cane sugar	2.03	3.2	Maize (excluding seed corn)	8.55	4.0
Chemical non-coniferous wood pulp	1.74	2.8	Chemical non-coniferous wood pulp	6.13	2.9
Shrimp, frozen	1.54	2.4	Boneless meat of bovine animals, frozen	5.72	2.7
Crude soybean oil	1.30	2.1	Bananas, including plantains	5.38	2.52
Wheat	1.22	1.9	Crude soybean oil	5.23	2.4
Orange juice, frozen	1.20	1.9	Poultry cuts and offal, frozen	4.37	2.0
10 main products	**23.91**	**37.9**	**10 main products**	**94.86**	**44.1**

Source: ECLAC (2017: 137).

Oils seeds and meats were the categories that saw the greatest increase in their share of regional agricultural exports between 2000 and 2016. As displayed in Table 2.1, soybeans displaced coffee as the region's leading agricultural export. In fact, the combined weight of soybean products—soybeans, soybean meal (and other solid residues from the extraction of soybean oil) and crude soybean oil—rose from 14% to 22% of the total value of exports. According to the latest data from *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019* (ECLAC 2020: 42), the combined weight of soybean products in the region's *total exports* is 5.5 per cent—split as follows: Soybean (3.8%) and Oilcake other solid residues of oil from soya beans (1.7%)—making the crop Latin America's third most exported commodity, following petroleum oil and motor vehicles, respectively.[27]

[27] Comparable figures for 2010, reveal a combined share in the total exports of 4 percent: Soybean (2.3%) and Oilcake other solid residues of oil from soya beans (1.7%).

This rapid take-off in soybeans production was largely in response to soaring world prices resulting from high demand from China and the rest of Asia for the region's agro-food products. As Table 2.2 shows, these global price rises were so steep that in some years the average value of this commodity was more than triple what it had been in 2000.

Table 2.2 Indices of prices of soybeans and derivatives, 2001–2018 (Index 2000 = 100)

Year	Soybeans	Soybean oil	Soybean meal
2001	92	104	100
2002	100	137	96
2003	125	165	114
2004	145	183	128
2005	130	164	116
2006	127	177	112
2007	181	262	158
2008	246	373	217
2009	200	252	208
2010	211	296	196
2011	254	384	201
2012	281	362	261
2013	260	312	267
2014	229	268	257
2015	185	233	191
2016	191	241	184
2017	186	252	172
2018	186	233	199

Source: UNCTAD statistical database (UNCTADSTAT). Available from https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=140865

According to Turzi's (2012) data, between 2001 and 2011, the area devoted to soy cultivation increased 53 per cent in Brazil, 63 per cent in Argentina and 94 per cent in Paraguay, making these three countries the first, second, and fourth largest exporter of soybeans in the world (see the last column of Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Soybean area, volume and share of global production and exports, 2015

Country	Area (million ha)	Production (million MT)	Share of global production (%)	Share of global exports (%)
USA	33.4	106.88	33.54	35.96
Brazil	32.1	96.2	30.19	44.53
Argentina	19.3	60.8	19.08	7.69
China	6.80	12.35	3.87	–63.75
India	10.9	9.00	2.82	0.20
Paraguay	3.24	8.10	2.54	3.63
Canada	2.23	6.05	1.90	2.77
Ukraine	1.80	3.90	1.22	1.91
Uruguay	1.33	3.11	0.96	2.24
Bolivia	1.08	2.65	0.82	0.21

Source: Oliveira and Hecht (2016: 258).

This, then, is the background to the major agrarian transformations in the Latin American countryside brought about by neoliberalism in the era of globalization. The question, however, is not simply how Latin America has been reincorporated into the global food economy but how global extractive capital has reinserted itself into Latin America, putting increased pressure on land and other natural resources. While a meso-level food regime analysis of Latin America "offers a glimpse of the growing contradictions attending the rise of transgenic crops with their

threat to food cultures and environments, and the political and social texture of local food sovereignty counter-movements" (McMichael 2013: 96), we are still in need of a more concrete analytical framework that can account for the social, economic and environmental implications of various forms and modes of agricultural activities taking place within the global food regime.[28]It is here that the concept of "agrarian extractivism" can offer valuable insights for understanding these new dynamics and trajectories of agrarian change.

2.3 Agrarian extractivism: concept and characteristics[29]

Agro- or agrarian extractivism brings the extractive character of so-called "industrial" capitalist agriculture to the fore. The concept directly challenges the notion that industrial agriculture is actually industrializing the countryside—developing industries which generate quality employment opportunities, develop forward and backward linkages and value-added processing in the places where production takes place. In fact, so-called industrial agriculture is characterized by industrialized external inputs controlled by market oligopolies upstream and processing, distribution and "flexing" downstream similarly controlled by a few multinational corporations. Industrial capitals therefore control both ends of the value chain, extracting natural and surplus value by circulating through the soil, contaminating the ecological material base, and exploiting or outright displacing labour. This type of agricultural model parallels the dynamics of extractive sectors (Teubal 2009) and should be conceptualized as such.

[28]The socioeconomic impact of the deployment of agricultural biotechnologies in Latin America has resulted in a new generation of familiar contradictions. This is argued with substantive evidence in the various national case studies presented in *Food for the few* (Otero 2008), *La dieta neoliberal: globalización y biotecnología agrícola en las Américas* (Otero 2014), as well as the research papers in a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* (Otero 2012), and a symposium in the *Journal of Agrarian Change* (Otero and Lapegna 2016).

[29]This section draws from an introductory draft chapter for a forthcoming volume on the topic which I am currently co-editing with two colleagues.

More than just removing, or extracting, natural resources, extractivism refers to the broader social relations of production and reproduction in extractive economies and enclaves. Acosta (2013) describes extractivism as a mode of accumulation which entails "the deep structural logic of production, distribution, exchange, and accumulation" (Chase-Dunn and Hall 2000: 86). For Gudynas (2015) extractivism is a "mode of appropriation" which refers to the different forms of organizing the appropriation of distinct natural resources (physical materials, energy and ecological processes) for human purposes in specific social and environmental contexts. Gudynas rejects the notion of "mode of production" when referring to extractivism, since we do not "produce" natural resources, but rather appropriate or extract them from nature (Gudynas 2015: 188). From this perspective, extractivism is not analogous to an industry since the industrial, value-added processes usually occur in faraway places from the extraction. This builds from Bunker's argument that the "internal dynamics of extractive economies differ significantly from those of productive economies in their effects on the natural environment, on the distribution of human populations, on the construction of economic infrastructure, and therefore on the subsequent development potential of the affected regions" (Bunker 1984: 1019).

Bunker goes on to say that "when natural resources are extracted from one regional ecosystem to be consumed or transformed in another, the socioeconomic and ecological linkages to the extracted commodity tend to a loss of value in the region of origin and to accretion of value in the region of consumption or transformation" (Bunker 1984: 1019). Extractivism not only leads to uneven economic and ecological exchange, but can also have devastating social consequences. Incomes often rise and fall rapidly, populations are displaced, ecosystems destroyed and political

elites become susceptible to forms of corruption. For Bunker, these processes represent "modes of extraction" which he introduced to characterize the systemic connections between changes in "the class structures; the organization of labour; systems of property and exchange; the activities of the state; the distribution of populations; the development of physical infrastructure; and the kinds of information, beliefs, and ideologies which shape social organization and behaviour" (Bunker 1984: 1020). In other words, extractivism is not simply "to pull out", but encompasses particular exploitative social relations combined with unequal ecological and economic exchange. It is therefore important to consider the relations of production (or extraction), of property, of divisions of labour, of income distribution, and of consumption, reproduction and accumulation in extractive economies.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, new forms of agricultural productions—in particular, those orientated towards large-scale, intensive monocrop production for export—have increasingly been included under the umbrella of "neo-extractivism", and are now commonly referred to as "agrarian extractivism" (see Gudynas 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Giarracca and Teubal 2014; Veltmeyer and Petras 2014). As a mode of extraction, agrarian extractivism involves particular exploitative social relations combined with unequal ecological and economic exchange, in which the surplus value is extracted and labour opportunities and conditions deteriorate via new forms of value-chain control and mechanization. It is therefore important to consider the relations of production (or extraction), of property, of divisions of labour, of income distribution, and of consumption, reproduction and accumulation in extractive economies.

As an emerging concept in the literature, agrarian extractivism has rarely been rigorously defined. Evidently, simply using the term synonymously with agro-industry is neither analytically or politically useful. An exception is the work of Alonso-Fradejas (2018) on the agro-extractive capitalist project in Guatemala. Using an approach grounded in agrarian political economy and ecology, Alonso-Fradejas defines the extractive character of the sugarcane and oil palm complex with three key features: (i) the extraction and appropriation of the surplus value, rents, and state revenues, including by means of financialization; (ii) the appropriation of productive and reproductive labour; and (iii) the contamination and exhaustion of external nature's energy and materials as well as damaging workers' health and vitality (2018).

In other words, Alonso-Fradejas reveals the economic, social and environmental extractive dynamics of sugarcane and oil palm production in Guatemala. Building off an earlier conceptualization of agrarian extractivism by Alonso-Fradejas (2015), as well as the classic work of Bunker (1984) and Gudynas (2015), McKay (2017) characterizes the agro-industrial soy complex in Bolivia as a type of agrarian extractivism defined by the four interlinked features: (i) large volumes of materials extracted destined for export with little or no processing; (ii) value-chain concentration and sectoral disarticulation (iii) high intensity of environmental degradation; and (iv) deterioration of labour opportunities and labour conditions in the area/sector. In this conceptualization, McKay attempts to add the issue of scale and how and by whom the economic activity is organized to the economic, social and environmental extractive dynamics. While the concept remains in its infant stages, more case studies and attempts to further refine this concept across various sectors, spaces, geographies, and political economies will undoubtedly contribute to its analytical and political utility.

2.4 Conclusion

The general trends of the neoliberal corporate food regime have played out differently in the countries of the region, through related but distinct trajectories of agrarian change. These differentiated paths are the result of distinctive histories of capitalist development, and of class and state formations. In order to better explain these variegated types of insertion into the global food system, we need to distinguish between factors that are the result of the current conjuncture related to the forces of global capital—as outline in this chapter—from those that stem from the historical changes that have taken place in the countryside of each individual country. Thus, the following chapters delve deeper into these dynamics in Paraguay, situating Paraguay's agrarian structure in historical context by mapping out the historical patterns of landholding and property relations in the country, highlighting the emergence and consolidation of the latifundio system, the expansion of agribusiness, and the rentier nature of the state.

Chapter 3

Land for the Few: Paraguay's Agrarian Structure

3.1 Introduction

Critical scholarship has been quick to scrutinize the lack of historical perspective within the early literature rush on land grabbing in Latin America, emphasising the need to decenter the rhetoric of "novelty" by historicising these processes within a deeper temporal frame (Edelman and León 2013).[30] From this perspective, "land grabbing is far from novel. It is, instead, a routine and old phenomenon" (Mollett 2016: 413). Reflecting on the recent furore over land grabbing in connection to his own on-the-ground studies of land appropriation in Costa Rica during the 1980s and 1990s, Marc Edelman (2013) poses an interesting question which is worth considering for the case of Paraguay. Paraphrasing his question: how do the current wave of land acquisitions or land grabbing differ from what occurred in Paraguay in between the late nineteenth century, when two companies—La Industrial Paraguaya and Carlos Casado—consolidated control over properties estimated at over 5 million hectares (Pastore 1972)?

By examining the historical antecedents to today's land grabbing we are able to gain a fuller understanding of "[t]he historically-specific determinants of class, power, and the political organization of the contending social classes in the countryside" (Edelman 1985: 154). Such an understanding is analytically important for, according to Edelman and León (2013: 1697–1698),

[30] While this critique is certainly not applicable to Galeano's (2011) contribution on Paraguay—which places the current wave of land deals in Paraguay within deeply grounded historical context—it is at least curious to note that in the abbreviated and translated version of the FAO study, published as part of a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* (Galeano 2012b), the historical discussion was completely axed out of the text.

three reasons: (i) each new cycle of land grabbing is "profoundly shaped by pre-existing social formations and local and regional particularities"; (ii) information on previous land uses and livelihoods provides a baseline from which to assess the impact of today's land deals, indeed many of the deleterious consequences attributed to current trends of land grabbing "might plausibly have predated today's land deals, might have other causes or might have happened anyway"; and (iii) "viewing the present moment as an epiphenomenal result of earlier social and material processes" facilitates an understanding of the "conditions of possibility for current forms of both dispossession and resistance" (Edelman and León 2013: 1700).

With these considerations in mind, this chapter maps out the evolution of Paraguay's agrarian structure, which are linked to the *longue durée* and the nature of class and state formation in the country. I begin by tracing the historical patterns of landholding and property relations since independence in 1811, through the War of the Triple Alliance fought from 1864 to 1870 and the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner from 1954 to 1989, until the protracted transition to democracy in 2008. This descriptive and empirically based analysis reveals the highly unequal distribution of land that has historically characterized the country, the intense penetration of foreign capital and associated dynamics of land foreignization, as well as the nature of capitalist agribusiness formation. From this historical analysis, the following section provides an analysis of the historical evolution and modern reconstitution of the *latifundio* in Paraguay. The chapter also engages in a theoretical discussion on the nature and role of the state in the historical development of capitalist agriculture, as well as the type of class alliances between national landed class, agrarian bourgeoisie, and foreign capital. It is contended that categories such as neo-sultanism, rentierism, reconstituted landlordism, coalesced bourgeoisie, Brazilian sub-

imperialism, and the oligarchic state, when put together, paint a clear picture to explain such relationships and the balance of class forces at the top of the rural. I bracket in this chapter the question on the nature and class alliances at the bottom—i.e. the various sectors of the peasantry—and the formation of agrarian social movements, which will be sketched out and developed in chapter 6.

3.2 From "república campesina" to the "república de la soja": cycles of land grabbing

Paraguay gained independence from Spain in 1811 under the leadership of José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia. Under Francia—also known as "*El Supremo*"—Paraguay initiated "Latin America's first autonomous revolution" (White 1978) pursuing an independent and nationalist path to development, usually viewed as a "neosocialist regime" (established over half a century before Marx wrote *Das Kapital*), which was continued by Carlos Antonio López (1841–1862), and Francisco Solano López (1862–1870).

The centralized development strategy pursued by Francia was accompanied by a profound social revolution which set the country apart from other nations in the region: the economy was shifted from colonial elite control to state control, placing the interests of the indigenous peasantry above those of the Creole elite, opening land for farming by renting state-owned land for nominal fees and for an unlimited period to peasant squatters (Turner and Turner 2009: 2608; Kleinpenning and Zoomers 1991: 282; Nickson 1987: xiii). These policies ensured Francia of support among the popular classes, giving raise to an era heralded by Brazilian historian Mário Maestri (2016) as the "república campesina" [peasant republic]. This model of autonomous

development continued under the López dynasty and toward the end of the "nationalist era" Paraguay had developed into one of the most prosperous countries in the region.

Other strands of historical literature have cast serious doubt over the celebratory tone of these depictions of the early national period (e.g. Huner 2019), but I certainly do not wish to go into the whole debate about the accuracy of such revisionist readings of nineteenth century Paraguay, which will better be left to the experts (cf. Whigham 1995: 95; Nickson 2015; Huner 2019). My intention here is not to validate or refute the above depiction, but rather to present widely held understanding in Paraguay about the history of the country. Indeed, the above depiction of Francia—and the notion that he placed the interests of the poor peasantry above those of other groups in Paraguayan society—has an honoured place in the mythology of right-wing nationalists, dependency theorists, and leftist critics alike (Lambert and Medina 2007).

Building on the work of Glauser (2009) and Galeano (2012a, 2012b), the chapter now turns to explore three of the main cycles of land grabbing, concentration and foreignisation in Paraguay in the post colonial period. The first begins with the end of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1879), when the private property regime was introduced in the country and the sale of public lands approved. The second cycle takes place during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954–1989) and is marked by agrarian and land colonisation policies that facilitates the acquisition of land by military and business elite. The third cycle begins at the start of the new millennium and is marked by the consolidation of the agribusiness-led, agro-extractive accumulation regime.

3.2.1 From post-war to dictatorship (1870 to 1954)

The first cycle of land grabbing in Paraguay take place in the aftermath of the disastrous War of the Triple Alliance fought between 1864–1879, in which the combined forces of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay utterly defeated Paraguay, marking a turning point in the country's history. The effects of the war on Paraguay were brutal, with emphasis on the reduction of the population, food deficit resulting from the complete disruption of agricultural production, and territorial loss to Brazil and Argentina, who, when winning the war, incorporated part of the disputed areas.

The autarkic development strategy of the previous fifty years was overthrown and replaced by a long period of foreign domination. For many writers of the 1960s and 1970s, the Paraguayan War provided an excellent illustration of the validity of dependency theory. In his classic dependency text *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Andre Gunder Frank has even suggested that the war occurred because Paraguay would not yield peacefully to what he terms "satellization" to the "metropolis", meaning Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro, in turn dominated by London (Frank 1969: 3–17). A similar reading is offered by Eduardo Galeano in the classic *Open Veins of Latin America* (see Galeano 1973: 188–197), and in Leon Pomer's *La Guerra Del Paraguay: ¡Gran Negocio!* (1968). While the thesis of British imperialism has been subjected to scrutiny (Abente 1987), few would disagree about the war's legacy in terms of the foreign control still exercised over Paraguay's economy. In order to raise funds to pay off public debt and stimulate economic recovery, post-war leaders started to sell off vast quantities of state-owned land at extremely low prices to foreign investors and members of

the small national elite, ushering in an extremely unequal land tenure system that remains surprisingly little changed to the present day.

It is worth noting that in 1870, when the war ended, fiscal lands still covered 98 per cent of the territory, comprising 30.6 million hectares, while only 489,000 hectares corresponded to private properties (Kleinpenning 1984). However, between 1871 and 1875, several laws were passed that facilitated the process of land privatisation (Rojas 2014), resulting in a major transformation of the ownership regime of one of the main factors of production in Paraguay. With average land prices as low as $0.42 per hectare, between 1885 and 1914, public land sales were carried out to the tune of 26 million hectares (equivalent to 64% of the surface of the total surface of Paraguay). Thus, over this period, the sale of public areas had a drastic effect on the concentration of land, consolidating the great large estate (*latifundio*).

The formation of the latifundio system took two distinct forms: extensive cattle ranching owned in most part by members of the domestic elite; and economic enclaves used for tannin extraction or production of *yerba mate*, owned by foreign companies. Enormous tracts of land in the Chaco and Alto Paraná initially changed hands between foreign companies, which were often engaged in speculation (Nickson 2015: 346). The most extensive properties were acquired by foreign capital. In 1886, the first two major investments by foreign companies took place: the Argentinian company, Carlos Casado, acquired more than 3 million hectares in the Chaco (almost 15% of the territory of the Paraguayan Chaco) for production of tannin, and the Anglo-Argentine company, La Industrial Paraguaya, acquired over 2 million hectares of land in the eastern region for the exploitation of *yerbales* (Pastore 1972). The latter company soon became

the largest employer in Paraguay, with 5,000 workers engaged in the extraction of yerba, logging, and cattle-ranching (Nickson 1981). Over the proceeding years, an influx of other foreign companies installed in Paraguay, including the British company Liébig's Extract of Meat Co. (LEMCO) and, of American origin, International Products Corporation (IPC), which settled in the country in 1917. Table 3.1 reveals the foreign companies that benefitted most from the Paraguayan land sales during this period, listing the largest land acquisitions and their ties to the rural economy.

By 1917, the total land area "grabbed" by the 16 largest companies amounted to 8.6 million hectares—equivalent to over one-fifth of the total territory in the country. There was also a clear loss of the national control of the export sector. In addition to being in border areas, these companies held control over transport, finance, ports, and shipping lines, thus establishing farm enclaves which had little or no connection with the national economy and society, except for the use of peasant and indigenous labour in semi-servile conditions (Pastore 1972; Parquet 1987).

The outward-oriented policies and foreign engagement in agrarian production and trade led to a gradual increase and diversification of export products, described by Baraibar (2020: 70–71) in the following terms:

> By the turn of the century, exports of tobacco, *yerba maté* (tea), hides, timber, lumber, and the bark of the *quebracho* (breakaxe) hardwood, from which tannin was extracted, and meat, had become important export products (Bulmer-Thomas 2003, 66–75; Sacks 1988). The war had nearly wiped out cotton production, but the state

encouraged its renewed growth and in the 1920s it reemerged as export crop, mainly cultivated by small farmers (Seyler 1988, 116–118). However, a sizable proportion of cultivations was controlled by Argentine, British or Brazilian interests. Moreover, Argentina successfully restricted Paraguayan exports largely to "raw" products. For instance, the processing of yerba maté was in Argentine mills, and the processing of products from the forest sector was also made in Argentina, with for example Paraguayan quebracho extract shipped to Argentina to be reexported as Argentine tannin (Abente 1989, 67–69). Thus, Argentina succeeded in maintain [sic] Paraguay as commodity provider for processing in Argentina. Thus, not only was the actual production controlled by foreign actors, but Paraguay was hindered to develop into anything else than the rawest commodity provider.

While many landowners were foreigners, there was also a domestic landed elite of ranchers, of which many belonged to the ruling Colorado Party. Many national landowners were also members of the powerful producer organization [Sociedad Ganadera del Paraguay, formed in 1885 and renamed the Rural Association of Paraguay (Asociación Rural del Paraguay, ARP) in 1938] …. [T]he ARP represented the ranchers' interests with a lot of say in national policies. The ARP was also important in pushing for modernization of the livestock sector and export-orientation. It contributed to the rapid advancement of fencing, of the introduction of new European races, and developed systems for systematic breeding, and fencing. The stock of cattle recovered quickly after the war, partly due to imports from Argentina

and Brazil). By 1900, the stock of cattle was two million heads—which was still one million less than fifty years earlier (Nickson 2015: 383).

Table 3.1 Foreign capital participation that settled in Paraguay, 1886–1917

Year	Company	Origin of capital	Principal activity	Land (ha)
1886	La industrial Paraguaya SA.	UK-Argentina	Yerba mate/wood	2,137,500
1886	Carlos Casado Ltda.	Argentina	Tannin	3,150,000
1889	The Paraguay Central Railway Comp	UK	Railway	–
1893	Société la Foncière du Paraguay	France-Belgium	Salting and tannery	477,500
1898	Liebig's Extract of Meat Co.	Britain	Livestock*	322,225
1902	Saladero Risso	Uruguay	Salting	56,250
1903	Saladero Kemmerich (San Salvador)	Germany	Meat exports*	–
1905	Campos y Quebrayales Puerto Sastre	Argentina	Tannin	225,000
1905	Estancia Cooper and Nephews	UK	Livestock	75,000
1906	Quebrachales Fusionados SA	Argentina	Tannin and wood	227,500
1907	Estancia La Rural Anglo Paraguaya SA	UK	Livestock	31,873
1909	Compañía de Navegación Nicolas Mianovich Ltda. SA	Argentina	Fluvial transport	–
1910	Estancia La Rural Argentino Paraguaya SA	Argentina	Livestock	160,000
1910	Estancia The Paraguay Land and Cattle Company		Livestock	444,082
1910	The River Plate Quebracho Comp.	UK	Tannin and Wood	187,500
1910	New York and Paraguay Comp. SA	USA	Tannin	375,000
1910	La Forestal del Paraguay SA	UK	Tannin	131,250
1910	The American Quebracho Company	USA	Tannin	412,500
1911	Estancias y Quebrachales Puerto Galileo	Argentina	Tannin/Livestock	187,500
1917	International Products Corporation	USA	Tannin/Livestock	–
		Total Land (ha)		8,600,680

Source: Parquet (1987).

The *latifundistas* emerged as a powerful social class. Famous names that would dominate the rural economy throughout the Liberal period and beyond soon appeared: Domingo Barthe, Carlos Casado del Alisal, José Fassardi, Foncière du Paraguay, Industrial Paraguaya, and Mate Larangeira. By 1946, landholding was still extremely concentrated. In the Chaco, 14 owners held 7,567,457 hectares, equivalent to 31 per cent of the total land area, while in the eastern region, 11 owners held 5,842,451 hectares, equivalent to 37 per cent of the total land area.

On the other side of the rural spectrum, the first agricultural census in 1942–44, organized by Servicio Técnico Interámericano de Cooperación Agrícola (STICA), revealed the inadequacies of the *minifundio* (small subsistence-oriented farms) system. Out of a total of only 94,500 farm units: over 48 per cent were less than five hectares in size and there were even 25,600 holdings, each with less than one hectare of cultivated land, on which 153,600 people lived; 74 per cent of all cultivators were still squatters with no legal rights to land; 72 per cent still did not have iron ploughs, 55 per cent did not have any kind of plough, and 49 per cent did not have either a plough or an oxcart. The typical farm equipment consisted merely of an axe, a hoe, and a machete. The ox remained the only nonhuman power source (Nickson 2015).

As consequence of all this, a defining feature Paraguayan countryside at the beginning of the twentieth century was the consolidation of a dualistic agrarian structure composed of *latifundias* and *minifundias*. By 1921, 47.8 per cent of the agricultural units (of less than 10 hectares) holding only 0.2 per cent of the land, against 1.7 per cent of the units with 76.1 per cent of the surface (in the stratum with more than 10,000 hectares) (Kleinpenning 1984). In short, the Paraguayan rural space, in the first half of the twentieth century, is marked by a joint movement

of land grabbing, concentration and foreignisation of a truly massive scale, establishing a highly unequal system of land tenure that remains virtually unchanged to the present day.

3.2.2 El Stronato (1954–1989)

The second cycle of land grabbing in the country begins with the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954–1989). If the first wave was driven by the territorialisation of Argentine and British capital for tannin, yerba mate and meat, the impetus for the second wave was a "conservative modernization"—to borrow from Barrington Moore's (1966) classic work (see Soler [2014, 2018] for excellent analysis along these lines)—carried out by the authoritarian regime, which sought to develop "empty" lands and generate new sources of revenues from the exports of cotton and soybeans. In this new cycle, Brazilian actors and the production of grain takes centre stage.

The Paraguayan political scientist Diego Abente-Brun (2005: 569) provides a description of the socioeconomic structure during the first fifteen years, or so, of the Stroessner era:

> Between 1954 and the early 1970s, the Paraguayan economy was characterized by very low rates of growth within the framework of a traditional social structure with widespread pre-capitalist forms of production in the countryside. Vast sectors of the peasantry were virtually excluded from the monetary economy and were devoted to subsistence crops on land they did not own. By the end of the 1950s, for example, 1,549 landowners controlled some 85 per cent of the land, and only 0.9 per cent of the territory was dedicated to agriculture.

In 1958, the first national seminar on land reform took place in Asunción, under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and organised by the Paraguayan Rural Association (ARP). This significant event marked the genesis of a vast agricultural programme. In order to implement this shift in strategy, the Instituto de Reforma Agraria (IRA) was replaced in 1963 with the Instituto de Bienestar Rural (IBR),[31] which was headed by the flamboyant Juan Manuel Frutos throughout the remainder of the Stronato (Hetherington 2011: 28; Nickson 2015: 33). The project, also called the "March to the East," echoed the Brazilian "March to the West," with all its military undertones.[32] It was seen as a nation-building project which would simultaneously improve the lives of the campesino population and protect the territory from being annexed to Brazil's much larger frontier drive (Hetherington 2011: 28).

The project also epitomised the Stroessner's particular brand of rural populism, known as *agrarismo* (Hetherington 2011). Adopting the language of Paraguayan nationalists such as Juan E. O'Leary and Natalicio González, Stroessner's government embraced a populist discourse. Portraying the period from 1870 to 1947 as a time when foreigners dominated Paraguay and its peasantry, Stroessner announced that he would "liberate" Paraguay and establish social justice through a strong, authoritarian government (Chambers 2002: 135). In the words of Frutos, the government claimed that it sought to "transform the agrarian structure and establish a new Paraguayan society, with access for its poor, especially its peasants, to the nation's wealth," and would be "revolutionary, peaceful, nationalist, and anti-oligarchy" (Frutos 1982). Denunciations

[31] Today the National Institute of Rural and Land Development (Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y de la Tierra; INDERT).

[32] Both were also explicitly modeled on the U.S. frontier of the nineteenth century.

against “oligarchs” were certainly not lacking in the legal code of the IBR. Consider, for example, this jewel written by Frutos:

> In 1940 the structure of land tenure was as follows: a. owners 5%, b. tenants or sharecroppers 4%, c. precarious occupants 91%. The only alternative: War on the *latifundio*, adopting political measures in both its aspects: as science and as art. To confront powerful sectors such as the large estate oligarchy, it is necessary to have powerful allies. In Paraguay the executives of the Agrarian Reform are allied with the people, the Armed Forces, and the youth. (Frutos 1977, quoted in Abente-Brun 1989, own translation)

IBR populist rhetoric notwithstanding, claims that the government had intended to destroy the landed oligarchy border on the farcical. According to the 1981 agricultural census, in the eastern region, 1,086 *latifundistas* still owned 58 per cent of the total area under cultivation, while in the Chaco, 951 *latifundistas* owned 94 per cent of the total area under cultivation. Meanwhile, 104,629 farm units, each less than 5 hectares in size, equivalent to 43 per cent of the total, accounted for only 2.5 per cent of the total area in eastern Paraguay. In the Chaco, 340 farm units less than 50 hectares in size, equivalent to 36 per cent of the total, accounted for only 0.1 per cent of the total area. In Paraguay as a whole, 2,289 holdings of 1,000 hectares and over, which made up only 0.9 per cent of the total, monopolized no less than 78.5 per cent of the farmland.

The reform emphasised colonization of “virgin land”, rather than expropriation, as the solution to the agrarian problem. According to Article 4 of the statute, only landholdings larger than 20,000

hectares in the Chaco and larger than 10,000 hectares in the eastern region were classed as *latifundios* and thus subject to possible expropriation if not "rationally cultivated" (i.e., in which fixed assets such as roads, wells, fences, and buildings totalled less than 50 per cent of the fiscal land value). However, in practice, hardly any land was ever expropriated under this law (Nickson 2015: 33). The strategy of agricultural colonization was, of course, a political one. As Tai (1974: 234) explains: "public land settlement (or colonization) is an attractive idea. To settle people on new land and to develop it for agricultural use does not involve any basic alteration of the property rights of existing landowners; hence a public-land settlement program will generate no opposition from the landed class." Emphasizing this same point, Kleinpenning and Zoomers write, "[w]hen opting for a policy of agricultural colonization… the Stroessner regime was well aware of the advantages of this strategy in comparison with… radical land reform measures… which would be in conflict with the interests of the ruling elite and particularly with those of the large land-owners" (Kleinpenning and Zoomers 1991: 290).

In total, the IBR is reported to have opened more than 7.5 million hectares of land to some 20,000 families and 1,210 titles between 1963 and 1985. Several critical studies have examined the impact of the colonization programme, highlighting the very low take-up of the IBR land-titling facility by *minifundistas*, not least because the legal procedure itself was extremely expensive and time-consuming and the titles could not in any case be transferred to the next generation by inheritance (Zoomers 1988: 112). The failure of the colonization program to substantially alter the structure of landholding was revealed by the 1981 agricultural census, which showed that only 52 per cent of all farmers in eastern Paraguay held legal title to their land, while 30 per cent were still *ocupantes* (squatters) and 13 per cent were sharecroppers. Rich

landowners with holdings of more than 100 hectares, who accounted for only 4 per cent of all farmers, still controlled 88 per cent of all cultivated land (Nickson 2015).

In practice, while the reform was nominally committed to proving land title and support to landless and land poor peasants, actual land allocation practices primarily benefited Stroessner associates (e.g. armed forces, rural elites and government officials), who in turn resold part of this land at favourable market prices to Brazilian companies and colonists. The IBR also sold land directly to foreign estate agencies and companies (Kleinpenning 1984: 173). Thus, far from resolving the country's skewed distribution of land ownership, the "horizontal expansion" of agricultural land gave rise to Paraguay's distinctive rentier class, a ruling class of landowners whose capacity to extract surplus relied on extra-economic means of enforcement and extraction. The following description of Brazil's land-based power relations captures just as accurately the historic and Paraguayan reality *tierras malhabidas*:

> The oligarchic and patronage-based features of these policies are rooted in the agrarian past. Land in Brazil [and Paraguay] has traditionally been not merely a factor of production but a reward for service and proximity to power, as well as a foundation for the accumulation and maintenance of more power and privilege. This power includes the ability of large landowners to direct the legal and coercive apparatus of the state in their region.
>
> (Pereira 2003: 42)

According to a recent report by the Paraguayan Truth and Justice Commission on illegal land ownership, between 1954 and 2003, a total of 7,851,295 hectares of land (64 per cent of the total land distributed and 19 per cent of Paraguay's total surface area) were allocated to both nationals and foreigners in an irregular and clientelist manner (CVJ 2008). The study examined 200,705 awards of land and concluded that many beneficiaries were relatives of Stroessner himself, or politicians and army officers directly associated with his government. Table 3.2 lists some of the main beneficiaries, including former Paraguayan Presidents, Alfredo Stroessner and Andrés Rodriguez, Former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza—who, after being overthrown by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN) in 1979, fled in exile to Paraguay where he bought a ranch and gated house[33]—and ex-Colorado Senator, Blas N. Riquelme. Indeed, it was on land to which Riquelme claimed ownership (some 4,000 hectares in Curuguaty in the department of Canindeyú) in which 17 people were massacred on 15 June 2012, triggering the impeachment of President Fernando Lugo (2008–2012) a week later, as we shall discuss in chapter 4.

Table 3.2 Individual beneficiarias of *tierras malhabidas* (ill-gotten lands)

Beneficiary	Hectares	Department
Alfredo Stroessner	1,305	Alto Paraná
Andrés Rodríguez	8,055	Alto Paraná and Cordillera
Blas N. Riquelme	4,078	Canindeyú
Humberto Domínguez Dibb	7,990	Ñacunday and Villa Hayes
Conradro Pappalardo	4,000	Chaco
Alcibiades Brítez Borges	10,000	Canindeyú
Pastor Coronel	4,476	–
Fahd Yamil	524	Amambay
Roberto Knopfelmacher	8,244	Concepcion and Chaco
Galo Escobar	1,630	Alto Paraná

Source: CVJ (2008). *Informe Final: Tierras Mal Habidas. Tomo IV.*

[33] Somoza was eventually assassinated outside his exile home (Avenida de España no. 433) by a seven-person commando team of the Argentine guerrilla movement, Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo.

As well as these corrupt forms of "domestic land grabs", the colonization program also brought about a process of land "foreignization" (*extranjerización*). The awkward concept of land foreignisation has distinct roots in Latin America (Zoomers 2010; Borras et al. 2012) and was widely used in the region before the recent land grab "literature rush" (Oya 2013). This is certainly the case in Paraguay, where there is a sizeable *extranjerización* literature stretching back to the 1970s (Laíno 1977; Nickson 1981; Neupert 1991; Glauser 2009; Galeano 2012a, 2012b). A strand of this literature focuses on the controversial issue of Brazilian immigration into Paraguay starting at the end of the 1960s, resulting in another awkward concept: "*brasiguayos*" a pejorative label (amalgamated from the Spanish words for Brazilian and Paraguayan) used to refer to Brazilian migrants in Paraguay and their descendants. The use of the term "*brasiguayos*" has been subject to particular critique for its implied dichotomy between wealthy Brazilian agriculturalists devoted to soybean production on the one hand, and impoverished and marginalized Paraguayan small-scale farmers on the other (Blanc 2015). In reality, "the majority of Brazilian immigrants in Paraguay are small-scale farmers who, like many of their impoverished Paraguayan neighbours, have faced constant marginalization" (Blanc 2015, 145). In assessing the Paraguayan literature on this topic, Blanc (2015) offers a broad-brush interpretation of various land-related studies in Paraguay. By lumping Nickson (1981), Nagel (1991), and Fogel (1989) together, however, he ignores the great variety in these studies, particularly in terms of methodological and conceptual framing. In fact, Nagel's detailed study of peasant differentiation amongst Paraguayan and Brazilian producers goes a long way in supporting Blanc's argument as she concludes that "Brazilian immigrants often suffer the same disadvantages as Paraguayan settlers" (Nagel 1991: 130).

Perhaps the most nuanced study on this topic was conducted by Wesz (2020) who looked at the differential paths and contemporary dynamics of rural producers and landowners of Brazilian origin in Paraguay. Based on semi-structured interviews with 56 Brazilian farmers/landowners, Wesz identifies five different movements and dynamics of this social group in relation to land in Paraguay: (i) producers who arrived in the second half of the 20th century and who remain in the same region in Paraguay; (ii) producers and/or descendants who arrived in the country in the same period and in the last few years they have moved inland; (iii) actors who arrived in the country more recently, investing in agricultural production and/or land acquisition; (iv) producers who chose to hold land in both Paraguay and Brazil; (v) rural producers who, for different reasons, return to Brazil.[34]

3.2.3 A transition in search of democracy (1989–)

The third and current cycle of land grabbing in Paraguay begins in the 1990s with the country's (protracted and arguably ongoing) transition to democracy[35] following the fall of the Stroessner

[34] It is important to note that foreign land grabbing continues in Paraguay despite the implementation of laws and regulations to restrict these processes. In 2005, a border security law was passed providing for a 50 km strip of land along the terrestrial and fluvial borders, within which the law prohibited ownership or usufruct of land by foreigners from neighbouring countries as well as legal entities mainly composed of foreign capital. In 2008, the clause of the Agrarian Statutes of 2004 was implemented, which prevents foreigners from having access to land administered by the Institute of Rural Development and Land (INDERT). Despite the legal ban, many transactions have had the tacit approval of INDERT officials (Galeano 2012). Fieldwork research by Wesz (2020) also revealed the strategies used by Brazilians to circumvent these legislative hurdles. Given that most of them have been in the country for more than 30 years and have descendants who were born in Paraguay, they end up putting the land title in the name of family members who have Paraguayan citizenship.

[35]There is a sizeable literature on the detective nature of Paraguayan democracy which cannot be covered here, but see Richards (2008), Lambert (2011), Duré et al (2012).

regime in 1989 through a putsch carried out by General Andrés Rodríguez, Stroessner's former confidant and *co-cuñado* (see Nickson 1989).[36] This cycle is marked by the penetration of trans-Latin capital, rise of flex crop production (soybean), and consolidation of an agro-extractivist development model.

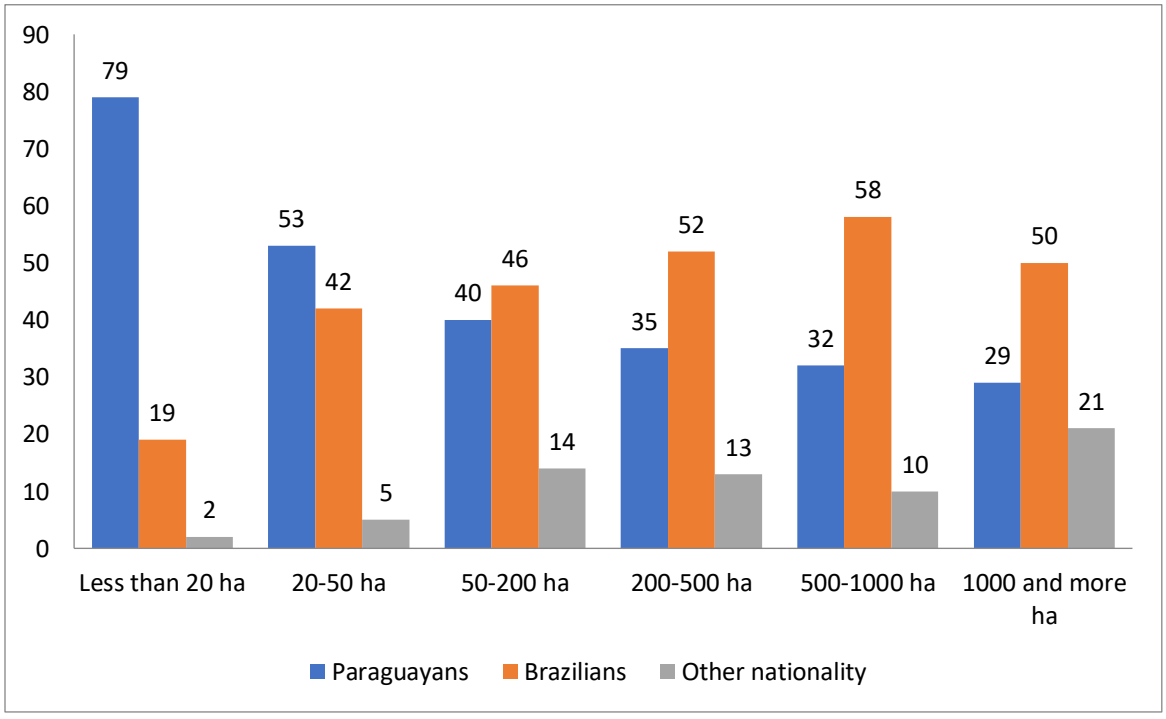
As a reflection of the continued strength of the rural elite in the post-Stroessner era, the 1992 Constitution accepted proposals by the ARP which effectively blocked significant land reform and expropriation of unproductive lands. The new constitution excluded the traditional usufruct right to land and established guidelines to agrarian reform in favour of large landholders, whereby expropriation of unproductive lands must be accompanied by full compensation, paid in advance to the landholder at the price agreed (Nagel 1999: 167-168; Lambert 2000: 388).[37] With continued campesino unrest and renewed calls for agrarian legislation, a new Agrarian Statute was finally approved in 2002 (after lying dormant in Congress for more than a decade), and in July 2004 the IBR was replaced by the Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y de la Tierra (National Institute for Rural and Land Development – INDERT). The new legislation was nonetheless technical rather than redistributive in character, and the stated aim of rural development and poverty alleviation was to be achieved through increased productivity, the stimulation of agro-industry, and overall reduction of market interventions (Henderson et al. 2015: 748). Furthermore, "a combination of continued resistance from the ARP and rampant corruption meant that, like its predecessors, INDERT failed to make any significant progress on agrarian reform" (Nickson 2015: 34).

[36] Stroessner's son was married to the daughter of Rodríguez.

[37] In practice, landholders have used this to sell poor quality lands to the government at inflated prices.

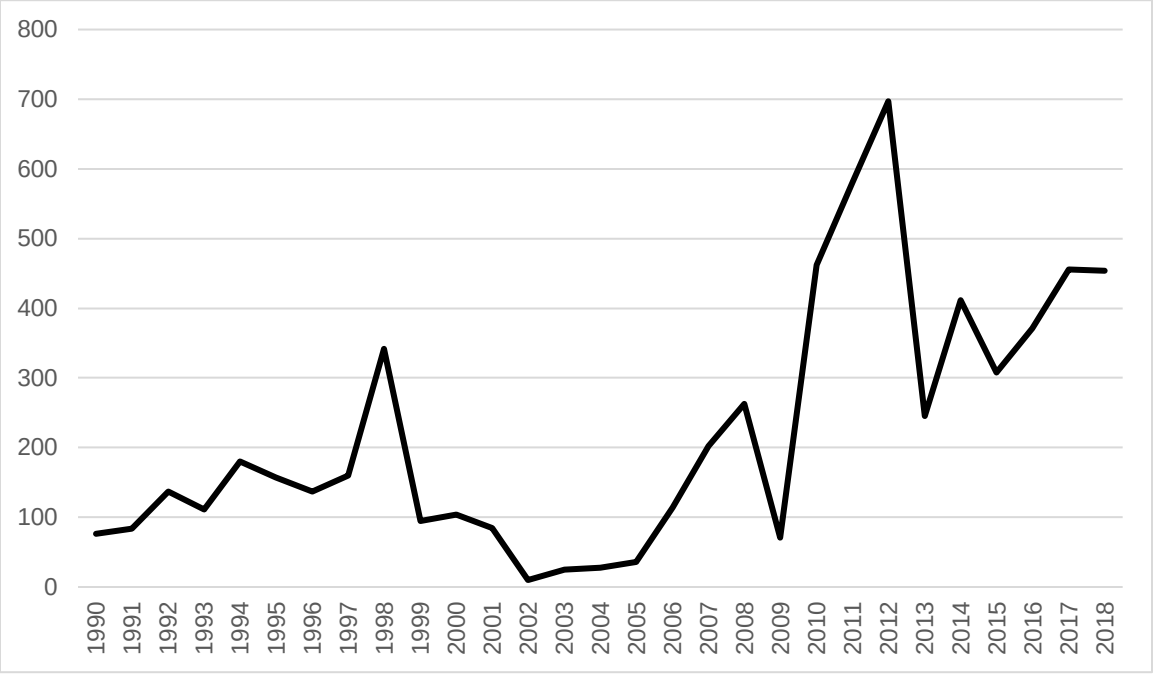
At the same time, the process of land foreignization (*extranjerización*) that had started in the 1960s with the release of state lands for private purchase (Nickson 1981; Laíno1977) continued to accelerate, as Paraguayan lands were increasingly being integrated into the expanding agricultural frontiers of Brazil and, to a far lesser extent, Argentina (Galeano 2012; Glauser 2009). The current correlation between land concentration and foreign ownership is indeed most striking, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. 64% of the land cultivated with soy in the country's four most important *sojero* departments—Alto Paraná, Canindeyú, Caaguazú and Itapúa– belong to Brazilian capitalists (Galeano 2012: 461).

Figure 3.1 Percentage of hectares cultivated with soy, by nationality of producers and farm size, 2008



Source: Galeano (2012).

Figure 3.2 Foreign direct investment inflows (millions of dollars), 1990-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on ECLAC (1998, 2009, 2019).

The commodity boom of the 2000s and the sudden increase in FDI in agriculture (see Figure 3.2) has triggered a significant increase in the price of land across the country. There has been a proliferation of agencies online offering to purchase thousands of hectares of natural forests for conversion into cattle ranches. Capital Campo, a company specialising in direct investment in farmland and asset management, claims that a 5,000 hectare property purchased in 2004 in Boquerón Department for $125,000 ($25 per hectare) was sold nine years later for $1,500,000 ($300 per hectare). The Q&A section of the website for Agroindustrial Acaray S.A., a company specialising in direct investment in farmland and asset management, lays this phenomenon out in surprising candor:

> *Rara vez compramos fincas de un ganadero existente. Generalmente estamos comprando las tierras de, la viuda u otro familiar que han heredado la tierra y no*

> *tienen interés en la agricultura, de los sucesores, de personas que se han adjudicado durante la dictadura Stronista del ex Instituto de Bienestar Rural (I.B.R) hoy Instituto de Desarrollo Rural (I.N.D.E.R.T). que hasta hoy están ociosa e improductiva, que han adquirido por precios irrisorios, y hoy están ofertando a precio de mercado, que con nuestro asesoramiento sensato el inversor puede comprar a precio infravalorado. Se trata de un cambio generacional que se está produciendo y que con el tiempo se agota la propiedad de tierras agrícolas, que está comenzando a concentrar en las grandes empresas.*

A particularly prevalent feature in this latest wave of land grabbing as therefore is the "porosity" of the expansion of land tenure among countries of the region (Gómez 2014)—in other words, intra-regional land grabbing driven by "(trans)Latina" companies, often resulting in cross-border foreignisation (Borras et al. 2012a, 2012b; Driven 2014). According to Gómez (2014, 10), this process of intraregional expansion has taken three different tracks: (i) via (trans)Latina companies (TLCs) to mobilise resources; (ii) through a mix of landownership and leasing (such as agricultural "pools" in Argentina); and (iii) through migration (the case of Brazilians in Bolivia and Paraguay). All three of these pathways have taken place in Paraguay, although the "sowing pool" phenomenon is not as prevalent as it is in Argentina. Having already discussed the issue of Brazilian migration above, let us briefly consider the first of role of (Trans)Latina companies in Paraguay.

Brazilian (Trans)Latin companies (JBS and Frigorífico Concepción) have taken a dominant role in the Paraguayan livestock sector and, alongside the world's four major grain processing

corporations, ADM (Archer Daniels Midland), Bunge, Cargill and Dreyfus (know as the ABCD firms), control the lion's share of agricultural exports (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 The top seven agribusiness companies and their export sale (US$ million), 2010-2019

Company (HQ)	Principle exports	Export sales
Cargill Agropecuaria Saci (USA)	Soy and derivatives	8,317
ADM Paraguay S.A. (USA)	Soy and derivatives	6,701
Frigorífico Concepción S.A. (Brazil)	Livestock	3,102
Bunge Paraguay S.A. (USA)	Soy and derivatives	2,364
JBS Paraguay S.A. (Brazil)	Livestock	1,652
Louis Dreyfus Paraguay (France)	Soy and derivatives	1,057
Noble Paraguay S.A. (Hong Kong)	Soy and derivatives	864
Total		24,057

Source: Own elaboration based on statistics from the National Customs Directorate (DNA).

This intra-regional character has aroused a healthy renewal of interest in Ruy Mauro Marini's (1972) concept of Brazilian sub-imperialism, redirecting our attention to the geopolitical alliance between the Brazilian state and private agribusiness interests (see Vuyk 2014; Zibechi 2014; Oliveira 2016; Sotelo Valencia 2017). As Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras (2014: 28) helpfully distinguish, extractive capital can largely be seen as "the multinational corporations, bearers of capital in the form of foreign direct investment", while extractive imperialism, on the other hand, refers to the dynamic workings of "the state in the exercise and projection of its various powers in support of this capital."[38] While not yet a direct investor in land, the Brazilian government provides significant support to Brazilian investors, first by monitoring investment

[38] For a fuller discussion on the intimate relationship between (extractive) imperialism and capitalism, see Veltmeyer and Petras (2015).

deals acquiring or leasing land (via the Brazilian embassy), and second by providing technical assistance (via Brazilian state agencies) in agricultural and cattle ranching ventures (Galeano 2012: 646). Furthermore, in the face of increasingly militant agitation by landless peasants in Paraguay for redistribution of Brazilian-owned soybean farms, the Brazilian government issued strong warnings and threatened sanctions against such actions. In early October 2008, for example, Brazilian president Lula signed Decree 6.592, which regulates the National Mobilization System dedicated to confronting "foreign aggression." The first article of the decree defines foreign aggression as "threats or injurious acts that harm national sovereignty, territorial integrity, the Brazilian people, or national institutions, *even when they do not constitute an invasion of national territory*"(quoted in *Ultima Hora* 2008, emphasis added). In other words, any expropriation of Brazilian-owned land in Paraguay could be used as a pretext for Brazilian military action against Paraguay. The intervention of the Brazilian state in support of its nationals in land conflict has also proven to be a perennial obstacle to land redistribution, as was clearly seen in the case of Ñacunday (Fogel 2013), which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.3 Reconstituted landlordism

Based on agricultural census data for the years 1956, 1981, 1991, and 2008, Table 3.4 provides information on the distribution of farms and landholdings by farm size categories. The structure of unequal landholdings has exhibited a remarkable persistence over time, remaining relatively immune to fluctuations in the rate of growth and resistant to diverse—albeit halting—efforts of class struggle for land over the past three decades to change this distribution in the direction of equity (discussed in chapter 6).

Table 3.4 Distribution of farms and land by farm size, 1956–2008

	1956	1981	1991	2008
Distribution of farms				
0–5 ha	45.9	36.0	40.0	40.5
5–10 ha	23.4	19.9	21.7	22.9
10–100 ha	27.4	40.0	34.3	30.2
100–500 ha	1.9	2.8	2.7	3.6
500–1,000 ha	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.9
1,000–10,000 ha	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.4
>10,000 ha	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Number of farms	149,614	248,930	307,221	289,649
Distribution of Land				
0–5 ha	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.8
5–10 ha	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.3
10–100 ha	5.0	9.5	9.1	5.7
100–500 ha		6.3	6.8	7.4
500–1,000 ha	92.6	3.2	4.2	5.8
1,000–10,000 ha		27.0	36.2	38.3
>10,000 ha		51.6	40.8	40.7
Land cultivated	16,816,618	21,940,531	23,817,737	31,0856,894

Source: Henderson et al. (2015).

Looking at the data for 1956, it is evident that the Stroessner regime inherited considerable inequality, as nearly 70 per cent of producers operated farms less than 10 hectares but accounted for just over 2 per cent of the total land cultivated. Conversely, in that same year, just over 3 per cent of producers operated farms greater than 100 hectares but accounted for nearly 93 per cent

of the total land cultivated. The 1956 census also gave a livestock of 4,500,000 head and, by 1966, some 14,300,000 hectares, equivalent to 35 per cent of the total land area, was used for cattle ranching. Over two-thirds of the national herd was owned by only 1.5 per cent of all producers, each with 1,000 or more head of cattle.

Largely due to the regime's land colonisation programme, it is apparent that the number of farms and area cultivated expanded greatly by 1991. Compared to the 1956, the number of farms more than double from 149,614 to 307,221, while the farmland jumped from 16.8 million hectares to 23.8 million hectares. The inegalitarian distribution of landholdings, however, remained intact, as in that year the largest 4 per cent of producers operated 88 per cent of total land cultivated. The 1991 agricultural census revealed that 351 owners, each with more than 10,000 hectares, held a total of 9,730,950 hectares. Of these, 237 were in the Chaco with 7,297,440 hectares (75 per cent of the total) and 114 were in eastern Paraguay with 2,433,510 hectares (25 per cent of the total). Meanwhile, 255,578 farmers, with less than 20 hectares each, equivalent to 83 per cent of all farms, held a total of 1,450,764 hectares, equivalent to only 6.2 per cent of all agricultural land.

Finally, the democratization process that began after 1991 appears to have been accompanied by a further concentration of landholdings, as the 2008 agricultural census revealed the impact of the expansion of commercial agriculture on the land tenure system. The total number of farms fell by 5 per cent from 307,221 in 1991 to 289,666 in 2008, of which only 8,190 were located in the Chaco. Although the number of holdings above 1,000 hectares in eastern Paraguay fell, the number of holdings between 100 and 500 hectares increased by 39 per cent and the number over

500 hectares increased by 59 per cent. By contrast, the number of farms of between five and 10 hectares in eastern Paraguay, at 66,118, showed hardly any change from 1991, while the number between 10 and 20 hectares fell by 13 per cent, those between 20 and 50 hectares fell by 28 per cent, and those between 50 and 100 hectares fell by 11 per cent. A World Bank report in 2009 concluded that Paraguay had one of the most unequal distributions of land tenure in the world.

Overall, the legacy of historical patterns of land distribution described in this chapter so far reveals a clear "landlord bias", driven by the interests of the ARP, as the institutional basis of the allocation of land and tenure systems clearly favours the interests of the dominant rural class above those of smallholders. The category of "landlord bias" was first developed by Cristobal Kay in his comment of Michael Lipton's famous "urban bias" thesis (Kay 1977) and further refined in his historical analysis of class alliances and agrarian change in Chile (Kay 1981: 498):

> Different social classes exist within each economically or geographically defined sector, and the main contradiction in society is not between sectors but between social classes. It is this essential contradiction which the state constantly tries to mediate through measures ranging from coercion to consent and which aim to ensure the domination of those classes in control of the state apparatus. The introduction of a class analysis reveals that whilst the State may have discriminated against the agricultural sector, it also acted to protect landlords' interests. Peasants were the main social group to be adversely affected by the government.

For Kay (2009, 112–113), a more useful analysis would therefore consider the "landlord bias" who exercise power "from the blocking of land reform, the absence or non-enforcement of minimum wage and social security legislation, the outlawing of rural trade unions, the failure to curb exploitative practices of traders (including sometimes landlords) who pay low prices for the peasants' marketed surplus and sell at a high price the inputs purchased by peasants, and lenders (including sometimes landlords) who charge usury interest rates for credit." In the case of Paraguay, large landowners—many of them foreign—have amassed vast estates, exerting a huge amount of influence on the state. Peasant leaders also grumble about the dense overlap between the landowner ownership and political power. The oligarchic control of the state by landed elites is widely recognized by the country's most important peasant movements:

> *Por un lado, la oligarquía, los latifundistas, los ganaderos, los sojeros, ellos los que tienen el control del aparato del estado y ellos marcan la política que se viene desarrollando en nuestro país. Se va profundizando inclusivo con el actual gobierno [Cartes], se está profundizando… se había aprobado una creación de impuestos por el 10% a la exportación de la soja y el presidente Cartes veto esa ley. Incluso, con la modificación de la ley fiscal, anteriormente el impuesto a la utilidad de las empresas estaba entre el 30%, bajaron al 10%. Se dieron más a las empresas… y toda la oligarquía están dirigiendo toda la política de los gobiernos de turno en nuestro país y son los que, hasta esto momento, no quieren ni pagar impuestos porque son, comparando con los países vecinos, los más atrasados digamos hasta en ese sentido.*
> (Marcial Gómez, leader of the FNC, personal interview 2015)

The rapid emergence of commercial soybean and meat production for export from the 1970s has had a contradictory impact on the phenomenon of the *latifundio*. On the one hand, most of the immense landholdings of the past were broken up and sold to agribusiness companies and *brasiguayos* in eastern Paraguay and to modern cattle-ranching companies in the Chaco. On the other hand, a consolidation of large landholdings in fewer hands took place, especially in eastern Paraguay, as commercial agricultural companies and *brasiguayos* such as Tranquilo Favero expanded their operations by buying up holdings of small farmers, who often lacked definitive land titles (Nickson 2015: 347–348). Although these new holdings continued to be referred to as *latifundios*, in reality their far superior level of mechanization and productivity means that they are extremely different economic entities to their counterparts of the pre-1970s. The next section briefly explores the complex web of intraclass relations of the various segments of the dominant rural class.

3.3.1 Coalesced bourgeoisie

In 1974, Maurice Zeitlin published a seminal article in *The American Journal of Sociology*, criticizing the prevailing managerial theory and evidence approaches that dominated the analysis of large corporation's ownership and control. He called for research on the capitalist class that would reveal its inner structure—particularly the interaction of family ties, property, and business leadership in the large corporations (Zeitlin 1974). Developing this line of research on intercorporate and class power further in *Landlords and Capitalists*, Zeitlin and Ratcliff (1988) set out to explore the full panoply of interclass relations—interorganizational, kinship, economic, and political—through a sustained, empirical, class analysis of the composition of Chile's dominant class up to the 1960s and their capital accumulation strategies. The strength of these

studies lies both in their exhaustive use of empirical data and insights gained from questionnaires and interviews with significant members of Chiles dominant class, and the methodological model used for the class analysis of the internal structures of dominant classes, which may well be fruitfully applied elsewhere.[39] For example, Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017b) invoke Zeitlin and Ratcliff's study to explain the difficulties faced by left-wing governments in Latin America to move beyond the inherited neoliberal model of agricultural development during early twenty-first century. They concluded that the rise of agribusiness has accentuated the fusion of the landed classes with financial and industrial capital, leading to the formation of a "coalesced bourgeoisie"—i.e. a "single" and "indissoluble" class of landlords and capitalists. Under these conditions, the ties that bind the different fractions of the bourgeoisie and landed property reaches a level at which the distinction between capitalists and landowners is abolished.

Drawing on the concept "coalesced bourgeoisie", I offer a class analysis of intersectoral alliances between the old national political and economic elite in Paraguay, and also show how new dominant actors have emerged from the reconfiguration of the global food system. It is argued that land-based power relations have resulted in a form of "reconstituted landlordism." This analysis requires careful consideration of the role of mutual (although asymmetrical) benefits, cooperation, and alliances between specific sections of the landed classes, foreign agribusiness capital, imperialist forces, and the Paraguayan state:

> The growing dominance of trans-Latin corporations, international financial actors and agricultural multinationals has social, economic and political consequences that

[39] For a detailed discussion of the research methods used in this study, see Zeitlin and Ratcliff (1975).

> have not been sufficiently studied, largely due to the opaque manner in which they act. They often operate through subsidiaries or partnerships with local companies, so their involvement is not always obvious. (Guereña 2016: 43)

The section begins by identifying some of the major landowners in the country today and their role within the wider political economy of the country. Information on the social and economic backgrounds of Paraguayan landowning elite as well as, where relevant, brief sketches of their political careers are drawn from the extremely reliable bibliographic entries in the latest edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Paraguay*, hence the frequent citations of Nickson (2015) throughout this chapter. The following section examines the internal structure of the Paraguayan dominant class, exploring issues such as the particular ways in which the contradictory interests between landlords and agribusiness are resolved, and the type and degree of influence the different segments of dominant class exert in shaping state polices for rural development.

3.3.2 The top landowners

Who are the top landowners of Paraguay today? The Carlos Casado or Industria Paraguaya of the twenty-first century? Answering this question is not easy; it is difficult to obtain data that can give us a clear idea of the magnitude of the phenomenon. As Scoones et al. (2013), Edelman (2013), and Oya (2013) point out, there are several methodological hurdles to overcome when carrying out research on land issues. Understandably, landowners are reluctant to tell researchers about their land holdings, since many may wish to hide their land holdings, fearing taxation or expropriation. Adding further complexity to this task is the lack of transparency in transactions, the use of shell companies, titling through *prestanombres* (front men) to conceal true ownership

(Nagel 1999: 160n17; Rojas 2016: 101–102). While measuring and defining ownership and tenure often requires rigorous analysis of cadastral surveys and land registries, neither the Paraguayan Public Registry of Property (DGRP) nor the National Cadastre Service (SNC) offer a searchable database of major landowners. Locating such information, therefore, entails painstaking cross-checking and drawing connections across variety of sources, to unearth hidden truths behind the official land records, and enumerating the cases in which the owner could be adequately identified.

One of the few studies to have done this work of the sleuth and the economist is an Oxfam report conducted by Arantxa Guereña and Luis Rojas (2016), *Yvy Jára: Los dueños de la tierra en Paraguay*. Trolling through and examining various records, such as the Secretariat of the Environment's (SEAM) environmental impact assessment reports, the register of livestock export-approved livestock establishments, cadastral records of recently acquired properties, newspaper articles, and trade publications, they have produced a database of more than 700 property records throughout the country, which paints a fairly illustrative, although far from complete, picture of the main landowners. In total, these major landowners hold 3,900,100 hectares, equivalent to almost 10 per cent of the total national territory.

Table 3.5 displays the 15 largest landowners in Paraguay, unearthed in the study. Although incomplete, the list makes it possible to identify the main large landowners and reflects the diversity of actors competing for control of land in the region.[40] In the top positions are a South

[40] It is important to note that the figures are likely an underrepresentation of the extent of land concentration, many large holdings have likely been missed. For instance, despite the enormous extension of land under their control,

Korean church (Moon Sect), an investment fund associated with a European bank (Grupo Espíritu Santo/DEG), large soybean producers of Brazilian origin (Grupo Favero), and powerful oligarchs, including a former president (Grupo Cartes) and the owner of one of Paraguay's main national newspapers (Pedro Zucolillo). One of the historic latifundios—Carlos Casado—still appears. Many of these large landowners own adjoining plots of land in the same district, as in the case of Favero in Ñacunday, where it has accumulated an area of 52,942 hectares distributed in 18 adjacent farms; the same is true of the Moon Sect in the Chaco or the Riquelme Group in Curuguaty. In part, this is because the owners are progressively acquiring new farms to increase their territories, but it can also be a strategy to minimize the risks of a possible expropriation or declaration of the property as a *latifundia* (Guereña and Rojas 2016).

Table 3.5 The 15 Largest landowners in Paraguay

Landowner	Land holding (ha)
Moon Sect	590,000
Grupo Cartes	200,000
Grupo Espíritu Santo (Portugal) and DEG (Germany)	136,000
Grupo Favero	130,000
Grupo Riquelme – Reguera	114,000
Grupo Rieder	94,000
Marcelo Bastos Ferraz (Brazil)	78,000
Fundación Moisés Bertoni	70,000
Grupo Domínguez Dibb	52,000
Carlos Casado SA and Cresud SA	50,000
Pedro Zucolillo	44,000
Joici Companhoni (Brazil)	40,000
Familia Zavala Serrati	37,000
Grupo Vierci	33,000
Heribert Roedel	32,000

Source: Rojas (2016).

neither the Chortitzer cooperative (98,636 ha) nor the Neuland cooperative (76,472 ha) have been included in this list because they are not individually owned, but held by numerous people.

By far the largest owner is the private estate of the Universal Peace Federation of Korea, a religious sect formed by multimillionaire Reverend Sun Myung Moon (1920–2012), which own some 600,000 ha in the Paraguayan Chaco—more than twice the size of Luxembourg. Although it is not wholly clear what goes on there, this private estate appears to function as a hideaway: it is a definite no-go area for outsiders. According to a report in *The Irish Times* (14 October 2004), Moon's acquisitions of land in Paraguay are connected to two strategy interests: control over the Guaraní aquifer, one of the largest resource of fresh drinking water in the world, and the narcotics trade.[41]

In 2000, the Moon sect paid a reported US$13.65 million for 390,000 hectares of land in the Department of Alto Paraguay (Chaco) from Carlos Casado, Paraguay's largest landowner and former tannin producer. The sale led to much controversy, as it made "Moon" the owner of the small town of Puerto Casado (population 6,000), which was once an important centre for the exploitation of quebracho extract by a private Argentinian enterprise. The confiscation of farmland surrounding the town that local people had tilled for generations led to hostility toward Victoria S.A., an agro-industrial firm established by the sect. On 30 October 2003, a mob destroyed the company offices in Puerto Casado. The conflict erupted after the company sacked activists who were trying to establish a trade union among its 400 workers. In 2005, a law was passed to expropriate 52,000 hectares of land belonging to Victoria S.A. However, in a counterproposal, which was accepted, Victoria S.A. donated 31,200 hectares to the community of Puerto Maldonado. The former tannin factory was returned to the company in June 2014 after being occupied by protestors in 2006 (Zoomers 2010: 437; Nickson 2015: 114).

[41] https://www.irishtimes.com/news/moonies-accused-of-involvement-in-drugs-1.1161827

Grupo Cartes, owned by president Horacio Cartes (2013–2018), is the second largest landowner in the country, as they have bought large amount of properties in several departments of the country since Cartes took office in 2013, mainly in the departments of Boquerón, Alto Paraguay and Misiones, which are added to other previous properties. The group's land would be around 200,000 hectares. Most of them are in the name of companies such as Ganadera Chajá, Ganadera Sofía, Ganadera Las Palmas, Campos e Invernada SA, Ka'aguy Pora SA, Compañía Agrotabacalera del Paraguay SA, among others. Box 3.1 provides some background information on what is known about Cartes before he assumed the presidency in 2013, including widely reported links to drug trafficking and money laundering which, despite efforts by the Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA) and sections of the media, did not deter voters, who were more impressed by his projected image as a successful businessman who could increase employment opportunities.

Box 3.1 Who is Cartes?[42]

From 1985 to 1989, Cartes was a fugitive from justice after being arraigned on fraud charges related to a scam that took place during the first half of 1985 associated with abuse of the multiple exchange rate system then in force, through which he embezzled $35 million from Paraguay's Central Bank.[43] He returned to Paraguay following the overthrow of Stroessner

[42] This section box draws almost exclusively and verbatim from Nickson's (2015) bibliographic entry on Horacio Cartes in the latest edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Paraguay* (for the full entry see, "Cartes Jara, Horacio Manuel [1956–]"; Nickson 2015: 114–117).

[43] "At the time, Cartes worked for an Asunción money exchange company, Cambios Humaitá, and was a shareholder in a front company, Humaitá Turismo, involved in the scam. Under the calesita ("roundabout") swindle, false imports of agricultural machinery were generated in order to obtain foreign currency from the Central Bank at

and handed himself in to the authorities having believed that he had made arrangements for the pending charges to be dropped, but it seems that he was double-crossed by associates in the Paraguayan judiciary. In his 11 May 1989 declaration to the court, he stated that his four years on the run were "in order to obtain evidence to prove my innocence." In his first interview after winning the presidency in April 2013, Cartes stated that he had been imprisoned for 60 days "during the Stroessner dictatorship," implying that he had been a victim of the violation of human rights prevalent during this time. However, there is strong evidence that his imprisonment actually took place from 24 April to 8 October 1989 (i.e., after the overthrow of Stroessner). The documentation surrounding this whole episode was subsequently removed from the state prosecutor's office and, despite repeated efforts by lawyers acting for the Central Bank, charges against him were eventually overturned in 2008 (almost twenty-three years later), shortly before he announced his candidacy for president.

After his release in 1989, he opened a money exchange company, Cambios Amambay, which was converted into a bank, Banco Amambay, in 1992. The business empire of Cartes grew rapidly during the 1990s through the creation of Tabacalera del Este (TABESA), a cigarette factory established in 1994 close to the Brazilian border, and Tabacos del Paraguay S.A., a cigarette sales company. He also purchased five large cattle ranches and the Pulp soft drink company. In March 1995, at the height of a major banking crisis that saw the collapse of two large banks—Banco Alemán and Multibanco—and a massive capital flight, Grupo Cartes set

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the preferential exchange rate. These funds were then turned over at the market rate and the profits deposited in U.S. bank accounts under front names, including that of the cleaning lady at Cambios Humaitá. After the scam was discovered in 1985, Cartes went on the run for four years. Virtually nothing is known about his activities at this time, although he is believed to have been living in Brazil" (Nickson 2015: 114–115).

up an offshore bank, Amambay Trust Bank, in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The bank operated until 2000. Although a wholly owned subsidiary of the Banco Amambay, Amambay Trust Bank was never registered with the Paraguayan banking authorities. At the time, the Cook Islands were on the blacklist of tax havens produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and generally regarded as a prime location for illegal money laundering activities. In 2001, Cartes gained control of Libertad football club. By 2014, his family-owned conglomerate, Grupo Cartes, consisted of 22 companies and employed 3,500 people in Paraguay (Nickson 2015: 115, 116).

In 2004, a Brazilian parliamentary committee investigated the alleged involvement of Cartes's associates in the Banco Amambay in narcotics-related money laundering, using as its basis an earlier study by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In October 2012, WikiLeaks published documents of a cable from the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires (dated 5 January 2010) showing that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was still watching Cartes for alleged connections to money laundering and drug trafficking to the United States. The cable referred to "Operation Stone Heart," an international investigation of narcotics smuggling, and money laundering based in the tri-border area (along Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil) (Nickson 2015: 115; Hetherington 2020: 242n5). For an even-handed assessment of these various crimes and allegations, see "¿Quien es Cartes?" (*ABC Color*, 17 April 2013).[44]

[44] Cartes responded by welcoming an investigation, saying that he has nothing to hide, that his company, TABESA, legally exported cigarettes to all parts of the United States, and that he had regularly been granted a U.S. travel visa over the previous decade. He later published a rebuttal of four specific accusations concerning his alleged involvement in the smuggling trade, drug trafficking, and money laundering (Nickson 2015: 116).

At the time of writing, a welcome additional source of data became available: on 24 June 2020 the national audit office (*Contraloría General de la República*, CGR) began publishing asset declarations of leading officials on its website,[45] starting with the first 3,000 of some 150,000 declarations from 1998 to 2017, including those by past presidents, members of congress, supreme court judges, and the public prosecution service. The decision to put asset declarations in the public domain, which had been bitterly opposed by many politicians, represents a major victory for campaigners in favour of open government. Although the law requires asset declarations to include assets held by immediate nuclear family members (spouses and children), opportunities remain for concealing assets through third parties and hidden overseas bank accounts. Nevertheless, public disclosure will shed light on the ability of many senior officials to use their time in office to dramatically increase their private wealth through corrupt activities and this is likely to lead to criminal prosecutions. They have already exposed cases of tax evasion, money laundering, illicit enrichment (Andrew Nickson, pers. comm. 2020). Among the first to be made public were that of Horacio Cartes, who declared assets of US$200 million when he assumed the presidency in 2013 (see Figure 3.3), and current president Abdo Benitez, who declared a monthly expenditure on clothes of G30 million (US$5,200) in 2016; that is 17 times the then minimum salary and equal to the total amount that he paid in personal income tax for the same year (Andrew Nickson, pers. comm. 2020).

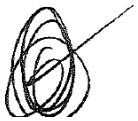
[45] https://djbpublico.contraloria.gov.py/index.php?start=10

Figure 3.3 Asset declaration for Horacio Cartes, August 2013

3.1.2.	CUENTAS A COBRAR-Deudor *	A LA VISTA	A 3 AÑOS	MAS DE 3 AÑOS	Gs.
	Aportes a capitalizar de empresas				
1	Club Libertad	26,418,847,213			26,418,847,213
2	Agrocitrus del Paraguay S.A.	11,428,309,156			11,428,309,156
3	Transporte Multimodal S.A.	1,163,979,000			1,163,979,000
4	Ganadera Sofia S.A.	41,793,560,894			41,793,560,894
5	Cia. Agrotabacalera del Paraguay S.A.	1,376,339,347			1,376,339,347
6	Ganadera Las Pampas S.A.	15,904,165,500			15,904,165,500
7	Chajha S.A.	98,016,191,226			98,016,191,226
8	Aerocentro S.A.	85,000,000			85,000,000
9	Consignataria de Ganados S.A.	671,000,000			671,000,000
10	Cauce Moro S.A.	15,183,587,075			15,183,587,075
11	Bebidas del Paraguay S.A	64,785,607,987			64,785,607,987
12	Sporting Life S.A.	1,061,842,066			1,061,842,066
13	Paraguay Soccer S.A.	21,399,451,867			21,399,451,867

	Dividendos a Cobrar	A LA VISTA	A 3 AÑOS	MAS DE 3 AÑOS	Gs.
1	Tabacalera del Este S.A.				91,674,303,529
2	Tabacos del Paraguay S.A.				34,885,902,157
3	Chaja S.A.				2,082,034,432
4	Habacorp SRL				5,715,000,000
5	Cigar Trading SRL				990,368,081

3.1.3.	INMUEBLES - UBICACIÓN							
	Finca o N° Cta.Cte.	País	Distrito	Superficie	Valor del Terreno	Sup. Cons. s/m2	Valor de Const	Gs.
1	Finca No. 71	PY	PJC	360 m2	100,000,000	900	300,000,000	400,000,000
2	Finca No. 8-835	PY	Chaco	3848 has.	548,340,000			5,137,080,000
3	Finca no.27.206	py	Recoleta	1886.42 m2	1,773,783,000	1,296.42	4,215,150,000	5,988,933,000
							SUBTOTAL	1,052,231,623,850



Source: CGR website, accessed 1 August 2020, (see note 45).

Grupo Favero is a family-owned business conglomerate set up by Tranquilo Favero, the largest soybean businessman in Paraguay and a controversial member of the elite, known as the "Rey de la Soja" ("king of soy"). He will be a recurring character in this dissertation, reappearing in chapters 5 and 6, so a brief profile is in order here.

Born in Videira, Santa Catarina, Brazil, Favero is a leading member of the brasiguayo community and founding member of the Asociación de Productores de Soja, Oleaginosas y Cereales del Paraguay (APS – Paraguayan Association of Producers of Soy, Grains and Oilseed). In February 2012, APS distanced itself from him after he was widely criticized for an interview in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* in which he said that Paraguayan farmworkers

were so lazy that they should "be treated like a bad woman, with a stick" (*ABC Color*, 13 February 2012; Nickosn 2015: 225).[46]

Favero moved to Paraguay in 1969, when he reportedly bought *tierras malhabidas* at $1 per hectare. The connection between Stroessner's colonization program, *tierras malhabidas*, and the current concentration and foreignization of land, is an issue that was frequently brought up during interviews with peasant leaders:

> *En la era de Stroessner, él lo que hizo fue una ley de colonización, qué es principalmente para abrir, digamos, la frontera con Brasil que entonces es la colonización de Alto Paraná, Canindeyú, Caaguazú. Y resultado un poco de eso también es que hoy tenemos la mayor cantidad de brasiguayos, entre comillas, en esos departamentos verdad. Y no solo brasiguayos sino tenemos latifundista que tienen… como Favero, que casi agarra todo un departamento del Alto Paraná verdad. También tiene en Canindeyú. Es un empresario brasileño que fue apropiándose de todas las tierras que en muchos casos son apropiaciones ilegales, hasta hoy no hay titularidad, fueron tierras del Estado que están siendo usurpadas digamos por empresarios.* (Lidia Ruiz, leader of the OLT, personal interview, 2015)

Grupo Favero comprises eight companies involved in grain production, trading, and processing. As detailed by Nickson (2015: 225):

[46] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/favero-odia-la-pobreza-y-dice-que-campesinos-deben-ser-tratados-a-palos-365925.html

> Agro Silo Santa Catalina S.A., the core company of the GF, was founded in the 1980s. It is supported by more than 1,500 producers and provides crop advances in the form of fertilizers, agrochemicals, and other supplies. Strategically located in the main production zones, its scope encompasses the entire soybean cycle from processing and storage to export and final delivery to overseas markets. In 1995, Favero founded Agrotoro S.A. after acquiring a 32,000-hectare cattle farm, which was gradually converted into a grain farm. It now boasts a static storage capacity of 42,000 tons and a seeds plant with a production capacity of almost 3,000 tons of seed per year. In 2000, Favero diversified into cattle ranching, with a 25,000 herd spread over 200,000 hectares of land in the Chaco. Cattle operations are overseen by the GF subsidiary, Ganadera Campo Bello S.A. In 2001, Favero entered the agrochemical industry through Tatu Agrosciences S.A. Its 12,000-square-meter agrochemical plant in Villeta imports insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides, which are presold to local companies and farmers. The Totemsa port, acquired by the group in 1995, is located on the Paraná River with a 300- ton-per-hour loading capacity and a static storage capacity of up to 25,000 tons.

In 2014, Grupo Favero is reported to have owned 168,000 hectares, 18 silos, 40,000 head of cattle, employed 1,500 staff, and operated in 13 of the 17 departments of the country. Favero (Nickson 2015: 224). In addition to producing 8 per cent of national soybean output, as reported in the Spanish newspaper *El País* (24 May 2018), the company produces corn, wheat, rapeseed, sunflower, sorghum, and meat (Nickson 2015: 225–226).[47]

[47] https://elpais.com/economia/2018/05/24/actualidad/1527176301_447075.html

The oligarchic rural elite are composed of narco-traffickers, landowners, military and paramilitary officers, agribusiness, and cattle ranchers. Drug lords are becoming powerful actors in the countryside since marijuana production is on the rise in Paraguay's northeast (the departments of Canindeyú and Amambay being two of main areas cultivation), including both small farmer and large plantations with near-slavery conditions. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Paraguay is the largest producer of marijuana in South America, accounting for 15 per cent of the world's harvest (Muñoz Acebes 2015: 76). Anti-drug officials roughly estimate Paraguay's annual production at between 30,000 and 45,000 tonnes, with 80 per cent of this production ending up in Brazil, where its value increases almost fivefold (Muñoz Acebes 2015: 78). Paraguay is also turning from a transit country for cocaine trafficking to a producer country, according to its anti-drug agency, the Secretaría Nacional Antidrogas (SENAD), with the installation of laboratories in its territory financed by Brazilian gangs (Muñoz Acebes 2015: 76).[48]

As Hetherington (2020: 238n1) notes:

> In some places there are clear overlaps between the oligarchs running the soy industry and those involved in the production and smuggling of marijuana, but in other places they are at odds, as production favours keeping some forest intact (to hide the production).

[48] For an excellent analysis of Paraguay's involvement in the drug trade since the late 1960s, see Simon (1992).

This topic of contradictory also emerged in other discussions with peasant leaders:

> *Tienes una zona donde no hay legalidad cómo es la zona narcotráfico y esa zona está creciendo. Eso es lo preocupante verdad, o incluso eso está involucrando al propio EPP [Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo] o al propio ACA [Agrupación Campesina Armada], porque en esa zona donde ellos interactúan. Son zona de negocios y son cuestiones así de conceptos que es muy difícil que se entienda, pero qué es preocupante, porque eso también agarré toda una zona. O sea, no es solamente el agronegocio de soja o ganadería… El narcotráfico en Paraguay no sabemos a dónde vamos a desembocar de aquí a 5–10 años...a un México, qué es lo más probable... la mexicanización. Y incluso muchas de esas disputas eran con los narcos y los ganaderos o los sojeros... principal de los ganaderos mantienen... por los narcos quieren monte, quieren espacio donde refugiarse y esconderse porque hay ilegalidad y los otros van abriendo camino verdad, entonces allí entre ellos también hay mucha disputa, entre los sojeros que si destruyen todo—no deja ni un arbol.* (Lidia Ruiz, leader of the OLT, personal interview, 2015)

The most prominent representative of this rural elite-narco-connection is probably Horacio Cartes (see Box 3.1), and he is widely seen as what José Mujica, the former Uruguayan president, described as "narcocoloradismo" (ABC Color, 5 July 2012).[49] Indeed, it is telling that the two largest landowners in the country—Moon Sect and Cartes—have been widely accused of involvement in the drug trafficking.

[49] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/narcocoloradismo-inicio-crisis-en-paraguay-segun-mujica-422764.html

At the same time, the conversion of extensive livestock farms into intensive soybean plantations or the transformation of thousands of hectares of forest into pastureland in the Chaco would not be possible without the injection of significant financial resources. Banks provide agricultural companies with the necessary credit to develop productive projects, and these in turn receive financing from the international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank. In 2015 alone, IFIs approved a total of $225 million in loans to Banco Itaú, Banco Regional and Banco Continental. In 2014, a loan of 7 million was approved to BANCOP and in 2013 another 15 million to Vision Banco. In total, between 2013 and 2015, projects were signed for almost $250 million (Guereña and Rojas 2016). All these projects have the objective of facilitating loans for the development of business activities, with an emphasis on soy production in the eastern region and cattle ranching in the western region. Some illustrative examples of the investment made by international financial development institutions to boost the agro-industrial sector in Paraguay include:

- The German Investment and Development Corporation (DEG) invested $32 million in 2013 to acquire the majority of the shares in the Paraguay Agricultural Corporation (PAYCO), a company that was wholly owned by the Rioforte Investments group—the investment arm of the Portuguese financial group based in Luxembourg, Espírito Santo (Guereña ad Rojas 2016).

- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) together with the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) have also invested $200 million in the municipality of

Villeta to launch the Complejo Agroindustrial Angostura SA (CAIASA), which operates the largest soybean meal and oil production plant in the country (*IPS News,* 23 March 2016).

- The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has also provided support to the Ganadera Vista Alegre (VASA), a cattle farming and forestry company operating some 95,000 hectares in the Department of San Pedro, owned by the descendants of British cattle rancher Federico Robinson (Andrew Nickson, pers. comm. 2020).[50]

The historical-political analysis just presented highlights the powerful confluence of interests between the Paraguayan state, the landed elite, foreign agribusiness capital, and the Brazilian government. At this point, it is necessary to turn to the thornier task of developing a theoretical analysis of the Paraguayan state with respect to agriculture.

3.3.3 The predatory and oligarchic state in Paraguay

Rural scholars have long focused on the central role that states play in process of agrarian change but theorizing about the nature of the state in the countryside remains the "neglected step-sister" of critical agrarian studies.

[50] Federico Robinson was a British cattle rancher who emigrated to Paraguay in 1933. He worked for the Société La Foncière du Paraguay and Liebig's Extract of Meat Company, where he became head of ranches. In 1954, he established the company Robinson y Pereira, buying 230,000 hectares of Chaco land from Paraguayan Cattle Farms and the estate of Percival Gibson. The central bullring of the ARP is named in his honour.

> [V]ery few of these studies have attempted to re-examine the ways in which we understand the state or have scrutinized the underlying assumptions about the nature of the state that agrarian scholars reproduce. Even fewer studies are dedicated to theorising the current nature of the state within the countryside or in respect to agriculture. The recent contributions on the agrarian question […] from Byres to Bernstein, from Akram-Lodhi and Kay to McMichael, have not theorised the state, even though their analysis point to the state in many ways. [Indeed], very few scholars work explicitly with a particular conception of the state or refer to the theoretical discussions around state theory. Only a few scholars (Wolford et al. 2013) have attempted to theorise what is specific or peculiar about the form that the state takes in the countryside or the role that it plays in social conflict over resources. Because of this centrality of the state, there seems to be a need to bring the state back in (once again), not only thematically but also through a theoretical discussions [sic] on the nature and role of the state in the ongoing process of neoliberal globalisation of the countryside (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a: 242)

Kay and Vergara-Camus (2017a) identify five schools of thoughts that focus on the state within the literature of agrarian studies natural resources: a Neo-Weberian, a Schumpeterian, a Marxist, a Foucauldian, and an Eclectic approach. Among all the constellation of theoretical tendencies running through these schools of thought, I believe that two deserve special attention given their frequent appearance in the Paraguayan literature on the characteristics of the Stroessner regime and the role and nature of the state since the transition to democracy

The first is the Weberian approach, which characterises the state as having relative autonomy and as being either developmental or predatory. Several attempts have been made to characterize the Stroessner regime, ranging from "traditional caudillo", and "traditional authoritarian" to "transitional from a caudillo-type to a modern bureaucratic-authoritarian regime." In fact, most of the initial literature on bureaucratic authoritarianism were quick to point out the sui generis nature of the regime. It is worth remembering tha the Stronato pre-dates the emergence of Southern Cone bureaucratic-authoritarian dictatorships by a decade, and it deviates significantly from this genre of militarism (see Sondrol 1990). In his seminal text, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, O'Donnell writes, "in Paraguay is the only survival of traditional authoritarianism in South America. A small and quite homogeneous elite rules over a largely politically inert and scarcely differentiated population. The foreign export-oriented sector is dominant, and there have been no serious attempts to subordinate it to domestic industrial and market expansion" (O'Donnell 1973: 112). More than a decade later, when reflecting on the various types of authoritarian rule in Latin America, O'Donnell outlines the characteristics of "traditional authoritarianism" as featuring "strong patrimonialist (in the Weberian sense), and in some cases even sultanistic components", before signalling out "Stroessner's Paraguay [as] the last remnant of what used to be a quite common form of rule in the region" (O'Donnell 1986: 4). In the same edited volume, the Brazilian dependency theorist Fernando Henrique Cardoso depicts Stroessner as belonging to a "caudillismo of the old Latin American Militarism" (Cardoso 1979: 35). But the most appealing characterization to date is that offered by the Paraguayan sociologist Marcial Riquelme (1994), who argued that the nature of the regime was similar to what Max Webercalled "sultanism", a variant of patrimonialism, in which power is centralized and based on the discretion of the ruler. The violent overthrow of the regime in 1989

is consistent with Riquelme characterization of "neosultanism", given its lack of institutional mechanisms for the peaceful transfer of power (see Nickson 2020).

Setting many complexities aside, not least the fact that "[t]he state itself is a socially and politically contested terrain, and as such is a highly heterogeneous institution comprised of various actors" (Borras 2007: 75), the essence of the Paraguayan state under Stroessner, and during the 19 years of transition to democracy, is accurately captured in Peter Evans's (1989: 562) conceptualisation of the "predatory state," wherein the state acts in the interest of an elite rather than pursue a coherent strategy for economic development:

> Some states may extract such large amounts of otherwise investable surplus and provide so little in the way of 'collective goods' in return that they do indeed impede economic transformation. It seems reasonable to call these states "predatory" … Those who control the state apparatus seem to plunder without any more regard for the welfare of the citizenry than a predator has for the welfare of its prey.

Following this description, several scholars have argued that Paraguay should be seen as a predatory state (the terms patrimonial state or privatized state have also been used), whereby connected individuals treat public agencies as private property (Nickson and Lambert 2002; Richards 2008; Fogel 2009; Levy 2013). For example, Levy (2013: 41) writes, "Paraguay is the epitome of state corruption and confusion between state and Colorado Party interests where the patrimonial state blurs distinctions between public and private property… and acts as a vital source of patronage for the Colorado Party, which behaves as if it 'owns' the state." During

Stroessner's rule (1954-1989) Paraguay's predatory state extracted rents from four primary sources: (1) the disbursement of public lands; (2) the construction of large infrastructure projects, especially dams; (3) state-owned enterprises; and (4) trade in contraband (Richards 2008: 102). For our interests in this dissertation, we focus the corrupt sale of state land (*tierras malhabidas*)—a practice initiated during the Stroessner dictatorship and continued under successive Colorado governments.

From a Marxists perspective, Paraguayan sociologist Ignacio González Bozzolasco (2009, 2012) characterizes the Paraguayan state as oligarchic. The standard usage of the "oligarchic" state by Latin American scholars has generally referred to political systems that are characterized by extremely limited scope of political competition, where the elite of the primary-product export sector (based on minerals and agricultural products) dominates the state and orients public policy around its needs (Collier 1979: 23–24). Along these lines, and in reference to the works of Agustín Cueva[51] and Waldo Ansaldi, González Bozzolasco argues that this state model is still in force in Paraguay, at least in its general characteristics. In making this argument, González Bozzolasco points to the fact that the economy is rooted in the *latifundio* agrarian model and the penetration of transnational capital in strategic areas (agriculture, electricity). The development of agriculture, cattle raising, and extractive enclaves contributed to the formation of a small economic elite and a relatively new rural oligarchy, whose origins were established in the last century and crystallized during the Stroessner era when 12 million hectares of land were

[51] In *El desarrollo del capitalismo en América Latina* (1977), Agustín Cueva argues that in the transition to a capitalist social formation in Latin American, an "oligarchic state" emerged as the "superstructural expression" of the process which implanted capitalism as the dominant mode of production. This oligarchic state constituted an alliance of local-landed, large-commercial, and foreign-capitalist interests.

distributed to both nationals and foreigners in an irregular and clientelist manner. Throughout the last decades, the Paraguayan state has not only favoured the internal accumulation of capital, attraction of external resources and the maintenance of legal privileges for the large agro-export sector, but also successfully set up a legal structure that supports and protects it, which is particularly clear in the current tax structure of the country (with one of the lowest tax takes and most regressive form of taxation in the region) (González Bozzolasco 2009, 2012).

What both these perspectives emphasize is that, as discussed earlier, far from resolving the country's skewed distribution of land ownership, the expansion of the agricultural frontier through the regime's land colonization programme gave raise to a distinctive rentier class, a ruling class of landowners whose capacity to extract surplus relied on extra-economic means of enforcement and extraction. In other words, access to land in Paraguay took the form of "politically constituted property" (see Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017 in reference to the work of Ellen Wood) because it was political power and control of the state which gave access to property. As a result, "almost all members of Congress are also members of Paraguay's tiny landowning elite, with titles held either directly or in the names of friends and family" (Nickson 2015: 18). Thus revealing "the nature of Congress as the political embodiment of the tiny elite that runs the country" (Lambert 2012).

While both Weberian and Marxists approaches serve to highlight the overarching characteristics of the Paraguayan state throughout the military dictatorship and protracted transition to democracy, it is important to view the state not as a static object, but as a series of relationships produced through produced through place, property and power. The particular forms, practices

and effects of state power must always be understood in contextually specific terms. Portrayals of the state as predatory or oligarchic, while largely accurate and helpful for illuminating the broader structural forces at play, do not adequately capture the micro-level process of state power. The challenge here is grappling with a noted tension between, on the one hand, developing a theory of the state within the rural settings of capitalist development, while on the other hand developing "a methodology or a framework that is adaptable to the diversity of cases, processes, and the balance of classes forces" (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a: 243). This latter objective rests on the need to "recognize a stronger agency on the part of different actors within the structure of the state and leaves room for contingent results" (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017: 243). In order to meet this objective, chapter 4 adopts a somewhat more eclectic approach to the state, as recommended by Wolford (et al. 2013), wherein the state is seen as a "contradictory space of conflicts of interests where actors, deploy strategies at multiple levels" (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017: 243). More specifically, I draw on different conceptualisations and understands of the state to illustrate different moments or aspects of Paraguayan politics. For example, my discussion of the agrarian reform impasse under Fernando Lugo (2008–2012) draws on the Gramscian concept of "Caesarism" to account for inherent weaknesses and ambiguities that characterised Lugo's administration—weakness and ambiguities which played out within the broad structural framework of the oligarchic and predatory state as discussed outline above. This fluid conceptualization of the state is then combined with an "interactive approach" to state-relations, as used Jun Borras and Jonathan Fox in their studies on agrarian reform (see Borras 2007). This eclectic approach, therefore, privileges a relational understanding or power which facilitates a more "nuanced analyses of the ways in which power flows through the various

disaggregated levels and functions of the state" (Wolford et al. 2013: 206). This will again be illustrated in chapter 4 via two land conflict cases studies in Ñacunday and Marina Kue.

3.4 Conclusion

The origins of Paraguay's *latifundio* system rose from the ashes of the War of the Triple Alliance, when Paraguay repudiated the self-reliant developmental strategy of the previous half-century via foreign occupation, political domination, and economic dependence—factors which continue to cast a long shadow on the trajectories of agrarian change. The Stroessner regime's colonization programme drove the country's agro-frontier expansion, offering land to many of the country's land poor peasants, but also facilitating the rent-seeking behavior, revealing the sultanistic nature of the regime and the rentier nature of the state. During this period, Brazilian migration increased via a form of "colonization by invitation" (Petras 2014), increasing the levels of land concentration and foreignization, and installing "brasiguayos" as a key social actor within the Paraguayan agrarian structure. The transition to democracy from the 1990s coincided with the country's continuing insertion into the global food regime, opening up the country to new forms of agro-extractive capital penetration, primarily in the form of agricultural biotechnologies and increasing agribusiness control of the commodity value chain (developed further in chapter 5).

By examining the prior distribution of power in society and within the state, we can begin to identify the nature of the political problem facing any attempt of major redistributive land reform in this country: (i) the legacy and ongoing perversion of a predatory state; (ii) the oligarchic control of the state by landed elites; and (iii) the changing character of contemporary agro-

extractive capitalism, particularly in relation to the sub-imperial interests of Brazilian trans-Latin capital. It is against this backdrop that we need to situate the analysis of the political economy and dynamics of social change during the almost four years (August 2008–June 2012) of the Lugo government in office, to which the next chapters attends.

Chapter 4

A "Coup" Foretold: The Politics of Agrarian Change under Fernando Lugo

4.1 Introduction[52]

Of all the so-called "pink tide" governments that reached power in Latin America over the past two decades, the election of defrocked Catholic bishop Fernando Lugo as President of Paraguay in April 2008—while admittedly "something of a red herring" (Hetherington 2011: 227)—was perhaps the most surprising. For one thing, Lugo's victory ended the seemingly eternal hegemony of the Colorado Party, which had been in power for 61 years—the world's longest ruling party at the time (Gott 2008; Nickson 2008).[53] His electoral platform centredon far-reaching socioeconomic reforms to address Paraguay's long-standing issues of poverty, inequality, and corruption. In an interview before the elections that made him president of Paraguay, Lugo stated that the first axis of his principle political would be program substantial reforms in agrarian policies, including redistributive land reform and support policies for small-scale producers:

> El primer eje es la Reforma Agraria integral, que no es solamente una cuestión de tierras. Acá se han repartido más de 11 millones de hectáreas en los últimos 20

[52]Parts of this chapter have been published in Ezquerro-Cañete and Fogel (2017).

[53] The *Asociación Nacional Republicana* (ANR), more commonly known as the *Partido Colorado*, had controlled the Paraguayan state continuously from January 1947 until Lugo's election in 2008. This period of rule spanned the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989) and a dismal democratisation process thereafter which saw three bouts of military instability (1996, 1999, 2000), the assassination of a Vice-President, Luís Argaña (1999), and the indictment of two former Presidents, Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993-1998) and Raúl González Macchi (1999-2003), on corruption charges (Nickson 2008).

> años, pero eso no ha solucionado el problema. La Reforma Agraria tiene que abarcar otros aspectos, no solamente el de la tierra, sino también la formación, la asistencia técnica, el acompañamiento, ir creando un modelo productivo diferente... Nosotros proponemos una Reforma Agraria integral no como una simple repartida de tierras sino como un proceso en que los sujetos de la Reforma Agraria sean los campesinos, los indígenas, la gente que la trabaja hoy ineficientemente. (Fernando Lugo, quoted by Carracedo 2008, in Gascón and Montagut 2010)

Critically, land reform was placed squarely back on the political agenda, an issue of particular importance in a country with the highest inequality of land in all of Latin America and where over 40 per cent of the population live in the countryside (Fogel 2009). However, despite these explicit commitments to agrarian reform and peasant farming, Lugo's government proved too weak to implement such reforms and key campaign promises faced deadlock. Moreover, fast-forward to June 2012, Lugo was removed from office by the Paraguayan Congress following a highly dubious impeachment procedure. The impeachment had been triggered by a violent clash a week before in the Curuguaty district of Canindeyú which left 11 landless peasants and six police officers dead. How should we interpret the rise and fall of Fernando Lugo, and what is its significance for agrarian change in the poorest and most agrarian society in South America, where the struggle for land and land reform remain at the very epicentre of the class struggle?

Despite its many insights, recent scholarship on the Latin American "left turn" has been uneven in its coverage. In particular, the academic debate on the pink tide has paid little attention to the case of Fernando Lugo's election in Paraguay (Levy 2013: 31-32). In a review of seven books dealing with South America's left turn, for instance, Marc Becker (2013: 253) observes how the case of "Paraguay's Fernando Lugo, unfortunately, receives not even minimal treatment in any of these volumes, even though this case contains a series of key themes facing the left, including the role of agro-export economies… and the limited nature of presidential power as evidenced in the June 2012 institutional coup." In an attempt to fill this lacuna—albeit partially—this chapter focuses on the politics of agrarian change in Paraguay and, in particular, on the land reform impasse under the short-lived Lugo government (2008–2012).

In concert with an earlier special issue on this subject in the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, edited by T.J. Byres (2004), I argue argue that a placing of class and power at the centre of analysis is essential for understanding the dynamics and constraints facing redistributive land reforms—particularly in a country like Paraguay, where, as we saw in the previous chapter, access to power and wealth is synonymous with access to land (Nickson 2015: 18). From this class-theoretical perspective, it is argued that Lugo's stalled agrarian reform can be explained by the oligarchic control of the state by landed elites which, despite the election of Lugo, continued to dominate Congress and succeeded in thwarting any significant reform. That being said, Lugo's weak position vis-à-vis the legislature and the seemingly insurmountable opposition to his reform programme within Congress provides only one side of the story. Indeed, as Saturnino Borras (2007) reminds us in his examination of the land reform process in the Philippines, successful implementations of redistributive policies are not simply imposed "from above" on

passive societal actors by politicians. Rather, in pursuing distributive land reform policies, "the state has to interact with a range of societal actors with varying, often competing and conflicting, interests. Thus, *a rigorous analysis of land reform requires the full understanding of state-society relations dynamics*" (Borras 2007: 64; emphasis added). For this reason, in this chapter, an "interactive approach" to state-society relations is applied, wherein the "prospects for distributive reform *depend less on the insulation and coherence of a strong state than on… the nature of the political interaction between the pro-reform forces in the state and society*" (Fox 1993: 39-40, cited in Borras 2007: 69; emphasis added by Borras).

Drawing upon recent fieldwork research, as well as insights gained from extensive in-depth interviews conducted and published by the Asunción-based social research centre, BASE Investigaciones Sociales, in the immediate aftermath of the parliamentary coup of June 2012 (Duré et al. 2012), this chapter begins by analysing the nature of the political interaction between pro- and anti-reform forces in the Paraguayan state and society during the Lugo government. To address ambiguities surrounding the *Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio* (Patriotic Alliance for Change –APC) coalition that brought Lugo to power, a Gramscian approach is offered here drawing upon work that has fruitfully located Lugo's government within the realm of "progressive Caesarism" (González Bozzolasco 2009; Bourscheid 2016). The following section then shifts to a narrative of the key events leading to the impeachment and removal of Lugo from office. The final section seeks to draw wider conclusions regarding the parliamentary coup and the 'real politics of land' from the Paraguayan case.

4.2 The land reform impasse and agrarian stalemate under Lugo

With the election of Fernando Lugo in April 2008, agrarian reform was placed squarely back on the political agenda. Influenced by liberation theology, Lugo had earned a well-deserved reputation as the "bishop of the poor" following the almost 11 years he spent working with poor but combative peasants in the department of San Pedro, which had been the epicentre of protest by landless peasant groups (Gott 2008). In their edited volume on the agrarian policies of left-wing government in Latin America, Gascón and Montagut (2010) include a chapter wherein they interview Peter Rosset—a researcher at the *Centro de Estudios para el Cambio en el Campo Mexicano* (Center of Studies for Rural Change in Mexico), and co-coordinator of the Land Research Action Network—on the prospects of these, at the time, new governments carrying out clear policies in favour of the peasantry and within the paradigm of sovereignty food. Reflecting on the early administration of Lugo in Paraguay, Rosset responded:

> The Paraguayan case is also complex. Lugo has arrived to power without deputies in the National Congress and with a very adverse balance of power. He does not control the institutions of the State. He does not control Parliament. It is true that he came to power thanks, in part, to peasant organizations members of *La Via Campesina* who are among the most combative on the continent. Perhaps only the MST of Brazil beats them in combativeness. But the scandals in his personal life that have weakened him even more politically, have paralyzed possible proposals of agrarian reform, and have forced him to accept that institutional forces have carried out repressive actions on the peasant movement that was initially his ally.

> Beyond the resisting in power and getting re-elected with a more favorable correlation of forces, you cannot expect much.
>
> In addition, the Brazilian government is exerting strong pressure on Lugo, even while carrying out military manoeuvres on the border, because of the land issue. And it is that as in the Bolivian case, the great Latifundio in Paraguay is of Brazilian capital, of the so-called "brasiguayos." An agrarian reform in Paraguay would require expropriating land of Brazilian capital. And the government of Brazil has left very clear that it has the determination to defend, in the way that is necessary, their economic interests in Paraguay. In short, Lugo is an extremely weak president of a country that is extremely weak in comparison with its Brazilian neighbour, a real superpower. Perhaps it can be built for a future, but there are few short-term expectations.

This precise summation touches on many of the key themes discussed and expanded on in this section. Following González Bozzolasco (2009) and Bourscheid (2016), I draw on Gramsci's concepts of Caesarism in order to highlight the ambiguities that characterised Lugo's administration. This political form emerges when no one class has the power to decisively impose its mark on the social order. Hence a mediating force such as Caesarism must emerge.

In the *Prison Notes* Gramsci writes: Caesarism "always expresses the particular solution in which a great personality is entrusted with the task of 'arbitration' over a historico-political situation characterised by equilibrium of forces leading towards catastrophe" (Gramsci 1971:

219). The "great personality" (or as Gramsci writes elsewhere, the "charismatic leader"), is "entrusted" with the power to arbitrate between contending groups (Fontana 2004: 179). In Paraguay this process took the shape of a "marriage of convenience" (Lambert 2011: 180), resulting in an "unlikely coalition of the pro-market Liberal Party and leftist activists, including environmentalists and peasant groups that had coalesced around the charismatic leadership of Fernando Lugo" (Hetherington 2014: 57). Caesarism is therefore either progressive or reactionary: "Caesarism is progressive when its intervention helps the progressive force to triumph, albeit with its victory tempered by certain compromises and limitations" (Gramsci 1971: 219). This was certainly the case with Lugo's electoral victory, which was tempered by various compromises and limitations that deserve mention from the outset. First, Lugo had come to power as the leader of the APC, a fragmented, ideologically divided electoral coalition. Crucial to the APC's electoral success (but also to its eventual downfall) was a strategic alliance with the centre-right *Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico* (PLRA), the traditional opposition to the Colorado Party,[54] who agreed to support Lugo's candidacy in exchange for the vice-presidency ticket, which went to Federico Franco. Not only did the APC hold a minority in Congress, but also Lugo's own position within the governing APC coalition was weak. Indeed, only five members of Congress represented his own supporters, primarily the small, centre-left *Tekojojá Popular* (which in March 2010 merged into the *Frente Guasú*). Thus, however ambitious Lugo's reform plans might have been, he was highly dependent on the support of the PLRA which dominated his coalition.

[54]Ideologically there is little difference between the PLRA and the PC, both are state-based clientelist parties marked by ample factionalism. The PLRA is noticeable for its lack of a clear political program, which is a reflection of its division into personalist factions, dominated by networks of national and local *caudillos* (Nickson 2015: 461).

A second wrench thrown in Lugo's electoral victory was that, despite losing the presidency for the first time in over 60 years, the Colorado Party retained a majority in both the Chamber of Deputies (30 out of 80 seats) and the Senate (15 out 45 seats), as can be seen in Table 4.1—particularly salient fact in a country with the weakest presidentialist system in Latin America with Congress retaining extensive powers, a design of the 1992 Constitution in reaction to the excesses of Stroessner's dictatorship (Nickson 2008). In addition, the Colorado Party's influence within Paraguay's patronage-based political culture remained largely intact.

Table 4.1 Distribution of seats in Congress, April 2008

	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
Partido Colorado	30	15
Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico	27	14
Partido Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos	15	9
Partido Patria Querida	3	4
Left-wing parties[a]	2	3
Other parties[b]	3	0
Total	80	45

Source: Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral (TSJE).

[a] Movimiento Popular Tekojoa, Partido Democrático Popular (1 Chamber seat, 1 Senate seat each); Partido País Solidario (1 Senate seat).

[b] Alianza Patriótica de Ñeembucú, Alianza de Presidente Hayes, Alianza Democrática Boquerón (1 Chamber seat each).

From a Gramscian perspective, we can understand Lugo's government as the product of the ongoing evolution of the bourgeois state as it confronts crises within the economy and within its legitimating institutions (González Bozzolasco 2009; Bourscheid 2016). That is, the Lugo administration represented a phase in which "there was no passage from one type of State to

another, but only 'evolution' of the same type along unbroken lines" (Gramsci 1971: 222). In this sense, "the most important change following the election of Lugo was that the state became a disputed space between progressive and conservative socio-political forces leading to an ideological polarization in the political debate around issues such as agrarian reform" (Levy 2013: 46). As a clear indication of these contradictory struggles and tension within the state, Lugo placed two personalities with vastly different ideological profiles as his ministers for the most important institutions for agricultural policy. On the one hand, as Minister of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), he chose Cándido Vera Bejarano, a person closely linked to the interests of the landowner business union. On the other hand, he placed the lawyer Alberto Alderete historic defender of peasant rights, at the head of the National Institute of Rural Development and Land (INDERT). Following Borras (2007), we focus on four related themes to guide our discussion of state-society interaction for agrarian reform in the context of Lugo's ("Caesarist") government: (i) autonomous rural social mobilisation "from below" (ii) pro-reform initiatives "from above" (iii) positive interaction between pro-reform forces within the state and in society, and (iv) ability to overcome landlord's resistance to land reform. Let us move, then, through each of these four domains in turn, in search for answers to why Lugo failed to implement the redistributive land reform he had promised.

4.2.1 Autonomous rural social mobilisation "from below"

The peasant mobilisations promoted by the more militant peasant organisations continued to keep the pressure up on the government. In August 2009, the Espacio Unitario *Popular* (United Popular Space – EUP) promoted a mass mobilisation for the implementation of agrarian reform and, from early 2010, land occupations intensified; the more frequent conflicts occurred in the

departments with the greatest soybean expansion. The reaction from the State was to intensify criminalization so that, between August 2008 and June 2010, 12,650 peasants were displaced, 1,148 were arrested and 334 were criminally charged (Palau et al. 2010: 23-24). In 2010, in the face of government inertia in advancing its promised land reform, a new militant peasant organisation, the Liga Nacional de Carperos (LNC), was formed and began rapidly attracting members (Fogel 2012). In the months prior to the "parliamentary coup" tensions sharpened in the countryside as *Carperos* began a campaign of large-scale land invasions in the in eastern border areas of Itapúa and Alto Paraná that targeted highly visible tracts of *tierras malhabidas*. The LNC, advocating more radical action to settle idle and ill-acquired land than that pursued by the existing peasant organisations, argued that many *brasiguayos* were in breach of the legislation that bars foreigners from owning land along Paraguay's borders. In the midst of this intense struggle, two episodes in particular—the cases of Ñacunday and Marina Kue—lay the foundation for the unravelling of the Lugo government. These are examined further below.

4.2.2 Reformist initiatives by pro-reform state actors "from above"

In response to an escalation of land invasions and mounting social tensions in the countryside in the first few months of his administration, Lugo announced the creation of a new state body for land reform, the Coordinadora Ejecutiva para la Reforma Agraria (Executive Coordinating Committee for Agrarian Reform, CEPRA), as well as the development of a social assistance programme for rural communities. At the same time, INDERT also announced that it would repossess plots of land it had awarded to people who were not qualified as beneficiaries of the land reform law (i.e. the politically constituted *tierras malhabidas*), and to recover state lands from present owners who came by them illegally.

The crucial first step of Lugo's initiative required an urgently needed cadastral survey to establish land value and ownership, estimated at cost of $300 million. This was to be financed by tax reform and a renegotiation of the 1973 Treaty with Brazil relating to the Itaipú hydroelectric dam. However, attempts by pro-reform factions within the Lugo government to raise these funds were immediately undermined by perennial foot-dragging within Congress, which strongly resented Lugo's decision to create a new land reform without any participation by Congress. On 4 June 2009, Congress voted to further postpone a personal income tax bill, thus cutting a key revenue stream (around $160 million). On the same day, it refused to approve an agreement between the hydroelectric plant Itaipú Binacional and CEPRA to finance new settlements for landless families. In the same session, and against the wishes of finance minister Dionisio Borda, it also voted to increase state pensions and double the salaries of departmental governors and members of the National Electoral Commission, at a combined cost of $118 million (EIU 2009). In other words, Congress voted to block vital funding streams, while simultaneously voting to increase spending, generating the possibility of an unsustainable deficit. As a result, INDERT's ability to settle landless peasants continued to be severely restrained by its limited budget and its requirement to compensate owners of expropriated land at market price.

Further illustrating the lack of state capacity to mobilise and allocate fiscal resources for the implementation of an agrarian reform is the fact that the "left turn" in Paraguay did not coincide with the regional shift towards neo-developmentalism (or "progressive neo-extractivism"). Contrary to the neo-developmentalist policies implemented in, for example, Argentina under the Kirchner administrations, where export taxes on soybeans were raised to 35 per cent (Lapegna

2017), Lugo's attempts to pass a bill to introduce a 6 per cent tax on unprocessed cereal exports (soybean, maize and rapeseed) were squashed by Congress. As a result, Lugo's administration was unable to move Paraguay beyond fundamentalist free-market policies, wherein taxes on commercial agriculture are kept at derisory levels (the amount netted in 2011 was only $13 million, equivalent to 0.5 per cent of total tax revenue).

Despite growing demands from peasant organisations, the continuing capacity of the state to govern in the interest of the elite meant that the politically constituted *tierras malhabidas* remained intact. Worst still is the fact that Lugo was incapable of halting illegal transfer of land, which continued throughout his presidency. In September 2011, Alberto Antebi Duarte, son of Paraguay's second richest landowner, Roberto Antebi, was awarded 4,000 hectares by this means thanks to high-level corruption in INDERT (Nickson 2012).

4.2.3 Pro-reform state-society alliances and interactions

Although Lugo's election would not have been possible without the mounting politicisation and support of both rural and urban social movements (see Levy 2013), the degree of support varied greatly depending on the particular organization. The peasant movement was strongly divided about the extent to which they should support the APC in the 2008 elections (Palau and Ortega 2008). While various national and regional organisations offered their support, the National Peasant Federation (FNC), which remains the best organised of all national peasant organisation and has demonstrated a greater capacity for mobilisation, retained its anti-establishment militancy and rejection of electoral politics, calling on supporters to express their contempt for the "bourgeois parliamentary system" with blank votes (Gómez, leader of the FNC, personal

interview 2015). Peasant organisations were also divided regarding the level of pressure that should be exerted upon the government. On the one hand, there was a partial process of demobilisation from those organisations, which viewed the Lugo government as a government of the people and those who felt mobilisation to pressure the government would facilitate the possibility of the fall of Lugo (Duré et al. 2012: 26).[55]

> *Los movimientos sociales nos mantuvimos muy quietos, porque también estaba ese miedo que, si nosotros estábamos muy movilizados, que a él le iban a echar y bueno, no sirvió de nada quedarnos quietos. Igual lo echaron, y son los aprendizajes que hoy tenemos verdad.* (Lidia Ruiz, leader of the OLT, personal interview 2015)

On the other hand, engaging in self-critique, leaders lamented the peasant organisations' failure to agglutinate into a movement that could support Lugo's agrarian policies (Duarte in Duré et al. 2012: 54). Marcial Gómez, leader of the FNC, goes further, pointing out that, while the FNC maintained its yearly marches to Asunción demanding that Lugo follow through on promises to enact agrarian reform and create health and educational programmes for rural communities,

> we have to question those organisations that said: "just let Lugo's government do its job without pressure, so it can be possible to achieve something." Others said, "we must

[55] The interviews cited here were conducted by BASE Investigaciones Socialeswith representatives of organisations from different positions within the peasant movement: ASAGRAPA (Tomás Zayas), CNOCIP (Nicolasa Trinidad), CPA-SPN (Ernesto Benítez), FNC (Marcial Gómez), MCNOC (Luis Aguayo), MAP (Jorge Galeano), OCN (Asunción Duarte), OLT (Ester Leiva), and CONAMURI (Alicia Amarilla).

> declare a truce in this process", while others simply entered the sphere of the State to get political appointments… For all that, we need to confront several social organisations including peasant organisations, because for [the FNC] there will be no change based only on good will, or the good desires of some people. Here there must be permanent social pressure for real change that will benefit the sectors, and that means good organisation and struggle. Unfortunately, there are organisations which have another reading of the situation, another vision, and above all, there are those who entered into the State apparatus and put aside the social struggle that they were carrying out (Gómez; quoted in Duré et al. 2012: 43; authors' translation).

4.2.4 Confrontation with Anti-Reform Coalitions

Landowners' groups comprise some of the wealthiest and most influential elites in the country, and exert a strong lobbying presence inside Congress, with representation in all major political parties. The two most important groups are the ARP, which represents mainly large cattle ranchers, and the Asociación de Productores de Soja, Oleaginosas y Cereales del Paraguay (Paraguayan Association of Producers of Soybeans, Cereals, and Oilseeds – APS), which represents 50,000 *brasiguayo* commercial farmers who control most of Paraguay's huge soybean production. Both the ARP and APS are members of the *Unión de Gremios de la Producción* (Union of Producer Association – UGP), a powerful umbrella association established in 2005 to defend the interests of producers and exporters of agricultural goods. Traditionally these groups have been able to block tax and land reform not only through lobbying, but also through the threat of direct action in the form of *tractorazos* (large disruptive demonstrations that mobilise thousands of farmers to block roads with tractors and farm equipment). Such a *tractorazo* early

in December 2008 sent a clear signal to Lugo that land reform efforts would be met with significant opposition. The slow pace of reform under Lugo led to a rise in land occupations, an increasingly militant discourse among peasant organisations and clashes with armed, often Brazilian, security guards. The deterioration in the situation led Claudia Ruser, the controversial hard-line leader of the APS, to accuse Lugo of alleged links to the Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo (Paraguayan People's Army – EPP), which she went on to classify as a proto-guerrilla organisation, supported by President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (Nickson 2015: 17–18). As Lugo's land reform project stagnated, social conflict became increasingly likely. Two land disputes in particular would mark the beginning of the end of Lugo's government.

4.3 Ñacunday, Marina Kue, and the Curuguaty massacre

Ñacunday

The Lugo government faced intense criticism over its poor handling of a land conflict in Ñacunday (department of Alto Paraná) on an estate controlled by Grupo Favero, owned by Tranquilino Favero who we met in the previous chapter. On 19 September 2011, at request of a neighbourhood commission of landless peasants (*Comisión Vecinal Santa Lucía*), the INDERT announced that it would begin a judicial review to determine whether land titles in the area were legal or not. The processing of official records revealed that Favero had illegally appropriated 55,406 hectares in 1999 (Fogel 2013: 81). INDERT duly arranged for army engineers from the Military Geographical Department (*Instituto Geográfico Militar*, IGM) to conduct an on-site survey of the estates to identify any surplus state-owned land. This all coincided with a wave of land invasions by the LNC to "recover" such properties for resettlement. About 3,000 *carperos*

had been camping in the Colonia Paranambú area of Ñacunday since July 2011, when they were evicted from the Espigón farm, another Favero property (LASSR February 2012; Fogel 2013). Some of Lugo's closest advisors, such as José "Pakova" Ledesma, the governor of San Pedro, and Senator Sixto Pereira, saw the conflict as an opportunity to mobilise political support ahead of the April 2013 elections by tapping into widespread, chronic hostility in rural areas against *brasiguayo* soybean farmers (EIU 2012).

At this point, the anti-reform alliance between landlords and state actors was principally responsible for holding back progress in the course of the survey. Landlords retaliated by evicting the intruders, dismantling the GPS receivers installed by the soldiers and removing a landmark they had planted. Favero filed an appeal which was backed up by a local public prosecutor, María del Carmen Meza, who issued a warning to the military high command that the presence of the *carperos* in the survey party was unwarranted. The Supreme Court intervened, ruling that future surveying would be overseen by a local judge—a step short of saying that Lugo had erred in entrusting that task to the military. The Brazilian consulate had an active involvement in the crisis too. Eduardo dos Santos, Brazilian ambassador to Paraguay, told the media that his embassy was providing Brazilian landowners with "technical, legal and consular assistance" (LASSR 2012). At the same time, the *carpero* movement was brutally suppressed and criminalized; Victoriano López, leader of the LNC, was arrested for alleged sexual abuse of a minor (Fogel 2013).

Throughout the entire episode, Lugo made contradictory and indecisive statements about the invasion. On the one hand wary of alienating his support base among the poor, and on the other

under pressure to uphold the rule of law (EIU 2012). On 26 February 2012, after months of dithering the Lugo government relocated the roughly 350 families of carperos inside Ñacunday to the nearby National Park, leading to the sharp criticism from Paraguay's environmental NGOs (LAWR 2012). The fiasco over measurement of Favero's farm exposed the inability of the Lugo administration, confronted with a hostile and conservative Congress, to enact the land reform it had promised. As Lidia Ruiz of the OLT recounts, the episode lay bare where the real power lay in the country:

> *[Lugo] intentó hacer la mensura de las tierras de Ñacunday en Alto Paraná y tuvo que llevar militares y todo, y ni aun así no lo hizo. Ahí fue claro quién era el poder, poder fáctico, el poder económico, son los intereses económicos lo que manejaban el poder, porque él teniendo una estructura del estado como el ejecutivo, teniendo incluso allí los militares, no le dejaron hacer una mensura, qué es un procedimiento administrativo normal. Porque la mensura lo que hace es para saber bueno cuántas hectáreas de tierra hay, quien lo está ocupando y cuántas hectáreas... y es básico. Y más aún en un territorio que es en el marco de los 50 km fronterizos, que es del Estado pero que hoy día está usurpado. Están en manos brasileñas. Y a él no le dejaron hacer eso. Ahí hubo Claridad de cómo el poder fáctico trabaja en el país*. (Ruiz, personal interview, 2015)

Marina Kue

On June 15 2012, 11 squatters and six police officers were killed in a shootout during a botched security operation by 324 police to evict 60 members of the peasant organisation *Movimiento por*

la Recuperación Campesina de Canindeyú (MRCC), who had occupied land near Curuguaty. The tragedy was the worst incident of political violence for decades, igniting criticism from peasant movements and opposition leaders, albeit for very different reasons. It took place on a 2,000-hectare section of property in Marina Kue (department of Canindeyú), that had been spuriously obtained during the Stroessner era by a corrupt businessman and former Colorado senator Blas Riquelme under the guise of agrarian reform (as signalled earlier in chapter 3).

On July 11 2016, the Paraguayan Supreme Court sentenced eleven peasants (eight men and three women) for the killings of the six police officers during the Curuguaty massacre. Rubén Villaba, who was identified as the squatters' ringleader, was given a 30-year prison sentence. Luis Olmedo was sentenced to 20 years as the main co-author of the crime, and two other men, Arnaldo Quintana and Néstor Castro, were given 18 years each for the same charge. Seven other peasants received sentences of between four and six years for criminal association and invasion of private property (LAWR 2016). Concerns over the lack of impartiality and independence in the investigations into the events in Curuguaty, are captured in a press release from the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein:

> The conviction of 11 peasants in the Curuguaty case following a trial that allegedly did not respect judicial guarantees is deeply troubling… [also concerning is] the fact that, up to now, the deaths of 11 peasants, killed in the same incident, have not been investigated by Paraguayan authorities, nor have the allegations that some were

> summarily executed after being subjected to torture and other human rights violations.[56]

The official version of what happened stated that squatters had fired at police first but this view was strongly contested by human rights and activist organisations (e.g. CODEHUPY 2012; PEICC 2012). Investigations have been cast in a shadow of doubt due to 'allegations of serious irregularities in the actions of the Public Prosecution Service, the judiciary and the security forces in relation to the police raid in Curuguaty in June 2012' (Human Rights Committee findings on Paraguay 2013). Accusations have also been made regarding the involvement of hidden marksmen, planted to spark a political crisis in order to oust Lugo from office. In such a climate of suspicion, conspiracy theories abound.[57]

In the immediate aftermath of the Curuguaty massacre, a medley of conservative social forces saw their opportunity and converged around the impeachment and removal of Lugo. Accusations of negligence, ineptitude, and incapacity to act decisively, spearheaded by highly placed spokespeople for the soy producers (such as Hector Cristaldo, head of the UGP, as well as spokespeople for Cargill and Monsanto), blamed Lugo for the deaths and called for his immediate impeachment (*Ultima Hora* 2012). Given that Lugo's position vis-à-vis the legislature

[56] See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20289&LangID=E

[57] According to an independent examination of audio footage by Spanish ballistics experts stated that the police were killed by automatic fire, incompatible with the rudimentary old hunting rifles captured from the squatters. The presence of women and children suggested that they were not expecting violence. Many believed that the shootout was orchestrated by hidden marksmen, a view detailed by the *Plataforma de Estudio e Investigación de Conflictos Campesinos* (PEICC 2012), which argued that the police, who were wearing bulletproof vests, were all killed by shots to the head and neck.

was never strong, it is no surprise that the opposition struck when the opportunity arose and that Lugo was not able to withstand the attack.

4.4 The ousting of Fernando Lugo

On June 21 2012, the Chamber of Deputies voted 76-1 (with 3 abstentions) to initiate the impeachment of Lugo on the grounds of "poor performance of functions" (*mal desempeño en sus funciones*).[58] The following day, after the briefest of debates, the Senate voted 39-4 (with 2 abstentions) to confirm the decision and remove Lugo from office. Lugo reluctantly signed, and his vice-president, Federico Franco, who had long disagreed with the president's reformist policies, was sworn in for the remaining 14 months of the presidential term of office. The impeachment process was widely criticised. Despite official assurances that the process was constitutional, no evidence was presented at the impeachment trial. In fact, the formal accusation document even stated that this was not necessary because the facts were "common knowledge" (*del conocimiento público*). Lugo was given just 24 hours to prepare his defence and less than two hours to present it to the Senate (which he eschewed as preposterous). On all these counts, the process violated Article 17 of the 1992 Constitution, which protects the rights of the accused to see the charges, challenge the evidence and be given necessary time to prepare an adequate defence. Due process fell by the wayside as Congress rushed through the 'express' impeachment (Nickson 2015: 17). In this respect, Lugo's ousting is an emblematic case of a "smart coup", a

[58] The Chamber of Deputies cited five counts to support its accusation of Lugo's 'poor performance': (1) organising and financing/authorization of a politically partisan gathering within the engineering unit of the armed forces in 2009; (2) instigating and supporting illegal land occupations/invasions in the Ñacunday area; (3) violating the democratic process by signing the Ushuaia II protocol (Mercosur's 2011 democratic charter) without consulting Congress; (4) responsibility for the increasing insecurity in the country due to failure to combat the EPP; and (5) instigating and facilitating land invasions, which led to the killings in Curuguaty.

process that is increasingly being witnessed throughout the region "whereby Left governments are forced out of office and a new Right-orientated government put in place, with, preferably, relatively little bloodshed and an element of popular and institutional legitimacy" (Cannon 2016: 119).

In many ways, this was a (smart) "coup" waiting to happen. Lugo had already survived various attempts by the Colorado opposition to impeach him on spurious charges. What occurred in the end was a catastrophic balance of forces mirroring the "reciprocal destruction" (or "mutual bleeding") of Caesarism. In the Gramscian vocabulary:

> Caesarism can be said to express a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner; that is to say, they balance each other in such a way that a continuation of the conflict can only terminate in their reciprocal destruction. When the progressive force A struggles against the reactionary force B, not only may A defeat B or B defeat A, but it may happen that neither A nor B defeats the other – that they bleed each other mutually and then a third force C intervenes from outside, subjugating what is left of both A and B (Gramsci 1971: 219).

Following Gramsci we would say that that the cross-party unity to approve Lugo's impeachment emerged as a particular expression of the catastrophic balance of forces whereby "the third force C [Colorado Party], intervenes not only because of the mutual exhaustion of A [Lugo] and B [PLRA], but also because A or B *invites* C's intervention as a second best (or least unfavourable)

solution to the conflict. Thus, though the eventual outcome of the intervention might be the subjugation of both groups, *the intervention itself is sparked by interest internal to the conflict*" (Fontana 2004: 178; emphasis added). Certainly, the PLRA's myopic behaviour reflected strategic concerns and an attempt to gain political advantage in the forthcoming 2013 electoral campaign. However, "in ousting Lugo, they ruptured the only political coalition capable of defeating the Colorados" (Setrini and Arce 2012). As Lambert (2012) pointed out, the

> Impeachment allowed the PLRA to distance itself from an unpopular government, which it had previously supported, and gain the presidency for the remaining 10 months of the presidential period; this would crucially provide access to state resources to fund their patronage machine and their electoral campaign (a practice which is illegal but was standard practice under the Colorados). The Colorados took the risk of allowing the PLRA full access to government, to highlight how they were unable to govern even without Lugo – a policy that would depend on effectively undermining government policy through their majority in Congress for the remaining ten months of the administration.

This is precisely what occurred in 2013. Colorado Party candidate Horacio Cartes, one of the most affluent businessmen in Paraguay (refer to Box 3.1), won the election with 45.8 per cent of the vote. The administration of Cartes (2013–2018) returned Paraguay to the orthodoxy neoliberal camp of Latin American politics, alongside Mexico, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and the majority of the countries of Central America (López and Vertiz 2015: 156), signalling a return to Paraguayan politics as usual.

4.5 Conclusion

Fernando Lugo promised substantial reforms in agrarian policies during his race to power. Once in power, however, his administration lacked the capacity to mobilise and allocate fiscal resources for the implementation of an agrarian reform. The unwillingness or incapacity of the Lugo administration to carry out its promise of, and mandate for, land reform ultimately resulted from weak interaction between pro-reform state and society actors, fierce political opposition from a coordinated, well-resourced and powerful landed elite, and the combative but insufficient mobilisation of an atomised campesino movement.

The ousting of Lugo from office reveals the inordinate level of influence exerted by the landowning elite on Paraguayan politics, as well as the very feeble nature of the country's democracy. "The vehemence of opposition to a centre-left president whose policies were more social democratic than revolutionary and who actually achieved very little" (Nickson 2015: 18) serve as a potent reminder that "it is hardly necessary for the Latin American governments to adopt social-revolutionary measures before the traditional elite… feel threatened and act violently in protection of their interests" (Gordon and Webber 2013: 36). In a country like Paraguay, where the oligarchic control of the state by landed elites is widely recognised, the prospects for redistributive land reform continue to be fragile without substantial, even if partial, structural and institutional change within the state and in society. At the same time, progress in the direction of redistributive land reform continues to be held back by the weakening of peasant organisations, due both to internal differentiation and mass peasant expulsion from the countryside. Once again, this situation can only be reversed "if peasants continue to mobilise on

a long-term basis and if their organisations and movements manage to minimise their differences and agree on a united strategy that transcends short-term demands" (Fogel 1997: 104).

In all, the Paraguayan experience demonstrates the resilience of the landed oligarchy and highlights how fragile the prospects for redistributive land reform continue to be in the post-authoritarian period. Such a transformation is not at all likely without addressing the underlying policy paradoxes and power structures associated with not only the legacy of the predatory state in Paraguay, but also how these power structures are intertwined with new accumulation regimes in the wider global food regime. To be sure, if these concerns are left unaltered, the current agro-extractive export model will continue to reproduce existing power structures that are founded on wealth polarisation as opposed to striving for redistributive policies to overturn Paraguay's longstanding rural injustice.

Chapter 5

From "White Gold" to "Green Deserts": Agrarian Extractivism and the Peasantry

5.1 Introduction

The term agro- or agrarian extractivism has a relatively recent history (Petras and Veltmeyer 2014)[59] and has become an increasingly recurrent term in the Latin American extractivist literature for understanding the new dynamics and trajectories of agrarian change and challenging dominant discourses which characterize present-day forms of capitalist agriculture as industrial agricultural development (Teubal 2009; Gudynas 2010, 2015; Teubal and Giarracca 2014; Alonso-Fradejas 2015; McKay 2017). In this chapter I will engage with and refine this emerging concept within the specific dynamics of agrarian change taking place in Paraguay, arguing that the current model of rural development represents a form of agrarian extractivism that is leading to social, economic, and environmental impoverishment for the majority of the Paraguayan population. The chapter is organized in four sections: the next (second) section provides greater conceptual clarity of the meaning agrarian extractivism within the broader 'extractivist' discourse, as well as its recent emergence within the Paraguayan agrarian literature on *agroextractivismo*. The third section offers a short presentation of the dramatic agrarian change that has occurred in the country over the past three decades, in terms of not only land use but also changes in forms of production and social relations. The fourth section harnesses the concept of agrarian extractivism to reveal the extractive character of the contemporary agro-

[59] The actual term agro- or agrarian extractivism, as far as I know, was first introduced in the book *Extractive Imperialism in the Americas*, written by James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2014), and developed further in Veltmeyer and Delgado Wise (2018), as well as in two keynote address delivered by Veltmeyer at the China Agricultural University and the BICAS conference in Brasilia in 2018. As we shall see in this chapter, the actual conceptualization of particular forms of agriculture as extractivist in nature as a much longer trajectory.

export development model. The final section concludes the chapter with some remarks on the analytical and political utility of this new concept and its applications to other Latin American contexts.

5.2 Agrarian extractivism: an emerging concept

As a result of the neoliberal restructuring of the global food system and the increasing dominance of agribusiness transnational corporations, some sectors of agriculture in Latin America have been transformed, according to Teubal (2009) and Gudynas (2010), into extractive systems. This argument is often made with particular reference to soybean plantations: "The no-tillage system, Roundup Ready seeds and glyphosate tolerance reconfigured agriculture into an essentially *extractive* system not very different from mining, as resources are *extracted* from soil without recompense" (Teubal 2009: 158; emphasis added). Hence the term "*agrominería*" (agro-mining) is now also entering the lexicon of activist research—see for instance the excellent *Atlas del agronegocio transgénico en el Cono Sur* (2020) prepared by Acción por la Biodiversidad.[60] In that publication, the collective defines this particular model of agriculture "as another form of extractivism, because it extracts millions of litres of water and thousands of tonnes of nutrients from the soil every year without replenishing them, thus condemning them to desertification" (p. 162). In their comparative study of open-pit mining and soybean production in Argentina, Giarracca and Teubal (2014: 48) again point to the commonalities between both sectors, emphasizing how the latter represents "a certain type of agriculture in which essential resources such as water and fertile land, and biodiversity, are degraded by extractivism" (Giarracca and Teubal 2014: 48). The Argentine sociologist Maristella Svampa (2013) is another scholar who

[60] The Biodiversity Alliance is a collective Latin American platform that brings together 13 key organizations and movements in the region working in defence of biodiversity.

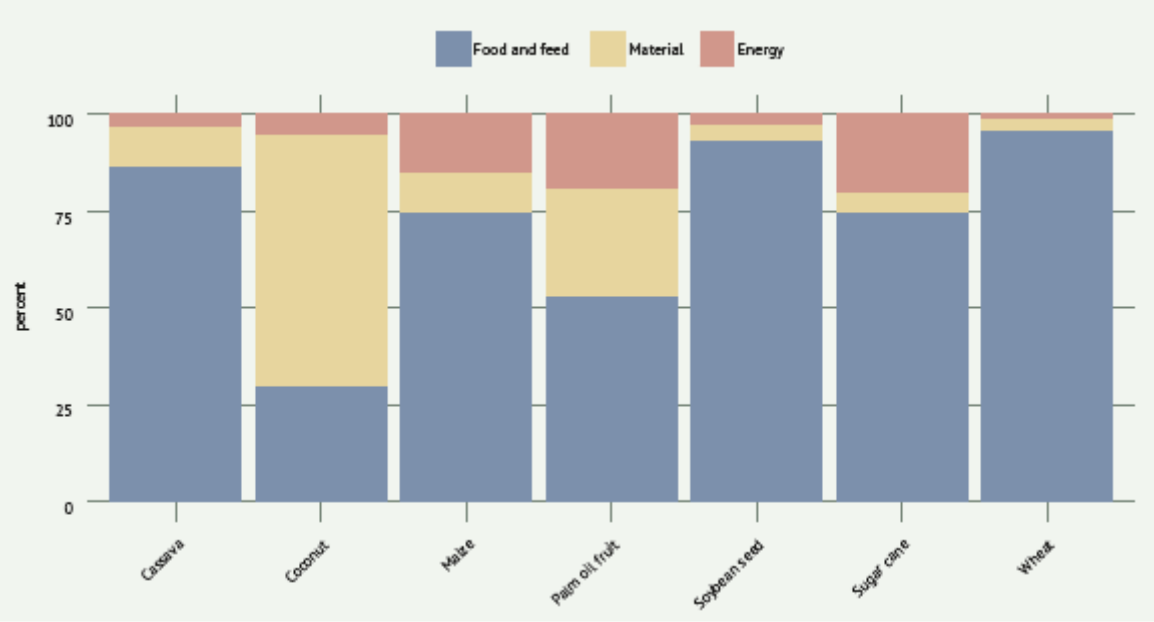
has included agribusiness and biofuels production in her understanding of the new extractivism in Latin America, ‘‘due to the fact that they consolidate a model that tends to follow a monoculture, the destruction of biodiversity, a concentration of land ownership and a destructive re-configuration of vast territories” (Svampa 2013: 118–119).

For Gudynas (2010, 2013, 2015), the term is important because it challenges dominant discourses of governments and corporations that adopt the term “agro-industry” or “industrial agriculture” as a legitimating strategy for these models. Rather than a form of industrialization characterized by social and sectoral articulation which generates employment through value-added, forward and backward economic linkages and a home market in agriculture, Gudynas points out that this model is largely characterized bycrop production which is more akin to “extractive industries” which extract raw materials in large quantities, destined for export with little or no processing.

For Petras and Veltmeyer (2014), the defining feature of agricultural extractivism in Latin America today has taken form around the “political economy of biofuels capitalism: the conversion of farmland and agriculture for food production into the production of biofuels.” In reality, the driving forces behind this transformation in land use relates not just to the increasing pull of biofuel markets—undoubtedly an import important factor (see Palau et al. 2008)—but also to the borders uses of this so-called “flex crop” (Borras et al. 2016). Figure 5.1 shows the relative share of soybean usage in the world bio-fuel economy, vis-à-vis other food crops, highlighting that the production of biofuels is a much more prevalent feature for crops such as sugarcane (see McKay et al. 2016), corn (see Gillon 2016) and oil palm (see Alonso-Fradejas et

al. 2016). In the specific case of soybeans, global demand is driven by the "four f's": food, feed, fuel, and finance (Turzi 2017), but its primary insertion into the global economy takes the form of livestock feed.

Figure 5.1 Share of food crop usage in world bio-based economy (2009)



Source: FAO (2013: 217). *Statistical Yearbook*.

The most systematic applications of the term agrarian extractivism to date is a study carried out by Ben McKay (2017) on the expansion of the agricultural frontier in Bolivia's lowlands. Building on the works of Gudynas (2013) and Bunker (1984), McKay demonstrates how the Bolivian soy complex is extractive in nature, extractive in a quadruple sense: (1) large volumes of materials extracted destined for export with little or no processing; (2) value-chain concentration and sectoral disarticulation (3) high intensity of environmental degradation; and (4) deterioration of labour opportunities and/or labour conditions. The strength of this framework is that it brings to the fore the extractive character of so-called industrial agriculture across socio-

economic and socio-ecological spheres with a particular emphasis on scale (scale of extracted materials and/or scale of capital involved), control (over value chains and control grabbing), and sectoral linkages (or lack thereof). Essentially, it brings Gudynas' dimensions of extractivism into direct dialogue with concerns from critical agrarian studies around the terms of land control and use, labour relations, surplus distribution, and capital accumulation (Bernstein 2010). Combining the vivid Latin American debates on neo-extractivism with an agrarian political economy approach in this manner allows for a more precise inquiry into extent to which particular agricultural sector may represent an extractive enclave (see discussion below on Fogel and Riquelme 2005).

For these reasons, in this chapter, I explicitly engage with this analytical framework, arguing that all four characterizations of agrarian extractivism highlighted by McKay for the Bolivian context can be usefully retained for analyzing the case of Paraguay. Of course, these features are not meant to represent a one-size-fits-all definition for agrarian extractivism. The degree and form of extractivism in agrarian sectors will undoubtedly vary in different contexts and crop complexes, as demonstrated in the various national cases study contributions to a forthcoming edited volume, *Agrarian Extractivism in Latin America* (McKay, Alberto-Fradejas, Ezquerro-Cañete *Forthcoming*), which will be the first systematic collection on agrarian industrial capitalism seen through the prism of extractivism. With this in mind, I not only trace over the four aforementioned dimensions of agrarian extractivism, but also elongate the concept to include additional dimensions that, I argue, are required to fully capture the extractive dynamics of agrarian capitalism in Paraguay today. In particular, I propose that the Paraguayan case exhibits, at least, three additional extractive dimensions that merit close analysis: the repressive model

required to sustain this mode of rural development; the negative impact on food security and sovereignty; the politics of agrarian extractivism and its constricting impact on democracy (this last point was developed in the previous chapter and therefore will not be covered in here). It is particularly surprisingly that the food dynamics has not been front and centre of the emerging literature on agrarian extractivism. This might partly be a reaction to debates and critiques arising from the related literature on "land grabbing" in Latin America. The initial FAO study (2012) was quickly critiqued in numerous follow up studies (e.g. Borras et al. 2012a, 2012b) for framing the dynamics of land grabs too narrowly within a food-centered/food crisis-centred analysis. This led to an expanded understanding of the motives behind contemporary large-scale acquisitions of land which has greatly benefited the literature. Be that as it may, let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater: the negative impact of agrarian extractivism on the national dynamics of food production deserve close monitoring if we are to unveil to true extent of the extractive nature of the current agribusiness-led model of agrarian capitalism. Adding more analytical strings to the bow of agrarian extractivism will capture, in a fuller sense, the extractive nature and dynamics inherent in the capitalist development of agriculture in Paraguay today, highlighting the growing contradictions of this model. I develop each of these points further below. Before getting there, let us briefly review how this discussion on the extractive characteristics of agriculture has developed within the Paraguayan agrarian literature.

One of the most systematic applications of the term agrarian extractivism was a study carried out by McKay on the expansion of agricultural frontier in Bolivia's lowlands. Building on the works of Gudynas (2013) and Bunker (1984), he demonstrates how the Bolivian soy complex is extractive in nature, extractive in a quadruple sense: (1) large volumes of materials extracted

destined for export with little or no processing; (2) value-chain concentration and sectoral disarticulation (3) high intensity of environmental degradation; and (4) deterioration of labour opportunities and/or labour conditions. All four of McKay's (2017) characterizations of agrarian extractivism in Bolivia can be usefully retained here. In addition, I propose that the Paraguayan case exhibits, at least, three additional extractive dimensions that merit close analysis: the repressive model required to sustain this mode of rural development; the negative impact on food security and sovereignty; the politics of agrarian extractivism and its constricting impact on democracy (this last point was developed in the previous chapter and therefore will not be covered here). All the other points are developed further below. Before getting there, let us briefly review how this discussion on the extractive characteristics of agriculture has developed within Paraguay.

The economic, social, and environmental extractivist dynamics of soy production in Paraguay have long been highlighted by national and foreign scholar activists, in a number of publications. Two of the first studies to emerge, following the legalization and expansion of GM seed in 2004, were a short study by Tomás Palau (2004), *The Advance of GM Soy Monoculture in Paraguay: Agrarian Capitalism and Peasant Expulsion*, and an edited volume by Ramón Fogel and Marcial Riquelme (2005), *Soy Enclave: Poverty and Weakening Sovereignty*. This latter text is particularly noteworthy as it predates aforementioned conceptual discussions around agrarian extractivism in Latin America by several years, but was already characterizing the expansion of soy production as an "enclave" economic activity, implying that foreign agribusiness companies created very little forward or backward linkages into the local or national economy that would stimulate private sector development and job creation. The volume's primary aim, however, was

to “raise concerns about the correlation between the soy boom, the expulsion of campesino farmers, environmental degradation, and the cultural shift in border areas” (Hetherington 2020: 45). Indeed, the two authors make very strong nationalist statement in their introduction and respective chapters, although the other contributing authors represent an interesting diversity of views, including a piece about anti-brasiguaio racism inherent in Paraguayan nationalist rhetoric (i.e. Albuquerque 2005; also see Blanc 2015; Hetherington 2020: 230n3), and a Spanish translation of an earlier article on Brazilian colonization of the eastern border region that had been previously published in the *Journal of Latin American Studies* (Nickson 1981; 2005). While the book failed to spark the sort of public debate the authors had hoped for—it was often dismissed in the country “for being too nationalist and too Marxist” (Hetherington 2011: 62)—it did spawn a long list of publications making similar claims (Palau et al. 2007; Rulli 2007; Glauser 2009; Guereña 2013; Riquelme and Vera 2013; Rojas 2014, 2016; Elgert 2016; Ezquerro-Cañete 2016, 2017), including increasing characterizations of the soy model as an extractive system.

In her historical review of the Paraguayan agro-export model, Duarte Recalde (2014) situates the emergence and consolidation of what she refers to as “*agroextractivismo extranjero*” within the wider extractive imperative throughout the region: the “Commodity Consensus”, a new economic and political order according to which the production of primary or low-processed goods is privileged from a tacit agreement about the irrevocable character of the extractivist dynamics (Svampa 2013: 31). Likewise, several researchers at BASE Investigaciones Sociales have included the large-scale monocrop production of agriculture for export as a form of extractivism in a number of recent publications, such as *Land in Dispute: Extractivism,*

Exclusion and Resistance (Rojas 2014) and *Mapping Extractivsim* (Ortega 2016). In a special report prepared for this same research center, Eduardo Gudynas, one Latin America's leading environmental thinkers, adds his voice to the Paraguayan extractivist literature. For Gudynas, Paraguay's extractive matrix is composed of three main pillars: soybeans, meat, and hydroelectric energy (Gudynas 2017). Paraguay is thus the only country where an extractivism of electrical energy occurs, that is, where a river is modified for the construction of a hydroelectric dam, and the energy obtained is exported directly. In other countries, hydroelectric power plants are part of the so-called support basins of extractivism, which include works or spaces that provide resources to sustain extractive activities. In those cases, hydroelectric dams generate electricity that extractivism needs. A well-known example is found in the Amazon of Brazil, where the Tucuruí dam feeds energy to the mining and aluminum processing of Carajás. For Gudyans, these dams are not extractive in themselves, since they do not export electricity, but are built to meet the needs of extractive enterprises that are located elsewhere. In the Paraguayan case, however, the energy of the dams on the Paraná River is largely exported, making it a unique case of hydro-electric energy extractivism (Gudynas 2017: 2).

Having outlined the main contours of the Paraguayan and Latin American debate on agro-extractivism, and before developing into the specific extractivist dimensions of the contemporary forms of agribusiness-led agro-export, the following section provides a brief history of the capitalist development of agriculture in Paraguay. This is necessary context because, as Peter Newell signals in his review of *Food for the Few: Neoliberal Globalism and Biotechnology in Latin America* (Otero 2008),

> there is a need to separate out analytically and historically… those transformations in agrarian structures that can be related to the introduction of transgenics, or even of neoliberal forms of capitalism, from those driven by other forces and factors. Many of the forms of social exclusion and environmental devastation [currently taking place across the Latin America] pre-date the period in which neoliberal forms or biotechnologies were introduced into the region and relate, for example, to systemic patterns of institutional weakness or forms of historical discrimination against campesino or indigenous groups. While some applications of biotechnology may exacerbate existing social inequalities or environmental problems, they cannot be held wholly responsible for their causation. (Newell 2009: 590–591)

With this important caveat in mind, the rest of this chapter will aim to reveal the specificities of agrarian extractivism in the current context, arguing that it has brought about large and unprecedented economic, social, and environmental transformations that have been profoundly damaging for the majority of Paraguay's rural population.

5.3 Agriculture in Paraguay: a brief background

Whether through the nineteenth century yerba mate plantations (*yerbales*), forest exploitation for quebracho logging (tannin production) in the Gran Chaco during the early twentieth, or the more than one hundred thousand "white gold" producers during the cotton boom of the 1970s and 1980s, Paraguay has always depended heavily on agricultural exports to sustain its economic growth (Reber 1985; Campos 1987; Stunnenberg and Kleinpenning 1993). Diego Abente Brun

(1989: 63) recounts the slow and gradual diversification of Paraguay's export products post-1870 in the following manner:

> Yerba mate continued to represent an important export item, and together with tobacco and hides accounted for the bulk of Paraguayan exports for the remainder of the century. Soon, however, new products were added. Timber came first, quebracho extract followed with the dawn of the twentieth century, the exportation of meat product took a quantum leap with the installation of meat processing plants in the 1910s and 1920s, and finally cotton became a major export item in the aftermath of the revolution of 1922–3. Hence, although the agro-export model of development remained firmly in place, the structure of the Paraguayan export sector changed significantly.

As a result of Stroessner's colonization and agrarian policies that where outlined in chapter 3, Paraguay experienced a massive expansion of the area under crop production, which increased six-fold between 1956 and 1988 (Weisskoff 1992: 1532). Describing the role that small farmers played in this transformation, Weisskoff (1992: 1534) notes the following:

> It may be a remarkable characteristic of Paraguayan agriculture that the expansion of the major food crops—cassava and corn—has been based on the production of hundreds of thousands of microfarms, each of less than a hectare. More surprising perhaps is that cotton, the leading export earner, is also a *minifundia* crop and was grown by 138,200 farmers in 1980/81 on plots averaging 1.76 hectares each.

Thus, a unique feature of Paraguay's pattern of agricultural development during this period was its heavy reliance on small-farm production: "almost 70 per cent of the area dedicated to cotton in 1981 was on farms of less than 20 hectares. Cotton alone accounted for more than a third of all Paraguayan exports in 1990" (Carter et al. 1996: 54n18). The extensive and intensive production of cotton in the 1970s and 80s was largely due to extensive government support, in the form of seeds, credit, infrastructure and technical assistance (Hetherington 2011; 2020). With the creations of cotton colonies, peasant producers were inserted into the national circuit of capital through produce commercialisation but continued to be organised under non-capitalist forms (Nagel 1991). This persistence of non-capitalist forms of production can be usefully understood through Marx's distinction between the formal and real subsumption of labour to capital. In the Marxist tradition, a social setting in which non-capitalist relations of production persist but the producers are inserted within (and subordinated to) the capitalist market as provider of a commodity is understood as one of "formal subsumption of labour to capital"—i.e. capital appropriate surplus value, but is does not determine the forms in which commodities are produced (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a).

Since the 1990s, however, waning government engagement and plummeting cotton prices took a toll. The cotton sector spiralled into a prolonged and ongoing crisis as production declined precipitously, plunging smallholders into deepening poverty and exclusion (Hetherington 2014). Cotton production fell from 246,594 tonnes in 2000 to 64,282 in 2008, while the surface area planted with cotton fell from 194,760 to 65,000 hectares (Itriago 2012b: 9). Over the same timeline, soy production, which requires extensive land use but very little labour, increased from

2.91 to 5.97 million tonnes, while the land dedicated to soy increased correspondingly from 1.2 to 2.64 million hectares (Ezquerro-Cañete 2016: 704). As a result, soy replaced cotton as the primary commercial and export crop, as expressed in the following Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) numbers cited by Hetherington (2011: 243–244n62):

> In 1980, smallholder cotton production accounted for 33.6 per cent of primary exports, while soybeans accounted for only 13.5 per cent. By 2005, this had more than reversed, with soybean accounting for 33.5 per cent, and cotton having fallen to 2.4 per cent. The other big winner was beef… which rose from 0.3 per cent to 15 per cent over the same span.

The ever-increasing penetration of agribusiness capital and agricultural biotechnology has led to the current model of agrarian extractivism, which correlates with the country's insertion into the neoliberal corporate food regime (Otero 2012; Ezquerro-Cañete 2016, Fogel 2019). The novelty of this new form of agrarian expansion relates to its scale and scope, its impact in the restructuring of society, and its damaging consequences.

5.4 Agrarian Extractivism in Paraguay

This section analyses Paraguay's soy complex through the lens of agrarian extractivism. In doing so, it traces over the four interlinked dimensions of agrarian extractivism as laid out by McKay (2017), but also elongates the concept to include three additional dimensions required to fully capture the extractive dynamics of agrarian capitalism in Paraguay today. It is particularly surprisingly that the food dynamics of agrarian extractivism has not been front and centre of the

emerging literature on agrarian extractivism. This might partly be a reaction to debates and critiques arising from the related literature on "land grabbing" in Latin America. The initial FAO study (2012) was quickly critiqued in numerous follow-up studies (e.g. Borras et al. 2012a, 2012b) for framing the dynamics of land grabs too narrowly within a food-centered/food crisis-centred analysis. This led to an expanded understanding of the motives behind contemporary large-scale acquisitions of land which has greatly benefited the literature. Be that as it may, let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater: the negative impact of agrarian extractivism on the national dynamics of food production deserve close monitoring if we are to unveil to a true extent ~~of~~ the extractive nature of the current agribusiness-led model of agrarian capitalism. Adding more analytical strings to the bow of agrarian extractivism will capture, in a fuller sense, the extractive nature and dynamics inherent in the capitalist development of agriculture in Paraguay today, highlighting the growing contradictions of this model.

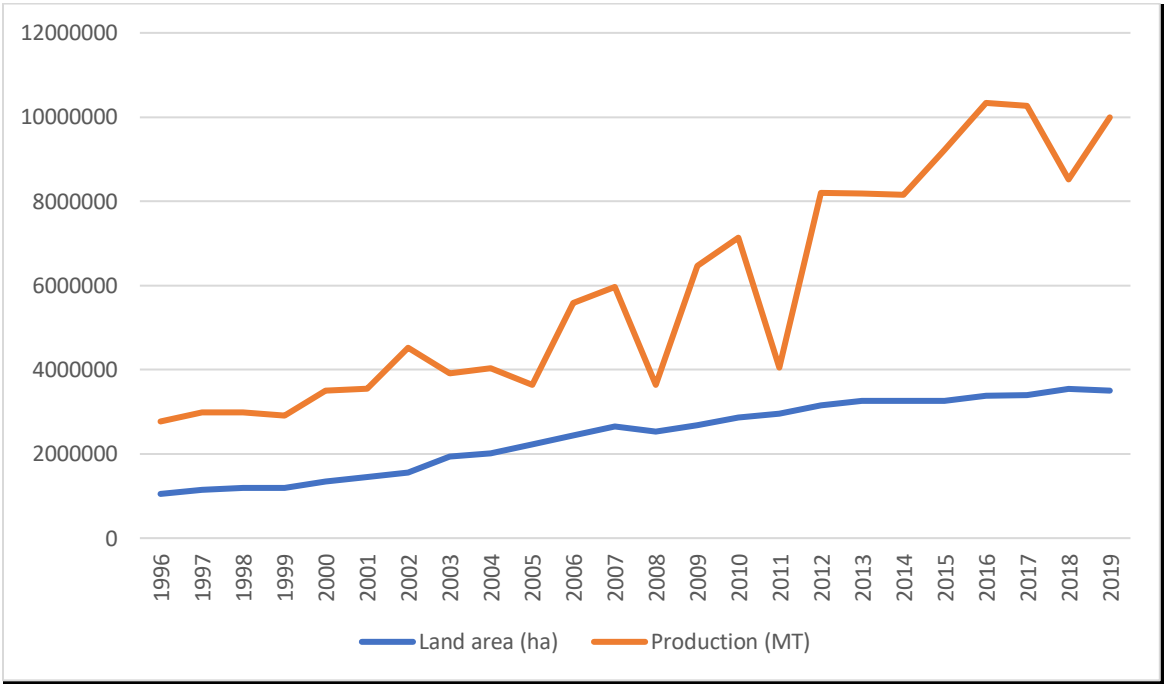
5.4.1 Large volumes of materials extracted destined for export with little or no processing

Looking at Paraguay's agro-export profile, we see that the country's insertion into the global food regime is aligned, almost in its entirety, with what Tony Weis (2007) has called the industrial grain-livestock-complex: together soy-based products (including whole soybeans, soybean cakes, meal, and oil) and beef (including frozen, fresh, or chilled beef and livestock cattle) account for 83 per cent of Paraguay's agrarian export basket in 2018 (CAS 2019: 51). Between 2002 and 2017, the export value of the soybean complex increased six-fold, but the relative share of the soybean complex (soybeans, soybean oil and soybean oil cake) was rather stable, increasing slightly from 44 per cent in 2002 ($500 million), to more than 46 per cent in 2017 ($2,990 million). Over the same period, the relative share of bovine meat exports almost

triple. The absolute value of bovine exports was almost fifteen times higher, from $70 million in 2002, to $1,030 million in 2017 (Baraibar 2020: 385).

As shown in Figure 5.2, soybean production area under cultivation has dramatically increased over the past twenty years, with the volume extracted going from 2,771,000 metric tonnes (MT) in 1996–97 to 10,336,144 MT in 2016–17, while land area more than tripled from 1,050,000 ha to 3,388,709 ha during the same period.[61]During the latest 2018–19 season, 7,653,310 MT of soybeans and derivatives were destined for export, representing 90 per cent of total production.

Figure 5.2 Total area and production of soybeans, 1996–2019.



Source: Own elaboration based on CAPECO data.[62]

[61]Over this period, yields have fluctuated between 1,367 and 3,050 kg/ha.

[62] CAPECO (Cámara Paraguaya de Exportadores y Comercializadores de Cereales y Oleaginosas), available at https://capeco.org.py/area-de-siembra-produccion-y-rendimiento

During the 1990s, soybean farmers exported most of their product to Argentina and Brazil, and international shipping went through the Brazilian port of Paranaguá. In large part this was due to the lack of national regulatory infrastructure to comply with phytosanitary regulations, thus producers often replied on Brazilian inspectors. With the creation of SENAVE (Servicio Nacional de Calidad y Sanidad Vegetal y de Semillas) in 2004 (Law 2549), ports on the Paraguay and Paraná rivers were brought into compliance with export standards which could now be verified locally, making it far easier to negotiate contracts with overseas buyers. As a result, the bulk of the soy that had been traversing the Brazilian border on the way to the Atlantic started going down the Paraná River into Argentina (see Table 5.1), leading to a boost in shipping volume so immense that Paraguay has now developed the third-largest fleet of tug boats in the world (only behind the US and China) (Hetherington 2020: 64–65).

Table 5.1 Evolution of soybean export infrastructure in MT (% of total export), 1992–2018

	Terrestrial	Fluvial	Rail freight	Total
1992	693,995 (49.9)	604,604 (43.5)	91,660 (6.6)	1,390,259
1993	635,649 (54.1)	428,192 (36.4)	110,920 (9.4)	1,174,761
1994	869,089 (56.5)	517,534 (33.7)	150,980 (9.8)	1,537,603
1995	721,129 (45.4)	713,045 (44.9)	153,254 (9.7)	1,587,428
1996	722,236 (33.6)	1,248,364 (58.1)	179,400 (8.3)	2,150,000
1997	430,746 (18.8)	1,743,446 (76.0)	119,409 (5.2)	2,293,601
1998	657,543 (28.7)	1,536,215 (66.8)	105,000 (4.6)	2,298,758
1999	784,482 (38.7)	1,113,850 (55.0)	111,220 (5.5)	2,025,552
2000	984,738 (39.2)	1,460,110 (58.2)	65,100 (2.6)	2,509,948
2001	1,155,776 (48.4)	1,216,615 (51.0)	5,000 (0.2)	2,385,979
2002	1,210,874 (38.2)	1,828,559 (57.7)	120,960 (3.8)	3,167,193
2003	351,906 (13.2)	2,152,152 (80.8)	149,309 (5.6)	2,664,415
2004	334,746 (11.6)	2,526,762 (87.7)	20,674 (0.7)	2,882,182
2005	31,986 (1.3)	2,227,727 (93.6)	120,631 (5.1)	2,380,344
2006	118,268 (2.9)	3,844,201 (92.9)	173,648 (4.2)	4,136,117
2007	97,560 (2.2)	4,242,351 (95.6)	98,174 (2.2)	4,438,085
2008	87,140 (3.8)	2,134,065 (93.5)	61,500 (2.7)	2,282,705
2009	107,605 (2.3)	4,492,824 (96.5)	54,000 (1.2)	4,654,429
2010	102,191 (2.0)	5,036,173 (98)	0	5,138,364

2011	199,116 (6.7)	2,771,923 (93.3)	0	2,971,039
2012	278,684 (5.7)	4,653,764 (94.3)	0	4,932,448
2013	581,349 (12.0)	4,274,772 (88.0)	0	4,856,121
2014	339,700 (7.6)	4,107,814 (92.4)	0	4,447,514
2015	387,073 (7.2)	4,984,059 (92.8)	0	5,371,132
2016	239,858 (3.8)	6,076,491 (96.2)	0	6,316,349
2017	178,846 (2.9)	6,058,344 (97.1)	0	6,237,190
2018	116,994 (2.4)	4,771,657 (97.6)	0	4,888,651

Source: Own compilation with data from CAPECO.[63]

This evidently had important implications for widening the export destination of soybeans. In 2019, soybeans were exported primarily to Argentina (69%), followed by Russia (17%), the European Union (8%), Brazil (2%), and Israel (2%); soy oil was exported to India (57%), Bangladesh (14%), and the European Union (13%); and soybean pellets was exported to the European Union (38%), followed by Chile (27%), Peru (13%), Thailand (6%) and Ecuador (5%).

In terms of processing, Paraguay has gradually increased the degree of semi-processing of its soybeans. Whereas in 1988–1989, a mere 99,741 MT (9.3%) were retained for in-country processing, by 2018–2019, as much as 3,373356 MT (39.6%) were being semi-processed as oil (12.9%) and flour (26.7%). Up until the early 2010s, only Cargill had soy-crushing structure within the country (Wesz 2016). But in response to restrictions on exporting Paraguayan soybeans through the Rosario soybean oil complex imposed by Argentina in 2011, ADM and a joint venture between Bunge and Dreyfus invested $280 million in setting up large export-oriented soybean oil plants. Bunge-Dreyfus venture built the processing plant Villeta (Central Department), with processing capacity of 3,000 tonnes per day. These plants have pushed the soybean processing capacity to 4,230,000 MT (CAPECO n.d.) and tripled the export capacity to

[63] CAPECO, “Evolución de las Exportaciones,” accessed 28 August 2020, http://capeco.org.py/en/soja-es-evol/

760,000 tonnes of oil. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reported that Paraguay was seeking to produce more soy oil than the European Union and take the place of the United States as the third largest producer of soybean oil, behind Argentina and Brazil (ECLAC 2013: 110). In 2016, however, a report by the Cámara Paraguaya de Oleaginosas y Cereales (CAPPRO) documented the lack of significant investments in recent years to expand the country's crushing capacity. Domestic consumption over total production is just 7 per cent—human consumption of refined soy oil is very low, and soy is used, domestically, for animal feeding (meal), although recently there has been an increase in the raw oil demand for biodiesel, since incentives for production and consumption of renewable energies have also increased (Rojas 2009; Wesz 2016).

It is important to stress here that when soybeans are semi-processed into meal and oil for export, there are no sectoral articulation and little employment generation. For these reasons, Gudynas (2010a, 2010b, 2013) suggests that this type of agricultural activity is not an "industry" since using the term industry implies some kind of industrialization or value-added—not primary production for export. Elaborating this point further, McKay (2017: 203) writes:

> The importance of in-country processing is the value-added component of the production process which can trigger sectoral articulation as complementary sectors engage in industrial processing and manufacturing creating employment through inter-sectoral linkages. However, when soybeans are semi-processed into oilcake and meal for export there is no sectoral articulation and little employment generation.

> The oilcake must be further processed to be converted into animal feed or consumer products.

Somewhat surprisingly, this same line of argument was presented to me during an interview in Asunción with an analysts from the Instituto de Biotecnología Agrícola (INBIO), an agency that was funded from royalties paid to Monsanto by soybean farmers for the use of their patented seeds (discussed further below)—although as context for the following quote, it was part of a much longer argument to exonerate producers from paying taxes on soy exports. Indeed, the following depiction of this form of agriculture in Paraguay could easily feature as part of the agro-extractivist critiques discussed at the start of this chapter.

> *No se termina—por otros problemas políticos—de consolidar la cadena de valor. ¿Ves toda la materia prima que tenemos acá? No solo de alimentos o de agricultura, sino tenemos miles de materias primas... que no se consolida porque… La parte industrial, lo poco que se hace, se hace a medias. Es decir, lo que se hace es* ***extracción****, pero no producto terminado. Entonces una fábrica—"fabrica" le dicen—de aceites no es tal cosa. Es una moledora de granos que* ***extrae*** *aceite, en sólido y líquido, y eso lo exporta. Y está todo automatizado. Para que toda la producción del país empleara cien personas. O sea, no solucionaste el problema. El problema es el producto terminado donde ahí viene la cadena: yo industrial produzco esto, encargo acá el envase, acá la tapa del envase, acá la etiqueta, el flete grueso, distribución, y luego mini distribución. ¡Vamos! Y todo esto a su vez usa insumo, usa neumáticos,*

> *aceite... va, va, va, va. Y eso no existe.* (INBIO analyst, personal interview 2015; emphasis added)

Thus, even the little "industrial processing" that takes place is not so, as it too constitutes a form of further "extraction" as oils are extracted from the soybean, and subsequently exported as primary commodities. The high volume of soybeans produced, semi-processed and destined for export represents the first features of agrarian extractivism in Paraguay—a point that was also raised by a completely different social actor: the leadership of the National Peasant Federation (FNC) laid out these extractive dimensions in the following clear terms:

> *La producción de soja que está ligada absolutamente a la exportación de materia prima, porque la producción de soja no se consume en nuestro país, es absolutamente para el mercado internacional y, sobre todo, exportación sin ningún valor agregado. Son materia prima que se exporta hacia afuera.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

5.4.2 Agribusiness and market concentration: sectoral disarticulation

An unmistakable trend in this new phase of global capitalism is the growing concentration of the commodity chain under the command of large agribusiness transnational corporations (McMichael 2009; Teubal 2009; Otero 2012). These firms control important segments at both ends of the value chain: agri-input corporations—those that invest in agricultural upstream[64] activities—dominate the seed industry and the provision of agrochemical, as well as other inputs

[64] i.e. all those activities necessary to secure the conditions of farming before it can take place, such as access to land, labour, instruments of labour, and with commodification usually credit as well (Bernstein 2010: 130, glossary).

that are sold to farmers; agro-food corporations—those that invest in agriculture downstream[65] activities—dominate global food processing and distribution, as well as the sale of food by supermarkets to consumers in the advanced capitalist countries. In this section, I analyse Paraguay's agricultural value-chain and argue that a new phase of "control grabbing" is occurring via value-chain relations. New forms of capital are penetrating Paraguay's countryside and drastically changing forms and relations of production, property, and power. According to national analyst Luis Rojas, "soy production in Paraguay is practically like an assembly plant: the inputs come from abroad, the land and water are provided here and often the same company that supplies the inputs is the exporter. They supply the inputs through credit to the producer and commit to purchase the production. The producer is just one more link in the process chain" (Rojas quoted in Guereña 2013: 19). Agribusinesses of different sizes are involved in all the stages of the commodity chain. These processes are analyzed by disaggregating the agro-industrial value chain and revealing where the value being produced is appropriated and how the terms of control are changing.

Market concentration in upstream activities can be sub-divided into three groups: seeds (GM and conventional), agro-chemicals, and machinery. These segments move considerable amounts of capital controlled by a select number of transnational agri-input corporations. Since the legalization of genetically modified (GM) soybean seeds in 2004, seed imports have increased rapidly. Although this has led to a proliferation of seed distributors, from 2009 to 2018, just ten companies controlled 92 per cent of Paraguay's GM seed distribution market and 67 per cent of conventional seed distribution market. Monsanto controlled more than 30 per cent of GM seed

[65]i.e. all those activities concerning agricultural commodities when they leave the farm, such as marketing, processing, wholesale and retail sale, and so on (Bernstein 2010: 125, glossary).

market, and almost 20 per cent of conventional seed, along with Dow Agro, Syngenta, Nidera, Bayer and LDC. The biotechnology transnationals were responsible for 70 per cent of total seed imports (Arrúa 2019: 33).

In addition to direct sales, transnational seed companies also receive revenues though the enforcement of intellectual property rights. Building on David Harvey (2003) notion of "accumulation by dispossession"—itself an updating of Marx's theory of "primitive accumulation"—Cambridge economist David Nally (2011) characterise this new moment in the commercialisation of food system as "accumulation by molecularisation", wherein corporate agribusiness—in partnership with the life science—are reconditioning human, animal and bacterial life in order to quicken the reproduction of capital. This model is most strongly associated with Monsanto's intellectual private (IP) property right over Roundup Ready soybean seeds. As discussed in Filomeno's (2014) comparative study of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, there has been a great variety in the success of this accumulation strategy, depending on the degree to which countries have been inserted in this IP regime, that is, the legal framework for protecting and enforcing IP rights—"accumulation by molecularization" thus depends to large extent on the access to state officials and influence over the policy-making process (see Filomeno 2014; Hetherington 2020: 50, 65). It has also been argued that such forms of revenue—received through the enforcement of intellectual property rights—should be considered a form of absolute ground rent, since such profits are acquired from a politically granted monopoly (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017a: 247). In Paraguay, while soybean farmers have refused to pay export taxes, Monsanto was successful in charging them royalty for their use of Roundup Ready seeds. This payment was sustained for ten years, between 2004 and 2013.

There is no data available on the exact amount of royalty payments during this period but, based on the initially reported fee of $4.40 per ton of soy produced (as reported in Guereña 2013, and newspaper reports), a rough estimate of $230 million for this 10-year period can be assumed.[66]

The expansion of transgenic soybean production has been accompanied by a steep increase in agrochemical use in Paraguay. In 2002, 75 per cent of the agrochemicals used in the country were utilized for the production of GM soy, with a net worth $83.7 million (Fogel 2005). Between 2009 and 2015, annual agrochemical use increased from 9.2 million kilos and 15.6 million litres to 30.8 million kilos and 20.5 million litres (Franceschelli 2015: 43). The average use of glyphosate, per hectare per year, increased from 2.5 litres/ha before the introduction of the RR soy, to between 4 and 6 litres in 2012 (Benítez Insfrán 2013). In many cases, it is "enhanced" with other more toxic herbicides such as paraquat and 2,4D. Thus, by 2015, 13.3 million litres of glyphosate, 9.1 million litres of paraquat and almost 2 million litres of 2,4D were imported into Paraguay (Franceschelli 2015: 44). From 2009 to 2016, the import of agricultural pesticides has increased fivefold and this trend has coincided with the massive liberalization of genetically modified seeds (Apipé 2017). In 2017, Paraguay officially imported 152,067 tonnes of agrochemicals (an average of 7.4 kilos of agrochemicals per inhabitant) for a value of $419 million, representing 6.2 per cent of the world total commercial value, an extraordinary amount if we consider that it refers to a small country with a cultivated land of 5,839,000 hectares. The main chemical imported was glyphosate (46%) followed by Paraquat (30%), with these products coming from China (60%), Argentina (20%), India (7%), Brazil (7%), the United States (2%),

[66] Own calculation based on CAPECO data for soybean cultivation. In reality the royalty payments were based on a 4% of gross earnings and also subject to yearly negotiations, making more precise calculations almost impossible (Filomeno 2014; Hetherington 2020: 50).

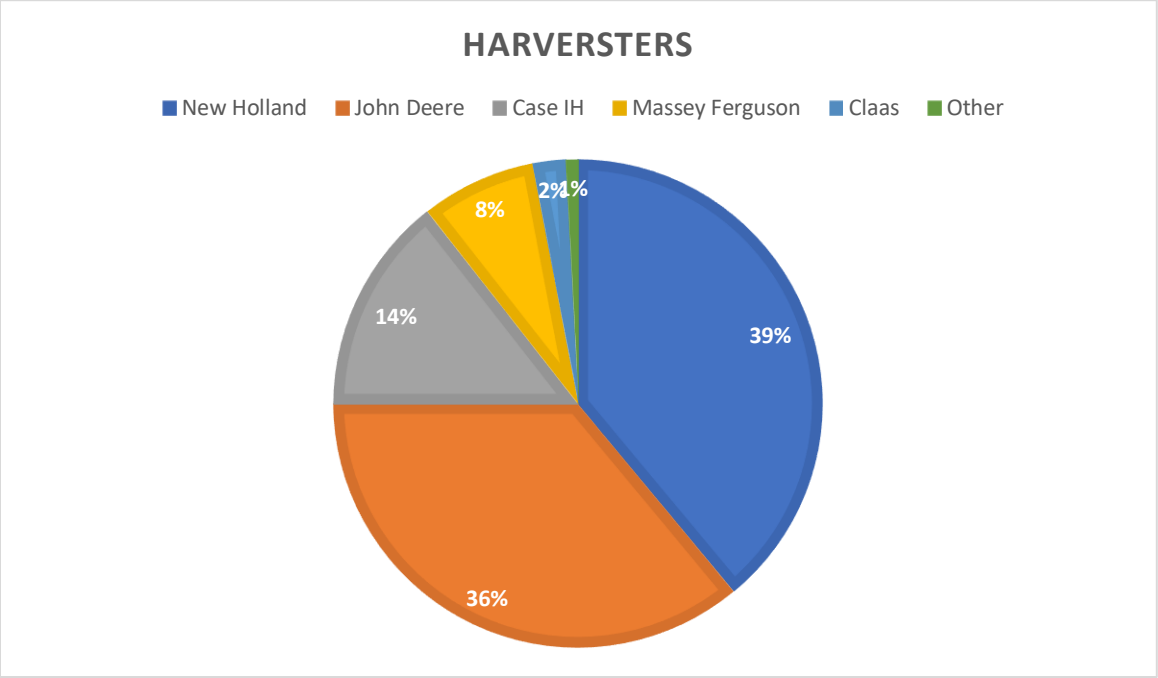
and France (1%). That same year, 1.5 million tonnes of fertilizers were imported at a value of $402 million (Apipé 2018: 32). Some 80 per cent of the total agrochemical imports is in the hands of 8 foreign capital companies, including Monsanto, Agrotec and Master Corporation.

In 2017, 1,519,154 MT of fertilizers were imported at a value of $1,338 million where more than 74 per cent was controlled by just 15 out of the 88 companies in charge of importing the fertilizers; amongst them, the 6 transnationals, Master Corp, Mosaic Company, LDC, BUNGE, Cargill and Fertimax represented 23 per cent of the imports (Arrúa 2019: 33). In the case of agrochemicals, in 2017, 39,277 MT were imported at a value of $316 million carried out by 88 companies, of which10 companies imported 74 per cent. Amongst them the giants Monsanto, Nayer, Dow and Syngenta with 26% of the total. In the first quarter of 2018, Bayer and Monsanto introduced into Paraguay products valued at $20.8 million. Bayer imported pharmaceutical and agrochemical products valued at US$11.13 million, while Monsanto imported seeds and agricultural products valued US$ 8.95 million.

In 2018, the total imports of agricultural machinery reached $1,224 million, with the market being dominated by the multinational John Deere, New Holland y Massey Ferguson-AGCO (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4).[67]

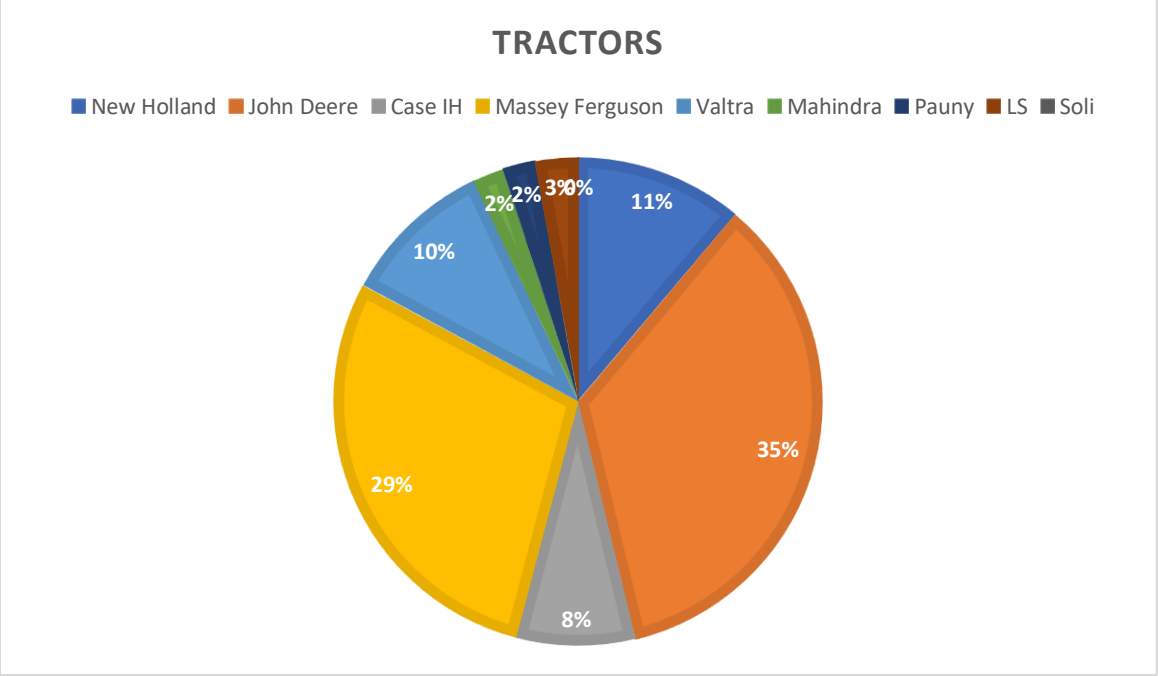
[67] Reference to agribusiness magazine *Campo* advertising the newest agricultural machineries.

Figure 5.3 Main importers of harvesters, 2018



Source: Arrúa (2019: 35).

Figure 5.4. Main importers of tractors, 2018



Source: Arrúa (2019: 35).

Market concentration is equally acute in downstream activities, such as processing, commercialization, and export. In Paraguay in 2015, six companies controlled 70% of the soybean export and almost the same five companies controlled 95% of the export of soybean derivatives (Vázquez, 2016: 36). As Wesz (2016: 297) highlights, such levels of market concentration have rendered the Paraguayan government as a "trading hostage":

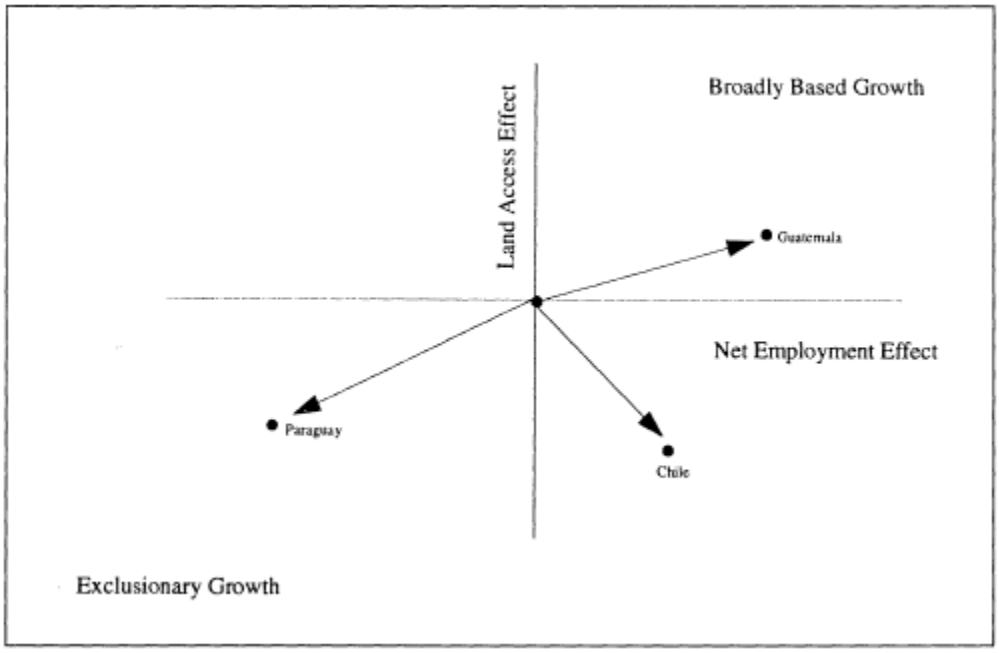
> The effect of the companies on economic stability and surplus generation is an important triumph of the companies when negotiating public investments in agribusinesses' strategic areas (plots for industrial plant building, infrastructure for production marketing, tax incentives, etc.). In this sense, these companies' economic and productive importance ends up turning the Paraguayan government into a trading hostage, using the conjuncture to negotiate public resources which contribute to their profits and their expansion in the grain market.

5.4.3 Re-concentration of land, exclusion of small-scale famers, and deteriorating rural labour opportunities

As Carter et al. (1996) have argued, there are three main channels through which to gauge the impact of agro-export "booms" on peasants and rural labourers: (i) the "small-farm adoption effect"; (ii) the "land-access effect"; and (iii) the "labour-absorption effect." This framework was used in a comparative study on the impact of the growth of non-traditional agricultural exports (NTAX) on the rural poor in Paraguay, based on soybeans and wheat, in Chile, based on fruit, and in Guatemala, based on vegetables. Evaluating the different possible scenarios, it is stressed that "[t]he most negative outcome would be one in which small farmers find their participation

thwarted by resource constraints and the labour intensity associated with larger farms drops below the levels of previous crop choices" (Carter et al. 1996: 38). Regrettably, as summarized in Figure 5.5, the soybean and wheat boom in Paraguay exemplified the worst-case scenario as described above.

Figure 5.5 Impacts of growth in agriculture exports on the rural poor in Latin America



Source: Carter et al. (1996: 45).

The fieldwork for the Carter et al. (1996) study was carried out in 1991–1992 and therefore predates the introduction of agricultural biotechnology. This speaks to the point raised early by Newell (2009) about the need to separate out analytically and historically the transformations in agrarian structures that can be related to the introduction of transgenics from those driven by other forces and factors. Evidently, the rural poor in Paraguay were already suffering multifaced forms of social exclusion from the emerging boom in (conventional) soybeans well before the emergence of GM soybean, which started being planted illegally in the country in 1999 and

where formally legalized in 2004. What will become clear from the analysis below, is that while the introduction of biotechnology into the countryside did not cause the issues of social inequality, they did certainly exacerbate them—in the case of environmental degradation discussed further below, a much stronger argument can be developed in terms of direct causation of the problem. Taking the three factors—small-farm adoption, land-access, and labour-absorption—in turn, we can begin by analyzing the extent to which small-scale units have participated directly in the expansion of soy production.

Comparing 1991 with 2008, the years of the last two agrarian censuses, it can be seen in Table 5.2 that the benefits of the transgenic soy boom have been reaped almost exclusively by the largest farmers. Soy in Paraguay is increasingly a large-scale crop: the number of farms in the three largest producer stratums grew at a much faster rate than the number of farms in the smaller categories. The number of producers in the 100–<1,000 hectare stratum, for example, grew by nearly 490 per cent. Conversely, the number of farms smaller than 20 hectares remained virtually stagnant, while the number of farms between 20 and 50 hectares contracted by 26 per cent (see Table 5.2). Thus, in 1991, soybean production provided a livelihood for 21,846 small-scale farmers (i.e. those with less than 50 hectares) and their families; 17 years later, the number had contracted to 20,487 small farmers. In terms of the overall structure of landownership, the transgenic soyization of agriculture has stimulated a new process of land concentration as the farms over 100 hectares increased their share of the country's soy cropland from 60.8 per cent to 88.7 per cent. During this same period, the share for farmers in the smallest category has been reduced from 9.3 per cent to 2.6 per cent (MAG 2010). These data show a marked pattern of unequal land accumulation leading to "*increasing* soy production on *fewer*, *larger* farms,

increasingly excluding peasant farmers from the rural landscape" (Elgert 2016: 538; emphasis in original).

Table 5.2 Farms and land surface dedicated to soy production, 1991–2008.

Farm size (ha)	No. of farms			Total area (ha)		
	1991	2008	% Change	1991	2008	% Change
<20	14,624	15,140	3.5	51,163	64,908	26.9
20–<50	7,222	5,347	-26.0	86,495	92,182	6.6
50–<100	2,424	2,562	5.7	79,954	120,482	50.7
100–<1,000	2,309	5,040	118.3	241,116	1,009,569	318.7
1,000–<10,000	134	789	488.8	70,901	1,015,224	1,331.9
>10,000	7	39	457.1	23,839	161,176	576.1
Total	26,720	28,918	8.2	552,658	2,463,541	345.8

Source: MAG (2009).

According to internal documents of the UGP reported in the media, out of a total 3,637,000 hectares of soy planted in during the 2019–2020 harvest, 832,849 hectares were planted by 41,600 small-scale producers (*pequeños productores*) with under 20 hectares (*ABC Color*, 23 April 2020).[68] Comparing these claims with the data from the latest agrarian census (see first row in Table 5.2), we see that over the past decade a total of 26,460 small-scale farmers have been incorporated into the soy sector, the area of land being planted by these producers has increased over 12-fold, and the their share of the total surface area planted with soy has jumped from 3 per cent to 23 per cent. Unsurprisingly, various national and foreign commentators have raised doubts about the validity of these claims (Andrew Nickson, pers. comm. 2020; Ramón Fogel, pers. comm.), and it will be interesting to see how the figures presented by the UGP stack up against the newest agrarian census, when it is made available. It can be assumed that the UGP

[68] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/paraguay-el-que-mas-deforesta-1579104.html

figures have been inflated by including smallholder farmers who are renting their land to *sojeros* (what could be considered petty bourgeois rentiers), a process for which there is no any reliable data but which has been widely corroborated by ethnographic research (e.g. Hetherington 2011, 2020).

At the same time, even if taken at face values, this reported increase in the incorporation of small-scall producers tells us nothing about the *nature* of this incorporation. Further analytical emphasis should be placed on the heterogenous social process in which different campesino social categories are embedded into the soy sector. What is the nature of debt relations, patronage and political clientelism, and competition for land? Unfortunately, without further research we cannot begin to answer to these questions? Future studies may opt for case study analysis of Itapúa, which was signalled out as the department with the highest number of *pequeños productores*, with over half of all soy producers belonging to this category (*ABC Color*, 23 April 2020).[69]

At the same time, there are also important political implications regarding the internal differentiation within rural communities, which are composed of both smallholding peasant farmers and rural landless workers, who earn their income predominantly from labour. This internal class division of the peasantry will undoubtedly impact their disposition towards resistance versus accommodation to the forces of capitalist development (see Hall et al. 2015). As explored in the following chapter, it is the rural landless workers of rural communities who are far more likely to engage in class struggle than smallholding peasant farmers (many of who

[69] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/paraguay-el-que-mas-deforesta-1579104.html

may be planting soy or renting their land to *sojeros*). The fact that smallholders can be differentiated into categories which include being simultaneously semi-proletarian and petty rentiers means they are caught in a contradictory class position, as their interest as landowner means they are less likely to engage in organized forms of resistance against the expansion and intensification of soy cultivation.

Before addressing the third factor in Carter et al.'s conceptual model—the "labour-absorption effect"—it is worthwhile considering the specific transactions and dynamics leading to the process of land concentration described above. Borras et al. (2012: 406) suggest that "land grabs [in Paraguay] seem to constitute everyday forms of dispossession by differentiation, most probably along a Leninist logic or overlapping Leninist and Chayanovian logics." This refers to forms of dispossession wherein (medium- to) small-scale landowners sell part or all of their holding to richer rural capitalists, and in the case of Paraguay often Brazilian landowners (Galeano 2012). Under the neoliberal food regime, however, the mechanism of dispossession has also been refracted by the adoption of biotechnology. Specifically, I suggest that the transgenic soyization of the Paraguayan agriculture has engendered a new predatory practice whereby the rich wrest land from the poor: the forced displacement of small holder peasant through the contamination of food crops, water, and air due to the agrochemical drift of fumigations on nearby soybean fields. As the spread of GM soybean production literally engulfs small communities, it has also ushered in a myriad of agrochemical drifts in rural areas as winds easily spread the herbicides sprayed from airplanes and "mosquitos" (tractors with long "arms" with faucets). This increased exposure to herbicides is leading to negative environmental and

widespread health ailments (skin rashes, muscular pains, headaches, breathing problems, and unusual pimples), and even the deaths of small children in rural areas (discussed further below).

At the same time, the combined effects of the collapse of the cotton sector and the expansion of soybean production have had a dramatic impact on the composition of rural labour, expressed in a sharp contraction of employment in the agricultural sector. In 1990, 38.9 per cent of Paraguay's economically active population made its living in agriculture (ECLAC 2005). By 2004, this ratio had fallen to 33.3 per cent and on to 22.8 per cent by 2014 (DGEEC 2005, 2015). A recent study by Riquelme and Vera (2013) gives strong evidence of this contraction in labour. According to the study, the number of seasonal workers employed in the agricultural sector plummeted during the period 1991–2008 from 946,040 to 238,674—a decrease of 74.8 per cent—meaning that 707,366 rural labourers have been rendered "absolutely extraneous" (Hetherington 2011: 64) to the needs of agribusiness capital (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Permanent and temporary rural wage labour, 1991–2008

Category	1991	2008	% Change
Number of farms with rural wage labour	107,739	96,804	-10.1
Permanent rural labour			
Number of farms	26,640	27,915	4.8
Total	81,748	81,754	0.01
Male	66,730	68,191	2.2
Female	15,018	13,565	-9.7
Temporary rural labour			
Number of farms	96,292	79,235	-17.7
Total	946,040	238,674	-74.8
Male	794,750	231,060	-70.9
Female	151,290	7,614	-95.0

Source: Riquelme and Vera (2013: 44).

The data clearly show the strong net negative impact on rural employment induced by the reorganization of agricultural production, lending credence to the assertion that the current

pattern of Paraguay's growth has been "employment-displacing more than employment creating" (Berry 2010: 323). A major factor contributing to this outcome, no doubt, can be attributed to the ascendancy of biotechnology in agricultural production, which has dampened employment opportunities as "rural labour demand has been displaced by demand for machinery and chemicals" (Richards 2010: 573). Kregg Hetherington explains the simple mechanism through which this new technology has transformed the rural labour market in Paraguay:

> as late as 1999, most soy farmers still needed a steady supply of *changueros*, because while farmers could mechanize land clearing, planting, and harvesting, they still needed people to deal with weeds that sprang up after germination and before harvesting. A one hundred hectare field of soy could provide work of this sort for at least a dozen men on a regular basis… Roundup Ready soy transformed this labour relation completely. [This new soy] could resist the application of Roundup even once it was growing in the fields, thus replacing manual weeders with increased pesticide application. (Hetherington 2020: 211–212)

The generation of jobs per hectare reveals some startling figures. On average, for every 1,000 hectares of land, 2.6 permanent and 7.7 temporary jobs are created. This quantity is significantly higher if we consider family farms, where the rate of job creation rises to 15.2 permanent workers and 94.4 temporary workers, while medium and large farms, characterised by mechanization of agricultural production, create just 1.8 jobs for both permanent and temporary workers per 1,000 hectares. The employment generation is inversely proportional to the size of the farm: the larger the farm the fewer the jobs created. For example, farms of less than 1 hectare

generate on average 518.7 permanent and temporary jobs per 1,000 hectares. At the other extreme, large-scale farms of over 10,000 generate just 1 direct employment per 1,000 hectares. It is also estimated that some 50,000 jobs are indirectly created along the soybean value chain (UNDP 2010: 80).

As Correia (2019) points out, wage-labour opportunities also intersect with longstanding cultural politics rooted in the history of Brazilian migrations to Paraguay (see Nickson 1981; Nagel 1991; Blanc 2015). As a result of this, he suggests, that the number of employees in farms or agricultural enterprises of Brazilians located along the border region, is likely greater than that recorded in censuses, since farmers will often prefer to employ their own countrymen, many of who are often not registered as residents, as well as seasonal Brazilian rural workers (*boias frias*).

Many Paraguayan campesinos are thus negated wage-labour opportunities. The obvious consequence has been a surge in rural-urban migration, as an expanding "marginal mass" (Nun 1969; Quijano 1971)—or "refugees of the agro-export model" as described in the analysis of Palau et al. (2007)—is forced to migrate into informal labour markets to eke out a living (see Riquelme and Vera 2015). As Rulli (2007b: 215) emphasizes, this "migration should be understood as a forced expulsion process, an inevitable consequence of the slow degradation of the living conditions in the place of origin." Clearly in the case of Paraguay, one of the least industrialized countries in Latin America, the decreased demand for unskilled labour in the agricultural sector has not been mitigated by a corresponding expansion in urban sector employment. Indeed, although Paraguay has experienced a swelling up of its "tertiary" sector,

which rose from 50.9 per cent in 2004 to 58.7 per cent in 2014 (DGEEC 2005, 2015), the majority of this employment has expressed itself outside the formal economy. The ILO (2013) calculates that 70.7 per cent of the non-agricultural employment in Paraguay is constituted within the informal economy, the third highest rate in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The fact that so many peasant farmers have become redundant to the requirements of agribusiness capital, combined with the lack of alternatives for gainful employment in other sectors of national economy, has rendered them as a "surplus population" (Li 2009) or an "outcast proletariat" (Davis 2006)—that is, a labour force without adequate livelihood alternatives. As McMichael (2008: 219) argues puts it, "in generating a 'planet of slums' [Davis 2006] neoliberal capitalism reveals the social and ecological limits of the development narrative. The so-called 'unlimited supplies of labour' from the countryside metamorphose into a seemingly unlimited supply of unemployed slum-dwellers, exiting increasingly degraded habitats." In Paraguay, the clearest manifestation of this process is found in los Bañados (Spanish for marshy wetlands), a peripheral settlement of makeshift homes on the outskirts of Asunción (see Rojas 2013). In interviews with peasant leaders, such "degraded habitats" were often described to me as "belts of poverty and misery" [*cordones de miseria y cinturones de pobreza*]:

> *Tenés al sojero que viene y te dice tanto, en Alto Paraná están pagando $2000 la hectárea, algo así como casi 12 millones [guaraníes] la hectárea de tierra... Pareciera ser mucha plata, pero si en Paraguay no hay industria, si en Paraguay no hay otras posibilidades de trabajo, no te sirve de nada. Porque ahí te quedas sin tu tierra que es donde está tu casa y te quedas sin tu comida. Vos comes toda esa plata*

> *y te quedas sin nada. [Eso] es un poco lo que profundizó los cordones o cinturones de pobreza de acá en los alrededores de Asunción verdad. O sea, el Departamento Central de tener 800,000 familias, paso a tener dos millones de habitantes. ¿Y de dónde vinieron esos? Vinieron del campo. ¿Y a qué se dedican eso dos millones? Y bueno, tenés unos cuantos en la calle pidiendo limosna, otro cuantos limpiando coches... y tenés ya con eso inseguridad, tenés montón... claro, la gente antes de morir va a querer robar para comer, no va a morir de hambre. Y el Estado ofrece nada.* (Ruiz, personal Interview 2015)

The transformation of Paraguayan agriculture in recent years has been accompanied by a concentration of landholdings, as well as increased mechanisation and sophistication of the production process in a way that has decreased employment opportunities for unskilled labour. The result has been an increase in rural-urban migration which is rendering vast masses of people without an adequate livelihood in agriculture, or alternatives for gainful employment in other sectors of the national economy. Such inherent features of this mechanised large-scale agriculture have led critical scholars to characterizes it as "the antithesis of broad-based development—it eliminates work opportunities and ejects labour to urban sectors that are already overwhelmed with unemployment and underemployment" (North and Grinspun 2016: 1497).

Increasingly, migration has become transnational, with more Paraguayans seeking employment opportunities abroad. One report from Paraguay notes that 280,000 Paraguayans have applied for permanent residence in Argentina since 2000, while Spain has seen a fourfold increase in the number of Paraguayan immigrants over the same period (*ABC Color*, 2009). An estimated

150,000 Paraguayans are living in Spain, of whom only 11,000 were legal immigrants (Nickson 2009)—a fact that was distastefully broadcasted by then President Horacio Cartes in a speech in Madrid (June 2015) where he told an audience of elite investors that Paraguay "exports poverty to Spain" (*Ultima Hora* 2015). In addition to soybeans and beef then, population has become an important export for Paraguay.

5.4.4 Environmental degradation

The expansion of agribusiness over the countryside, particularly because of its enormous use of agrochemicals, is having significant negative environmental impacts across the region, such as increased deforestation, loss of biodiversity, decrease soil fertility, surface and underground water contamination, as well as negative health impacts on the population.

As soybean expansion has out-competed pastures for beef and dairy production in fertile areas, cattle ranching is being displaced further into non-agricultural land, particularly in the Chaco region. Ranching and soy are thus the main causes of the current dramatic deforestation of the native forest throughout the country, not least the hotspot of the Chaco which is currently exhibiting one of the most rapid reforestation rates in the world, and the Atlantic forest area, where only an estimated 11.7 per cent of forest's original area remains (Baraibar 2020: 15). Recent studies conducted on a global scale identified Paraguay as one of the countries in Latin America with the highest deforestation rates worldwide (Hansen et al. 2010, 2013). The rapid deforestation rate has resulted in the loss of 90 per cent of the forest cover in the eastern region of the country, earning Paraguay the unenviable title of "world champion in deforestation" (*ABC*

Color, 30 March 2017).[70] Between 1990 and 2015, annual net loss of 325,000 (ha) of forest area (FAO 2016; Zarate 2018). According to the National Forestry Institute (INFONA), the country's forest area was reduced by 265,590 hectares between August 2017 and the same month in 2018, especially in the Chaco region.[71]

There is also a heated debate about the social-ecological hazards caused by snowballing agrochemical use. This causes adverse effects on pollinators, soil nutrients, food safety (chemical residues in food exceeding safety limits), soil and water resources, and biological diversity (Angulo 2017; Domecq 2017; Neris 2017; Barreto 2018; Baraibar 2020: 19–20). There are also public health concerns over the agrochemical exposure among farmers and communities nearby the sprayed fields causing health problems, issues which are discussed below as a form of quotidian violence.

5.4.5 "*La soja mata*": a panorama of violence

Throughout many parts of Latin American, extractive operations have unleashed increasingly violent dynamics on the local communities. In *Blood of Extraction*, a book about the seamy side of Canadian foreign policy, Todd Gordon and Jeffery Webber (2016) shed light on the ways in which the Canadian state exercises its (secondary) imperial power to facilitate the expansion of Canadian capital in Latin America. The book documents a wide range of environmental and human rights abuses, unveiling that "the wealth repatriated to Canadian companies is routinely covered in blood and dirt" (Gordon and Webber 2016: 181)—a direct allusion to Marx's famous insistence that capitalism stalks about the world "dripping from head to toe, from every pore,

[70] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/paraguay-el-que-mas-deforesta-1579104.html

[71] http://www.nanduti.com.py/2019/01/16/paraguay-perdio-265-590-hectareas-bosque-agosto-2017-2018/

with blood and dirt" (Marx, 1990 [1887]: 926). Not only do the authors go to great lengths to show that the foreign policies of Canada benefit primarily the interests of Canadian capital rather than those of the citizens, let alone the peoples of Latin America, but also they offer rather detailed coverage of the vicious methods of Canadian imperialism. In this context, the book's catalogue of violent appropriation of natural resources includes "murder, death threats, assaults, and arbitrary detention against opponents of resource extraction" (Gordon and Webber 2016: 28). In my review of this book (Ezquerro-Cañete 2019), I suggested that the authors might have drawn more on the Uruguayan political ecologist Eduardo Gudynas, whose concept of *extrahección*—a term coined by Gudynas to capture "the most acute cases of the appropriation of natural resources, where these are extracted using violence and where human rights and the rights of nature are violated" (Gudynas, 2013: 15)—is directly applicable.

In dialogue with Gudynas's concept of "*extrahección*",[72] this section examines the different forms of violence brought about by the sweeping expansion of agribusiness in Paraguay in recent years. To frame this discussion, we can consider one of the protest slogans of the organized peasant movement (See Figure 5.6): "Soy = Glyphosate + Paramilitary" [*Soja = Glifosato + Paramilitares*] was written on the banner at the forefront of a demonstration staged by peasant and indigenous organizations on August 31, 2006, to protest against the Second Roundtable on Sustainable Soy Conference held at the Hotel Yacht Golf Club in Asunción (Maeyens 2006). The banner encapsulates the twin forces of violence and dispossession faced by the peasant and indigenous communities who live near soybean fields. On the one hand, the quotidian violence caused by agrochemical drifts that contaminate the air and water and affect the health of

[72] This new term comes from the Latin word *extraher*, which means "to pluck with violence."

inhabitants of rural towns. One the other hand, the more open, direct, and deadly violence involving the assassination of peasant activists and local leaders along with the criminalization of social protests.

Figure 5.6 Soy = Glyphosate + Paramilitary.

Source: *Última Hora* archives.

The following sections outline emblematic cases of quotidian violence caused by agrochemical drifts, violent land evictions for the cultivation of GM soy, and the assassination of peasant activists and local leaders protesting this expansion of agribusiness.

5.4.5.1 Quotidian violence: agrochemical drifts

This dramatic increase in the use of agro-chemicals is associated with a myriad of socio-environmental problems, including contaminated surface and ground water and has been linked health problems of the local population.[73] Several clinical studies carried out at the Hospital of Encarnación (department of Itapúa) by the paediatrician Stela Benítez-Leite, Professor of Medical Science at the National University of Asunción and research at the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT), have documented the harmful effects of occupational exposure to agrochemicals on human health, including associated risk factors for congenital malformations (Benítez-Leite et al. 2007) and a significant increase in the frequency of karyorrhexis and pyknosis (Benítez-Leite et al. 2010). A recent study published in the *British Journal of Medicine & Medical Research*—titled "Violated Rights in Rural Populations Exposed to Transgenic Soybean Crop"—reports findings about genetic damage to children exposed to pesticides (Benítez-Leite et al. 2016; also see Benítez-Leite and Corvalán 2018). Not surprisingly, such studies have been subjected to frequent attacks and scrutiny by the soy industry. The UGP, which has a strong presence on the Paraguayan public funding program (CONACYT), attempted to publicly discredit Benítez-Leite's work by publicizing how much of her research grant had been used on catering (Hetherington 2020: 164).

Despite repeated requests from the peasant organisations to the authorities, the Ministry of Health has refused to investigate the matter. Since the early 2000s, one NGO in Asunción, BASE Investigaciones Sociales (BASE IS), started systematically recording reported incidents of

[73] According to the Paraguayan Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MSPBS) there has been an increased mortality rate from cancer cases, which many researchers associate with the increased exposure to agrochemicals (Fogel 2019: 19).

human, animal, and vegetable contamination associated with the agrochemical drift of fumigations. This matrix reveals that there was a total of ninety-six cases of pesticide related intoxications because of agrochemical drifts between 2003 and 2006 (Palau et al. 2007: 332–346).The following quotes from leaders of two peasant organizations I interviewed provide a powerful description of this destructive impact:

> *En Alto Paraná tenemos asentamientos que están rodeados de sojales y de verdad que es muy difícil porque... la expulsión, que no quiere reconocer el Estado, ni quieren reconocer mucha gente urbana, es difícil. Tienes a tus niños todos con problemas de piel, con problemas estomacales, dolor de cabeza. Pero además de eso, tenés que tú producción ya no sale más. La mandioca tiene problema. Tiene un bicho que le ataca en la raíz... tenés mandioca podrida, tenés tu poroto todo destruido... o sea también incluso en la comida, te estás quedando sin comida.*
>
> (Ruiz, leader of OLT, personal interview 2015)

> *En varios departamentos del país donde ya tienen más de 10 años las plantaciones de soja con fumigaciones aéreas van apareciendo enfermedades… se ha multiplicado la enfermedad cancerígena, sobre todo en criaturas… son datos estadísticos que están saltando actualmente. Hay comunidades que en época de fumigaciones masiva de sojales hay mortandad de animales domésticos, de gallina, de chancho, incluso de animales vacunos, que tienen los compañeros pequeños productores. Un problema que va en aumento en la comunidad y asentamientos que*

> *están rodeados por grandes extensiones de sojales.* (Gómez, leader of FNC, personal interview 2015)

Such grievances by campesino communities are routinely rejected and dismissed by the agro-industry and soybean union. In an excerpt from an Al Jazeera documentary, Héctor Cristaldo, head spokesmen for the Unión de los Gremios de la Producción (Union of Production Trades, UGP), offers the following fanciful analogy: "It's the same as when you put salt on your barbecue. If you put a little, it is delicious. Too much and you'll have high blood pressure and it'll kill you" (quoted in *People & Power: Paraguay's Forgotten Coup*).[74] When I questioned a senior member at the Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (Instituto de Biotecnología Agrícola, INBIO) about the impacts of fumigation, he replied with vitriolic humour:

> *Como nosotros veníamos en la agricultura usando productos que, en la época cuando no había estos descubrimientos de ahora, [eran] altísimamente tóxicos… [antes de que] se adopta esta tecnología nueva, y no pasaba nada. Correcto. Yo tengo 40 años de agricultura. Estas es mi casa y mi chacra es esto* [signalling two ítems on the table side by side]. *Estoy vivo. Y a mis 63 años tengo mejor estado físico que cualquier jovencito. Muy bien. ¿Cuál es el daño? Ahora, toda la franja productiva sobre el Río Paraná, desde Pedro Juan Caballero a Encarnación, o sea todo lo bajo del país, tendremos que estar toditos deformes, cancerosos, y muertos. ¿Por qué? Porque tenemos 60 años de fumigación. … Yo vengo de fumigar sesenta años allá, vengo acá, fumigo y se me entrega una comunidad entera. ¡Una*

[74] Documentary available on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RE-70bdH1c

> *comunidad entera! Cuando que antes, que no existía la tecnología y la maquinaria y todo eso, nos poníamos en la espalda la mochila* [agricultural backpack sprayer] *y nos bañábamos con el veneno. Y estos dicen que el viento le trajo y se enfermó toda una comunidad. ¡Vaaa!*
>
> (INBIO director, personal interview 2015)

As Pablo Lapegna (2017) has argued in reference to these same dynamics in the Argentine province of Formosa, such adamant dismals of agribusiness elite to the peasants' grievances represent a form of "symbolic violence", defined by Pierre Bourdieu as those processes by which "different classes and class fractions are engaged in a symbolic struggle [. . .] aimed at imposing the definition of the social world that is most consistent with their interests," which ultimately "help to ensure that one class dominates another" (Bourdieu 1991: 167). Through the contrasting quotes above, "the effects of symbolic violence can be read in the discourses mobilized by elites denying the negative environmental effects of agrochemicals and in the vilification of peasants when they demand resolution" (Lapegna 2017: 186). Identifying these forms of symbolic violence provides a glimpse into the obstacles that rural communities and peasant social movements face in addressing the negative impacts of the soy boom.

The case to garner the most public outrage against the soy sector was the 2003 poisoning death of Silvino Talavera, an eleven-year-old boy from the small campesino settlement of Pirapey (district of Edelira, department of Itapúa) who was sprayed by a crop duster on his way home from school (Hetherington 2013). While cases like this were widely rumored to have occurred throughout the countryside, this was the first one in which a team of activists and lawyers

managed to get medical proof, in the form of tests on the boy's blood that pesticides killed him (Hetherington 2014). Other cases include the death of 12 indigenous *mbya* people from district of Aba'í (Caazapá department) also due to exposure to agrochemicals (*La Nación* 2009). In 2014 the death of two girls in the Huber Duré colony, Canindeyú department, was again reported as a result of agrochemical spraying. These situations continue to this day, and there are still recurring cases of serious risk to the population due to the irresponsible use of pesticides for GM crop. For example, on 20 February 2019, a spraying company sprayed pesticides on a transgenic soy crop a few metres from a school and a health post in the district of Capiibary, in San Pedro, putting hundreds of people at risk.[75] For other similar cases of fumigations close to rural schools, see Rodríguez and Peralta (2019).

The unwillingness of the Paraguayan state to act against agrochemical spraying regardless of the growing scientific evidence of its damaging effects is a testament to the complete lack of monitoring of the social and environmental impact of agribusiness, leading to the mobilization of affected communities, as Marcial Gómez (leader of the FNC) and Lidia Ruiz (leader of the OLT) explained to me:

> *Hay leyes ambientales de protección de comunidades campesinas y comunidades indígenas que no cumplen los sojeros, los grandes productores… avasallando todas las leyes ambientales y el Estado no hace ningún mínimo control para el cumplimiento de dichas leyes. Más bien ponen fuerzas represivas, respaldando las fumigaciones que atropellan todas las leyes ambientales vigentes; por ejemplo, el*

[75] http://www.biodiversidadla.org/Noticias/Plantan-soja-y-fumigan-a-metros-de-una-escuela-y-un-puesto-de-salud

> *Estado está actuando contra la comunidad campesina, contra la comunidad indígena, que están resistiendo en sus comunidades, incluso exigiendo el cumplimiento de las leyes ambientales.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

> *Y el Estado tampoco garantiza la no expulsión porque la federación* [FNC], *por ejemplo el año pasado y el año antepasado, hizo mucha... una fuerte campaña de oposición a la fumigación, donde las familias campesinas salían y ahí fueron los policías a reprimirlas. Balines de goma, le pegaban, la montada, le agarraron cinco-seis presos casi toda la semana. O sea, en vez de garantizar... y ellos [los campesinos] atajan los tractores fumigadores y los policías se iban y garantizaba la fumigación. Hacían cordones. Hay fotos así muy elocuentes de cordones de policía garantizando la fumigación.* (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

Such an image as described by Ruiz is displayed on the front cover of Kregg Hetherington's recently published book, *The Government of Beans: Regulating Life in the Age of Beans* (2020),[76] when Horacio Cartes deployed police to protect the fumigation of a soybean field from campesino protesters (*Última Hora*, 3 December 2013). Describing this image (Figure 5.7) as a "caricature of authoritarian agribiopolitics", Hetherington (2020: 202) "blue-helmeted riot police stood around the edges of soy fields where there should have been a thick wall of elephant grass. One barrera viva [living barrier] has been replaced by another. Only this time, rather than protecting neighbours from pesticides, the barrera faced outward, protecting pesticides from neighbors."

[76]My own review of Hetherington (2020) is forthcoming in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*.

Figure 5.7 Police guarding a soybean field in Paraguay, 2013

Source: Photo by Edgar Vásquez.

5.4.5.2 Violent Land Evictions

Land conflicts in Paraguay result from a large number of overlapping factors, where historical injustices such as *tierras malhabidas* (ill-gotten lands), discussed in chapter 3, blend with the agro-extractive shift in the development model. When communities refuse to leave their property or attempt to take disputed territory through land occupations, they often face heavy repression. The case discussed in the following section—Tekojoja—is an example of violent dispossession, whereby communities in regions where agribusiness corporations are seeking to expand production suffer displacement at the hands of police and paramilitary forces.

Tekojoja is a campesino camp located in the eastern department of Caaguazú. Between 2002 and 2006, a group of several hundred campesinos in Tekojoja from the MAP were embroiled in a violent struggle with a handful of Brazilian soy producers from the nearby community of Santa Clara.[77] Approximately 200 hectares were in dispute between peasants and soy producers attempting to purchase the land for GM soy production. The lands in dispute had been bought illegally by Brazilian migrants: the land in Santa Clara and been purchased from speculators in the 1970s, while land in Tekojoja had been recently bought from land-reform beneficiaries against the citizenship requirements codified in the land-reform law (Hetherington 2011: 70). The National Institute for Rural and Land Development (INDERT) made a shady contract granting thirteen agricultural lots in the region to a group of Brazilian soy producers. In response, peasants began a recuperation process and occupied those 200 hectares in June 2003. Meanwhile, the MAP initiated legal action to recognize the land as property of Tekojoja. Brazilian *sojeros* carried out two violent evictions—in December 2004, and again in June 2005—displacing fifty-six families, burning their houses, and robbing their possessions. During the last eviction, two people were shot dead.

Thus, on December 3, 2004, Judge Gladis Escobar ordered the eviction of the peasant settlement, an action which left forty-six houses burned and twenty hectares of crops destroyed. The peasants then reoccupied their lands. The people of the MAP relayed that,

> after the tractors had destroy our crops, they came with their big machines and started immediately to sow soy while smoke was still coming out from the ashes of our houses.

[77] This paragraph draws heavily on Maeyens (2006).

> Next day we came back with oxes and replanted all the fields over the prepared land. When the police came, we faced them with our tools and machetes, we were around 70 people and were ready to confront them. In the end they left. (quoted in Maeyen 2008)

The soy producers acted again. On June 24 2005, the attorney of Vaqueria headed another eviction of the land reoccupations, despite the fact that no decision had been taken by the Supreme Court on the case of the illegal sale of land rights (*derecheras*) in the region. This time, soy farmers aided by heavily armed men evicted fifty-six families (400 people, including 223 children), and eventually shot Ángel Cristaldo (twenty years old) and Leoncio Torres (forty-six years old), without any provocation from their side. The second eviction is bitterly depicted by Canadian anthropologist Kregg Hetherington, who witnessed the event during his doctoral fieldwork.[78] Hetherington writes (2011: 119),

> Two truckloads of riot police showed up at five o'clock in the morning and began pulling people out of bed. They loaded the trucks with over a hundred campesinos, including Joel and his wife (who was then eight months pregnant), and drove them to the regional jail while Opperman's gang drove through the community on tractors, demolishing houses and setting them on fire. Then, as Opperman was leaving the location, he spotted a group of about fifty campesinos, some of whom had hidden during the evictions, some of whom had gathered in solidarity to discuss a reaction. As his convoy drove past, men in the trucks opened fire on the campesinos with

[78] Hetherington would later played a pivotal role in the case, first by providing photographs "which proved that the campesinos had been unarmed when they were attacked", and later as a key witness in court during the murder trial, which "set the stage for a Supreme Court ruling which favored the campesino land claim" (Hetherington 2011: 119).

shotguns, killing two young men and severely wounding another.

The above episode is far from an isolated case. Countless examples of this process have been documented, often linking state and paramilitary violence to the expansion of the agro-industrial sector (Rulli 2007; Fogel 2013).

5.4.5.3 Extrajudicial executions

The *Chokoue*[79] report published by the Paraguayan Coordinating Committee for Human Rights (CODEHUPY 2014), documents 115 victims of extrajudicial executions from February 3, 1989 to August 15, 2013. Since the "parliamentary coup" of 2012, killings have increasingly shifted from occurring within the context of land conflicts—occupations and displacements—to assassinations carried out by hired gunmen (*sicarios*) either in the homes of peasant leaders or in public. Some examples follow.

On September 1 2012, peasant leader Sixto Pérez was murdered in his home in the district of ex Puentesiño, Concepción. On December 1, 2012, Vidal Vega, another peasant leader, was shot at his home near Curuguaty by two men on a motorbike. Vega was a leader of the movement of landless farmers whose invasion in the department of Curuguaty precipitated the June 15th shoot-out that left seventeen dead and led to the impeachment of former president Fernando Lugo.[80] For decades Vega had lobbied the government to redistribute part of a 135 square mile landholding illegally occupied since 1964 by Blas Riquelme, a former president of the Partido

[79] Chokokue means peasant in Guarani, the indigenous language spoken by the vast majority of Paraguay's mestizo peasantry.

[80] Discussed in the previous chapter.

Colorado. Vega was a leader of the *Comisión Sin Tierra de Naranjaty* (Landless Commission of Naranjaty) and secretary of the recently-formed *Comision de Familiares de Victimas de la Masacre de Curuguaty* (Committee of Relatives of Victims of the Curuguaty Massacre). He had regularly taken food and clothing to the twelve peasants imprisoned pending the trial arising from the June killings, and was well known to the authorities. He himself had not been charged because he was away buying supplies when the violence erupted. As one among the few leaders not to be killed in the clash or jailed afterwards, he was expected to be a witness at their trial. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, on 1 December 2012, two hired gunmen arrived on motorcycle to the home of Vidal Vega. Police information quoted in news reports indicates the victim's spouse, María Cristina Argüello, answered the door: the two unknown men asked for Vidal Vega and shot him with 12-caliber rifles, in the presence of his family (CODEHUPY 2014).

On February 19, 2013, Benjamín "Toto" Lezcano, a leader of the *Coordinadora de Organizaciones Campesinas "José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia,"* (José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia Coordination of Peasant Organizations) was murdered in his home by a *sicario*, in the district of Horqueta, Concepción; in March 2013, Dionisio González, a peasant leader, was murdered in the district of Alfonso Kue, Concepción. On April 21, 2013, in a case of mistaken identity, police shot Francisco Denis, a grassroots member of a peasant movement, on his way back from voting in the general elections in Kurusu de Hierro, Concepción. On May 31, 2013, Antonio Carlos Moreira, a Brazilian colonist with ties to the *Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo* (Paraguayan Peasant Movement, MCP) in the Laterza Kue land conflict, was shot in his home in the Caaguazú department by *sicarios*. On August 14, 2013, Lorenzo Areco, a member of the

Organización Campesina Regional de Concepción (Regional Peasant Organization of Concepción – OCRC), was murdered by *sicarios* on the streets of Yvy Ya'u, Concepción. Beyond these cases of cold-blooded killings, grassroots members of peasant members have also faced the frequent harassment and intimidation of thugs hired by agribusiness (CODEHUPY 2014).

Of the 115 executions recorded, 77.4 per cent occurred in just five departments—Canindeyú (25), San Pedro (21), Concepción (16), Caaguazú (15), and Alto Paraná (12).[81] These executions thus manifest a marked regional concentration. Not coincidentally, four out of these departments are also the country's most *sojero* departments.

The CODEHUPY report also highlights the complete lack of accountability with respect to the extrajudicial executions of campesinos during the fourteen-year period. In fact, not a single person has been charged for any one of the 115 executions investigated in the report. In the few instances in which the negligible actions of judges and prosecutors has reached the *Jurado de Enjuiciamiento Magistrados* (Special Jury of Judges, JEM) the result has been absolute impunity without exception (CODEHUPY 2014: 171).

National military and paramilitary groups connected to large agribusinesses and landowners in Paraguay have repressed, coerced, and murdered the ranks of an expanding landless peasantry with complete impunity (Guereña 2013; CODEHUPY 2014). Such arbitrary evictions of peasant and indigenous communities from land occupations have led to numerous accusations against the

[81]The remaining executions are divided into the remaining departments as follows: Cordillera (10), Caazapá (7), Itapúa (6), Amambay (1), Ñeembucú (1), and Paraguarí (1).

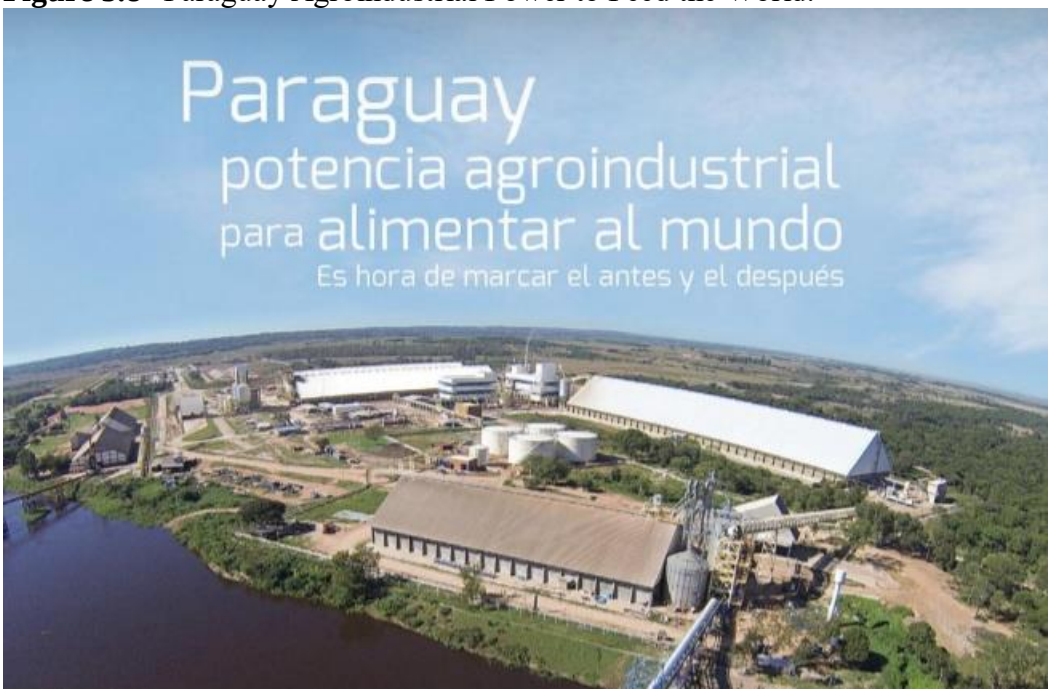
police—and increasingly private forces—of violence, unjustified arrests, and extra judiciary executions. In this regard, human rights and activist groups claim that "the unstoppable expansion of soya crops is the cause of the harassment, attacks, and assassinations at the hands of the police, the paramilitary, and private armed groups who are antagonistic towards the rural leaders" (FIAN and Via Campesina 2006, quoted in Rulli 2007: 221).

The various forms of violence discussed in the above cases exemplify how the current agrarian extractivist project in Paraguay is reinforced by, and even contingent on, violence perpetuated by the state to protect private agribusiness interests. Indeed, Paraguay would appear to exhibit the most acute and violent expressions of *extrahección* in the region. In the cases of Bolivia and Uruguay, for instance, the advance of agro-extractive capital has not been associated with the forced dispossession of small family farmers through violent and extra-economic coercion (McKay and Colque 2016: 605; Oyhantçabal and Narbondo 2019: 213). In the cases of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, however, reports of peasant and indigenous leaders killed in land conflicts abound (e.g. Lapegna 2013). As a researcher at the Buenos Aires-based group Grupo de Reflexión Rural (GRR) declares, "Paraguay could be viewed as the country in which agri-business show their most brutal side, by evicting and attacking people with complete impunity. The militarization and para-militarization of the countryside are linked to the increase of soya cultivation and the security systems of the agribusiness" (Rulli 2007: 221).

5.4.6 Compromising food sovereignty by replacing domestic production with imported goods

In recent years, the claim that GM crops are a necessity to "feed the world" and aid development in the global South have become increasingly pervasive and pronounced (see Figure 5.8). One of the more compelling arguments made by proponents of GM crops is that the peasant mode of production and small scale farmers are not well suited to innovation and investment (Collier 2008: 71), and that the increased global demand for food—fuelled, in large part, by what Weis (2007) refers to as the "meatification" of diets—can only be met through a model of "large, technologically sophisticated agricultural companies" (Collier 2008: 73). As several scholars have noted, however, this particular vision is Malthusian in character: the problem is framed as purely a matter of supply; the solution to which is the technological innovation offered by biotechnology to intensify production (Brooks 2005; Alessandrini 2010; Nally 2011).

Figure 5.8 "Paraguay Agroindustrial Power to Feed the World."



Source: IPIE (2014). Instituto Paraguayo de Investigaciones Económicas.

Paradoxically (and perversely?) this technology-as-magic-bullet idea invariably ignores "the fact that most transgenic crops are not even geared for direct human consumption" (Otero, 2012: 282). In the case of soybeans, for instance, only 6 per cent of world production is consumed in the form of whole beans, tofu or other whole-soy and fermented foods. The other 94 per cent is processed into soybean meal and oil for yet further processing (Oliveira and Schneider 2016, 168). As discussed at the start of this chapter, much of this global production is intrinsically tied into the emergence of "flex crops"—that is, crops that have multiple and flexible uses which provide global capital with a "spatio-temporal fix" for profitable investment (Harvey 2003; Borras et al. 2012: 404-405). Hence, this process of "flexing" has redefined soy into an industrial crop for livestock feed production and biodiesel, as well as an indexed commodity in financial markets (Turzi 2017).

Within this context, the final destinations for Paraguayan soy include China and Europe, "where much of the import is used for animal feed and thus contributes to 'meat security' in those countries" (Elgert 2016: 551). In many instances, this necessity to feed the global industrial grain-oilseed-livestock complex has undermined domestic food security for producer countries by replacing subsistence and food crops for domestic consumption with agro-commodity exports—what is has been referred to as the "agrarian question of food" (McMichael 2009; Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009). As Elgert (2016: 551) helpfully elaborates: "The soy industry's role in producing more food for a growing global population is likely little comfort to Paraguay's small-scale farmers… as food security is effectively shifted from producer countries to consumer countries. The soy industry is overwhelmingly concentrated on the export market, with negligible production for domestic consumption."

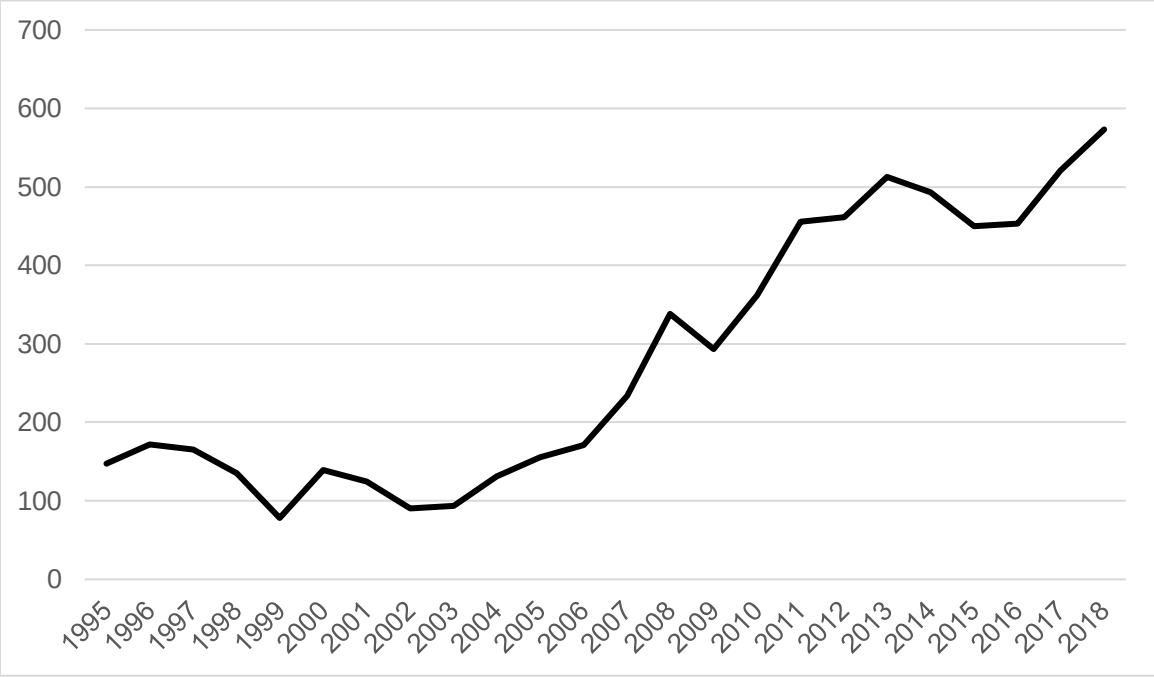
The move from subsistence to commercial production in Paraguay is most dramatically expressed in the following numbers. In 2013-2014, out the 5,637,300 hectares dedicated to agriculture a staggering 93.7 per cent (5,284,400 hectares) were sown with cash crops (primarily soy), while subsistence crops constituted a mere 6.3 per cent of the cultivated land (Pereira Fukuoka 2015: 68). Valdez (2019) cites a 50 per cent drops in peasant production over the 15 years period from 2002 to 2017 (Ávila and Monroy 2018). Based on estimates of the national consumption of basic crops in 2017 vis-à-vis their domestic production, Imas (2020: 100–101) calculates a deficit in domestic production of 46,640 tonnes for potatoes, 40,326 tonnes for onions, 34,300 tonnes for tomatoes, 29,140 tonnes for bell peppers, and 17,950 tonnes for carrots.

Consequently, the decrease in national production has resulted in an increase in food imports, primarily from Argentina and Brazil. Food imports have been steadily increasing over the past two decades, from a low of US$78 million in 1999, to a high of US$573 million in 2018 (see Figure 5.9). These figures on total imports, however, severely understate the increase in food dependency given the many reported cases of contraband food imports, estimated at around US$ 100 million (*5días*, 1 February 2019).[82] For instance, the Paraguayan Poultry Farmers Association (Avipar) reported that the smuggling of chickens, eggs and live birds from Brazil constitutes an evasion of G.2 billion (roughly $290,000) per month, and that sales of national production had fallen by 40 per cent since mid-January. It is estimated that at least 2,000 kilos of

[82] https://www.5dias.com.py/?p=144520

chickens enter illegally on a monthly basis, evading tax controls, and not complying with the chain of cold requirements, putting the health of consumers at risk (*5días*, 7 February 2020).[83]

Figure 5.9 Food imports (US$ million), 1995-2018



Source: own elaboration from DGEEC (various years), *Statistical Yearbook of Paraguay*.

As a result, "food security" is largely achieved by importing products such as onions, tomatoes, and bell peppers rather than relying on national production of such stable crops. As Imas (2018) has documented, 98 per cent of domestic consumption of potatoes is imported, for bell peppers the figure is 60 per cent, onions (56%), and tomatoes (50%). The increasing reliance on food imports also has the added risk of price hikes in food prices due to currency exchanges. For example, while conducting field research I noticed a startling increase in the price of tomatoes at the supermarket (field notes 2015). As reported in the local newspaper at the time:

[83] https://www.5dias.com.py/?p=175311

> Until only a few days ago, 20 kilos of tomatoes were bought at the wholesale market in Asunción [*Mercado de Abasto*], at a price of G.35,000 or G.40,000. This weekend the same product, the same quantity, came to cost 180,000 guaranies. In the supermarkets the red fruit is priced at about G.15,000 per kilo. The tomato is a product of constant demand in Paraguay, as it is consumed throughout the year. In 2013 the country consumed, on average, about 5 million kilos each month. (*Ultima Hora*, 23 February 2015)[84]

The peasants' manioc (*mandioca*) cultivation is endangered by the government's neoliberal policies under which the state has withdrawn subsidies, credit, technical assistance, and other services to the peasant sector (Itrago 2012). Manioc is a crop that is not only important for the economic survival of the peasantry, but also has cultural and symbolic significance (Finnis et al. 2012, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the rapid expansion agribusiness production can be linked to the displacement of campesino agriculture (Riquelme and Vera 2013) that has, subsequently, compromised access to food for the rural poor—reproducing, at the national level, the very dynamics of poverty and malnutrition that GM proponents commonly propose to eradicate on a global scale. As a result of these dynamics—decreased national production, increasing dependency on food imports, and the lack of policies for food sovereignty—the current agro-export model is predicated on a paradox: in a country of 7 million with vast agrarian land and production, 25 per cent of Paraguay's population suffers from hunger (FAO 2012, *Panorama of Food Security in Latin America*, cited

[84] https://www.ultimahora.com/por-que-esta-tan-caro-el-tomate-n874813.html

in Kretschmer 2019). Indeed, malnutrition in Paraguay has augmented, rather than diminished, over the past decade. The prevalence of food inadequacy,[85] for example, rose from 29.8 per cent in 1990–92, to 33 per cent in 2011–14; while the depth of food deficit increased from 130 calories per day to 157 (FAO 2014). At the same time, data from the FAO (2014) indicate a relative and absolute increase in the overall rate of undernourished population in Paraguay, from 900,000 in people (20.2 per cent) in 1990-92 to 1.5 million people (22.3 per cent) in 2011-2013.[86] Worst still, according to a recent UNICEF report, these figures include 400,000 undernourished children (*Ultima Hora* 2015).[87] Therefore, while Paraguayan agriculture may be producing a greater share of exports of agro-commodities, its ability to feed its own people has decreased, becoming increasingly dependent on food imports (with a significant portion of contraband imports), and even increased hunger and malnutrition.

5.5 Conclusion

Like a bull in a china shop, the penetration of agribusiness capital has recast the dynamics of rural change throughout the Paraguayan countryside. Extractive capital penetrates the Paraguayan countryside through imported value-added commodities (GM seeds, agro-chemicals, machinery) which circulate through Paraguayan soil, causing unprecedented levels of environmental degradation and social exclusion for the rural majority, before being exported in commodity form as a soybean to external markets where it is further processed and fed into the global grain-feed-meat complex. All these features point toward the extractive nature of this

[85] Food inadequacy 'indicates the risk that individuals will be living on a diet that prevents them from effectively discharging an economic activity requiring significant physical effort' (FAO 2014: 38).

[86] Indeed, Paraguay has the third highest rate of undernourishment in Latin America and the Caribbean, after Haiti and Guatemala (FAO 2014: 58, Table 12.).

[87] https://www.ultimahora.com/en-paraguay-existen-400-mil-ninos-extrema-pobreza-n881621.html

rapacious model of agrarian capitalism. These dramatic changes brought on by agrarian extractivism have transformed the nature of the rural class struggle, as we shall explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Biting the Hand that Starves You: Peasant Resistance to Agrarian Extractivism

6.1 Introduction

Growing tensions between large-scale agricultural producers and agribusiness transnational corporations on the one hand, and local communities, peasant and rural organisations, and small-scale farmers and landless rural workers on the other, have become a recurring and escalating problem across many parts of Latin America. The agribusiness-led expansion of soybean cultivation in southern cone of South America has triggered powerful but uneven forces of resistance across the subcontinent. One site of particularly acute tension that has emerged in this context has been the expanding agro-extractive frontier in Paraguay, where land re-concentration and "foreignisation" have long been at the root of violent clashes (Nagel 1999; Fogel 2001; Riquelme 2003; Piñeiro 2004; Ezquerro-Cañete 2017; Palau 2020). This chapter employs an analytical framework developed by Dietz and Engels (2020) to explore the nature and character of current cycle of contention in the Paraguay countryside. Building on theoretical work from historical materialism, contentious politics and social movement studies, Dietz and Engels (2020) propose an analytical framework for scrutinising conflicts over land, comprising four dimensions: structures, institutions, agency and narratives. Rather than creating a triumphalist narrative, this chapter favours a sober assessment of the vulnerabilities and challenges of this movement. Indeed, in examining ebb and flow of the movement over time, several instances are indicated when the movement has fractured or collapsed entirely. It is argued that a fundamental weakness of agrarian social movements in Paraguay has been their inability to produce a successful challenge to the dominant authoritarian nationalist discourse of the Colorado Party.

This argument is supported by a brief discussion of the memory practices of two peasant-based social movements and one rural guerilla movement, unveiling how the phantasms of Paraguay's tragic past of national wars, civil unrest, and lack of political stability are traced over, revealing the continued allure of authoritarianism, which presents an important obstacle to the formation of emancipatory rural alternatives.

6.2 A Brief history of the campesino movement[88]

6.2.1 The peasant league movement: "nipped in the bud"

The tardy emergence of a movement representing campesino interests reflected the low level of agricultural development. The highly unequal system of land tenure created by the land sale at the end of the Triple Alliance War remained largely unaltered until the mid-1970s. However, landless labour was not a characteristic feature of the rural population. This was partly due to the fact that large-scale migration from rural areas to Argentina acted as a "safety valve" throughout the twentieth century. Between 1947 and 1973, as a consequence of the political instability prior to 1954 and then the unfavourable political climate under the Stroessner regime, more than 500,000 Paraguayans are said to have moved to Argentina, most of them to Buenos Aires (Kleinpenning and Zoomers 1991: 287; see Table 6.1).

[88] The following section is based on interviews with members of the FNC, OLT, CTCU, CONAMURI conducted in Asunción and Caazapá throughout 2015.

Table 6.1 Paraguayan-born Argentine residents by place of residence, 1869-2010

National Census	Argentina	Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area	Other Provinces
1886	3,288	–	–
1895	14,562	9.3	90.7
1914	28,049	11.2	88.8
1917	93,248	12.4	87.6
1947	155,269	13.3	86.7
1960	230,000	29.6	70.4
1995	250,450	73.3	26.7
2010	550,713	75.4	24.8

Source: del Águila (2018).

The likelihood that rural leaders would successfully revolt against the oppressive political regime was further reduced by the colonisation programme introduced in the early 1960s by the Stroessner regime which alleviated pressure for land reform in the central zone near Asunción (discussed in chapter 3). As a result of this colonisation programme, Paraguay was the only country in Latin America to register an increase in the share of the total population living in rural areas—to 67 per cent by the mid-1970s. The effect of both international and internal migration was to lessen the objective conditions for social conflict in the rural areas (Kleinpenning and Zoomers 1991; Nickson 2015).

Beginning in the early 1960s, a peasant co-operative movement arose which came to be known as the Ligas Agrarias Cristianas (LAC), other church-back peasant movements included the Juventudes Agrarias Cristianas (JAC), and the Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs), which quickly expanded throughout the country (Fogel 1986). It represented the first signs of

independent political action by the Paraguayan peasantry which had hitherto been bound by ties of traditional loyalty to one or other of the two major political parties established in the aftermath of the Triple Alliance War: the Partido Liberal and the Partido Colorado (Hicks 1971). The main objective of the LAC was to obtain better producer prices for cash crops, especially cotton, sold by its members to *acopiadores*.[89]

In January 1968 it organised the inaugural congress of its Federación Cristiana Campesina (FCC), with 500 delegates. A more radical peasant movement also emerged, during the 1960s, inspired by progressive Jesuit and Franciscan priests and lay workers. Loosely grouped together in the Federación Nacional de Ligas Agrarias Cristianas (FENALAC), this organisation emphasised the autonomy of grassroots based communities (Nickson 1989), and the role of popular education in the progress of social change, through the formation of Escuelitas Campesinas de las Ligas Agrarias Cristianas, (see Valdez 2019).[90]

By the end of the decade the LAC boasted a national membership of 10,000, more or less equally divided between the FCC and FENALAC, and organised in a network of regional leagues, *ligas*, throughout the country. The rapid growth of the LAC began to sap the traditional support which

[89] An *acopiador*, also known as *bolichero*, is an intermediary in the agricultural sector, who purchases produce from small farmers, especially cotton, and also provides them with an unofficial source of agricultural credit for the seasonal purchase of farm inputs. In turn, he sells this agricultural produce to the large-scale processing and export companies, from which he also receives credit. The *acopiador* is often also a shopkeeper, selling basic consumer goods to the small farmers. Given the absence of state-guaranteed producer prices, the scarcity of official credit schemes, the absence of strong marketing cooperatives, and the repression of the small farmer movement, the *acopiadores* have long exercised a powerful role in the rural economy of Paraguay. However, with the advent of mechanized agriculture, their influence has declined considerably in the 21st century (Nickson 2015: 30).

[90] For a short documentary on the *Escuelitas Campesinas de las Ligas Agrarias Cristianas*, see http://www.baseis.org.py/publicaciones/escuelitas-campesinas-parte-01/

large numbers of the peasantry gave to the ruling Colorado Party. This political threat was the major reason for a sharp deterioration in relations between the Stroessner regime and the Catholic Church from 1969. Mounting repression followed against the LACs—torture and imprisonment of peasant leaders, destruction of Christian communities, deportation of progressive clergy and a media campaign denouncing communist infiltration in the Catholic Church. In turn this repression led to a questioning by LAC members of the non-violent approach which had inspired them since their formation, together with a renewed interest in the radical ideas associated with the theology of liberation. Faced with a common external threat, an attempt was made to unite the two strands of the LAC movement. In August 1971 a new unitary organisation, the (KOGA) was formed to which all FENALAC bases were affiliated as were several FCC bases and various independent groups of more recent formation (Nickson 1989, 2015).

The repression of the peasant movement reached a peak in April–May 1976. The government accused the *ligas* of involvement in an embryonic peasant-student guerrilla movement, the Organización Primero de Marzo (OPM).[91] Almost all *ligas* became inoperative as over 2000 peasant members of the LAC were arrested in a series of raids throughout the country, as well as a hundred students in Asunción. Twenty peasant leaders and four students were killed in the repression, and several hundred people were detained for over 12 months. During my fieldwork, I interviewed Magui Balbuena at her home in Caaguazú about her early experience in the Juventudes Agrarias Cristianas (JAC). She recounts the impact that this wave of repression had

[91]For a history of the OPM, see, Boccia Páz (1997); for a general overview of the armed struggle against the Stroessner regime, refer to a special issue of the Paraguayan journal *Novapolis* (2004).

on the movement of resistance to the dictatorship, and its severe impact on the emerging peasant organizations:

> *Toda la oposición fue arreada prácticamente. Arreciada. Y se hizo escombro de estas organizaciones en 1976. Pero la peor parte se la llevaron las organizaciones campesinas: la Juventud Agraria Católica y las Ligas Agrarias, que tuvieron la mayor cantidad de muertos, de desaparecidos, asesinados, encarcelados, torturados, y exiliados también. Entonces fue una terrible represión que prácticamente diezmó a la organización, prácticamente la desarticuló. ¡Fue desbaratada! Entonces no había caso, fue muy criminal, fue así una represión muy grande que desató la dictadura que ~~lo~~ alcanzó ~~a~~ todo, a toda la esfera de la sociedad. Después quedó gente en la cárcel, personas inválidas, personas que fueron torturadas y después liberadas pero que siguieron enfermas o murienron al poco tiempo. Y la represión del 76 ~~le~~ alcanzó a hombres y mujeres, y a niños también. Porque varias mujeres con sus hijos estuvieron en la prisión de Emboscada cerca de Asunción donde se creó el campo de concentración para albergar a los miles de presos. Allí estuvieron más de dos mil presos políticos, mujeres, niños y hombres. Por eso es importante partir un poco de nuestra historia reciente de represión y como fueron desarticuladas las organizaciones sin poder recuperarse fácilmente el movimiento popular luego de toda esa lucha y esa represión que se ha llevado a cabo en el Paraguay* (Balbuena, personal interview 2015).

6.2.2 Rebuilding the movement in the 1980s

The demise of the LAC coincided with radical changes taking place in the agricultural sector, with the emergence of export-oriented commercial agriculture, promoted by *brasiguayos*, and the rapid integration of Paraguay into the world food chain through soybeans and meat. The resulting rapid increase in the price of land led to the growing eviction of squatters, families who had exercised customary rights over land for which they had no title. Furthermore, the deficiencies of the colonization program of the Stroessner regime and the completion of the construction of the Itaipu dam, which until then had provided work for many landless peasants, contributed to a growing problem of rural landlessness, especially in the eastern border region. During the final years of the Stroessner regime, these structural conditions combined with political and social changes would give rise to land conflicts and the rebirth of an independent peasant movement, in the eastern frontier region.

A striking example of the growing popular resistance to land evictions in the eastern border departments was the rebellion at Colonia Acaray in the department of Caaguazú in March 1980, which led to one of the most serious collisions with the army. Twenty farmers were killed and over 200 persons were arrested after discontented colonists had taken the passengers of a bus "hostage", in protest against intimidation and expulsions in the eastern frontier area. The "rebellious" colony of Acaray was subsequently invaded and placed under military control, all remaining adult males being arrested and removed to detention (Nickson, 1981, 1982; Kleinpenning and Zoomers 1991). The brutality suffered by the women and children of the community in Acaray is described in harrowing details by Balbuena:

La comunidad de dónde vinieron fue sitiada durante casi 4 meses. Unos 5 mil miembros del ejército copando el río haciendo destacamentos militares... y las casas prohibiendo las reuniones de los vecinos durante más de 3 meses… este vecino no sabía si aquel vecino que está a 50 o 100 metros vive o no vive. En cada casa había militares custodiando la familia y comieron toda la chanchería comunitaria, las gallinas, toda la mandioca, todo el maíz, todas las vaquitas que tenían, se lo comieron todito el ejército. Un desastre hubo allá en la comunidad…

…allí las mujeres fueron violadas, las niñas fueron violadas… y mira en esta casa solamente la familia, los policías se llevan a la señora más joven y a la niña de 13-14-15 años se la llevan al destacamento de ahí, la violan en fila los militares, sistemáticamente, hasta que quedae semi-muerta, y después la dejan recuperarse 15 días y la vuelven a violar. Fueron terribles esos momentos… y después ya de eso, nosotros supimos… Porque durante muchos años, las mismas mujeres no hablaron sobre los hechos que les sucedieron por temor, por vergüenza y por la falta también de... viste que las campesinas en las comunidades… se vive otra cultura otra forma de relacionarse. Entonces no es que uno cuenta nomás lo que está sufriendo, lo que le sucedió entonces.

Y muchas mujeres incluso se casaron después con compañero de los que fueron también llevados, porque en esa comunidad todos los hombres fueron llevados a la cárcel de Ciudad del Este y las mujeres y los niños fueron los que se quedaron en la comunidad, y los policías y el ejército se ensañaron con ellas y con los niños. Y

> *bueno, en esa comunidad sufrieron tanto las mujeres porque sufrieron atropellos, incluso violaciones y muchas torturas y lo más triste es que, por ejemplo, a esta familia les dicen que su marido, a quie se llevaron a la cárcel, verdad, "hace rato que murió" "tu marido ya no viene", "tu hermano ya no viene", "tu hijo mayor ya no viene", "todos están muertos"... y ninguna mujer puede comunicarse con las vecinas, sino que está totalmente aislada; imagínate vivir tres meses en esas condiciones. Y los maridos, los hijos más grandes, los hermanos… les dicen que están todos muertos, pero no... los que murieron son los que iban a Asunción, verdad, los interceptaron por el camino, pero los otros que quedan en la comunidad fueron llevados a la cárcel, no los mataron, fueron torturados, pero no murieron. Pero a cada familia les dicen: "Su hijo, su marido, están todos muertos" y además les dicen: "esa tu vecina, hace rato que se levantaron todos." O sea que fue una tortura psicológica y física. Terrible fue.* (Balbuena, personal interview, 2015)

The survivors of the LAC regrouped and emerged much strengthened and also independent of the Church in the 1980s. The *Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo* (MCP) was founded on 25 December 1980 by former members of the LAC. Balbuena, who was involved in the formation of the MCP, narrates the gradual rebuilding of the peasant movement in the following terms:

> *Culmina esa represión, pero con saldos de muertos, de asesinados, de torturados, de apresadas y apresados, y de exiliados y de desaparecidos. Así termina la redada represiva, pero queda la secuela de la represión y el movimiento popular descabezado, el movimiento popular diezmado… entonces fue muy difícil esa época.*

Y muchas compañeras y compañeros en el exilio—yo estaba también en el exilio en el 1976, volví en el 1977—y nos colocamos aquí en Caaguazú y empezamos la reorganización campesina nacional, un comité de organizaciones nosotros hemos conformado con algunos compañeros y compañeras de esta zona y después empezamos a buscar a nuestros compañeros… porque nosotros éramos luego una organización nacional antes, entonces nuestros compañeros estaban en Concepción, San Pedro, Alto Paraná, aquí en Caaguazú, en otras zonas del país, Misiones, Itapuá… entonces empezamos a rebuscar por nuestros compañeros y compañeras… quien se ha quedado después de la represión, porque la gente… hubo una migración interna terrible. Los que no pudieron cruzar la frontera por la represión de su zona se mudaron, por ejemplo, los de Paraguarí se mudaron todos hacia el monte de Alto Paraná. Parte de Paraguarí y parte de Caaguazú se fueron a meterse en el monte de San Pedro. Y empezaron la gente a organizarse en medio del monte y a formar comunidades nuevamente. Y bueno tenemos que empezar a buscar el hielo de búsqueda de nosotros compañeros y compañeras, y así vamos aglutinado nuevamente para poder reorganizarnos y fundar en 1980 el Movimiento Campesino Paraguay (MCP). Fundamos esta organización campesina de los que fueron parte de la Ligas Agraria y Parte de la Juventud Agraria Católica… de los restos que quedaban. Y empezamos a trabajar y organizar a los sintierra… y en 1984 hicimos la primera ocupación de tierra después de la bárbara represión… justamente aquí en Departamento de Caaguazú. (Balbuena, personal interview, 2015)

As a result of the introduction of commercial agriculture in the eastern border region, the number of land conflicts rose dramatically, and a growing body of landless peasants emerged for the first time in Paraguay. In July 1985, the MCP organized a meeting that attracted 5,000 landless peasants in Caaguazú, where they founded the Permanent Assembly of Peasants without Land (Asamblea Permanente de Campesinos sin Tierra) (APCT). The size of this gathering marked the re-emergence of the movement after the destruction of the LAC a decade earlier (Nickson 1988: 256). The MCP started carrying out land occupations which led again to its members being harshly repressed, imprisoned, and tortured:

> *…realizamos la otra ocupación en Alto Paraná, es la segunda ocupación. Y allí el ejército y los terratenientes, que decían que era su tierra, fueron así a masacrar prácticamente en la ocupación en pleno monte de Alto Paraná y murieron dos de nuestra organización del MCP. Murieron dos jóvenes: uno de 21 años y otro de 24 años. Fueron asesinados por los terratenientes y por miembros de la policía que estuvieron en el monte diciendo que allí había un campamento guerrillero. Y había 400 familias con niños podres—que no tenía ni zapatos, ni ropa las criaturas en pleno monte en este campamento echo de paja y árboles—dicen que son guerrilleros…que si era una organización guerrillera no iba a estar allí niños y mujeres embarazadas. Hubo un desastre, esa represión fue terrible… fueron dispersados por el monte las mujeres y los niños… corrieron todos de la balacera… y fueron llevados… no me acuerdo si era cinco o seis, siete compañeros presos, cuando eso. Fueron atados a los árboles así, y allí azotados y se les derramada agua salada… y mientras los policías y los ganaderos mataban un novillo y hacían asado*

> *y se lo comían allí, delante de los compañeros atados a los árboles y apaleados. Terrible fue esa represión, un duro golpe otra vez que estábamos empezando prácticamente la reorganización del campesinado*. (Balbuena, personal interview, 2015)

Despite this repression, land conflicts intensified in the mid-1980s. Most frontier land was by then claimed by someone, and transportation and communication networks expanded to cover much of the zone. New occupations were likely to occur on lands subject to opposing claims and where they were likely to be noticed, thus increasing the likelihood of confrontation and repression (Zarza 1988). Fogel (1986) found that in the first 9 months of 1984, 9 violent expulsions occurred, affecting 1,045 families, with 322 campesinos detained.

A significant turning point in the re-emergence of rural militancy after the demise of the LAC was the victory of landless farmers at Tavapy II, an agricultural colony in the Department of Alto Paraná, following a protracted struggle from 1983 to 1986. In 1983, the 4,000-strong community first occupied land whose ownership was claimed by a Chilean, Engelberto Engelwar. In mid-December 1986, a detachment of army and police surrounded the settlement, cutting it off from external communication. In March 1987, 300 community members traveled to Asunción where they carried out an unprecedented demonstration in front of the headquarters of the IBR. Despite positive assurances from the authorities, they were beaten up on their return and the encirclement of the colony was re-imposed. However, this action provoked a wave of public sympathy, which led to open disagreement within the leadership of the Partido Colorado over the question. On 20 May 1987, the Stroessner regime lifted the police and army cordon and decreed that the colonists

should be granted 2,300 hectares of the disputed land.[92] This decision was heralded as a major victory for the resurgent peasant movement and it encouraged a new wave of land invasions (Nickson 2015: 564).

6.2.3 End of dictatorship and the resurgence of the campesino movement

The number of land invasions escalated during the 1990s, encouraged by the country's first hesitant steps toward democracy following the overthrow of Stroessner. During the first days after the coup, hundreds of rural Paraguayans swept onto unused lands claimed by the state, the Stroessner family and its cronies, and foreign investors, to set up ramshackle huts and clear plots to grow manioc and corn. They were soon followed by thousands more. By the mid-1990s, observers and representatives of the occupants estimated that roughly 19,000 families had claimed lands totaling over 360,000 hectares (Nagel 1999: 148).

In the absence of a significant industrial proletariat, these various campesino organizations quickly solidified their position as the most important and strongest social movement challenging the state and the political elite (Fogel 2009: 54–55). Table 6.2 provides an alphabet soup of abbreviations for the various peasant organizations that mushroomed throughout the country.

[92] In May 2011, Tavapy, with a population of 20,000, was granted municipal status.

Table 6.2 Campesino organisations in Paraguay

1963	Ligas Agrarias Cristianas (LAC)
1968	Federación Nacional de Ligas Agrarias Cristianas (FENALAC)
	Federación Cristiana Campesina
1971	Coordinación Nacional de Bases Campesinas Cristianas
1980	Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo (MCP)
1982	Fundación de Coordinadora Regional de Agricultores de Itapuá (CRAI)
1983	Comisión Permanente de Familiares de Desaparecidos y Asesinados (CPFDA)
1984	Asamblea Permanente de Campesinos sin Tierra (APCT)
	Asociación de Agricultores de Alto Paraná (ASAGRAPA)
1985	Organización Nacional Campesina (ONAC)
	Coordinación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas (CMC)
1986	Coordinadora Nacional de Productores Agrícolas (CONAPA)
	Asociación Pequeños Productores Agrícolas (APPA)
	Coordinación Juvenil Campesina (CJC)
1988	Asociación Campesina de Desarrollo Integrado (ACADEI)
1989	Coordinadora Nacionalde Lucha por la Tierra y la Vivienda (CNLTV)
1991	Federación Nacional Campesina (FNC)
1993	Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinos (MCNOC)
	Organización de Lucha por la Tierra (OLT)
1994	Coordinadora Interdepartamental de Organizaciones Campesinas (CIOC)
	Unión Campesina del Norte (UCN)
1996	Organización Nacional de Aborígenes Intendentes (ONAI)
	Movimiento Paraguay Pyahurâ (MPP)
1998	Coordinadora de Productores Agrícolas de San Pedro Norte (CPA-SPN)
	Movimiento Juvenil Campesino Cristiano (MJCC)
1999	Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas e Indígenas (CONAMURI)
2002	Movimiento Agrario del Paraguay (MOAPA)
2003	Movimiento Agrario Paraguayo (MAP)
2004	Lucha por la Defensa por la Soberanía y la Vida (CDLSV)
2006	Movimiento Popular Tekojoja (MPT)
2009	Coordinador de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indígenas del Paraguay (COCIP)
2010	Liga Nacional de Carperos (LNC)
2014	Coordinadora de Trabajadores Campesinos y Urbanos (CTCU)
2016	Coordinadora Nacional Intersectorial (CNI)

Source: Adapted from Riquelme (2003); Piñero (2004); Palau (2005); Palau et al. (2017); Tamayo Belda and Mereles Pintos (2019).

In July 1991, 15 regional organizations with 7,200 members came together in the founding congress of the Federación Nacional Campesina (National Federation of Peasants, FNC)—although its origins stem from CONAPA which had been formed in 1986 (Gómez, personal interview 2015). The FNC remains the best organized of all national peasant organizations and

has demonstrated the greatest capacity for mobilization. The Coordinadora Nacional de Lucha por la Tierra y la Vivienda (CNLTV) which had formed just before the fall of the dictatorship in 1989, was renamed the Organización de Lucha por la Tierra (OLT) in 1993. Lidia Ruiz explains the significance of this change and the importance of narrowing down the organizations focus on the issue of land:

> *OLT digamos como tal, como Organización de Lucha por la Tierra se queda con ese nombre a partir de 1993, pero antes de ellas fue una Coordinadora Nacional de Lucha por la Tierra y la Vivienda (CNLTTV) que se fundó en el 89 un poco antes de la caída de la dictadura. Y abarcaba dos ejes, digamos, la lucha por la tierra y la lucha por la vivienda que era más urbana. Y a partir de que había más desafío en la lucha por la tierra se decide, digamos, quedar como organización de lucha por la tierra y tener como mayor delimitación en el trabajo*. (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

The FNC and OLT later helped establish the Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (MCNOC–Coordinating Committee of Peasant Organizations) which agglutinated over 35 different peasant organisations at the regional, departmental and district level. On 15 March 1994, the founding event of the MCNOC was a massive protest march of unprecedented scale through Asunción to demand a reform of the government's agrarian policy. Congregating close to 40,000 people, the march represented the first national mobilisation by peasant organisations that had previously articulated their demands only at the local or regional level. Each year thereafter, peasant organisations have held a massive protest march in the capital to

present their demands in a public show of their strength in numbers (Levy 2013: 36–37). In 1998, however, leadership rivalries and ideological differences resulted in the FNC splitting from the MCNOC (Piñeiro 2004: 130):

> *Tenemos mucha experiencia de alianza y de rompimiento de alianza en nuestro país. Nosotros, desde la FNC hemos ¿incursado? muchísimo la construcción de una instancia de coordinación de todas las organizaciones nacionales, departamentales. La MCNOC fue parte de esa experiencia, después en el 98 se rompió prácticamente la MCNOC por unas razones… en el 98 en Paraguay ganó otra vez las elecciones generales el ¿cuadrado? que estaba con Lino Oviedo, un militar golpista, autoritario con una línea más fascista… y ahí nosotros decíamos que tenemos que derrotar otra vez al fascismo, tenemos que defender las libertades públicas y eso vamos a hacer en la ruta con movilización… y ahí había diferencia de pensamiento en las organizaciones. Prácticamente en ese proceso se rompió la MCNOC con esa política.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

Before delving deeper into the movement's agendas and aims, strategies and forms of collective actions, it is important to reflect on the internal disputes within and between the various peasant organizations. Ultimately, any attempt at building and consolidating a large social movement requires a narrative of "simplification", often privileging unity *over* diversity. Any "engaged research" recognizes the importance of this political task, and the present study is deeply sympathetic to this imperative. Nevertheless, as Edelman and Borras (2016: 40) rightly stress, it is not productive, politically, and analytically, to *over*-privilege unity at the expense of not seeing

diversity or acknowledging its roots and implications. As an "engaged scholar", this is not purely an academic matter, since it is easy for scholars to be "movement hecklers" from a distance (Edelman and Borras 2016: 40). I agree with Edelman and Borras (2016) that acknowledging significant internal differentiation in a movement facilitates not only a better grasp of critical political issues, such as strategic alliances, but also of internal organisational struggles for unity in the face of differences (Edelman and Borras 2016: 40). It is in this spirit that I briefly sketch my ideas in the following section on the Paraguayan campesino.

6.3 Class, identity, and ideological differences within the campesino movement

As other scholars in the field of peasant studies have noted, activists tend to project an overly coherent picture of their movements and to overstate their support, while in reality many peasant organizations are often wracked by factionalism, with leaders sometimes using them as springboards for their own individual upward mobility (Landsberger and Hewitt 1970; Edelman and Borras 2016). This raises several questions regarding the leadership dynamics of these organizations. Such dynamics have been a constant feature of the campesino movement in Paraguay, which has been plagued by infighting and divisions. As the Uruguayan rural sociologist Diego Piñeiro (2004: chap. 3) puts it in the title of his chapter on the Paraguayan peasant movement, "unity is an arduous path" [*la unidad es un camino trabajoso*]—one that has rarely been achieved, and is still pending consolidation in Paraguay.

Many observers have argued that the lack of a single body representing the peasantry has more to do with personal rivalries and competition for mass support and resources among its leaders than ideological and programmatic differences (e.g. Riquelme 2003; Palau 2005; Nickson 2010). A

study analysing the structure of ONAC, FNC and MCNOC, concluded that while these organizations had an ample base of support, this "often contrasts with the elitist ways of exercising power by leaders" (Mora 2006). However, it is also true that more substantive divisions coincide with and reinforce personal rivalries. As Ramón Fogel (1997: 100) explains:

> Ideological differences contributed to the fragmentation of groups representing the peasantry. By the end of 1992, 70,000 peasants belonged to 753 grassroots organisations, which were divided into 53 regional organisations which, in turn, were affiliated to ten different national organisations. Regional and national organisations were distinguished from each other according to the emphasis that they placed on class, militancy and Christianity.

The ideological persuasions of the movement's leaders vary from those coming from the communist party-based framework, to those of the syndicalist tradition, from those of broadly liberal provenance to those influenced by Liberation Theology. For example, "the antiestablishment militancy of the FNC is largely a product of 1980s underground organizing, which adopted a hardened Marxist stance in the face of its total exclusion from public politics" (Hetherington 2011: 83). Thus, ideological differences and conflicts over leadership have contributed to the fragmentation of the groups representing the peasantry. At the same time, regional differences in political conditions and land-tenure structure encourage the use of different tactics by campesino leaders. These differences are compounded by the different base structures possessed by campesino organisations (Setrini 2010: 30).

As Edelman and Borras (2016) rightly stress, it is impossible to understand the politics of rural social movements without examining their base or constituencies in particular social classes—e.g. commercial farmers, rich peasants, small peasants, or landless labourers—as well as the class alliances that may exist within agrarian organizations. Indeed, recent critiques of the master framework within many food sovereignty movements—"unity in diversity"—have highlighted "the difficulty of representing all classes of peasantry within the same movement" (Henderson 2018: 7). Within this context, "class dynamics have been, and remain, a significant factor in shaping peasant organization struggles. Internal class contradictions constantly threaten unity as a result of ongoing processes of class differentiation" (Henderson 2018: 7). At the same time, while class is a fundamental category of analysis for agrarian politics, it is essential to understand how it intersects with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, generation, nationality, and religion (Edelman and Borras 2016: 7). I now turn to looking at the Paraguayan campesino movement from these perspectives.

The experience of the Paraguayan campesino movement is rich and complex, as reflected in even a brief survey of the large scholarly and activist literature on peasant studies, including a special issues of the Paraguayan journal *Novapolis* on "The Agrarian Question and the Campesino Movement in Paraguay"—with contributions from Palau (2003), Galeano (2003), Morínigo (2003), Parra and Soare (2003)—and several other works on forms of peasant resistance and land conflicts (Fogel 2001, 2006; Riquelme 2003; Piñero 2004; Palau 2005; Tamayo Belda and Mereles Pintos 2019). The social base of the various peasant organizations is relatively homogenous, consisting predominantly of landless and land-poor rural workers, peasant based

on conquered settlements, and smallholder producers.[93] While there may well be other social groups and classes in the countryside that belong to the movement, they arguably have less of a voice within the movement and are less significant in terms of its mass base. This has important implications for how the movement frames issues and campaigns and builds alliances with other working-class movements (these points are developed further in the next section).

Class intersects with other social identities, most importantly in the Paraguayan case, ethnicity, gender, and nationalism. In Paraguay, the questions of social liberation and the rural struggle are strongly infused with a revindication of ethnic, linguistic, cultural and even national claims (Petras 1997). A nationalist orientation has long been visible within the campesino movements. As Beverly Nagel explains, this is partly a consequence of the repression suffered by peasant organisations during the Stroessner regime: "Since class-based criticism could not be voiced, nationalist appeal provided the only real space for objections" (Nagel 1999: 157). This nationalist discourse is particularly evident near the border with Brazil where native Paraguayans feel aggrieved of their dispossession amidst land takeover by Brazilians and "brasiguayos" (a pejorative label amalgamated from the Spanish words for "Brazilian" and "Paraguayan" used to describe Brazilian-born naturalised Paraguayans or Paraguayans of Brazilian descent).[94] The

[93] What is missing from the literature is a recent, systematic sociological analysis of the social base and class composition of the many peasant organisations across Paraguay engaged at some level or in some form of the class struggle has not recently been recently conduced. Noticeable exceptions include Fogel's (2012) study into the *carperos* movement, a spontaneous movement that emerged during the Lugo administration.

[94] The use of the term '*Brasiguayos*' has been subject to particular critique for its implied dichotomy between wealthy Brazilian agriculturalists devoted to soybean production on the one hand, and impoverished and marginalised Paraguayan small-scale farmers on the other. In reality, "the majority of Brazilian immigrants in Paraguay are small-scale farmers who, like many of their impoverished Paraguayan neighbours, have faced constant marginalization" (Blanc 2015: 145).

arguments and the rhetoric used are decidedly nationalist, with obvious parallels to past Brazilian invasions (discussed further below).

This nationalist rhetoric is only emphasised by the country's linguistic distinctiveness. Paraguay is the only country in Latin America where a majority of the population speaks an indigenous language, Guaraní, despite the fact that most do not self-identify as indigenous.[95] According to the 2002 census, Guaraní is preferred by 59 per cent of the households compared with 35.8 per cent that preferred Spanish (DGEEC 2004). In rural areas, Guaraní remained by far the predominant language, preferred by 82.5 per cent of the population. As a result, there has been a tendency—not unbroken or free of contradictions—for the Guaraní ethno-linguistic composition of the Paraguayan peasant movements to stand in for as an analogue class (Fogel 1997; Petras 1997: 21).

There are still indigenous communities of different ethnicities that are organized and in part also recognize themselves as campesinos, some of which are represented in the National Organization of Independent Aborigines (ONAI). Many of these indigenous groups underscore that land has a multidimensional character, particularly for defending their cultural identity. Land is an essential aspect of the world view of the Guarani and Kaiowá indigenous population. For example, the Guarani and Kaiowá feel that they belong to the land, as encapsulated in the term *Tekohá*, used to refer to their territory:

[95] Paraguay has a largely homogenous *mestizo* (mixed race) population. The 2012 census numbered the indigenous population at 117,150 (DGEEC 2013), equivalent to roughly 2 per cent of the national population.

> *Tekohá* goes beyond a mere description of a piece of land. The prefix *teko-* represents a series of norms and customs of the community, while the suffix *-ha* has a connotation of place. *Tekohá* is the physical place—including land, jungle, fields, watercourses, plants and remedies—where the way of life of the Guarani and Kaiowá indigenous peoples develops. The land is an extension of themselves and their source of life. In their own words, 'the land is them, and they are the land.'[96]

They seek historical reparation through laws that would permit them to recuperate the lands that belong to their ancestors (see Correia 2018, 2019).

In regard to the gender dimensions of the movement, we should begin by acknowledging that, historically, the Paraguayan countryside has tended to be notoriously patriarchal. In 1985, the MCP promoted a separate women's organization called the Coordinación de Mujeres Campesinas (CMC), which was formed under the leadership of Magui Balbuena who was introduced early. Reflecting on the origins and challenges of organizing for greater gender equality in the 1980s, she recounts:

> *Y en 1985 vemos de la necesidad de la participación de las mujeres también en igualdad de condiciones con los varones, porque prácticamente en la asamblea si venían 600 personas de eso diez eran mujeres. Todo hombre y los hombres... Fue interesante esa época, como estamos ahora, verdad. Hay un fuerte patriarcado y machismo todavía en nuestra sociedad, pero pensando en 1984-85-86 como el*

[96] https://www.fian.org/en/struggle/tekoha-is-life

> *machismo era mucho más fuerte y cuando empezaba había mujeres líderes naturales de la comunidad, líderes de la iglesia, que venía a la asamblea y cuando las mujeres se levantaban a hablar, a decir algunas palabras, se levantaba otro hombre hacia allá y decía: "Coordinador haga callar a esa mujer. Lo que dicen las mujeres no sirve, no vale nada. Por favor, hágale callar a esa señora que está hablando. Está hablando todo de balde." Así era.* (Balbuena personal interview 2015)

In another interview with Lidia Ruiz (leader of the OLT), she also discusses the work that has been done to strengthen women's participation and empowerment within the movement:

> *Se vio la necesidad de hablar y de trabajar la participación de las mujeres. Porque las mujeres están en todos los espacios: en la lucha por la tierra, en ocupación está, en movilización esta. Generalmente, en las ocupaciones son las que resisten mientras los varones van y trabajan para poder sostener, porque en una ocupación, generalmente, no hay comida suficiente, entonces... o en la campamento sin tierra, y a partir de ahí veíamos que bueno, la mujer participaba en todo pero no hablaba mucho, no estaba en las instancias de decisión y entonces la organización agarró que era necesario fortalecer la participación de las mujeres y sobre todo el empoderamiento de ellas para que pudieran asumir tareas organizativas donde se toman decisiones. Entonces trabajamos con comités de mujeres.* (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

The continued marginalization of gender issues within the mainstream campesino movement led to the formation of the National Coordination of Rural and Indigenous Women (CONAMURI) in 1999, with the objective to "to make visible the peasant and indigenous women who are part of society, who are citizens, who are producers, and who have rights in this country and who are the most discriminated against, exploited—doubly exploited—and oppressed sector of Paraguayan society" (Balbuena, personal interview 2015). This organisation brings together local rural and indigenous women workers' organizations proposing alternative development projects to end class, ethnic and gender poverty, exclusion, and discrimination. This organization is a member of the Via Campesina international movement, which also vindicates agrarian reform. Diana Viveros, member of CONAMURI, places emphasis on the gendered dimension of any such reform: "A comprehensive agrarian reform must ensure equality, avoid any type of discrimination based on gender or ethnicity, and give priority to the most disadvantaged groups for the distribution of land, recognizing women as subjects of rights and obligations" (Viveros 2012: 99). CONAMURI also has ties with the urban women's movement, collaborating on issues such as women's reproductive rights and domestic violence (Levy 2013: 36–37).

6.4 Agenda and aims

By the mid-1990s, the political focus of the peasant movement had begun to shift from issues of producer prices to agrarian reform. The new organizations that emerged during this period derived their principal support from the increasing number of land-hungry families. Consequently, the movement has always framed the land issues as a struggle against *latifundio*:

> *Uno de los ejes principal de lucha desde el surgimiento de la Federación Nacional Campesina es la lucha por la tierra. El latifundio es uno de los problemas centrales de Paraguay y en ese sentido el programa de lucha de la FNC es la reforma agraria. Y los primeros años, centralmente la lucha era la por la reforma agraria, ocupaciones de latifundio, la exigencia a las instituciones del Estado en relación al desarrollo de los asentamientos que se iban conquistando de poco a poco. La defensa de la producción que tienen los pequeños productores… con el planteo al Ministerio de Agricultura (MAG) en base a apoyo técnico, crédito para el desarrollo de la producción agrícola… [estas] son las reivindicaciones históricas de la FNC.* (Gómez personal interview 2015)

Agrarian reform has become the overarching master frame of the movement's land campaign. The FNC demands the redistribution of large private holdings to landless and land-poor peasants in order to create self-sufficient agricultural communities. At the same time, the FNC warns against projecting the struggles for land as an exclusive need of peasants. Over time, it evolved to underscore the need to frame the struggle within a solution to the problem of the wider society, and thus framing the need for broader coalitions:

> *Después ya en el año 98, nosotros hemos desarrollado un gran debate nacional con diferentes sectores de la sociedad incluyendo a profesionales, intelectuales, partidos políticos, donde hemos colocado en el debate el problema agrario en nuestro país. Y como conclusión de los debates con los diferentes sectores de la sociedad, hemos concluido nosotros en un programa que nosotros lo llamamos "propuesta de*

> *reactivación de la producción agrícola y el desarrollo industrial" como una propuesta de desarrollo nacional, no precisamente para el campesino, sino que para el país. Y esa propuesta incluye la necesidad de la reforma agraria, la necesidad del desarrollo de la producción agrícola en mano de los pequeños y medianos productores, que históricamente viene produciendo fundamentalmente alimento para la población—variedades de alimentos—y materia prima industrializable en nuestro país. Y ligado a eso, el desarrollo industrial como salida a dar ocupación a mano de obra en la ciudad, dar valor agregado a la materia prima, y sobre todo... en la perspectiva de satisfacer la demanda interna que tiene nuestro país de producto estratégico para garantizar el desarrollo nacional. Y a partir de ahí, a partir de ese planteamiento… nosotros consideramos que pasar de las reivindicaciones sectoriales a reivindicaciones más sobre desarrollo nacional.* (Gómez personal interview 2015)

The FNC stresses the importance of access to land for small family farmers to support livelihoods and society's interest at large, as well as the need for the integration of agrarian reform into the broader national-development strategy. For the OLT, agrarian reform must be combined with state support for production and marketing networks that would be controlled by small family farmers.

> *Nosotros hablamos de que no basta con la distribución de tierra nomás. En primer lugar… tiene que haber distribución de tierras y también democratización de la tierra. Entonces nosotros hablamos de que hay que democratizar la tierra en el país,*

además de distribuir a las familias que necesitan. Pero además de eso, tiene que haber toda una política de Estado para la agricultura campesina para garantizar los derechos básicos, porque no sirve de nada que el gobierno entregue una tierra sin acceso: no hay camino, no hay electrificación, no hay agua potable, o sea, las familias se terminan cansado y salen nuevamente de ahí porque no tienen forma de sobrevivir tampoco. Entonces nosotros decimos: si vamos a hacer reforma agraria necesitamos ver esta cuestión.

También ver la agricultura campesina, la comercialización, el mercado, porque acá hay un problema grave que es que la agricultura campesina, que generalmente es familiar también, y que es la que produce comida, no tiene salida, no tiene mercado. Primero, no tenemos camino, no puede ni entrar ni un tercero a comprar. Hay puentes en situaciones que se caen. Segundo, los precios no están controlados por el Estado, entonces el que compra lo hace a precio ínfimo y trae el producto a Asunción y lo vende con un beneficio claro. La mandioca es una prueba de ello: la mandioca en mi asentamiento se vende a 100 guaraníes el kilo y acá en Asunción está 2000-2500 guaraníes el kilo. Entonces hay un grupo que se quedó con una muy grande cantidad de ganancia, que no es el productor. Entonces no es rentable. No es rentable y así pasa con las demás producciones verdad. Entonces tiene que haber una política de Estado que garantice la agricultura campesina y sobre todo garantice esa agricultura que es la comida de la gente. Porque en Paraguay la agricultura campesina es la que provee el 70% de la comida a nivel nacional. Y conste que sería la que provee el 90% si no hubiera un Estado tan corrupto y no se

> *aceptaran los contrabandos, porque los grandes supermercados traen contrabando de Argentina y de Brasil, por ejemplo, en cebolla, papa, tomate... y hay también producción nacional, pero como el contrabando no paga impuesto, compran a un precio y están cruzando, no hay control, entonces es lo que, digamos, no contribuye a la economía campesina. Y son cuestiones que el Estado tiene que revisar y rever.* (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

These issues all align with well established frameworks for agrarian reforms to be successful and truly pro-poor. The "tripod" framework, for instance, highlights the need for such reforms to be built on three pillars, namely "peasant-initiated", "livelihood-creating/enhancing", and "state-supported" (see Akram-Lodhi et al. 2007). Sometimes, a fourth pillar is included—integration of agrarian reform into the broader national development strategy—which is predominantly emphasized by the FNC.

6.5 Alliances and the issues of autonomy

Another point about the FNC is that it has a policy of not accepting financial support from the state or international nongovernmental organizations (Nickson 2015: 532). It is politically autonomous of any electoral and/or sectarian left parties. It is largely engaged in direct action rather than the electoral process. Increasingly, some militant peasant organisations are calling on supporters to express their contempt for the "bourgeois parliamentary system" with blank votes.

> *Nosotros venimos debatiendo el tema electoral con la gente y sobre todo la manipulación que hacen los partidos tradicionales en relación a la necesidad de la*

> *participación política del pueblo. Porque, los partidos tradicionales, incluidos algunos sectores de izquierda electoralista, ellos reducen la participación política del pueblo solamente al tema electoral. Y nosotros consideramos que el pueblo tiene que ir participando permanentemente en cuestiones políticas, no reducirse sólo al tema electoral. Y en la última elección [2015] nosotros habíamos participado en la contienda electoral, nosotros llamamos al voto protesta—votar protestando—y técnicamente es voto nulo, porque en los boletines de voto se ponen "yo voto por reforma agraria", "yo voto por educación", "yo voto por salud", y técnicamente es voto nulo… es una forma de empezar nuestra protesta, y sobre eso generar debate en la sociedad.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

A rough estimate of the level of support for this form of electoral protest can be gauged by combing the number of invalid and wasted votes. If all wasted/invalid votes came from this source, the past three elections (2008, 2013, 2018) would reveal support figures of 66,303 (38,485 wasted votes, 27,818 invalid votes), 131,703 (72,066 wasted votes, 59,637 invalid votes), and 134,548, respectively.[97] As Gómez continues explaining:

> *Nosotros creemos que, realmente para que el pueblo elija a sus representantes, se tienen que transformar muchas cosas en el ámbito de la justicia electoral. Porque la justica electoral está actualmente en manos prácticamente del Partido Colorado, y toda la mafia se dirige desde la justicia electoral. Además, se utilizan la miseria del pueblo en los momentos electorales, se compran las cédulas, se compran los votos.*

[97] Data from the Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral (TSJE).

> *Son una forma de manipulación de la participación de la gente. Realmente la gente no decide, no elije a sus representantes, y mucho menos se discute un programa de gobierno para el pueblo. Solamente se pone en el debate quien es el candidato que tiene mayor presencia política… todos los debates se centran en los candidatos, no en un debate sobre un programa de desarrollo para el país, sobre un programa de gobierno. Nosotros allí, en la coyuntura electoral colocamos el debate sobre la necesidad de un programa de gobierno que realmente nos lleve a desarrollar políticas para el desarrollo de nuestro país.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

6.6 Strategies and forms of collective action

While the strategies of the movement may have differed—particularly, in the way they relate to the power of the state and alliances with political parties—their forms of mobilization have been very similar: massive demonstrations, marches, land invasions, and roadblocks have, since the early 1990s, been campesinos' primary extrajudicial tool for affecting government policy (Nagel 2005). Ever since the inaugural MCNOC march in 1994, the FNC has a carried out an annual march in Asunción thereafter to present their demands in a public show of their strength in numbers. This year, the FNC was forced to cancel what would have been its 27th consecutive annual march through the capital—which had been planned for 26–27 March 2020—due to the COVID-19 pandemic (*ABC Color*, 16 March 2020).[98]

6.6.1 National Marches

[98] https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2020/03/16/fnc-pospone-marcha-prevista-para-el-26-de-marzo-ante-medidas-contra-el-coronavirus/

Since democratization, campesino organizations make up the country's largest organized social group and one of the few groups capable of mobilizing a large number of supporters at key moments in order to extract benefits and exert pressure on the state. The intervention of organized campesino groups has been decisive in at least two major political junctures since democratization.

These collective actions, including synergistic alliances with other sectors, can be observed throughout recent historical events such as the so-called *Marzo Paraguayo* in 1999 when the peasant movement interlaced with students protests. This was the first of the political junctures. Regular peasant protests had been scheduled for March of that year, when the assassination of Vice-President Luis Argaña triggered a political crisis. In exchange for the forgiveness of public-sector loans made to their members, the FNC joined student-led opposition to a coup attempt by General Lino Oviedo. Campesino leaders (along with student groups) were able to mobilize large enough numbers to defend constitutional government. As Setrini points out however, "the nature of this exchange was plainly clientelistic: political support for the incumbent government in exchange for debt forgiveness. Furthermore, leaders secured material benefits for their followers by betraying the political preferences of their bases, among which were many Oviedo supporters" (Setrini, 2010: 29; also see Hetherington, 2011: 47–56).

A second key intervention occurred in June 2002, when the FNC, ONAC, and MCNOC provided the backbone of the *Congreso Democrático del Pueblo* (Democratic Congress of the People, CDP), which organised a large-scale demonstration in Asunción that forced the government to make a *volte-face* on the privatization of the state-run telecoms operator Compañía Paraguaya de

Comunicaciones (Copaco).[99] During this period, the campesino movement reached unprecedented levels of unity and cohesion as the FNC and MCNOC were reunited within the CDP. The catalyst for their unity was their opposition to neoliberalism, which saw as a main source of impoverishment and marginalization of peasant families, although unity would prove temporary as old rivalries and disputes between the FNC and MCNO resurfaced:

> *En el 2002 se logró otra vez la unidad de todos los sectores ya en el Congreso Democrático del Pueblo. Con esa alianza se logró parrar la privatización de la empresa pública que estado en ese proceso. Posteriormente vinieron las elecciones generales y se rompió otra vez allí la alianza porque un sector se fue al tema electoral, otro sector no quería participar en las elecciones.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

In 2004, a new coordinating body called the Frente Nacional por la Defensa de la Soberanía y la Vida (National Front for the Defense of Sovereignty and Life) brought together a number of campesino groups (primarily the MCNOC and the MAP) with urban labour unions, and began a series of three national days of action in August, September, and November (Hetherington 2011: 83–84). In 2014–15 the CDP was reconstituted against public–private partnership being proposed by President Cartes (2013–2018) which was the main point of contestation in the country during the time I was conducting fieldwork.

[99] Ironically, at the time, Paraguay had one of the lowest landline telecom coverage in Latin America and rural families suffer the most from this low coverage (Nickson 2010: 272).

> *Hasta ahora, la alianza es sobre temas concretos, por ejemplo, tenemos 4 puntos concretos: luchar por la derogación de la ley de Alianza público-privada; luchar por la derogación de la ley de militarización, que es una modificatoria a la ley de defensa para que los militares salgan a hacer cuestiones internas en nuestro país; el tema de la lucha por la tierra; el trabajo, el empleo. Son cuatro puntos de acuerdo, y sobre esos cuatro puntos de acuerdo estamos llevando adelante movilizaciones de lucha. Este primero de mayo [2015] vamos a hacer un acto de movilización acá en la capital. Desde el 18 de mayo, vamos a hacer una lucha prolongada que nosotros convocamos, vamos a salir el 18 no sabemos hasta cuando, para hacer movilizaciones y cortes de ruta en diferentes partes y departamentos del país, por estos 4 puntos. Hasta allí estamos llegando todavía con nuestra alianza.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

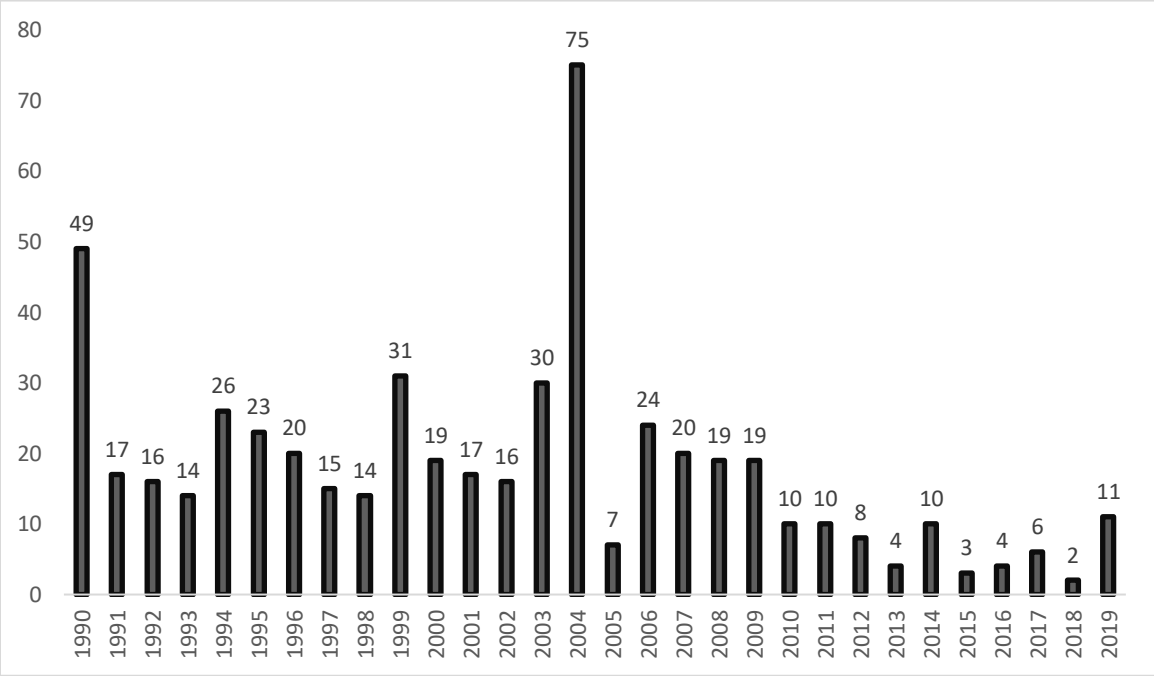
Although this time round, the movement was not able to halt this law, as it had done 12 years earlier.

6.6.2 Land Occupations

Land occupations remain the most important strategy for gaining access to land: "It is important to understand that in Paraguay access to land does not pass through a political decision… it is [achieved] through a struggle and a conquest" [*lucha y conquista*] (Ruiz, personal interview 2015). Table 6.1 depicts the ebb and flow of land occupations since the transition to democracy. Scholars of social movements have long recognized that movements are affected by "protest cycles", which are composed of an ascending phase, a peak, and a declining phase (Della Porta

2013). The 1990s were clearly the most dynamic period, with an apex being reached in 2004. The 2012 massacre in Curuguaty appears to have signaled the start of the declining phases. At the same time, there were clearly internal waves, particularly during the 1990s and early 2000s, with various peaks and falls recurring every 4–5 years, probably in line with the start of each new government owing to the heightened hope for success. Indeed, the second year of each of the last four elected regimes—e.g. Frutos (2004), Lugo (2009), Cartes (2014), Benítez (2019)—appears to have coincided with a cyclical peak.

Figure 6.1 Land occupations in Paraguay, 1990–2019



Source: CDE (2007), Base-IS (2019).

According to Riquelme (2015), between 1989 and 2015, over 500,000 hectares of land were "conquered" by peasant organizations, allowing for the formation of new colonies (*colonias*) in their place. The majority of these lands are connected to the actions of the organized peasant organizations. Over the course of the democratic transition, the FNC has managed to reclaim

close to 300,000 hectares of land, redistributed into 40 encampments (*asentamientos*) on which over 14,000 households—about 60 thousand people—are settled (Zibechi 2014; Base-IS 2017).[100] Not all these lands were the result of organized taking; two other sources exist: old campesino settlements and spontaneous gains, whose occupants went to the organization after the conquest of the land or in the process of taking it, in pursuit of knowledge and support. For this reason, the FNC differentiate between occupations (*ocupación*), settlements (*asentamientos*), and communities (*comunidades*). Occupations are seized lands whose ownership is disputed with landowners and the state. They have not secured stability and are often persecuted. Settlements are colonies that are in the process of being legally recognized. Communities are lands adjudicated and recognized by the state long ago. The FNC only occupies properties over 3,000 hectares, their target being large estates. In general, settlements distribute some 10 hectares to each family, where they produce subsistence crops, and leave a part for community use. Internally, they are organized by committees of families plus one director elected by an assembly of two representatives per committee, two young people, and two women. There is usually a store, a school, and an infirmary in the center of each settlement. After three or four years, they produce enough to sustain themselves and have surplus to sell in the market. The FNC supports its communities in marketing their produce directly to urban consumers through the National Production Fair (Feria Naciones de Producción) in Asunción, where a lot of settlement products are sold (Zibechi 2014).[101]

[100] http://www.baseis.org.py/la-fnc-conquisto-cerca-de-300-mil-hectareas-de-tierra/

[101] Produce sold includes: fresh cheese, chicken, and eggs, kidney beans, cassava, corn, pork, chipá, tomato, starch, honey, peanut, and horticultural products like lettuce, onions, parsley and pepper.

Between 1993 and 2015, the OLT resettled some 11,100 families on some 52,000 hectares of land, predominantly in the departments of Itapúa, San Pedro, and Caazapá. In 2016, the organization was engaged in 18 land occupations, which, if conquered, could resettle a further 1,000 landless peasants on some 10,000 hectares of land. Throughout this process, 19 OLT activists were killed in the struggle for land (BASE IS 2016):[102]

> *Hemos tenido nuestros muertos en la lucha por la tierra, casi toda la historia de los asentamientos tiene un muerto por lo menos… un mártir en ese sentido. También haber pasado por violencia en el marco de desalojos, verdad, que son ejercidos por instituciones del Estado que deberían de estar velando por nuestros derechos, sin embargo, estaban respondiendo directamente a los intereses de empresas privadas, y acudían a hacer los desalojos y las represiones. Igualmente, si había movilizaciones, como cortes de ruta, o como ir a Asunción para peticionar esto en forma de movilización, también eran reprimidas. Entonces tenemos como mártires. Tenemos muchos compañeros y compañeras que pasaron por las cárceles que hasta hoy día también tenemos imputados e imputadas, verdad, en la lucha por tierra, varones y mujeres. Entonces son digamos las consecuencias y lo que nos muestra todavía la desigualdad que hay en el tema del acceso a la Tierra en el país.*

> *Mi asentamiento* [a settlement in the town of Capiíbary in the San Pedro department] *fue conquistado. Se hizo una ocupación… en 1990 y en el 94 recién nosotros tuvimos la decisión del Estado de las compras de esas tierras, eran tierras del Estado.*

[102] http://www.baseis.org.py/desde-1993-la-olt-conquisto-alrededor-de-52-mil-hectareas-para-familias-campesinas/

> *Tuvimos dos desalojos. También en ese proceso le mataron a un compañero e hirieron a otro. Eran gemelos, uno murió y el otro sobrevivió… y también una niña que murió durante el desalojo por el susto. Son las historias que tenemos así en casi todos los asentamientos.* (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

Many of these conquered territories take on the names of their "martyrs"—such as Regina Marecos, Mariano Díaz, Felipe Osorio, Huber Duré, Crescencio González, Sebastián Larrosa—who have been those murdered in the struggle for land (Areco 2019).

Table 6.3 charts the geographic locations of the land occupations, with the size of the land occupied and the number of participants, over the past ten-years (2008–2018). Of the 95 land occupations recorded during this period, one-third (32) occurred in the northern department of San Pedro. The eastern bordering departments of Canindeyú and Alto Paraná recorded 14 occupations each. Nine and five occupations were carried out in Caaguazú and Itapúa, respectively. Put more starkly, the five most conflictive departments are also the five most *sojero* departments.[103] In total, some 19,455 peasant families occupied 212,482 hectares of land during this period.

[103]In order of land area dedicated to soybean production: Alto Paraná (976,851 ha), Canindeyú (685,851 ha), Itapúa (636,553 ha), Caaguazú (469,291 ha), and San Pedro (343,207) (MAG 2019).

Table 6.3 Land occupations by department, 2008–2018

	Cases	Landholding (ha)	Area occupied (ha)	No. of occupants
Concepción	7	9,852	24,893	1,345
San Pedro	32	269,014	59,759	5,740
Cordillera	2	1,972	--	350
Caaguazú	9	54,028	13,540	1,620
Caazapá	4	27,751	1,000	245
Itapúa	5	15,400	9,800	2,050
Misiones	4	6,460	4,810	575
Paraguarí	1	600	310	100
Alto Paraná	14	787,418	59,768	2,210
Canindeyú	14	94,282	24,602	2,720
Presidente Hayes	2	14,000	14,000	2,500
Alto Paraguay	1	--	--	--
Total	95	1,280,777	212,482	19,455

Source: Palau (2019b).

Only 10 out of the 95 occupations resulted in favourable outcomes for the peasantry, as a total of 14,249 hectares were occupied by 3,598 peasant families. The successful conquests occurred in San Pedro (5), Concepción (2), Alto Paraná (2) and Presidente Hayes (1). The majority took place under the Lugo administration. Of the remaining occupations, 11 cases are ongoing, continuing resistance in unfavourable contexts, while the rest concluded in dispossession or were deactivated by other mechanisms. Over this period, 2008–2019, 1,326 people have been charged and 862 have been detained in the context of land struggles. As important as these conquests are for peasants and indigenous peoples, they are still relatively small when compared with the wider problem of land concentration in the country.

Almost half of the occupations where carried out by local commissions—both neighbourhood and landless—with no ties to organizations with a longer history in the land struggles and greater capacity for resistance. Despite this, these local commissions find themselves leading the charge for land in the country. National level organization, for their part, carried out almost one-third of the identified occupations, divided as follows: the OLT and MCP carried out 8 each; the Liga Nacional de Carperos (LNC) carried out 7; while the MCNOC, CONAMURI, FNC, and Unión Campesina Nacional (UCN) carried out one occupation each during this period. Five occupation where carried out by indigenous communities, revindicating their ancestral lands. This data perhaps reveals, or at least should cause us to reflect on, a point raised by Edelman and Borras: that privileging formally constituted organizations—as done in this chapter—may be "limiting, since it tends to render invisible political activity that occurs outside of their bonds and to obscure the reality that few social movements organise more than a minority of the constituencies it claims to represent" (Edelman and Borras 2016: 8).

In sum, during the 1990s and early 2000s, when the peasant organizations were at their strongest, the movement managed to extract significant concession from the government. These tactics were successful in pressuring the government to redistribute land or increase cotton subsides on several occasions in 1989 and 1990, and then again in 1999 (during the *Marzo Paraguayo*) and 2002 (Kretschmer et al. 2019). The number of land occupations, however, have dropped dramatically in recent years, in large part due to the increasing levels of repression and criminalization of the land struggle:

> *Desde la fiscalía y el poder judicial se empieza a imputar a la gente: imputaciones, orden de detenciones, cada vez más se va agravando la situación de las comunidades y eso también ha generado para la Federación Nacional Campesina de tomar otra medida de fuerza, otra medida de acción frente a esa situación de criminalización, de persecución, de represión, que sufren los compañeros pequeños productores en diferentes comunidades, en los diferentes departamentos del país. Actualmente nosotros tenemos más de 200 compañeros y compañeras imputados, alguno con orden de detención otro con medida sustitutiva. Otro con un juicio oral que van a llegar. Así que hay un frente de lucha y de movilización permanente contra la criminalización y la persecución de los compañeros que están sufriendo a raíz del avance del modelo de la producción de soja.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

> *En estos 20 años las leyes de represión en el país se han perfeccionado y aumentado. Hoy en día tenemos compañeros y compañeras que son imputados de asociación criminal, de no solamente ya invasión de inmueble, sino que como 4 tipificaciones ya. Y antes era solamente invasión de inmueble. Entonces las leyes que se hicieron y también las instituciones de represión, digamos, han cambiado respecto a la gente que hace lucha por la tierra. Y son nuevos desafíos que nos llaman de verdad. ¿Cómo superar todo eso?* (Ruiz, personal interview 2015)

At the same time, concerns over the increasing presence of drug trafficking and armed groups in rural areas are making land occupations increasingly less viable. In 2015, I accompanied Ester

Leiva, leader of the Coordinadora de Trabajadores Campesinos y Urbanos (CTCU), to a peasant settlement in the town of San Pedro del Paraná (department of Itapúa), where the community was planning a land occupation. The planned invasion was abandoned, however, after it became apparent that an armed group had occupied the land with the aim of extorting the owner to sell the land (fieldnotes and informal discussion with Ester Leiva 2015).

6.3.3 Class struggle against agrarian extractivism

Peasant resistance of the 1980s and early 1990s was centred entirely on the struggle for land, against the latifundio system. In the current conjecture of capitalist development (agrarian extractivism), the class struggle also relates to conditions generated by agribusiness, and the operations of extractivism:

> *Viene empezando también el incremento del modelo de producción empresarial en Paraguay, sobre todo en la década de los noventa, viene ya en auge la producción extensiva sobre todo de la soja, introduciendo la semilla transgénica de la soja también. Inicialmente empezaron a plantar soja en los grandes latifundios. Después se va remplazando inclusive en alguna zona donde había ganadería por la plantación de soja, trasladándose la ganadería hacia otra zona, sobre todo hacia el Chaco, y en la última década están avanzando sobre comunidades campesinas, comunidades indígenas, y ahí se va generando otro problema para la comunidad de campesina indígena, sobre todo, con el envenenamiento masivo que trae consigo la soja transgénica y la expulsión de su propia comunidad. Así que son dos situaciones que vienen de la última década, con la plantación masiva de soja por grandes*

> *empresas agrícolas… y ahí también nosotros hemos tomado una posición política de resistencia en las comunidades, en los asentamientos, contra del avance de la producción de soja y contra el envenenamiento… y cada vez más eso va generando conflictos con las empresas agrícolas y el Estado a través de la fuerza represiva que tiene, como la policía, empieza a resguardar la plantaciones de soja y a resguardar la fumigaciones y cuando hay movilizaciones contra la fumigación, o contra la plantación de soja alrededor de las comunidades, empiezan las represiones. Se va agravando la situación.* (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

The class struggle that the FNC is currently engaged in has developed across three main axes:

> *Nosotros decimos que actualmente tenemos tres frentes de lucha. Por un lado, la organización y la lucha por el acceso a la tierra, que es una lucha contra el latifundio por la reforma agraria. Otro frente de lucha es la resistencia en las comunidades y asentamientos ya conquistados, contra el avance de la soja y contra el envenenamiento. Y otro frente de lucha es contra la violencia que surge de la represión, de la imputación, de todas las persecuciones tanto judiciales como de represión que sufren los compañeros de lucha. Serian como tres frentes de organización de lucha y movilización que estamos llevando adelante*. (Gómez, personal interview 2015)

6.7 Discourse analysis

Drawing on similar tropes of Paraguay's authoritarian past, peasant-based social movements have countered Colorado nationalist rhetoric with a nationalism of their own. The following excerpts, drawn from various internet-based resources,[104] illustrate how the peasant social movements remain strongly influenced by the government of Francia (see discussion in chapter 3). At a FNC demonstration under the banner of "The national debate against the latifundio and for agrarian reform", at the *Plaza de Armas* (Plaza of Arms) in Asunción, December 16, 2015, activist Ermo Rodríguez begins his speech by presenting the Nationalist Era as a glorious precedent, worthy of emulation:

> Do you know, companions and partners, that we once had an independent, sovereign, free country? Where there were no foreign countries that came to say what we had to do or how we had to do things in our country. At that time, Paraguayans and Paraguayans decided what we had to do in our country. That is Paraguay. And he directed Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, with that poor Paraguayan people, who knew what kind of country he wanted. And it was very clear to Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia an issue, and remember this well: absolute independence. Neither love new nor love old. No new pattern, no old pattern. Paraguayans and Paraguayans were free and independent, sovereign.We already have the experience of an independent Paraguay. So I would like this story to be told, we think, ruminate, show and tell where we go, because that is the story that they hide from us and they want to keep hiding us. This oligarchy does not want us to remember that, in a way to justify that what they do is fine because they have the truth. And they lie. They say

[104] Including a Facebook page dedicated to the FNC, online videos of demonstrations, and national newspaper archives.

> our country was isolated, it was turned into an island, completely closed by Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia. That is a lie that anti-Francia, anti-independence, anti-sovereign propagandists made run.

In the lead up to the 23rd annual march of the FNC, deputy general secretary Marcial Gómez presented at a public lecture organized by the Faculty of Philosophy at the National University of Asuncion (UNA), March 9, 2016:

> Unfortunately, all that land is in the hands of a few landowners, who appropriated it in different ways. And this reminds us of the history of our country, because we have a very rich history in the independent era, since 1811 with Dr. France and then with the López: the land, one of the most valuable resources that was in the hands of foreigners and invaders, he recovered it again to pass it to the State and use it according to the development we needed. And Paraguay was one of the most developed countries in Latin America, with an independent, sovereign policy, without borrowing from anyone, without asking for mercy from anyone. But the basis was the issue of land, from there a national development policy was generated.

As in the romanticised and authoritarian Colorado narrative, the peasant activist relay stories of the positive legacies of the Nationalist Era, in an effort to "*recuperar el pasado para cambiar el future*"—"recover the past to change the future." These memories include the defence of national sovereignty, state-led development, agrarian reform, and a more egalitarian society.

Although the locus of nostalgia for the Nationalist Era is remembered in terms of the more egalitarian aspects of this period, it is also remembered in terms of the loss associated with Paraguay's defeat in the Triple Alliance War. As Gómez continues,

> We know that one of the most genocidal wars in the world was that of Triple Alliance, from 1865 to 1870, and with that war what was eliminated was the independent and sovereign national development policy of Paraguay. And from that war, the first element as part of payment for the expenses of war was the delivery of the land to large transnational companies: La Industrial Paraguaya, Yerba Mate Larangeira, which appropriated millions and millions of hectares of our land.

This memoryscape of foreign attack dovetails neatly with factors related to the current conjecture, allowing for the drawing of an obvious parallel between a "first" invasion of Paraguay during the Triple Alliance War, primarily by Brazilian troops, and a "second" invasion of "brasiguayos" in recent decades.[105] Current outcries against foreign land ownership by peasant organizations usurp the nationalist rhetoric of the dominant Colorado discourse, identifying foreign landowner as their enemy and deploy nationalist rhetoric to justify land occupation by defining their autochthonous claim to the soil (Nagel 1999: 157). While this process of *extranjerización* (foreignisation) began in the 1960s with the release of state lands for private

[105] The use of the term 'Brasiguayos' has been subject to particular critique for its implied dichotomy between wealthy Brazilian agriculturalists devoted to soybean production on the one hand, and impoverished and marginalized Paraguayan small-scale farmers on the other. In reality, 'the majority of Brazilian immigrants in Paraguay are small-scale farmers who, like many of their impoverished Paraguayan neighbours, have faced constant marginalization' (Blanc, 2015: 145). For a detailed study of the socioeconomic differentiation between Brazilian and Paraguayan peasants in Paraguay, see Nagel (1991).

purchase (Laíno1977; Nickson 1981), it has accelerated in the last two decades as Paraguayan lands are increasingly being integrated into the expanding agricultural frontiers of Brazil and, to a far lesser extent, Argentina (Galeano 2012). Indeed, the distinctly "translatino" (Borras et al. 2012) character of the corporate capital involved in the country's soy sector is more acute than anywhere else in the region. The correlation between land concentration and foreign ownership in the case of soy cultivation is indeed most striking: 64 per cent of the land cultivated with soy in the country's four most important *sojero* departments—Alto Paraná, Canindeyú, Caaguazú and Itapúa—belong to Brazilians (Galeano 2012, 461).

An extreme case is Grupo Favero, a company owned by the so-called '*rey de la soja*' (king of soy) Tranquilo Favero. In 2018, the Spanish newspaper *El País* (May 24, 2018) reported that Grupo Favero controlled around 160,000 hectares in Paraguay, contributing 8 per cent of the country's total soy production. The following excerpt taken from the Organización de Lucha por la Tierra's (OLT, Struggle for Land Organization) peasant march in October 2008 outside a Grupo Favero grain silo in Capiibary, in the department of San Pedro in northern Paraguay, illustrates how the nationalistic rallying of peasant organizations are fuelled by grievances against land takeovers by Brazilians and brasiguayos. Leading a crowd of close to 1,000 campesinos, Ester Leiva, a principal peasant leader in the resistance, points to the increasing marginalization and dispossession of Paraguayans in their own country, as she chants

> *¡Fuera a estos invasores, que vienen a invadir nuestro país! Dicen que nosotros somos los invasores... nosotros solo luchamos por nuestra riqueza, por nuestras tierras, por nuestra naturaleza. Estos brasileros que se instalan en nuestro país,*

> *estos son los invasores. Estos vienen a reprimir, nos envenenan y nos matan. Por ello le decimos: ¡Fuera brasileros! ¡Fuera Multinacionales!*
>
> [Out with these invaders, who come to invade our country! They say that we are the invaders... we only fight for our wealth, for our lands, for our nature. These Brazilians who settle in our country, these are the invaders. These come to repress us, poison us, and kill us. That is why we say: Get out Brazilians! Get out Multinationals!][106]

These same grievances and anti-Brazilian sentiments have also been weaponized in recent years by the Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo (EPP, Paraguayan People's Army), which is, apart from the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN, Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in Mexico, the only revolutionary movement to appear in Latin America since the end of the Cold War. Since its foundation in 2008, this small but growing rural insurgency movement has succeeded in galvanizing a slow but steady degree of public sympathy and logistical support from citizens in its area of operations, especially amongst the poor and landless peasants of northern Paraguay. An important factor in attracting new recruits and support for the EPP, Nickson (2019) outlines, has been the movement's development of a "coherent" ideology that meshes together radical Catholicism, Marxism, and nationalism. Alcides Oviedo Britez, the acknowledged leader of the EPP, has published two texts from prison, where he is currently serving an eighteen-year sentence for his involvement in a kidnapping. Surveying and summarizing the content of these two publications, Nickson (2019) notes that

[106] Documentary *Tierra Arrasada* (2009), available at http://www.baseis.org.py/tipo_publicaciones/multimedios/

> the texts repeatedly emphasise three interrelated and powerful nationalist messages: that during the nineteenth century Paraguay was one of the most developed countries in Latin America; that this process was halted by an imperialist war, led by neighbouring countries; and that the national liberation struggle led by the EPP will regain the independence of the country and return it to its former glory… The belief in the 'heroic possibilities' of the EPP to recover the 'lost dignity' of the country is a potent message that resonates with the 'common sense' understanding of Paraguay's distinctly martial history.

The traumas of the nineteenth century suffuse the discourse of peasant-based and rural guerrilla movements, impairing their ability to question their founding myths. In *Ideología autoritaria* (1987), written during the Stroessner dictatorship, the Paraguayan *pensador* Guido Rodríguez Alcalá argues that to glorify the nationalist period is to mistakenly justify an authoritarian tradition that has dominated Paraguayan political history and has been manipulated by a series of rulers to justify dictatorship, oppression, and the denial of political rights and civil freedom in the name of the national interest. In his own words, '[a]n (overly) favourable judgement of Paraguay and its glorious past is not dangerous if it is simply an error or analysis, but it certainly is when it is used for the purpose of political manipulation' (Rodríguez Alcalá 2013: 418). The grassroots politics of social movements have not challenged, discarded, or significantly revised the dominant authoritarian nationalism (Lambert and Medina 2007).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the growth and scope of the Paraguayan peasant movement. After suffering severe repression during the Stroessner regime, peasant organizations have mushroomed since the mid-1990s, with dizzying number of peasant organisations forming locally, regionally, nationally, as well as under umbrella coordinating committee groups. Through its history, the Paraguayan movement has oscillated between peaks of levels of unity and cohesion, on the one hand, and troughs of fragmentation and weakness on the other. During its most dynamics moments, the movement has been successful in forcing some degree of pro-peasant policies.

Sporadic but dramatic land-based political conflicts are among the more obvious symptoms of the persistence of the land problem. These conflicts are inflicted by legacies of authoritarian political and land administration, shaped by class dynamics and other social differences (particularly nationality), and intensified by contemporary patterns of exclusion and extraction related to the advance of extractive capital in the agricultural sector. Peasant organisations mobilize around issues of land, of pauperization and of extreme oppression and social injustice.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, Paraguay's agrarian model has shifted away from the small-scale production of a variety of agricultural crops, for both domestic consumption and export, toward the large-scale, mechanized production of GM soybeans for global commodity markets. This agrarian model is widely praised at home by the mainstream media (*ABC Color*), the soy industry's primary lobby group (Unión de Gremios de la Producción, UGP), and is largely consistent with the World Bank's (2007) "agriculture-for-development" proposal. Despite this praise from government and international development institutions, I have argued that Paraguayan agriculture is involved in a persistent and multi-faceted crisis. This crisis is not just internally induced; it stems also from "external" relations that increasingly interact with, and enforce the impact of, outside pressures exerted on agriculture. The current rural crisis is characterized, at the national level, by a myriad of strongly inter-related expressions, which have been explored throughout this dissertation and can be summarized as follows:

– *Crisis of peasant farming*. In 2013–14, out of the 5,637,300 hectares dedicated to agriculture, a staggering 93.7 per cent (5,284,400 hectares) were sown with cash crops (primarily soy), while subsistence crops constituted a mere 6.3 per cent of the cultivated land (Pereira Fukuoka 2015: 68).

– *Subsistence crisis*. Paraguay's export-oriented agricultural development model has increased the country's dependence on food imports, making the country much more vulnerable to volatile commodity prices and food insecurity—far from any pathway towards food sovereignty. Paraguay has the third-highest rate of undernourishment in Latin America and the Caribbean, after Haiti and Guatemala (FAO 2014: 58). FAO data indicate a relative and absolute increase in the overall rate of undernourished population in Paraguay, from 900,000 in people (20.2%) in 1990–2 to 1.5 million people (22.3%) in 2011–13 (FAO 2014).

– *Crisis of land access*. Paraguay is the country with the greatest land concentration in Latin America, with a 0.94 Gini coefficient (Guereña 2016).

– *Rural labour*. The expansion of soy production has been accompanied by the contraction of employment in the agricultural sector. In 1990, 38.9 per cent of Paraguay's economically active population made its living in agricultural (ECLAC, 2005). By 2004, this ratio had fallen to 33.3 per cent and it had fallen further, to 22.8 per cent, by 2014 (DGEEC 2005, 2015). A recent study by Riquelme and Vera (2013) found that the number of seasonal workers employed in the agricultural sector plummeted during the period 1991–2008, from 946,040 to 238,674—a decrease of 74.8 per cent.

– *Environmental crisis*. Recent studies conducted on a global scale identified Paraguay as one of the countries in Latin America with the highest deforestation rates worldwide (Hansen et al. 2010, 2013). The rapid deforestation rate has resulted in the loss of 90 per

cent of the forest cover in the eastern region of the country. Another deleterious effect of the soy boom has been the rise in agrochemical use and public health concerns about herbicides drifting onto people's farms and residences.

– *Crisis of rural violence and criminalization*. To this day many peasant leaders are assassinated in Paraguay for daring to defend the interests of the rural poor. The *Chokoue*[107] report published in 2014 by the Coordinating Committee for Human Rights in Paraguay (CODEHUPY 2014), documents 115 victims of extra judiciary executions within a census from February 3, 1989 to August 15, 2013. In June 2012, a violent clash in the Curuguaty district of Canindeyú left 11 landless peasants and six police officers dead, triggering the impeachment of Fernando Lugo a week later.

– *Political crisis*. In the immediate aftermath of the Curuguaty massacre, a medley of conservative social forces saw their opportunity and converged around the impeachment and removal of the moderately left-of-centre president, Fernando Lugo (see Ezquerro-Cañete and Fogel 2017), bringing to an end the country's halting democratic experiment since 1989. Other sources of political tension include: the growing strength of Paraguayan drug cartels and the increasing integration of sectors of the peasantry into drug trading (Cardozo et al. 2016); the emergence of new radical paramilitary groups in rural areas, such as the *Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo* (EPP) and the Agrupación Campesina Armada (ACA) (Nickson 2019); and the 2018 occupation and burning of the

[107] *Chokokue* means peasant in Guarani, the indigenous language spoken by the vast majority of Paraguay's mestizo peasantry.

National Congress building in protest of talks of a constitutional amendment that would have allowed Horacio Cartes (2013–2018) to run for a second term.

As an analytic lens emerging from the convergence between the literatures on Latin American neo-extractivism and critical agrarian studies, the concept of agrarian extractivism serves to fully account for and explain the nature and implications of the contemporary processes of rural transformation taking place in Paraguay. The penetration of extractive capital into the countryside is transforming agriculture with dramatic social, economic, ecological, and political implications. Dominant forms of agricultural expansion, which extract large volumes of raw materials with little to no processing, lack sectoral linkages and remain controlled by a market oligopoly, contributing to widespread environmental degradation and destruction, deteriorating labour opportunities, and not leading to any substantial form of industrial development inclusive rural development. It is a mode of extraction, appropriating the economic and ecological value from the land in which it operates, while excluding the rural poor as they become surplus to the needs of capital accumulation. As a concept, agrarian extractivism exposes the extractive character of this dominant model, challenging the use of "industrialization" as a form of discursive legitimation used by governments and corporations alike. It is important to reveal the very extractive dynamics of agricultural production and to stop serving a legitimating discourse that equates this type of agricultural production to industrialization.

Building on the work of Fogel and Riquelme (2005), Teubal (2009), Gudynas (2010), Svampa (2013), Petras and Veltmeyer (2014), Alonso-Fradejas (2015), McKay (2017), this study has sought to refine and extend the concept of agrarian extractivism to account for the contemporary

dynamics of rural change in Paraguay. In the context of Bolivia, McKay put forth four interlinked dimensions of agrarian extractivism—(1) large volumes of materials extracted, which are destined for export with little or no processing; (2) value-chain concentration and sectoral disarticulation (3) high intensity of environmental degradation; and (4) deterioration of labour opportunities and/or labour conditions—which this study has traced over. Additional factors relevant for the Paraguayan context were highlighted in chapter 5. First, it was argued that issues concerning low-labour absorption should be interlinked with diminishing access to land for the rural poor and deteriorating conditions for smallholder farmers. Taken together, these dynamics reveal in a fuller sense the exclusionary dynamics of agrarian extractivism: small-scale producers are left uncompetitive in export production, while the expansion of GM soy production is inducing a pattern of structural change that diminish access to land for the rural poor and dampen overall employment. Moreover, the failure to generate more employment in the agricultural sector contributes to a host of social problems associated with rural-urban migration in a context where other economic sectors are unable to absorb surplus population. Second, three additional elements were added to the analytical framework: (5) compromising domestic food production, risking the countries food sovereignty; (6) variegated forms of violence used to advance and sustain the model; and (7) threats to the very basis of Paraguay's democratic political system, as discussed in chapter 4 in reference to the parliamentary coup against Fernando Lugo.

Beyond the soy complex and dynamics of rural change specific to Paraguay, the concept of agrarian extractivism as an analytical framework for agrarian political economy can be used across sectors and geographic areas to analyze the socio-economic and political dynamics of agrarian change. There are, in fact, exciting new studies being produced which are extending the

empirical gaze of agrarian extractivism beyond its current anchoring in the corporate controlled production of genetically modified (GM) soybean, revealing the analytical utility and flexibility of the concept. Whether it is forestry in Uruguay (see Kröger and Ehrnström-Fuentes, forthcoming), oil palm in Colombia (see Ojeda, forthcoming), pineapples in Costa Rica (see León Araya, forthcoming), or agave and tequila production in Mexico (see Tetreault, McCulligh, and Lucio, forthcoming), agrarian extractivism as a framework for analysis can help us understand how new forms of capital penetration are leading rural transformation and the implications for society, the economy and the environment. Viewing other forms of agrarian transformation in Latin America through the extractivist lens invites an empirical reassessment of the geographical scope of the concept beyond the so-called "soy republic" of South America, and introduces a new set of questions about the political and analytical utility of the concept.

The concept of agrarian extractivism also has important methodological and epistemological implications for researchers engaged in scholar activism. As Jonathan Langdon and Kofi Larweh (2015) have discussed, in reference to their collaborative participatory action research in Ghana with Ada-based activists, who formed part of a resource-defense movement called the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF), participatory research methods are too often overly framed and designed by academics, as opposed to collectively designed with social movements. Building participatory relationships in such a manner runs the risk of "mining" movements for information as opposed to contributing to their goals and learning:

> the way these approaches are framed and, ultimately, constituted has deep implications on the nature of the collaboration: whether, for instance, it replicates

> *extractive* forms of research that mine movements for data, or parallels and reinforces movement processes and deepens movement reflections… Key to this process of framing and constituting participatory research is the research design process. […] [P]articipatory research, and PAR [participatory action research] in particular, must be owned by… social movements… rather than being used by academics—especially in the North—carrying out studies ultimately more concerned with *extracting* information than in responding to movement needs and priorities... the relationships that frame such research, along with the way in which the research is conceived (i.e. is it owned by the movement from the outset) is critical to avoid this type of *extractive* relationship. (Langdon and Larweh 2015: 283–284; emphasis added)

This echoes the work of Hale (2006), Borras (2016), and other scholar activists who have expanded on the importance of mutually defined and owned participatory processes and goals, especially in contexts of struggle, ensuring widespread access and usability of knowledge for the social movements with which we work. It is through such activist research that

> we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results. (Hale 2006: 97)

Finally, as I reflect on my own research design and process, I acknowledge that while I would be happy to say that I was working within the spirit of scholar activism—i.e. my research was explicitly and unapologetically connected to the struggles of the campesino movement—the research methods were too rooted in my own (academic) objectives. This is a key lesson that I plan to take forward with me in future research. I hope to have shed some light on the great work and research being done by the many committed social researchers in Paraguay (e.g. researchers associated with CERI, BASE IS, and CDE), and I plan to continue collaborating with these institutions through future projects. Based on relationship-building during the fieldwork for this project in 2015, I also intend to work much closer with the national peasant organizations that I have established rleationships with—FNC, OLT, CONAMUR, CTCU—from the start of the research design process. The concept of agrarian extractivism can therefore serve as a potent reminder for researchers to engage more closely with social movements, in order to develop co-owned research designs which allow for movement articulations to shape the project. Ultimately, the concept can alert researchers of the risk of replicating the extractive relationship—in mining movements for information—that this study has sought to uncover: "it is the way research relationships are formed, and the way these relationships are embedded in movement articulations that determine whether the research is positioned to be a synergistic addition to movement processes—a moving with movements—or an *extractive* process for academic purposes" (Langdon and Larweh 2015: 283–284; emphasis added).

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