Politicising Development in Northwest Argentina: Peasant Initiatives for Integral Change

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To my father, a true socialist.
Abstract

This thesis focuses on grassroots responses to economic, political and social challenges of peasant (campesino)-indigenous communities in Northwest Argentina. The main aim of this thesis is to analyse the particular development model and experiences of two campesino-indigenous organisations, MOCASE-VC from the lowlands of Santiago del Estero Province and Red Puna y Quebrada from the highlands of Jujuy Province. These organisations have been demanding access to land, citizenship rights and an inclusive form of development, among other things. Both organisations were formed in the midst of the neoliberal economic restructuring of the late twentieth century, and articulate a discourse of "integral development". This discourse entails a profound and simultaneous change to the current exclusionary and polarised polity, society and economy in which campesino communities live. This thesis provides a critical in-depth analysis of the main livelihood challenges of peasant communities and how these communities mobilise and organise to contest these challenges.

This thesis situates the emergence of campesino organisations and their struggles within historic processes of socio-political, socio-economic and agrarian change, and draws on reflections and experiences of members of various organisations in order to understand their current realities and challenges. The organisations under focus contest their marginalised position by adhering to principles of radical democracy, which include a decentralised organisational structure that strives for promoting horizontal prefigurative politics, consensus decision-making, social equality and food sovereignty.

This study was guided by a qualitative methodology and the empirical data was generated over two visits to the field. The main research methods used while in the field were semi-structured interviews with individuals and focus groups, observations and participation in various activities of the organisations and spending time living with campesino families, experiencing first-hand their way of life.

The findings from this research provide evidence that while discourses and praxes of radical democracy and horizontality pose different challenges, they also contribute to the consolidation of campesino communities as autonomous and active social subjects. These discourses and praxes politicise development to incorporate a wider political analysis of
social and economic marginalisation as sources of poverty and inequality. It has been found that the main livelihood challenges for peasants in the study areas are securing land-tenure and improving production and commercialisation. This thesis has found that while natural attributes are significant to the latter challenges, the structural political impediments to development that are most crucial. Therefore, this thesis has found that the horizontal and participatory structures of the case-study organisations empower individuals and communities, and create a bottom-up inclusive alternative that mobilises and politicises campesino-indigenous communities. The main conclusion drawn from these findings is that a politicised programme of participatory development is fundamental to an integral approach to solving the multitude of potential livelihood challenges. This approach seeks to address problems at their source, but also requires long processes of social change and learning within rural communities.

Keywords: development, peasant organisation, indigenous people, radical democracy, Argentina.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

PART I

Chapter One

Introduction

*Research topic and its significance*

Conventional wisdom has it that you give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime; or do you? This proverb may have somewhat different meanings, depending on a particular context; but within development studies its meaning is quite clear, disparaging handouts and favouring the provision of means for self-reliance. It is also somewhat paternalistic and warrants questions such as who is to teach and how? Even if such fundamental questions could be answered, could a woman who had learned to fish feed herself for a lifetime if the fish stock is depleted due to intensive commercial fishing? Could a man perpetually feed himself if the water in which he fishes is contaminated? Could a woman feed her family if there are enough fish but the market is controlled by powerful monopolistic fish vendors? Could a man feed his family if the cost of health regulations for selling fish is prohibitive? These additional questions lead to a simple yet paramount argument: development is always political and never disconnected from the wider political economic order. Derived from this is an understanding that merely teaching people to fish, as problematic as this may be, will not necessarily suffice for them to feed their families, let alone for a lifetime, especially when they face structural restrictions, as is often the case.

Even though it could be argued that the above proverb strongly resonates with the classical paradigm of development, current influential development discourse and policies still tend to be depoliticised. Put differently, the sources of impoverishment and existing inequalities are more often than not being obscured or even totally ignored in both discourse and praxis. A different model of development is thus required; and that is the essence of this thesis. Such a model should enable people to fish but also to contest exclusionary socio-political and economic structures that marginalise them as humans and as fishers, or any producers for that matter. A truly alternative development model must be considerably politicised and must...
address not only the symptoms but also the root of poverty and marginalisation. Such an approach to development is inevitably antagonistic; but it may or may not be radical. It may be reformist, revolutionary or some combination of both; but it cannot be politically neutral for the simple reason that the hegemonic political and economic orders that affect human societies, be they local or regional or even global, are never apolitical.

This thesis is concerned with a particular and different politicised rural development in Northwest Argentina. This study focuses on the experiences of two peasant-indigenous organisations, MOCASE-VC and Red Puna y Quebrada, which aim at bringing about a wide and comprehensive change in the economic, social and political spheres, both locally and beyond. I perceive the discourses and praxes of these organisations as experiences of an “integral development model”,¹ where emphasis rests upon securing land-tenure and improving peasant production and commercialisation (economic development), while concurrently challenging social inequalities of domination and addressing the inadequate provision of social services among other things (social development). Thus, what makes this model integral is this combination of economic, social, political and environmental aspects. Inherent to this approach is a conviction that without contesting the hegemonic neoliberal political-economic order and the underperforming model of liberal representative democracy, a meaningful and sustainable development for the peasantry cannot materialise. This conviction provides a rationale for using an integral development model as theoretical framework for analysing the discourses and praxes of peasant-indigenous organisations in Northwest Argentina.

Therefore, this integral model provides an alternative to more familiar or mainstream models of development because of its encompassing scope and its inherent political analysis of poverty and inequalities. Central to this alternative model are also the means for achieving such comprehensive change. This is reflected in the adherence of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna y Quebrada to ideals of radical democracy, including wide and direct democratic participation, an aspiration for working in a horizontal structure and the making of decisions by reaching consensus among members. These elements of the proposed development model

¹ The term “integral development” (desarrollo integral) is frequently used in Argentina, often in conjunction with the term “integral agrarian reform” (reforma agraria integral). In this thesis I adopt and theorise the former term as a framework for analysing the discourses and praxes of the case-study organisations. “Development” is understood here not as a linear process from pre-modern to modern, but rather as improvement of people’s standards of living, defined in a wide, cultural and context sensitive manner, taking into account that “good” and “bad” are subjective and thus are not definitive but open to debate.
receive much attention in this thesis exactly because they go beyond “teaching or learning to fish” to promoting a counter hegemonic analysis and practice. These political aspects also make the particular experiences of organised rural communities relevant to other social settings, where livelihoods and challenges may be different but domination and exclusion are similarly present.

**Situating the research**

This is primarily an empirical research study. It draws upon research conducted among a number of peasant-indigenous organisations, particularly with the Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero - Vía Campesina (Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero – Peasant Way – MOCASE-VC) from the Santiago del Estero Province and the Red Puna y Quebrada\(^2\) (Puna and Quebrada Network) from the Jujuy Province (see Map 1.1). These organisations are connected through their association in the Argentinean Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indigena (National Peasant Indigenous Movement – MNCI). This latter movement, along with the MOCASE-VC, are also member organisations of La Vía Campesina (The Peasant Way), an international movement of organised peasants, small to medium-scale agriculture producers, landless agriculture workers, indigenous people and rural women from around the world.

This is also a qualitative study, and this methodology emphasises the importance of the researcher in the research process, including the final analysis in the written account. While it is important to situate knowledge and address the positionality of the researcher, this will always be partial, as it is not possible to fully express the effects of the researcher’s position (Rose, 1997; Gold, 2002). I was drawn into this field of development in general and of rural development in particular out of my personal experiences and previous academic studies. Both my parents were politically active in Argentina in the early 1970s and I grew up in a socialist home on a Kibbutz in Israel. Thus, ideas of socialism, cooperativism, participatory democracy and egalitarian society were always part of my life. As a university student I embarked on a dual journey, combining a Bachelor’s degree in economics and human geography. The differences between these academic disciplines were, at times, vast. What is

\(^2\) The Puna and the Quebrada are two geographic regions in the highlands of Jujuy Province.
Map 1.1: Research locations within Argentina
taught in mainstream economics departments in Western universities (and perhaps also elsewhere), and definitely in my university, is neo-classical economics in its most simplified, pure and reality detached form. In contrast, the discipline of human geography, and even more so of development studies, focuses primarily on those who are politically and economically marginalised and therefore do not benefit from the (unfulfilled) promises of the neoliberal doctrine.

Prior to embarking on this research I was unaware of the struggle of the campesinos (peasants) in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. This was not part of the Argentina I knew, nor was it part of how this country is often perceived – a relatively high income and urbanised “developing” country with relatively high levels of education and other social indicators, and which in spite of reoccurring economic crises and hardship, was not stricken by poverty like some of its neighbours. Still, poverty was never absent from Argentinean society; but it seemed to be more visible in its urban rather than rural form, which could be attributed to the focus of media and English language academic publications on the large urban centres, and primarily on the capital Buenos Aires. The latest boom in agriculture production and trade has shifted some of the focus to the countryside, where Argentina’s economic “comparative advantage” lies. My research suggests that academic attention for an international audience has not fully addressed important transformations in the countryside.

The particular case of the MOCASE was brought to my attention by a family member in Argentina (at that time I was not aware that in effect there are two such organisations). This initiated a long process of research, contacting people and eventually travelling to Santiago del Estero to conduct the first fieldwork for this thesis. As a result of the rapport I had established with the MOCASE-VC I gained access to the Red Puna y Quebrada (hereafter Red Puna), which, as mentioned above, are connected through their membership in the National Movement - MNCI. This was a true snowball process, where the research relies on referrals in order to reach further participants.

Although both MOCASE (VC and “historic”)\(^3\) and Red Puna had been studied before, such studies were primarily, if not exclusively, conducted by Argentinean academics. Therefore, the reporting of these studies was in Spanish (and to a lesser extent in Portuguese) and largely not published for an international audience beyond the Spanish and Portuguese speaking

\(^3\) In 2001 an internal conflict within the MOCASE resulted in its division into two separate organisations – MOCASE-VC and “historic” MOCASE. This will be further discussed in Chapters Three and Six.
communities. In that sense, a part of the novelty of this research involves its “foreign” perspective, as this study is not being conducted by an Argentinean person. Since the positionality of the researcher is both present and influential in social research, it is implicit that different positionalities are likely to affect the findings and conclusions. Hence, this research enriches existing knowledge about the campesinos’ struggle and the paradigm guiding this struggle, as well as reaching English speaking audiences. This is of importance because the type of struggle in which these and other peasant organisations engage has generally two fronts: locally in the field, and on spatially different scales, where publicity campaigns are used to attract support and enhance local and sometimes global solidarity. International research contributes to the latter front, and thus indirectly to the former as well.

Having a differentiated positionality and using English as the reporting language, however, are not in themselves the most compelling reasons for the authenticity and added value this research offers, and thus must be regarded only as secondary in importance. Far more important is that this investigation examines aspects that were not thoroughly researched previously. For example, the communal economic activities of the MOCASE-VC, but more significantly, the political discourse associated with a horizontal organisational structure and consensus decision-making and connecting rural development with grassroots social mobilisation and radical forms of politics. With that, this latter topic of alternative forms of politics has many different aspects that no single research project could address in a fully satisfactory manner, and thus more research is always valuable. Furthermore, development and social mobilisation are processes that may span decades and examining them at different points along their trajectories enables a better understanding of their significance, impacts and evolution over time. Therefore, while past studies, such as Durand (2009), Barbetta (2009) and Cowan Ros (2007), are useful for discussing the history of the organisations, this research is particularly concerned with current challenges, dynamics and practice.

**Theoretical frameworks and research context**

Although this is primarily an empirical study, it is nevertheless informed by and contributes to existing theoretical frameworks. Although these frameworks are related, each of which contains a differentiated body of literature, often from a number of academic disciplines. Therefore, in this thesis I use and interdisciplinary approach in an attempt to weave these fields and their theoretical frameworks together.
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Development and post-development

A key theoretical framework in this research is development studies, and it is this field to which the findings of this investigation most directly contribute. This thesis also engages with more particular aspects of economic, political and social development in relation to organised peasant producers in Argentina. These aspects include conceptualisations of the peasantry and how this sector has been affected by the neoliberal reforms and agriculture modernisation in Argentina, and what alternatives this sector has to offer.

The politicised integral model I analyse in this thesis perceives development as a bottom-up and autonomous initiative of politically and economically marginalised communities. These communities wish to improve their standards of living according to their own preferences by increasing their level of income, but also by explicitly striving for a change towards a more egalitarian and just society. This conceptualisation of development conforms to the post-development paradigm, which critiques the mainstream development ideology; and it is also useful for assessing recent approaches to development that prima facie could claim to incorporate similar progressive ideals. Post-development is a controversial set of ideas that critique and challenge the notion of development, at least in its modernist post-World War Two form (McGregor, 2007). The discursive deconstructing of development, which had started in the late 1980s, became even more prominent in the following decade and led to its conceptualisation as a particular historical experience of distinct epistemologies, values, power relations and forms of representation (Escobar, 1995; Sidaway, 2007). The post-development school of thought, then, advocates finding alternatives-to-development rather than alternative development, which is merely about finding “better” ways for achieving similar (deemed inappropriate) goals (Escobar, 1992, 1995). This critical stand vis-à-vis development sparked a fierce debate within this subject field, and attracted counter criticism that saw post-development as having an affinity with neoliberalism, offering no constructive direction (Ziai, 2004), promoting problematic binaries of modernity and anti-modernity, and transgressing with romanticism and self-righteousness (Corbridge, 1998). In his account of post-development critique and its counter-critique, Aram Ziai (2004) concludes that arguments from all sides of the debate are not without at least some merit.

Be that as it may, such largely academic debates have penetrated and affected the development industry, at least discursively. This is evident in the adoption of new buzzwords, such as “participation”, “empowerment” and “the voices of the poor”, by development practitioners and institutions. These words have gained dominance within mainstream
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

development jargon in recent times, but nevertheless, “[i]nternational development organisations may appear to have appropriated concepts once used by radical alternative movements, but they have not necessarily swallowed them whole” (Cornwall and Brock, 2005, p. 1055). For example, even the World Bank, an institution often criticised for its top-down approach, have adopted concepts from the ongoing debates in the development arena (to give but a few examples see Blackburn, Chambers and Gaventa, 2000; Eberlei, 2007; Mansuri and Rao, 2012). Whether this reflects a genuine paradigm shift or mere empty rhetoric is very much open to debate; but it is possible to use post-development inspired language without necessarily incorporating their underlying ideals into policy, let alone using them to address existing power relations and structural impediments for development.

The topic of this thesis is, therefore, embedded in the field of development studies. However, given the inter-disciplinary nature of development studies, in order to instigate and develop the main argument of this research study, it is necessary to draw upon an array of academic disciplines and their respective theoretical and practical aspects. This approach is important since inherent to an integral model of development is a synthesis of the different spheres (economic, social, political and environmental) affecting human societies. In general terms, within an overarching framework of development studies, this thesis meshes together the hegemonic and alternative political economy contexts (neoliberalism; trade globalisation; cooperativism), the political contexts (representative democracy; prefigurative politics; identity politics) and the social contexts (civil society; social movements; collectivism).

The peasantry in the 21st century

Within the field of development studies, this study is concerned with a particular, although not entirely homogenous, group of small-scale agriculture producers who identify themselves as peasants, indigenous and often as both. For many research participants being a peasant, or campesino, is related to the particular form of technology they use; but it is also closely associated with a particular way of life and relations with the land and the natural environment. Being an indigenous person refers to having a historical affinity with pre-Columbian societies, which not all peasant research participants believe themselves to have.

In the science-driven modern era, the peasant way of life and economic logic have been denigrated and belittled. Instead, the idea of the agriculture entrepreneur has been promoted (Van der Ploeg, 2008). Therefore, I believe the concept of “peasant” requires some additional
attention because what exactly constitutes being a peasant in the 21st century is open to debate and different interpretations. First and foremost, in current time, the majority of small agriculture producers that may be regarded as peasants have diversified sources of livelihood, on and off-farm, including subsistence farming but also petty agriculture commodity production and wage labouring; but this process of diversification and its degree have not been uniform (Bernstein, 2001; Kay, 2008). The term “peasant”, thus, has historically had different meanings and definitions and there is no agreement regarding a definition of what constitutes being a peasant in modern times. Nevertheless, some common criteria are (1) agricultural livelihood of subsistence and petty commodity production; (2) social configuration based on family labour, where production, consumption and reproduction are reliant on the family unit; and (3) subordination to state and market structures (Bryceson, 2000). Other definitions may also include rural proletarians as landless peasants (Bernstein, 2001) and lack of capital accumulation due to structural restriction (Manzanal, 1993; de Dios, 2006a).

The concept of “peasant” is sometimes imbued with notions of class stratification and struggle (Bryceson, 2000), but in Argentina the National Agricultural Census (Censo Nacional Agropecuario) uses the politically neutral term of “small agricultural producers”. This term includes all types of small agriculturalists, while there is a wide understanding that there are different sub-groups within this category of “small producers”. A report published by the Ministry of Economy and Production provides an analysis of census data where three such sub-groups are identified. “Type 3 small producers” is the group that includes the least capitalised producers, which most closely approximate peasant producers, or campesinos. In Argentina, about two thirds of farming units are those of small agriculture producers, which account for 13.5 per cent of agriculture land. Within the small producers group, the sub-group of “type 3 small producers” account for about a third of the total national farming units (and about half of total small producers farms) and a mere 3.5 per cent of agriculture land (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). Hence, the Argentinean agrarian structure reflects severe inequalities in terms of agricultural land holdings.

The peasantry and the neoliberal political economy
Increasing land concentration in Argentina is a notable consequence of the neoliberal political economy shift (Pengue, 2005; Newell, 2009), similar to that in other Latin American
countries which implemented swift neoliberal restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s. This process included privatisation of state enterprises and a sharp decline in government social expenditure (Lewis, 2002). In Argentina, this process also diverted the economic development focus from industry to agriculture, in which the country has a “comparative advantage”, and forced small scale farmers and peasants (again with similarity to other Latin American countries) to compete with the more substantial capital resources of commercial agri-business (Kay, 2004; Porto, 2007).

Trade liberalisation, an important component of the neoliberal adjustment, mainly created economic opportunities for well established multinational agri-business corporations. The increased openness to trade in agriculture commodities created greater demand for these products and the Argentinean farming sector responded accordingly. Agri-businesses entered the Argentinean agriculture market, promoting a new technological package that included genetically modified (GM) crops, agrochemicals and modern machinery (Newell, 2009). The new technological package allows commercial farmers to expand their production into previously marginal land. Even though those lands still incur more risk, high global demand for agriculture commodities, especially of soybeans, provide a strong economic incentive nevertheless. The resulting expansion of the “agriculture frontier”, then, has had important economic, social and environmental associated costs (Newell, 2009; Pengue, 2005).

Those large commercial farmers that can afford the new technological package are, without a doubt, among the “winners” of market liberalisation. However, the marginal lands into which agriculture production is expanding are not vacant. In many instances these lands are being occupied by campesino families who have lived on and worked the land, sometimes for decades, without legal land titles (de Dios, 2009). The campesinos of the north Argentinean province of Santiago del Estero are a vivid example of the resulting contestation over land between resource rich agribusiness and resource-scarce campesinos. The latter are often seen as the “losers” of neoliberal economic restructuring.

Since the main focus of this thesis is on campesino organisations, the importance of the political economy of agricultural production and consumption is clear. However, the Santiagueño countryside and the highlands of Jujuy are two very different ecological regions; and, although much of the land in both regions is marginal in terms of its suitability for intensive commercial farming, the climatic conditions in the latter region are a much stronger deterrence to agribusiness. The encroachment of the “agriculture frontier”, with its associated
land conflicts and related livelihood threats, is, therefore, not equally experienced across these territories. Still, structural restrictions on peasant life and production, such as insecure land tenure, are a commonality. The roots of insecure land-tenure in Jujuy stretch back to colonial times; this issue has lingered through the post-colonial era (Rutledge, 1987) and is yet to be completely resolved today. In contrast to Santiago del Estero, the current political reluctance to resolve land disputes in this region stems from mining interests rather than from the pressure of influential agribusiness. Where indigenous communities hold communal land titles, mining companies (most of which are multinational corporations) have to negotiate and receive permission for exploration and extraction of minerals. Such companies, therefore, have a strong economic incentive to prevent or limit the recognition of communal land titles. Notwithstanding such differences, the issue of insecure land-tenure is indicative of the lack of political will on the part of successive provincial and national governments. Moreover, the neoliberal political economy, with its emphasis on exports, global trade and the hegemony of multinational corporations is another similarity between these territories. These territories, then, provide two different but yet similar settings for examining integral rural development of peasant communities.

**Peasant mobilisation and organisation in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy**

Insecure land-tenure is an issue of much importance in both Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. Many peasant communities in Santiago del Estero do not have recognised legal titles for the land they possess, making them vulnerable once these lands were coveted by agribusinesses. Under such circumstances, numerous campesino families were subjected to evictions, often by violent means, starting as early as 1963 but with increasing frequency from the 1970s onwards. Until the mid 1980s the majority of evictions were “silent”; that is, they went unnoticed by the wider public. Another factor that had significantly contributed to this atrocious reality was the autocratic regime in the province that aligned itself with the interests of the powerful elite, and further marginalised the campesino sector (Barbetta, 2009). This experience is highly significant when examining the current relations between campesino organisations and the provincial authorities.

The formation of peasant organisations to resist the declining conditions of campesinos in Santiago del Estero during this period was intimately connected to broader changes occurring in Argentina. The return of democracy in 1983 marked the end of the oppressive military
dictatorship and allowed for the re-emergence of civil society in Argentina. A land conflict in 1985, where some 400 peasant families were to be evicted from their land in the east of Santiago del Estero, marked the first step of mobilisation of the peasantry in that province. With the assistance of a local Catholic clergyman and a number of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), the campesinos organised and fought for their land (Durand, 2009; de Dios, 2009). In subsequent years more communities mobilised and organised in a similar manner with each community forming a “first-tier”, or “first-degree”, organisational structure and a number of neighbouring communities forming a “second-tier” (degree) organisation. In 1989 they joined forces and in the following year established a “third-tier” organisation, the Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero (Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero - MOCASE). From the outset, this newly formed organisation dedicated itself not merely to defending land but also to other issues such as representing the campesinos in front of the authorities and improving the standards of living of its constituents (Durand, 2009).

However, while the objectives of different campesino communities were very much similar, different opinions regarding the strategies for achieving them started to surface. At the centre of this internal conflict stood disagreements regarding funding sources and their implicit implications for the level of autonomy of recipients – the MOCASE. Another divisive issue was the internal structure of the organisation. Some members wanted to abolish the existing (relatively) “vertical” structure in favour of a more “horizontal” one that would foster the decentralisation of decision making and enhance popular participation. Prior to the division, the MOCASE had a Directive Committee that steered the organisation. This structure was deemed by some member organisations as too centralised and instead they championed a more decentralised structure where decisions are reached through consensus in the communities and in the organisation’s plenary sessions. Yet another issue under dispute was the degree of self-determination that would affect communities’ ability to form new “second-degree” organisations, rather than joining an existing one if such already operated in their proximity. These disagreements could not be resolved and in 2001 the “third tier” organisation was divided in two, with MOCASE-Vía Campesina (VC) splitting off from the original MOCASE (Durand, 2009).

4 Importantly, although the organisational structure is perceived as consisting of separate tiers, in this instance this does not reflect superiority or domination of one tier over the other.
In effect, the MOCASE-VC separated from the MOCASE, bringing the new ideas of horizontalism and radical democracy into the discourse of peasant struggle in the province. This discourse provides a more comprehensive and radical critique of neoliberal globalisation and representative liberal democracy, at least in the way it is being practiced in Latin America. It has been a new form of (arguably or potentially) revolutionary discourse that has been also evident in the ideas of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, and the MST (Landless Rural Workers’ Movement) in Brazil. It promotes, *inter alia*, participation, accountability, transparency, cooperativism and a more fundamental notion of “strong democracy” (Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel, 2007; Barber, 1984).

The other organisation under focus in this thesis, the Red Puna y Quebrada from the highlands of Jujuy Province, went through a different process of formation and consolidation that eventuated within a similar, yet place-specific, context. During the 20th century the population of the highlands of Jujuy had substantially increased (Bolsi, 2005). The economy of the region in that period was primarily reliant on a few large mining complexes, small scale agriculture production and work in the public sectors (Cowan Ros, 2007). As a result of this population growth and limited sources of employment and income, the peasantry became increasingly involved in seasonal migration and semi-proletariatisation as a livelihood strategy (Rutledge, 1987). The gradual implementation of neoliberal policies from the late 1970s onwards, the subsequent decline of national industry and the introduction of new technologies for agro-industries (especially in the sugar mills in the lowlands of Jujuy) had adversely affected employment in the mining complexes and the demand for manual labour in agriculture. From this period onwards, the population of the highlands was in crisis (Cowan Ros and Schneider, 2008).

In spite of the growing economic crisis, and in contrast to some other parts of Argentina, social mobilisation during the 1980s in the highlands was not significant and no “second-tier” organisations were formed. The intensification of the crisis during the 1990s and the involvement of development experts, or *técnicos*, from several NGOs and public agencies would combine to change that. The focus of these development actors was primarily on financial and technical support for organised groups, which meant much emphasis was directed at forming associations, including of agriculture producers, artisans, women and youth (Cowan Ros, 2007). Resulting from this social intervention and newly introduced
legislation that provided rights for organised indigenous groups,\(^5\) between 1995 and 2000 four different civil organisations of second and third-degree were established in the highlands of Jujuy. One of these organisations was the Red Puna y Quebrada, which was founded in 1995 in the midst of the social and economic crisis by six diverse organisations, including local and foreign NGOs, a local cooperative and a governmental institution (Cowan Ros, 2007).

In the course of only a few years, the composition of the organisation had changed from consisting mainly of NGOs to having numerous grassroots associations and “base communities”. The founding members of the Red Puna criticised the lack of a strategic development plan for the region and the inadequate democratic system where, for instance, local politicians utilised development related projects to foster political patronage (Red Puna, 1998). This political analysis caused some of the original member organisations to depart and the third-tier organisation grew bigger through the incorporation of a diverse range of grassroots organisations, many originating in the growing urban centres of the region. However, many new urban dwellers kept regular contacts with their rural communities and some also continued to engage in agriculture production. Therefore, a rural-urban dichotomy did not effectively exist in the highlands of Jujuy at the time of the formation of Red Puna, a situation that continues in the present era. In this regard the Red Puna is somewhat different from the MOCASE-VC; but these organisations also share similarities. As the Red Puna grew bigger in terms of member organisations and geography, especially following the 2001 severe economic crisis, the organisation had to develop a structure to support its size and diverse composition. Over the years an organisational structure similar to the one used by the MOCASE-VC was developed.

The creation and consolidation of the Red Puna, therefore, was different from the MOCASE-VC in the sense that there was no visible violent conflict. There was, however, a long history of oppression and marginalisation of campesino and indigenous communities in both Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. The recent mobilisation and organisation of these populations are also part of processes of political, economic and social change. Among these processes were the demise of the military dictatorship and reconstitution of democracy, the neoliberal structural adjustment and the emerging of civil society as a vehicle for social and material change.

\(^5\) These rights include, \textit{inter alia}, the right to bilingual and bicultural education, communal ownership of land and exemption from paying various taxes (Schwittay, 2003).
aid, and as a space for marginalised communities to voice their demands and gain public recognition.

**Research design and justification**

The intent of this research study is to gain local insights and experiences in order to develop and crystallise understanding of the discourses and praxes of *campesino*-indigenous organisations in their struggle for integral development and change. The most appropriate methodology for this task is a qualitative one; and thus this research adheres to a qualitative methodology guided by the interpretive paradigm and employs a case-study approach. In-depth semi-structured interviews with individuals and focus groups were the main research method; but they were accompanied also by non-participant and participant observations, resembling a short and thus limited form of ethnographic method in which the researcher spends an extended period of time living with the research population. It is important to acknowledge the limitations inherent to this qualitative research methodology, such as subjectivity and the positionality of the researcher.

The fieldwork for this research study was conducted in three main locations (see Map 1.1 above) during two visits to Argentina, between February and April 2010 and between December 2010 and February 2011. The first location was the capital, Buenos Aires, where interviews were conducted with several academics and government employees who work or are affiliated with the organisations under focus here. The second fieldwork location was Santiago del Estero Province, where time was spent with different grassroots *campesino* organisations and interviews were held with different stakeholders. The third fieldwork site was Jujuy Province, where, again, interviews were held with a variety of stakeholders. Research participants reflect an obvious bias towards *campesino*-indigenous organisations; but, for me, it was important to also include people that may present different and even conflicting viewpoints. This, I believe, both assists in situating the debates around the discourse and praxis of main case-study organisations and adds academic rigour.

The knowledge generated in this research, therefore, adds to discussions regarding the struggles of marginalised rural communities against resource abundant agribusinesses, mining companies and local political elites. These struggles are often local manifestations of larger contestations over resources and economic hegemony, where the economic benefits
from agriculture and natural resources production and trade accumulate mainly in the hands of affluent land owners and multinational corporations, many of which originate from the North (Newell, 2009; McMichael, 2000). These struggles of rural communities are also part of the contestation of their social marginalisation as peasants and ethno-cultural marginalisation as indigenous people. A qualitative methodology is, therefore, most appropriate for gaining a more profound and nuanced understanding of how such political and economic structures have affected the livelihoods of these rural peasant-indigenous communities.

Notwithstanding the discontent with the current global and local political and economic structures, it is difficult for many to even imagine feasible alternatives. This is not to say that alternatives do not exist; but it does suggest more attention and research are required in order to conceptualise what could constitute a viable alternative. Different alternatives, across spaces and cultures, are being developed from below. Although they may seem, and to some extent are, context specific, such examples could inspire and enrich other struggles and attempts for achieving sustainable development that would lead to higher, albeit subjective, standards of living and a more equitable society. This research is designed to capture and critically analyse such alternatives in great depth. It does so by drawing on experiences and reflections of different stakeholders, by identifying different conflicts and debates, and by situating those seemingly local issues within wider conflicts and counter-hegemonic struggles for change.

**Research aim and objectives**

The main aim of this research study is to investigate and analyse the nature of a particular development model as it is being articulated and practiced by peasant-indigenous movements in Northwest Argentina. The experiences of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are pivotal for achieving this aim; but while comparisons between these organisations are insightful, this is not a comparative study. Instead, these organisations are similar yet different examples of the ways in which this particular development model is manifested and thus represent different experiences of a similar development approach. This aim of analysing the development model of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is to be achieved by addressing three research objectives.
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The first research objective is to situate recent and current campesino struggles in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy within historic processes of socio-political, socio-economic and agrarian change. In my view, the particular historical and social contexts of these organised groups in their respective geographic locations are of utmost importance for better understanding their discourses and praxes. These historical processes included, *inter alia*, the exploitation and subjugation of indigenous populations and the (often partial) integration of peasantries into the capitalist market economy. This context is important because, in formulating their demands, indigenous groups often make explicit reference to historical grievances, and because it is necessary for understanding the sources of conflicts over land-tenure.

Another aspect of this objective is to link the specific mobilisation and struggle of these campesino-indigenous movements to wider national, regional and global challenges and contestation of the prevailing political economy and political orders. In particular, links are made to neoliberal economic restructuring, the re-establishment of representative democracy and the re-emergence of civil society as an important social actor and mediator of development. This objective serves for situating the localised experiences of marginalised rural and semi-rural communities within wider trends and events.

The second objective is to gain in-depth insights into people’s experiences and reflections on their realities. This includes the livelihood challenges they face, their hopes and aspirations, the actions they take in order to make these hopes a reality, and the challenges they encounter along this struggle for obtaining what they ought to achieve. Derived from this objective, thus, is the centrality attributed to individuals and communities as active agents of change. As noted above, a qualitative methodology is best suited to this task.

The third objective seeks to analyse the different aspects of the discourse and praxis of this development model and particularly of the role of radical democracy as a vehicle for development and change. This objective focuses on the key aspects of the integral development model, and particularly on how development is being conceptualised and performed. Ideals of radical democracy and prefigurative politics are not prerequisites for an integral development model, but are contentious and interesting, theoretically as well as practically, and offer numerous advantages alongside challenges. This study will explore and analyse these ideals by drawing from a diverse body of literature addressing the internal dynamics of participatory groups. By situating these struggles in historical perspective and
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drawing on people’s own understanding of their realities it is then possible to better analyse the visions and strategies of these people for bringing about a comprehensive change.

Thesis structure

The thesis’s structure comprises of four parts, as depicted in Figure 1.1, although there are some notable overlaps. The above objectives were used to shape much of the thesis’s core (Parts II-III), and were formulated to reflect a progression of analysis from the wider context to the specifics of the case-studies and from the historical to the current. This structure is useful for grounding the current events of land conflicts and social mobilisation in historical processes that shaped the economic and social configuration of the study areas.

Figure 1.1: Thesis’s structure

However, before addressing the particularities of the case-study organisations and their territories, it is important to set the scene and establish the framework that was used in this research (Part I), starting with this introductory chapter. Chapter Two, the second component of Part I, provides theoretical and contextual background to the topic of the thesis. An important objective of this chapter is to bring together, in a succinct yet effective manner, the diverse theoretical components that are of relevance for conceptualising an integral model of development and change. Therefore, the bodies of literature discussed in this chapter and the
chapter’s structure reflect a particular logic reflecting the way in which the thesis’s topic has been analysed. The first body of literature situates current peasant livelihood challenges and struggles within the neoliberal global structure of agriculture production and consumption, with the associated emphasis on intensive cultivation methods utilising modern technologies on a grand scale. The second body of literature addresses the discontent of many social organisations with how liberal democracy operates across Latin America and engages with current debates regarding how counter-hegemonic movements should relate to their respective states. This chapter then moves from the critique of the hegemonic political-economy and polity to offer alternatives. The literature here is situated primarily in the fields of post-development and radical democracy. The latter is perceived as embodying much potential for creating socially inclusive alternatives that empower ordinary people to assume responsibility over, and be part of, their communal affairs. Central to this aspect of the thesis is literature on horizontalism, prefigurative politics, collectivism, consensus decision-making and other similar concepts.

Chapter Three, the last of Part I, presents and discusses the guiding methodology of this research. It presents the philosophical beliefs underlying this thesis and the methods that were used in the field to gather data and later in the office to analyse and present the findings. This chapter provides justifications for the case-studies and fieldwork locations, and points out how this study is different from previous ones. Also discussed in this chapter are issues of positionality in research, ethics, study limitations and cross-lingual research.

Part II of the thesis addresses the first research objective and includes chapters four, five and six. Chapter Four serves as a “transitional” step from the discussion of a broader theoretical and contextual literature to more context specific literature. Using primarily Spanish-language academic publications and government reports, this chapter focuses on the Argentinean peasantry and its characteristics, followed by a discussion of the changes of the agrarian structures in the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. This chapter examines the highly contested nature of land-tenure, and the notable extent of social mobilisation of the peasantry in both Santiago del Estero and Jujuy.

Once the historic processes that have shaped and affected the rural populations under examination in this research are discussed, Chapter Five addresses the issue of social mobilisation and the important role of identity politics within counter-hegemonic discourses and actions. This chapter investigates and deconstructs rural identities in Argentina to show
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their implication for current mobilisation of marginalised rural communities. Of particular importance are the nuanced differences and commonalities between the ethno-cultural identity (as indigenous people) and social identity (as peasants) of rural communities, and how the negotiation of these ethnic and class identities are manifest in the discourses of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna.

Chapters Six to Nine focus more closely on the two case-study organisations of this research study – MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. Still in Part II, Chapter Six is concerned with the formation of peasant organisations in Argentina, and particularly with the formation and consolidation of these two organisations. This chapter links the formation of peasant organisations to the re-emergence of civil society in Argentina and depicts the historical trajectories of these campesino-indigenous organisations to the present day. This chapter progresses from a more conceptual discussion of civil society and the “third sector” to the history of the Argentinean civil society, and to the conditions that prompted and enabled the current social mobilisation in the country’s rural interior. The depiction of the establishment and consolidation of the two case-study organisations is of particular importance, demonstrating some of the challenges specific to their trajectory of social organisation and struggle.

After the historical and organisational processes of grassroots mobilisation have been examined, Part III of the thesis examines the second and third research objectives and includes chapters seven, eight and nine. Chapter Seven analyses the current challenges for rural livelihoods in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, as expressed by research participants in interviews. The array of challenges presented in this chapter underlies the wide scope of the aims and objectives of the grassroots struggles of organised rural communities. This ample scope, then, forms the basis for the conceptualisation of an integral development model as a comprehensive response to these diverse livelihood and other challenges. Of great importance in this chapter is the often politicised manner in which many research participants expressed current challenges, reflecting a critical stand toward structural impediments to development. In light of the challenges mentioned by research participants, the chapter ends with a discussion of the aims and objectives of the case-study organisations in their struggle.

Chapter Eight focuses on a key aspect of how the aims and objectives of the campesino-indigenous movement are to be achieved – the organisational structures and internal politics of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. This chapter depicts and critically analyses the internal
structure and politics of these organisations, including their aspiration for horizontality, participatory democracy and consensus decision-making. Those elements of radical democracy are pivotal in the integral development model of these organisations, both theoretically and practically, and it is important to understand how they come into being in practice. This chapter critically engages with the challenges, perceived and real, of adhering to ideals of radical participatory democracy. Relating to these challenges and to the way power is conceptualised within this form of organisation and decision-making, the chapter also addresses the involvement of non-peasants, often urban, university-educated professionals (also called “técnicos” – experts), who have become a vital part of these grassroots organisations. This is an interesting and positive partnership, but also one that some critics see as involving an inherent power imbalance, with implications for the organisations’ aspiration for horizontality. This chapter addresses themes relevant to both the second and third research objectives.

Chapter Nine is the last of the results chapters. This chapter looks at how integral development is being achieved in practice. It demonstrates how the ideals of horizontal prefigurative politics are used in projects of economic development. These projects are undertaken through collective production and commercialisation, where decision-making rests with those individuals directly engaged with these projects. This form of development aims at promoting political and social change through participation in decision-making and focuses on contesting existing social inequalities. These projects reflect the dual emphasis of the integral development model where, on the one hand, short-term objectives of generating income are targeted while, on the other hand, long-term objectives of forming political consciousness and bringing about social change are also present. Thus, the pursuit of integral development has generated economic as well as social benefits. These achievements are not insignificant, but the last part of this chapter is more forward looking, asking whether the causes of the campesino-indigenous movement could be better achieved or promoted through engagement in party politics.

Part IV, the last section of the thesis, comprises of the conclusions chapter – Chapter Ten. This chapter confirms the validity of the main findings of this research study. Rather than offering a summary of the thesis, it provides a synthesis of the various issues relating to the social mobilisation of campesino-indigenous communities in Northwest Argentina and their discourses and praxes of a different, integral, model of development. The empirical findings and their theoretical implications are discussed according to the three research objectives.
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presented above. This chapter then suggests possible avenues for further research before providing a final succinct reflection on the research topic.
Chapter Two

Integral Development through Prefigurative Politics: From a Critique to Conceptualising Alternatives

Introduction

The integral development model put forward by the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna aims at promoting an encompassing economic, political and social change. Undoubtedly, these different spheres are overlapping and interconnected, rather than disjointed. However, each of these spheres also has its particular relevant literature. The literature discussed in this chapter and the way it is being presented reflects a particular logic. In order to analyse the discourses and praxes of the case-study organisations of this research it is necessary to situate the mobilised peasantry within wider economic and political structures, acknowledging the dynamic nature of such structures. The neoliberal order and the structures of food production and consumption, with its emphasis on global trade and advanced technologies are, therefore, important for understanding the economic (and also political) marginalisation of campesinos in Northwest Argentina. However, their political and economic marginalisation is also a central aspect in their mobilisation and, although it is embedded in colonial and post-colonial
processes, current democratic structures have not been particular successful in changing this reality in the study areas. Social movements’ engagement with and relations towards the state, therefore, reflect a particular analysis of a given political culture. The case-study organisations here express an antagonistic stand towards the state and the representative democracy model that perpetuates their marginalisation as social subjects. Rather than being the main focus of campesinos’ struggles and mobilisation, this critical analysis of the political-economy and the polity by progressive social movements, such as the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, serves them to construct alternatives, to form new structures that reject existing structures that exclude and marginalise social groups. Such alternatives resonate strongly with post-development thinking and are often situated within a framework of “radical democracy” and “prefigurative politics”. This inclusive form of participatory democracy is seen by many organisations as a way to challenge existing social structures that may seem “natural” but in practice serve particular dominant groups within society. Therefore, in their quest for promoting an integral development, the case-study organisations examined here have chosen to adhere to principles of radical democracy and prefigurative politics. Some may argue that the integral development model presented here is idealistic but unfeasible. This, however, does not seem to deter those who advocate and practice it, and thus neither shall I be disheartened.

Addressing the theoretical and contextual aspects underlying grassroots peasant-indigenous social movement-led integral development, therefore, entails the consideration of literature from an array of disciplines and subjects. Surely, no single chapter, or even thesis, could ever encompass the entirety of the issues inherent to this topic. I start with this explicit assertion because I am about to embark on an almost impossible mission – bringing together this vast and differentiated literature in a succinct manner without losing sight of the chapter’s purposes. These include providing background and context to the research topic, discussing relevant theory and concepts, providing supporting evidence for arguments and debates, and situating the research within and alongside existing studies and knowledge in the research field (Ridley, 2008).

The first component of the research topic covered in this literature review is the increasing dominance of the neoliberal economic order and its effect on the structure of agriculture production and the peasantry. This discussion explores the challenges the neoliberal political-economy inflicts on marginalised peasant producers by focusing on literature on Latin American peasants and small agricultural producers and addressing the geographic
inequalities of power between agribusiness corporations predominantly from the North and marginalised rural communities from the South. The second part of the chapter shifts from the political-economic context and into the political order that has often accompanied the neoliberal restructuring, namely representative democracy. Within the Latin American context I conceptualise this political model as part of a neoliberal democratic paradigm, with the roll-back of the state on the one hand, and the (re)emergence of organised civil society on the other. Of importance here are also the relations between the state and social movements with regard to social change and development. The third part of the chapter adds yet another important theoretical and practical pillar to this research. Here I explicitly situate this research within post-development thought and then move beyond mere critique to engage with alternative approaches to bottom-up grassroots autonomous development. The theoretical as well as the practical aspects of these alternatives are primarily political by nature and they stem from experiences of different counter-hegemonic associations which advocate for a wide social, political and economic transformation through prefigurative politics within radical democracy. In the context of the peasantry’s path to survival, such alternative politics entail an integral model of development, and in order to stay true to this integral approach this literature review must engage critically with an array of academic fields. That may seem somewhat disjointed, but in effect all these complex issues have enormous bearings on rural communities’ wellbeing, and a genuine integral development model must take into account the various aspects of the political-economic system in order to envision short and long-term change.

The peasantry under a global and neoliberal agro-market: challenges and responses

The increasing hegemony of the neoliberal political-economic doctrine and its implementation across different parts of the world, including Latin America, has received much attention. Here I examine some of the key aspects of this important shift and its ramifications for often highly marginalised agriculture producers – the peasants – whose livelihoods have been affected by neoliberal policies. Peasant producers may struggle to compete with cheap, and often imported, food and they are not very likely to benefit from trade liberalisation and the subsequent new export opportunities because they lack capital, marketing channels and relevant knowledge. At the same time, neoliberal economic restructuring has removed the already limited protectionist and supportive measures provided
by the State to its peasant producers (Kay, 2006). Therefore, in this discussion I address the logic of neoliberalism regarding agriculture production, its pitfalls and some of its implications. Importantly, while some parts of the discussion below are more conceptual and general, they are often linked to Latin American and particularly Argentinean experiences, reflecting the main focus of this study.

The restructuring of the Argentinean economy according to the neoliberal doctrine since the 1970s and increasingly during the 1990s and its ramifications for the country’s peasantry is merely an example of the global hegemony of this economic paradigm over the last 30 years. Within this doctrine trade liberalisation receives special attention. According to its proponents, economic development is to be achieved by means of trade liberalisation which promotes growth through exports in accordance with “comparative advantage” in terms of available resources. Since comparative advantage for many “developing” countries lies in low-technology and labour intensive industries, such as agriculture and mineral extraction, emphasis should be placed on the export of such primary commodities and the import of manufacturing goods (Yarbrough and Yarbrough, 2006; Todaro and Smith, 2006). As a part of this doctrine, trade barriers for agriculture had been multilaterally reduced through negotiations under the GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade), and its successor, the WTO (World Trade Organisation) (Yarbrough and Yarbrough, 2006). Still, agriculture has remained an important component of contestation surrounding trade liberalisation, and it is at the centre of the unresolved issues in the current WTO Doha Round (Stewart-Brown, 2009).

Following the neoliberal paradigm, many poor countries were instructed to focus on exporting primary agricultural goods as an engine for growth, in which they have comparative advantage. However, the United States and the European Union subsidise their farmers, creating an “artificial” comparative advantage in their favour (McMichael, 2000). Under the neoliberal order small agriculture producers in, say, a poor “developing” country, need to compete on the global market with subsidised producers in a “developed” country. Peasants, or campesinos, in Latin America have particularly experienced hardship as a result of this unfair competition (Kay, 2004). Trade liberalisation is intended to promote competition and a “level playing field”. With farm subsidies and well established agro-multinational corporations (MNCs) that exercise economic power for their own benefit and spread into newly available economies, however, the “playing field” was never levelled. Thus, already well established agribusinesses have had an advantage over small scale
producers with inferior technology once markets were opened for foreign investment and competition (McMichael, 2000).

Argentina, as a whole, clearly has comparative advantage in agriculture, based in its vast arable land of the Pampa region, and it is a net exporter of agriculture goods (Porto, 2007), and thus should benefit from trade liberalisation in agriculture. However, there is debate about whether the Argentinean campesinos could benefit from the economic opportunities created by trade liberalisation. Guido Porto (2007) from the World Bank has calculated that if rich countries would remove all tariff and nontariff barriers of trade (such as quotas, cheap credit and tax reliefs), Argentina would experience poverty alleviation. He argues that although such trade liberalisation will increase the prices of commodities, this increase will be outweighed by an increase in nominal wages for unskilled rural labourers, especially in the poorer parts of north Argentina. However, agriculture production of export commodities like the current bonanza cash-crop of soybeans, which has swept across large territories of the country including Santiago del Estero Province, is capital intensive and highly mechanised and does not require much labour (Newell, 2009; Pengue, 2005). It seems that Porto assumes “trickling down” would prevail; this assumption is, nevertheless, very much disputed (see Stiglitz, 2002). Instead, large MNCs capture much of the benefits while the campesinos need to face with great challenges to their rural livelihoods.

Many of today’s agro-MNCs gained economic power in their domestic markets (Heffernan, 2000) during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, when agriculture imports were highly restricted (McMichael, 2000). Due to spatial distribution of farms and difficulty to access markets, some small companies had managed to achieve economies of scale in their operations and gradually started to expand while acquiring both monopoly powers over agriculture inputs, as well as monopsony powers over outputs. Cargill, an agro-MNC originally from Minnesota, is an eminent example of such a company. As time passed these companies grew further and started both merging with each other and buying rival companies. This process has brought about very large and powerful agriculture corporations (Heffernan, 2000). In 1999 Cargill was the largest private company in the world (Kneen, 1999). In Argentina Cargill has more than 4000 employees in 50 locations across the country, producing a diverse range of products, ranging from flour and vegetable oils to beef and protein meals, of which 90 per cent are for export (Cargill, n.d.).

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6 Cargill’s office in Quimilí is located about 400m from the MOCASE-VC’s Central.
Richard Lewontin (2000) argues that these corporations have transformed farming into agrifood industry. From this perspective, while farming is the process of turning inputs such as seeds, water and fertilisers, for example, into produce, agrifood is what Lewontin (2000, p. 95) defines as “farm operation, but also the production, transportation, and marketing of the inputs of farming, as well as the transportation, processing, and marketing of the farm outputs.” This multidimensional control reduces competition for the agrifood corporations, and results in a vertical integration of production, and hence immense economic power (Heffernan, 2000).

Another aspect of the agro-export-led economic growth is technology. In order to achieve this prospective growth there is a need to produce enough agriculture surpluses for exporting. This objective does not accommodate subsistence farming, as it produces little if any surpluses, and so this model promotes large scale, capital intensive and mechanised farming. Therefore, those who were able to seize the new opportunities offered by the liberalisation of the market were primarily capital abundant large domestic farm holdings and agro-MNCs (Kay, 2004).

As a result of trade liberalisation, established MNCs gained access to more foreign markets. In Argentina, agro-MNCs bought national agro-companies and consolidated in their hands what previously was a more diversified supply system of agricultural inputs (mainly seeds). From this point seeds were sold as part of a technological package including also pesticides and machinery (Newell, 2009). The Argentinean government gladly accepted the biotechnology these MNCs had brought with them. It was, and still is, perceived as a component that would boost Argentina’s economy, helping its government to service its foreign debt (Newell, 2008, 2009). Genetic-modified (GM) seeds are an integral part of this new biotechnology phase in Argentinean agriculture. It promised less intensive tillage and thus less soil erosion, and less use of pesticides. Although Roundup Ready (RR) soybeans did not increase previous yield levels in Argentina, Carl Pray and Anwar Naseem (2007) note that savings on agriculture inputs resulted in increased profits for Argentinean farmers and the type of herbicide used for this cultivation has changed to a much less toxic one. However, although Pray and Naseem (2007) argue that the poor do not benefit much from new agro-biotechnology, they ignore much of the associated costs of the proliferation of GM crops. Herbicides used may be less toxic but Peter Newell (2009) and Walter Pengue (2005) pointed that, in the case of Argentina, imports of agro-chemicals and fertilisers have significantly increased, rather than decreased. Therefore, although herbicides may be less toxic, their usage
in absolute terms has significantly increased. Moreover, there are other costs associated with the cultivation of GM crops in Argentina, among them deforestation in order to bring more (often marginal) land under cultivation in some parts of the country, including in one of the provinces under examination here – Santiago del Estero; increased concentration of land in the hands of large farmers; soil degradation; loss of biodiversity and less employment for agricultural labourers (Pengue, 2005; Newell, 2009). Thus, new biotechnology in Argentina has important economic, social and environmental associated costs.

The new technological package requires capital for investment and, overall, credit for rural dwellers in the Global South is both scarce and comes at very high interest rates that reflect the lack of collateral of the borrowers and the high risk that is associated with the rural economy (Norton, 2004). It is an impediment for agriculture modernisation that requires governments or other sources to offer concessional credit or assistance that would allow marginal farmers to modernise and improve their prospects for a better living (Kay, 2006). However, as a part of the neoliberal restructuring, governments in Latin America had withdrawn subsidised credit and technical assistance for the agricultural sector, passively contributing to a widening technological gap between the campesinos and the more affluent capitalist farmers (Kay, 2004). In Argentina, many farmers wanted to capitalise on this new economic opportunity, but a substantial share of those who managed to receive credit for buying machinery and inputs such as agrochemicals and seeds could not repay their debt and as a result lost their land (Pengue, 2005; Giarracca and Teubal, 2001).

Ill-defined land titles have also made an important contribution to this process that has resulted in an increasing land concentration in the hands of fewer and larger producers. In a search to expand their production, many such large producers entered into peripheral regions where land values were lower. Even though this phenomenon in north Argentina was evident already in the 1960s and 1970s, prior to the recent round of trade liberalisation and the introduction of the biotechnological package, it was definitely intensified by these latter developments (Bidaseca, 2010). This is of great concern to the campesinos, which often occupy those lands without having a secured tenure and thus are at a vulnerable position. In Argentina, 43 per cent of the productive arable land is in the hands of only 1.3 per cent of the agriculture producers (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2007).

The phenomenon of land concentration is important because it implicitly means that peasants are losing their access to or control over the means of production. This is neither new nor
exclusive to the Global South. The process by which the size of farms increases and their number decreases has been evident in the USA for more than 50 years now, and it has substantially modified the traditional family-based farm structure there (Magdoff, Foster and Buttel, 2000). However, in the US these were small-scale farmers and not subsistence peasants who lost their land; nonetheless, a parallel can be drawn to the process that is taking place in many “developing” countries since it is essentially a manifestation of the same economic course, of which Argentina serves as a vivid example (Pengue, 2005).

Land concentration counters the agriculture-rural development path that was manifested through land reforms during the 20th century in different parts of the world (but not in Argentina) (Borras, Kay and Akram-Lodhi, 2007). According to the leading redistributive theory in 1960s and 1970s, as it was manifested in Chile for instance, private small landholdings would eliminate dependency on large landlords and create both demand for domestic manufactured goods and local supply of food. In turn, both foreign debt and domestic inflation would be controlled (Murray, 2006). The neoliberal-capitalist paradigm radically changed prevailing theories and praxes of Keynesianism that championed state intervention to increase local demand to stimulate the expansion of domestic markets. The neoliberal shift, then, has had a significant effect on land-tenure and thus on rural livelihoods in Latin America, a region that was predicted to benefit the most from trade liberalisation and less state intervention in agriculture (Kay, 2004). Agriculture production, however, is far from being monolithic, and the implementation of neoliberal policies has not had the same effects on all types of producers.

According to Miguel Teubal (2009, p. 10), “[i]t is true that neoliberalism gave way to a growing agrarian capitalism that marginalized peasant economies.” In Argentina, the Deregulation Decree of 1991 (no. 2284) has had a significant effect on the agriculture sector but it was particularly detrimental for many small to medium-size producers, both peasant and non-peasant. This legislation removed the main institutions that supported and regulated the domestic agriculture production, such as the meat and grain boards, and either cancelled

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7 Neoliberal policies in Latin America included five main components: (1) trade reforms (such as lowering tariffs); (2) domestic financial liberalisation (such as eliminating controls over credit and interest rates); (3) international financial liberalisation (such as allowing for external capital transactions); (4) reforming tax systems (such as the introduction of value-added tax and lowering corporate and personal income); and (5) privatisation of state enterprises. These policies were implemented to different extent across the region and Argentina experienced a particularly high degree of neoliberal economic restructuring (Morley, Machado and Pettinato, 1999).
or reduced other regulatory mechanisms including price supports and production quotas (Giarracca and Teubal, 2001; Teubal, 2009). These and other measures lowered the profitability of small-scale agriculture production and greatly exposed the agriculture sector in Argentina to the volatility of the global economy. This, in turn, meant that “[m]aintaining one’s standard of living required more and more land, and the owners of smaller farms experienced an ever increasing struggle for survival” (Giarracca and Teubal, 2011, p. 43).

In theoretical terms, historical periods of advancing capitalism, of trade liberalisation and of transformation of many peasants into petty commodity producers or (semi-)proletariats have continuously framed the century old “agrarian question”, which has been concerned with whether and how capital is affecting and changing agriculture production and structures (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010). Warwick Murray (2006) discusses two opposing views regarding the peasant question using Spanish terminology: campesinista (peasantisation) and descampesinista (depeasantisation). According to the former, also known as the Permanence Thesis, the existence of campesinos is not incompatible with a (neo)liberal global market. It follows a theory formulated by A.V. Chayanov in 1925 that suggests the existence of a parallel peasant economy. There, it is argued, a peasant is not subjected to the profit maximisation of the capitalist economy, but rather he or she acts to fulfil and maximise his or her family's satisfaction (Araghi, 1995). Hence, capitalist modernisation will not eliminate the peasantry.

The latter descampesinista view, also known as the Disappearance Thesis, which is attributed to the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the second half of the 19th century, predicts the demise of the peasantry due to modernisation and its transformation into the proletariat (Araghi, 1995). In a modern context, Murray (2006, p. 648) explains that this view holds that “globalisation is at best a danger to peasant livelihoods, and at worst incompatible with the very survival of peasant economy.” This is primarily because subsistence farming is not an integral part of the neoliberal-capitalist paradigm, a paradigm consisting of trade of surplus production according to comparative advantage, which underlies the contemporary economic globalisation. He also asserts that these two processes are place and context based, and thus the answer to the peasant question lies along a campesinista – descampesinista continuum. Thus, while some countries may experience the demise of small-scale agriculture producers, other countries may not, depending on their agrarian settings and their involvement in the global economy. This helps us to think about the economic pressures on
campesinos and think through the conditions under which they might sustain their livelihoods.

In Latin America, globalisation, and arguably also other social processes, seem to have pushed the peasantry somewhat towards the descampesinista end of the continuum. However, while modernisation has had an adverse effect on Latin American campesinos, they remain a significant part of both the agrarian sector and the society (Kay, 2004). Cristóbal Kay (2004, p. 240) asserts that “while the [Latin American] peasantry is far from disappearing, it is not thriving either, since their relative importance as agriculture producers continues to decline.” According to Kay (2006, 2009), economic growth, even when pursued by agriculture exports, will not suffice by itself to significantly alleviate rural poverty in the Latin American context of the world’s most extreme wealth concentration and income disparities. Of most significance to this study is Kay’s (2006, p. 456) assertion that “the main causes of rural poverty are structural, being related to the unequal land distribution and to the uneven power system.” Neither neoliberalism nor state sponsored import-substitution industrialisation have addressed these fundamentally structural causes of poverty. The multifaceted nature of the causes of rural poverty was also stressed by Araghi (2000), who evokes the importance of understanding the reciprocal action and reaction between geography, history, politics and economics in order to comprehend the complexity inherent in the “peasant question”. The peasantry’s situation and challenges are several, and no single reform can remedy current development stagnation; hence the embedded importance of politics in achieving development and the need for an integral development model that would address such issues.

One important challenge the campesinos face is lack of “food sovereignty”.

Philip McMichael (1997, p. 639) attributes the problem of food dependency in the South to the Green Revolution of the 1970s, which “introduced the agro-industrial dynamic into Third World food production,” which has been a distinctive characteristic of the “second food

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8 The term “food sovereignty” was coined in the 1996 World Food Summit by the transnational peasant organisation La Vía Campesina. La Vía Campesina (2011, p. 2, emphasis in original) defines food sovereignty as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems... It puts the aspirations, needs and livelihoods of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. Food sovereignty prioritises local food production and consumption. It gives a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector.” This concept will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.
regime” (McMichael, 2009). Modernisation of agriculture created dependency on imported inputs and enhanced the integration of the food market. Since the 1980s a distinctive shift was evident. The North-South integration had initiated substitution of traditional basic food crops with commercial non-traditional feed crops and other high-value foods, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, for export in developing countries. This shift was a response to an increasing demand for animal proteins and other high-value foods, brought about by proliferation of affluent diets, primarily but not exclusively in the “developed” world (McMichael, 1997; McGlade, 1997). For McMichael (2009) this configuration of the political economy of a global food system is a new, third, food regime.

Pengue (2005, p. 319) reaffirms this analysis of a new food regime in arguing that “we are facing a battle for high quality protein between developed and developing countries.” Argentina has experienced this shift from more diverse food production into feed crops as well. As a result, poor people no longer can afford the diverse diets they once could. For example, Pengue (2005) notes that meat consumption per capita in Argentina declined by 10 kilograms between 2004 and 2005. The traditional high quality meat protein was replaced by vegetable protein, such as soybeans; a change entailing a cultural shift as well as adverse health effects (Pengue, 2005). This phenomenon is what Argahi (2000, p. 155) refers to as “hunger amidst abundance.” It materialises when agriculture is directed towards affluent diets and the process in the descampesinista position, in which the rural poor have lost the means to subsist, is present.

The neoliberal restructuring of the Latin American economies, thus, has had an impact on campesinos’ livelihood strategies and social arrangements. A most notable change over the last 30 years has been the diversification of income sources, with a substantial increase in the importance of nonfarm activities as a source of livelihood (Bebbington, 2004).

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9 The concept of food regimes, introduced by Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael (1989, p. 95), “links the international relations of food production and consumption to forms of accumulation broadly distinguishing periods of capitalist transformation since 1870.” They identify the period of 1870-1930s as the first food regime, and 1950s-1970s as the second.

10 This vegetable protein is intended for the production of animal protein in wealthier economies.

11 In 2004 twenty per cent of Argentina’s children were undernourished. According to Pengue (2005), this was the result of the inability of the poor to afford the diverse diets they previously had, and particularly the substitution of animal with vegetal proteins. In part, this can be attributed to the high unemployment rate and poverty that resulted from the severe economic crisis of 2001. In 2002, over 17 per cent of households reported some level of hunger and 6 per cent reported severe and persistent hunger (Fiszbein and Giovagnoly, 2004). Increasing levels of child malnourishment and micronutrient deficiency (for example, 34.1 per cent of children between 6 and 23 months of age had anaemia due to iron deficiency) was still evident in 2007 (Scribano, Huergo and Eynard, 2010).
studies show that the relative share of nonfarm employment among rural households had increased significantly between the 1970s and the 1990s across Latin America. A similar trend was observed for the share of nonfarm income, which reached an average of 40 per cent of total rural income. The increase in the nonfarm employment was a result of both “pull” factors such as higher earnings prospects associated with nonfarm employment, and “push” factors such as land constraints and lack of credit (Reardon, Berdegué and Escobar, 2001).

Findings from these different studies also suggest that, in very poor rural areas across the continent, many households tend to rely to a high degree on nonfarm income as a share of their total income. However, since the rural poor usually lack education and other tradable skills, the level of their nonfarm earnings is often low (Reardon, Berdegué and Escobar, 2001). Thus, unsurprisingly, education and skills (human capital), and likewise social capital have become increasingly important for coping with crises and poverty (Bebbington, 2004). It is paramount for rural poverty alleviation that the government provides adequate education and technical support that would assist livelihood resilience (Kay, 2004), since it is not at all likely the free market would do this.

In the meantime, since effective government assistance is curtailed under the current neoliberal order, Latin American campesinos have had to adapt, resulting in an employment diversification strategy. This strategy is being manifested through a process of semi-proletariatisation, or sometimes complete proletariatisation, of the peasantry (Kay, 2004; Murray, 2006). Under this process campesinos increasingly offer themselves as cheap farm labourers for large capital abundant farmers and agribusinesses. Some agro-industry exports, such as fruits and vegetables, demand greater labour inputs, and that is where labour supply meets its demand. However, the nature of this work is predominantly seasonal and casual and therefore many campesinos can find only temporary, low paid and social security free employment (Kay, 2004). Furthermore, diversification of livelihood sources is not confined to agriculture work. Many campesinos migrate from the countryside to urban areas in search

12 Fernando Leiva (2008) notes that the election of centre-left candidates across Latin America has meant a departure from market fundamentalism and a gradual shift towards a more pragmatic approach to development. This approach, known as Latin American neostructuralism, aims at state involvement in increasing productivity with greater emphasis on social equity. This doctrine, however, still sees export-led development by competitive economic sectors as key; which in the Argentinean case is the agriculture sector. Therefore, even though under Kirchnerism the popular social sectors have received more support, I would argue that the Argentinean government is still very much attentive towards the market and investment of private capital and the peasantry is still marginalised and threatened by this political logic. In other words, the neoliberal project is no longer as severe but Argentina is not in a post-neoliberal epoch.
of work opportunities. There is nothing novel in this rural-to-urban migration, be it permanent or temporary. However, the pace of this phenomenon has accelerated over the last couple of decades (Bebbington, 2004). Both related phenomena of livelihood diversification and migration are evident in the provinces of Jujuy and Santiago del Estero, although, as will be shown in Chapter Four, these are not new phenomena in these territories.

Anthony Bebbington (2004, p. 182), in sum, asserts that “under neoliberalism… livelihoods have become more diverse, multi-active and mobile in addition to becoming in many cases more vulnerable.” This diversified livelihood strategy, however, is primarily about survival and it does not seek to contest the nature of the prevailing difficulties of the peasantry. This is not to say that the peasantry is passive. On the contrary, “the neoliberal project has certainly not gone unchallenged by peasants in most of Latin America” (Kay, 2004, p. 246). Peasant movements have sprung across the continent, as in other parts of the world, demanding social justice, a fair economic system, food sovereignty and an agriculture system that is based on small and medium producers (La Vía Campesina, 2011).

The (neo)liberal representative democratic state and social movements: discontent and counter-hegemonic strategies

The proliferation of social movements across Latin America has been prominent over the last 30 years or so. This has occurred despite some predictions that social movements have only a temporary role and once the process of “transition-to-democracy” is completed and electoral democracy is established they would fade away (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden and Kuecker, 2007). Regardless of the theoretical validity of such predictions, the optimism that accompanied democratic transitions in Latin America has given way to discontent, pessimism and even more social mobilisation (Pearce, 2004). It is in this context that social movements have retained their significance.

In Latin America, democracy is often perceived as yet another tool used by the social and economic elites to perpetuate their hegemony. While democracy exists procedurally (free press and elections for instance), even if it is “by the people” it is certainly not “for the people”. Other, “deeper”, aspects of democracy that relate to civil and human rights, such as protection against discrimination and appropriate rule of law, remain feeble (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden and Kuecker, 2007; Pearce, 2004). In other words, there is a “gap between ‘electoral
CHAPTER TWO: Integral Development through Prefigurative Politics

democracy’ (i.e. procedural aspects are in place) and ‘liberal’ democracy (i.e. full protection of political and civil rights)...” (Foweraker, Landman and Harvey, 2003, p. 140).

Liberal democracy is a model identified with Western political culture that entails both democratic rule and political liberties. While the former includes indirect representation through regular free elections, electoral choice and distinction between state and civil society, the latter entails liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly and more. Also important to this model are the rule of law and separation of power (Zakaria, 1997; Bollen and Paxton, 2000; Heywood, 2003). This model of democracy is established on the notion of individualism, but it also aims at citizens’ ability to protect themselves from the authorities while also enhancing their personal capabilities of being responsible for the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of their lives (Heywood, 2003; Vincent, 1992).

However, even a true “liberal democracy” is not unproblematic; political systems may indeed be regarded as “liberal” but they could also concurrently be part of what Benjamin Barber (1984) calls “thin democracy”. Thus, it is not the fundamental notion of “democracy” that is under attack by many social movements, but rather it is “representative democracy”, where individuals are being elected to represents the people, that is at the centre of discontent. Representation, nevertheless, is an integral part of liberal democracy and the struggles of many social movements around the world involve, inter alia, a strong critique of liberal democracy, at least in the forms in which it is being practiced in many countries in both North and South. The prevalent “representative democracy” is often perceived as elitist, corrupt and serving the interests of capital, hence the conceptualisation of a “neoliberal democracy”. For Gustavo Esteva (2009, p. 48),

in the real world, the democratic model has normally been elitist, in that it assures the perpetuation in power of self-selected minorities. In a democracy, a small minority decides for the others: it is always a minority of the people and almost always a minority of the voters that decides which party will govern; a still smaller minority promulgates the laws and makes the important decisions. Alternation in power and constitutional checks do not change this fact.

In other words, political parties fail to articulate the voices and demands of the “majority” poor, rural and urban, and of other marginalised groups, and therefore lose credibility and support of these groups. Such a group is the Zapatista movement from Chiapas, Mexico, and their most famous spokesperson, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, asserted that
until now, and in the best of cases, representative democracy or electoral democracy has referred simply to the citizen participating in an electoral process, choosing a candidate on the basis of programmes or policies, and then proceeding to delegate the taking of political decisions to that person or that party. From that moment on, or at least until the next election, that delegate, being either a person or a party, and supposedly with the backing of the majority, commands (interviewed by Huerta and Higgins, 1999).

Social movements such as the Zapatistas represent the various aspirations of marginalised citizens and hence their proliferation in a region where the implementation of neoliberal policies is closely associated with both democratically elected governments and a widening socioeconomic gap (Pearce, 2004; Stahler-Sholk, 2001; Robles, 2001).

The limited success of the democratic endeavour in Latin America has its historic roots in the attempt to relocate a governance system associated with Western traditions and culture and implement it in places with different cultural contexts. Cultural processes that enabled a more successful evolution of liberal democracy eventuated in some parts of Europe but did not take place in Latin America (Avritzer, 2002). According to Jenny Pearce (2004), the domination of a strong class of large landowners managed to preserve its socioeconomic hegemony for much longer compared with its European counterpart. This domination, characterised by strong hierarchical and personalised patron-client relations, was then extended into politics and concurrently into the modern state. This culture, a residue of the colonial Hispanic legacy, is strongly embedded in a corporatist system of the ruling elites (Wiarda, 2003; Pearce, 2004). Howard Wiarda (2003) ascribes the corporatist nature of power holders in 19th century Latin America, namely the large landowner elite, the Catholic Church and the military, as conservative forces that retarded, at best, the development of more inclusive and liberal political systems.

Facing such political realities, since the 1980s many social movements have detached themselves from political institutions, but at the same time have not adopted a revolutionary character, at least not as this character was historically manifested in that region. That is, some movements do not wish to overthrow the government, and some do not even oppose capitalism (but rather more often oppose neoliberalism). Their fundamental goal is to promote social and economic equity by reforming the political-economic system. Thus, most are arguably more reformists than revolutionists (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden and Kuecker, 2007).

A common characteristic of many current social movements is their attempt at forming and practicing new forms of politics. By doing so, they do not necessarily wish to overtake the
state’s political power. Rather, their aim is to truly democratise their respective societies. This includes pressing governments from below, demanding civil and human rights as well as social justice from the state (Sang-Sub, 2007). In other words, “fundamentally in dispute are the parameters of democracy – to be sure, the very boundaries of what is to be properly defined as the political arena: its participants, its institutions, its processes, its agenda, and its scope” (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, 1998, p. 1). Social movements, in their own contexts and particular settings, are thus continuously engaging in (re)shaping democratic praxis.

The notable discontent with and subsequent departure of some social movements from systems of representative democracy in Latin America go beyond a critique of how politics is being practiced. There is also a theoretical component in place that rejects the underlying notion of this “thin” democratic structure. For Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey (2005, p. 213) “representation” “has been recognized as a mechanism of control and exclusion – for elite rule – since antiquity.” According to such views, representation disempowers the people and allows a privileged few to pursue their own goals on “behalf” of others. Emphasising this point, Tormey (2006, p. 144) also argues that “if we move from a position that insists that people can be represented without doing violence to them ... then the ‘starting point’ of political philosophy as long practised has to be rethought.” To a great extent this is a critique of power relations, which stems from an analysis that sees these relations as centralised, oppressive and unjust.

As noted above, the state, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, is regularly perceived as flawed, corrupt and in need of radical transformation; but it is also the principal addressee of social and economic demands. The question is, therefore, how social movements should relate themselves to the state, and could direct engagement in party politics be a strategy for development and change, or should indirect political pressure be preferred?

The respective roles of the state and of grassroots social movements in processes of social and economic development and their interactions with each other are the subject of much published literature and continue to be a field of research and interest (for an example see Goldstone, 2003). Diane Davis (1999) suggests the concept of “distance” and its four identified sources (geography, institutions, class and culture) as a useful theoretical tool for examining such relationships in the Latin American context. Davis challenged the suitability of theoretical frameworks of social movements, such as “political opportunity structure” (POS) and “new social movement” (NSM), in the Latin American context because they are
grounded on Western assumptions and historic experience of state – civil society relations; assumptions and experiences that are foreign in the Latin American political context.

A detailed discussion of these two theoretical frameworks is well beyond the scope of this thesis; but in very general terms, POS theory is often associated with North American scholars and it focuses on the political circumstances that affect and shape the emergence, activities and achievements of social movements. A notable characteristic of this theory is its emphasis on external factors and structures that affect social movements, rather than examining internal aspects of such movements. Key focus of this theory is the State and how movements develop strategies within a particular context of political opportunities and threats (Edelman, 2001; Tarrow, 2011; Kriesi, 2004; Wahlström and Peterson, 2006; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004).

The NSM theoretical framework was developed primarily by European scholars and has had a notable Marxist influence, albeit its rejection of Marxism. In contrast to “old” social movements, such as labour movements that struggled for working-class rights in the industrial era, NSM theory is embedded in the post-industrial era of multiple identities and different conflicts, be they social, economic, political or environmental. This theory is based on the importance of conflict in society, perceiving it as being of a collective nature, rather than individual. It is concerned with the relations between dominators and dominated and a revolutionary notion often prevails among NSM theorists, which put emphasis on transforming society rather than reforming it (Nash, 1999; Pichardo, 1997; Melucci, 1980, 1994).

According to Davis (1999, p. 586), “for NSM theorists and their Latin American interpreters, what makes social movements ‘new’ is precisely their autonomy or distance from state institutions and formal political processes.” The argument she puts forward is that in Latin America some individuals and groups of citizens are more distanced from state institutions than others, and this distance serves as stimulus for forming and joining social movements, which, in turn, seek to bridge these gaps and to bring marginalised groups closer to the state, rather than to gain greater autonomy from the state, as NSM theory would suggest (Davis, 1999; Melucci, 1980; Buechler, 1995; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996; Kriesi et al., 1992; Foweraker, 1995; Nash, 1999).

Also focusing on case-studies from Latin America, James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2005) serve to radicalise the discussion about relations between states and their respective
social movements. These authors have identified three basic models of social change and political power in Latin America. The first one is electoral politics, where political parties contest each other for citizens’ votes that would mandate a party or a coalition of parties to rule. The second model is the formation of social movements. In contrast to political parties these are not meant to obtain power in an institutional way, but rather to pursue power, and consequently their demands, by pressuring the political system from the outside through mass mobilisation. The third model, which came to the forefront in the 1980s and 1990s, is based on social action for more localised economic and social development. This model does not entail a direct confrontation with state institutions, but rather it focuses on the concept of “social capital” and its accumulation, thus emphasising the ability of marginalised groups to network and organise themselves in order to improve their material and social wellbeing. This latter model, argue Petras and Veltmeyer (2005), defines the most common approach to social change in present development theory and practice within the prevailing neoliberal framework.

Ostensibly, the above typology may seem unproblematic, but definitely not to Petras and Veltmeyer. Beginning with the third model, they perceive such highly geographically confined efforts of local development as a mechanism through which the economic and political elites, domestic and international, keep the poor and marginalised at bay. For them this model of development provides “micro-solutions to micro-problems” (2005, p. 228), and this offers a minimal relief that prevents mass mobilisation that in turn may contest the hegemony of the elite, and perhaps would address the macro-problems affecting our world. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), they assert, are “missionaries of micro-reform” (2005, p. 229) and a “vehicle for transactions between old regimes and conservative electoral politicians” (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, p. 131). NGOs, thus, are a tool for promoting a non-confrontational development model, which does not contest the neoliberal model itself, a view that resonates with Tina Wallace’s (2004) view of NGOs as potential Trojan horses of neoliberalism.

Petras and Veltmeyer (2005) are also critical of the third and second models and argue for a fourth model of social change that, in some capacity, combines these two models. For them “the only way forward for the working classes and the popular movement is political power: to abandon the development project and engage the class struggle – to directly confront the holders of this power and to contest power in every arena open to it” (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005, p. 238). Political power could be assumed by social movements through either electoral
politics or revolutionary mass mobilisation. Both paths, however, have their own pitfalls. In this thesis these models of social change suggest ways that campesinos could respond to their marginalisation.

Notwithstanding Petras and Veltmeyers’ typology, Jack Goldstone (2003) highlighted the complexity embedded in relations between states, political parties and social movements. He offers a typology of different ways by which states may respond to pressure from social movements and the ways social movements influence states. This typology reflects the different paths both states and social movements may choose, from violent protestation and counter state coercion through to ongoing alliances. Choosing a strategic path, therefore, is a task with which each social movement has to engage; and opinions often diverge on this issue of bridging the gap with the state.

From a critique to an alternative: envisioning integral development through prefigurative politics and practice

A critical discussion of the hegemonic neoliberal economic and political order in the light of its implications for marginalised social sectors, and particularly for the peasantry, is important for laying the theoretical as well as the practical foundations for analysing how progressive social movements provide counter-hegemonic alternatives. A mere critique, therefore, is an important starting point but it will not suffice. In order “to overcome the separation on which capitalist rule is based… actions must point-beyond in some way, assert alternative ways of doing” (Holloway, 2005, p. 213).

This argument is of much relevance also to the field of development, which is yet another facet of this research study. An “integral development model”, the main concept guiding the analysis in this study and an antonym to a “non-confrontational development model”, is a product of exactly this notion of critiquing and then offering an alternative path. In MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, I find resonances with this in their emphasis on integral development. Therefore, naturally, this model is linked to post-development thought, and it provides, arguably, a way to move from a critique of development to a practice-oriented and theoretically-embedded course of action. Yet again, I shall begin with a brief overview of the development – post-development debate, but only to situate and contextualise emerging alternative paradigms.
From the early 1990s the term “post-development” was increasingly used to capture an array of criticism of development (Hart, 2001). With its theoretical roots stemming from a poststructuralist and postcolonial critique (Escobar, 1995), post-development writers perceive “development” as a collection of a particular form of knowledge, interventions and narratives, that give those who implement them the ability to influence and rule others (Sidaway, 2007). Therefore, the “post” prefix does not refer to a quest of finding novel and more efficient ways to achieve development, which is perceived as a form of domination, but rather it signifies the inadequacy of the notion of “development” itself, urging a departure away from the concept of “developing the underdeveloped”. Instead of inflicting Western values and ideas as to what is socially and materially desirable on the world’s poor, post-development theorists call for imagining new “alternatives-to-development”, rather than “alternative development”. The latter is being rejected on the grounds that it merely uses different methods to pursue the same (undesirable) path of development (McGregor, 2007).

Thus, the notion of “development” and its meanings are central to this debate. According to Arturo Escobar (1992, p. 20), “development was chiefly a matter of capital, technology, and education and the appropriate policy and planning mechanisms to successfully combine these elements.” Development, Escobar (1992, p. 22-3) elaborates, “is most clearly anchored in the Western economy, with its ensemble of systems of production, power and signification.” This conceptualisation of development is widely accepted by different post-development thinkers. However, it has been criticised for being too narrow to capture the diversity within the development discourse, and the ways in which alternative frameworks and practices have shifted from the margins to the mainstream (Nederveen Pieterse, 1998, 2000; Ziai, 2004).

Criticism regarding post-development ideas, however, did not end in debating the definition of development, and the translation of these radical new ideas to practice has formed an important arena for contention. While some post-development theorists may not be concerned with offering alternatives to development practice, Escobar (1992) explicitly asserts that it is important to have theoretically informed alternatives that are practice-oriented. Thus, in order to achieve an alternative-to-development it is necessary to change institutions and social relations, incorporate different forms of knowledge and enhance the autonomy of local communities. This, in turn, was envisioned by Escobar (1992) to materialise by the independent activities of social movements. Such civil mobilisation will, inter alia, form communal solidarity, enhance direct and more just democracy and reduce the vulnerability associated with the capitalist economy by improving the informal economy (Ziai, 2004). As
will be discussed in Chapter Nine, this vision resonates with the MOCA-E-VC and Red Puna and is manifested in their communal economic ventures.

However, Escobar’s early imaginary of what future (alternative-to-) development should consist of did not satisfy many commentators, who persisted in arguing that post-development is an unconstructive critique since it offers no real practical guidance (see for example Pieterse, 1998). Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1998, p. 366), a notable critic of post-development, wonders “what is the point of declaring development a ‘hoax’... without proposing an alternative?,” obviously disregarding Escobar’s vision. Regardless, Aram Ziai (2004) notes that it should come as no surprise that post-development writers give little thought to what role development institutions should play, since they do not see them as relevant. But that does not mean no alternative practices have been suggested. For Andrew McGregor (2009) “post-development is undergoing a metamorphosis.” This change includes a shift in focus from angry critiques of development and its implicit (often inappropriate) values to that of a constructive epistemology for researchers for finding alternative possibilities and opportunities for more adequate social and economic change (McGregor, 2009).

For the purpose of this thesis, I understand development as a multifaceted project and therefore draw on a diverse literature covering an array of topics, all of which form essential parts of an integral development model. The case-studies analysed in this research, with their emphasis on politicised integral development, can usefully draw on these approaches. Moreover, development is and always has been political. For that essentially simple reason, integral development, which stems from post-development ideas, is an explicitly political endeavour. Thus, if, as Escobar notes, development has been synonymous with particular exploitative systems of production and power, what might alternatives look like? This question compels some critical engagement with how development could be better achieved through more progressive organisational structures that transform communities from objects of development to its designers and drivers. Doing that entails an analysis of literature examining the dynamics of social movements that have attempted to address pitfalls (found also in “traditional” development) such as power imbalances or domination.

Can post-development alternatives take place within a representative democracy and capitalist economic order? Or does this order merely perpetuate unwanted power imbalances and, hence, is incompatible with such alternatives? This thesis is primarily concerned with
social organisations that would respond in the negative to the first question and in the positive to the second. An interesting alternative brought forward by such social organisations and resistance networks is a democratic structure based on a “horizontal” (as opposed to “vertical”) logic of decentralised and non-hierarchical participation and decision-making (Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel, 2007).

For Robinson and Tormey (2005) horizontality is about challenging the axiomatic perception of political parties as the only democratic option and promoting models of authentic and autonomous participation and engagement of constituents with and alongside each other. For them horizontal politics is an ethics. In addition, horizontality and anti-representative politics provide the foundations for imagining how different worlds might be created. In a Deleuzean fashion, they metaphorically see such models as a proliferation of rhizomes that as they grow and spread create multiple points of challenge which diminish the prospects of oppression. In addition, they assert that

as any gardener who has tried to eliminate dandelions knows, a rhizome system is very difficult to reach because when a rhizome is destroyed, others will form and re-link, re-forming the networks which have been damaged. An arborescent organisation, in contrast, can be cut down far more easily (Robinson and Tormey, 2005, p. 221).

What is still to be seen is if these rhizomes can create a strong and continuous network that would offer an alternative political system that could foster (post-)development. Otherwise the rhizomes would mainly stay hidden under the ground.

The praxis of horizontality is broadly positioned within a “radical democracy” framework, which according to Esteva (2009, p. 49) includes “ordinary people run[ning] their own lives... [having] in mind not a set of institutions but rather a historic project.” Theories regarding “radical democracy” vary but a point of convergence could be found in that current notions of radical democracy differentiate themselves from other democratic forms by having greater emphasis on antagonism, contestation and openness (Kioupkiolis, 2010). Fundamental to any notion of radical democracy, however, is active participation of constituents. This is a pivotal aspect in this thesis because both case-study organisations emphasise grassroots democratic participation and a horizontal structure, believing them to be instrumental in achieving meaningful social change. Radical democracy, therefore, is an important means for contesting the social marginalisation of disenfranchised groups.
CHAPTER TWO: Integral Development through Prefigurative Politics

I shall return shortly to horizontalism and its significance, but first it is important to note that the following discussion departs from focusing solely on the peasantry and its mobilisation, and even from “development”. Instead, the discussion situates those themes within the more encompassing phenomenon of counter-hegemonic prefigurative movements such as MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, which attempt to establish a different way of negotiating power within and between social groups. For that objective, anarchist, feminist and social movement literatures are valuable and insightful, offering a rich theoretical and practical understanding and knowledge.

In her seminal 1982 book – *Community and Organization* – Wini Breines analyses the new left movement in the 1960s. Within this movement she distinguishes between two competing forms for bringing about political, social and economic change. The dissenting approaches include more traditional “strategic politics”, targeting organisation-building, strategic planning and vanguard leadership and “prefigurative politics”, emphasising counter-institutions, community-building and non-hierarchical democratic participation (Breines, 1982). Thus, the essence of this divide was the movement’s relationship to and view of power and how it should be utilised (Breines, 1980).

Prefigurative politics, thus, places people’s actions in the present as the principal focal point, rather than particular theories and visions of post-revolutionary social order. This is not to say that such actions are not framed within a theoretical analysis of social change – they usually are – but *the emphasis has shifted from the end goal to the means of achieving it* (Breines, 1982). The aim of prefigurative politics is to affect the lived reality of individuals and groups by experimenting with models of horizontal and participatory organisation. Prefigurative politics, therefore, is about theorising through doing; it is about experimenting with different organisational structures in order to better suit the multiplicity of cultures and contexts within large and diverse social movements, such as the alter-globalisation movement. In this movement prefigurative politics is the preferred paradigm for both contesting existing exclusionary hegemonic power structures and creating inclusive alternatives which rest upon ideals of radical democracy (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Prefigurative politics also form part of the basis for creating “autonomous geographies”, or spaces where people can construct a social order based on non-capitalist principles of egalitarianism and solidarity through contestation and creation (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). Autonomous geographies and prefigurative politics, therefore, are concerned with revolutionising the social order here and now through constant participatory negotiations of actions and structures.
Rural development, conceived as meaningful and sustainable change through prefigurative politics in the form of horizontal peasant organisations, is a core objective of the organisations under examination in this research study. The main pillar of such organisational politics is the aspiration of a model horizontal structure coupled with consensus decision-making. Leadership within this structure may become problematic and has to be constantly renegotiated and refigured. These issues of structures, decision-making rules and leadership are highly interrelated; but they are also worthy of some more specific examination, as each has its own theoretical and practical aspects. It is important to note at this point, however, that much of the ethnographic literature on these issues comes from anarchist and feminist oriented research and is mainly focused on urban associations in the Global North. The organisations under examination here are, of course, predominantly rural and from the Global South. The different contextual settings and challenges, livelihood related or other, are likely to affect group dynamics in various ways. Nevertheless, there are many commonalities in terms of adopting this radical practice of democracy and of associated challenges of working horizontally.

Thus, while the discussion below draws much from literature on urban experiences of prefigurative politics, I begin with relevant examples from the rural South. Perhaps the most notable movement creating such “autonomous geographies” are the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. They articulate a discourse that emphasises egalitarian rights, negates representative democracy and, instead, endorses horizontal participation. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional - EZLN) has captured global attention despite its seemingly local struggle (Stahler-Sholk, 2001). For June Nash (1995, p. 36) it is the “first postmodern movement in the Third World.” While the more theoretical aspects of the Zapatistas’ discourse are well articulated, its practical side is at times criticised for being weak or inconsistent (see for example Petras, 1997; Watson, 2002; and Thomassen, 2007), in a manner reminiscent of the post-development discourse more generally.

Another prominent Latin American social movement is the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers’ Movement ( Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST). The MST was established in 1984 in southern Brazil, as a response to rural poverty and within a context of modernisation of agriculture production, especially of soybeans (Vanden, 2007; Vergara-Camus, 2009a). The conditions that gave rise to this movement, such as lack of access to land

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13 This organisation stunned the world when it rebelled against the Mexican government on January 1, 1994, the same day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect.
and political marginalisation were similar in many parts of Brazil and the movement soon became a national organisation (Vanden, 2007). The MST is Latin America’s largest social movement, having more than a million members and it is arguably one of the most successful in terms of achieving its goals of redistribution of land (Robles, 2001; Caldeira, 2008; Vergara-Camus, 2009b). Paramount to this organisation’s struggle is what Hannah Wittman (2009, p. 123) calls “the social question of agrarian reform.” The MST acts to promote not only an integral agrarian reform (including, in addition to land redistribution, government investment in social and economic programmes to improve rural livelihoods) but also social change through political participation before and after land is granted. This political formation seeks to incorporate all people into the processes of decision-making, from the local to the national level. It is, similar to the Zapatistas, a social movement that promotes a discourse of rights, and criticises the absence of different human and citizenship rights in contemporary democratic Brazil (Caldeira, 2008).

These Latin American movements are without a doubt influential in their respective regions and beyond. The MST is also a member of the La Vía Campesina and thus has direct contact with the Argentinean organisations under focus here. Further analysis of these important movements is beyond the scope of this literature review especially given that despite the considerable academic attention they have received over the years, relatively little addresses their practice of participatory democracy (Starr, Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2011). It will suffice, therefore, to mention these movements as a reference to prefigurative politics in the Latin American context and to note their importance as examples that foreground the experiences of Red Puna and MOCASE-VC.

For such movements horizontalism is the backbone of their organisational structure. This stems primarily from a belief among many political activists on the left who perceive hierarchy as domination, or power-over. Abolishing hierarchy is, therefore, fundamental to empowerment and the creation of an egalitarian society. Some may dismiss this as a mere unattainable utopia; nevertheless, the organisational structures and procedures of numerous groups in different parts of the globe aim at translating Jacques Rancière’s notion of the “presupposition of equality” into practice (May, 2010). Cooperatives and collectives, where the former are more closely associated with the economy and the latter with the social arena, are two notable forms of less or non-hierarchical organisations (Oerton, 1996), and their experiences are valuable for examining the prospects and the challenges of horizontal organisations. For Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt (1986, p. 2), collectives and
cooperatives include “any enterprise in which control rests ultimately and overwhelmingly with the member-employees-owners, regardless of the particular legal framework through which this is achieved.” Obviously, the mere fact that an organisation subscribes to ideals of equality and collective decision-making does not mean that equality is complete (May, 2010); but of importance is the aspiration to break away from the hegemonic logics of the capitalist market and representative democracy in which hierarchical structures are predominant.

Organisations that operate within the solidarity and social economy are a good case in point. According to Frank Moulaert and Oana Ailenei (2005, p. 2042), “the term social economy designates the universe of practices and forms of mobilising economic resources towards the satisfaction of human needs that belong neither to for-profit enterprises, nor to the institutions of the state in the narrow sense.” Thus, while organisations that belong to this economy produce and sell products, their aim is to transcend the hierarchical model of capitalism by emphasising free association, cooperation and democratic enterprises (Caruana and Srnec, 2013). In other words, such organisations, while producing goods and services, adhere to ethical principles that prioritise autonomy, participatory democracy, workers and services to communities ahead of profit (Defourny and Develtere, 2000).

In the sphere of counter-hegemonic social movements, where antagonism against powerful institutions is prevalent, breaking ranks with hierarchies has further meanings. For movements of resistance, operating in a vertical structure could be dangerous. It puts power in the hands of few who could use it to their own advantage; but, as Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey (2005, p. 213) note, it also “allow[s] the cooption of such elites through their incorporation into structures such as parliamentary politics and the media ‘celebrity’ circuit.” Organisations that operate in a vertical structure, and hence experience an inevitable centralisation of power, are also more prone to infiltration by hostile agents who wish to neutralise them. Once the centre of power is rendered without charge, the whole organisational body ceases to function. In more extreme cases, centre-targeted assassinations may also destabilise the organisation (Robinson and Tormey, 2005). These are strong reasons not in favour of horizontal organisation per se, but against operating in a vertical structure.

In Argentina, vertical forms of organisation have clearly come under scrutiny over the last fifteen years or so, and especially around the severe economic crisis of 2001 and the popular rebellion. During this period Argentina experienced an upsurge of prefigurative movements and organisations, many of which adopted a horizontal form of collectives and cooperatives
The economic crisis in Argentina, which culminated in December 2001, exacerbated the growing discontent with the highly hierarchical power dynamics associated with capitalism and the neoliberal world order. The state, in turn, was perceived to be located at the heart of these hierarchies of power-over and many of those adversely affected by the crisis wished to separate themselves from the state and create an alternative in the form of direct democracy, direct action and horizontalidad (Sitrin, 2006).

“Horizontalidad” is a key concept in the counter-hegemonic popular movements in Argentina and the two case-study organisations in this research are part of this broad social-political phenomenon. It could be easily translated into English as “horizontality” or “horizontalism”, but according to Marina Sitrin (2006) these words do not embody the full meaning of the Spanish term (see Chapter Three for a discussion on the issue of cross-lingual research and translation). Horizontalidad, for Sitrin (2006, p. 3), “implies democratic communication on a level plane and involves – or at least intentionally strives towards – non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian creation rather than reaction.” According to this view, this concept not only encapsulates principles of non-hierarchy and collective authority, but it also connotes positivity and creativity in forming different organisational forms that promote solidarity, democratic participation and direct action by conscious social subjects.

Another key concept, which Sitrin (2006) argues similarly fails to adequately translate into English, is “autogestión”. Traditionally, this concept resembles the anarchist notion of self-management; but in the current Argentinean context Sitrin argues that it is more about how, instead of what, things are done. Marcelo Vieta (2010, p. 302) notes that “autogestión means to self-organize and self-direct working life cooperatively as an alternative to owner-managed work organization, while minimizing the intrusive mediation of free markets, traditional bureaucracies, hierarchical organization, or the state.” He agrees that “self-management” does not fully capture autogestión’s socio-political component of denoting “an organic and processual movement of self-conception” (p. 317).

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14 These experiences, of course, are not exclusive to Argentina but are shared with other countries in Latin America and beyond, and those organisations have created networks at different scales from the local to the global.
Of much importance in both *autogestión* and *horizontalidad* is autonomy. This concept has increasingly emerged as fundamental to many social movements worldwide (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer, 2010). Depending on how autonomy is conceptualised, it could reflect, on the one hand, a struggle against domination and exploitation; but on the other hand, in its individualist form, which is dominant in the neoliberal discourse, it could lead in practice to “divide and rule” by hegemonic elites. Thus, autonomy can be a double-edged sword; and while it is a notable anarchist ideal, it is also a dilemma of much urgency and gravity to many anarchist groups (Graeber, 2009).

Steffen Böhm, Ana Dinerstein and André Spicer (2010) argue that in spite of the recognition of the importance of autonomy for many social movements, this concept remains relatively under-theorised. In their theoretical analysis they have identified that in published literature “autonomy is usually defined as either a process of labour self-valorization, negation of state power, or as alternative to hegemonic forms of development” (p. 18). Moreover, they argue that autonomy cannot be fully attained because capital, the state, and hegemonic development logics consistently attempt to repossess autonomy and utilise it for their own ends. Their conceptualisation of autonomy also sees social movements as embedded in complex and specific contexts of social, political and economic relations from which they cannot simply detached themselves. Autonomy, therefore, is never complete; but it is a goal and a hope for numerous social movements who strive, through struggle and mobilisation, to carve for themselves autonomous spaces as part of an ongoing practice of counter-hegemonic antagonism. Thus, *horizontalidad, autogestión* and autonomy are empowering and socially promising, whereas hierarchy is associated not only with domination but also with loss of human potential (Iannello, 1992).

A horizontal organisational structure may exclude some (vertical) forms of decision-making; but it does not predetermine a particular mechanism of decision-making. If a group’s adoption of horizontalism is perceived as an ethical choice, as is often the case, then it is also likely to be the case with adopting a decision-making mechanism. Therefore, strongly related to the ethics of power-with and non-hierarchy is consensus decision-making. This form of decision-making, prevalent among groups of political activists (Renz, 2006), is believed to promote equality and participation among group members (Snyder, 2003), as well as a greater egalitarian social association and kinship (Chatterton, 2010).
Neither unanimity nor the uncontested satisfaction of group members with decisions is at the core of the consensus process. Instead, the main aim of this process is to achieve complete support from members. The consensus process allows for disagreement between group members regarding a decision, and there are different mechanisms to ensure that disagreement has its place. In such instances opponents in a minority position can “stand aside” and let a decision be made; and, although their opposition can be noted, ultimately general support is obtained. Alternatively, a member can “block” a decision altogether. Of importance is that each group member would feel an integral and valued part in the decision-making process, and that a decision was achieved through genuinely transparent and open discussion (Coy, 2003).

Despite the popularity of consensus decision-making among small groups from an array of social settings, and the seemingly clear ethical reasons behind it, Kevin Sager and John Gastil (2006, p. 2) still maintain that “scholars know relatively little about why or how groups might adopt a consensus decision rule, as almost no published research has explored this question.” If consensus decision-making is perceived as a moral socio-political position to which a group subscribes, the reasons for adopting this rule become clearer. This view of consensus as a guiding moral is partially why this decision rule is dominant among counter-hegemonic political groups, including anarchist associations (Gordon, 2008; Graeber, 2009; Dupuis-Déri, 2010), feminist groups (Iannello, 1992; Oerton, 1996), anti-capitalist organisations (Sitrin, 2006; Chatterton, 2010; Lagalisse, 2010), and other social movements that may include these groups and others (Polletta, 2002; Chatterton, 2005; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; della Porta, 2009).

Although consensus decision-making is perceived here as an ethical undertaking, it also embodies significant attributes that are important for understanding why this approach has been so popular among particular kinds of social movements, including those under focus in this research study. Therefore, beyond the egalitarian nature of this decision form, Jane Mansbridge (2003) notes that many people who take part in social movements have experienced marginalisation, and inclusive structures that corroborate people as equal and worthy social subjects are of much value to counter that marginalisation. Consensus decision-making rule also generates a sense of inclusiveness and responsibility that in turn creates a sense of shared ownership and an enhanced commitment to the movement by its activists (Mansbridge, 2003; Woehrle, 2003). With that, Mansbridge also argues that consensus
decision-making should not be seen as innately superior to majority rule in all instances, but should be considered according to particular contexts and variables.

Horizontal organisational structures coupled with forms of consensus decision-making, then, necessitate at least some discussion of the role and place of leadership. Radical horizontal organisations aim at decentralising power and creating equality between members. Therefore, can, or should, there be a place for leadership in such instances? Is leadership required for generating social change? And if it is, what boundaries should it have? These questions are both theoretical and practical and I pose them primarily in order to frame an ongoing debate within autonomous horizontal movements, rather than to answer them.

This debate on the nature and value of leadership within autonomous horizontal movements and organisations reflects the various aspects inherent to leadership and structures of power. Rothschild and Whitt (1986) found that collectives have had complicated and unresolved issues with leadership. On the one hand, there is a need for people to be active and fulfil different tasks within the organisation and it must be acknowledged that people have different skills and personalities. On the other hand, if one or a few individuals were to gain the ability to single-handedly influence decision-making, the collective character of the group could be threatened. Therefore, leadership in participatory democracy should ultimately be shared; and individuals who have more influence due to their experience or personality are expected to act like coaches – to offer support and inspiration while acting like a bridge between group members and to other groups. Leadership should not be decisive but inclusive and sharing (Hendriks, 2010).

Uri Gordon (2005, p. 132) dedicates considerable attention to leadership in current anarchist politics, discussing what he calls “the anxieties around the term ‘leadership’ in contemporary anarchist discourse.” He asserts:

Let us be clear about this: with all the prefigurative politics, horizontalism and sitting in a circle during meetings, there are clearly power-inequalities in the anarchist movement. There are observable situations where some activists consistently have a larger personal presence, more frequently initiate actions and projects, assume positions of responsibility, and speak and get listened to more than others (p. 133).

Thus, ensuring that leadership corresponds with horizontal ideals is a challenge for prefigurative movements. This, in turn, highlights the inherent importance of ethics, reflected
in a requirement for having an underlying “generosity of spirit” (Graeber, 2009) for the success of this participatory and inclusive project.

Since much of the literature that features here is not about development in the strictest sense, I would like to make the link explicit. Integral development contests both existing structures of power relations and political, social and economic marginalisation. Within this, top-down development is being challenged; but, importantly, particular forms of (vertical) bottom-up initiatives are also being criticised. Thus, the aim of bringing about an encompassing change is relevant to both “developed” and “developing” societies, which are subjected, albeit perhaps to different extents, to domination and exclusion. Development through horizontal participatory models is, ultimately, about improving monetary incomes (economic development) and empowering individuals and communities to challenge existing inequalities (social development).

The potentials of horizontal collectives and cooperatives for both bottom-up development and socio-political change have generated much hope and optimism in some circles, and their experiences teach us about possible and meaningful alternatives to capitalism and representative democracy. In spite of that, many commentators have argued that such organisations, as admirable and desirable as they may be, are impracticable and thus destined to fail (Oerton, 1996). In response to arguments that dismiss horizontalism as utopian and hence unattainable, Robinson and Tormey (2005, p. 223) suggest that “it is the very “impossibility” of genuinely transformative politics that assures us that this is actually worth pursuing.” Nevertheless, the inability of some to imagine a different political order, as well as the more specific and engaged criticism, should not be ignored but used constructively to improve shortfalls and to clarify further the ideological reasoning of the horizontal paradigm. Failing to do so could deter “unconverted” groups from joining the movement.

Much published literature in the field of radical democracy tends to critique the hegemonic political order and to provide evidence and theory to suggest the possibility for alternatives. However, engagement with the challenges associated with operating in a horizontal structure and consensus decision-making, I would argue, has not received enough academic attention, especially within development studies. It could be due to different reasons, such as the positionality of researchers as activists or affiliates, the broader political and moral beliefs of academics, or perhaps a perceived greater urgency in positively presenting alternatives to capitalism. Notwithstanding such valid reasons, critical reflections are by no means
completely absent and those are often based on Rothschild-Whitt (1979) and Rothschild and Whitt (1986), which, once again, are not related to the field of development studies.

A challenge for collective organisation that features predominantly in the literature is time. Rothschild and Whitt (1986, p. 64) begin by noting that “democracy takes time,” while Francesca Polletta (2002) titled her book about social movements in the US *Freedom is an Endless Meeting*. Reaching a consensus in decision-making in particular often requires much more time than in hierarchical or bureaucratic settings (Snyder, 2003); but it is not to say that this is wasted time, since deliberation and sharing of ideas and opinions are at the core of the ideal of this decision-making rule. Nevertheless, group members might get bored, distracted and even agitated during the long meetings that such a process entails (Gastil, 1993). Organisational experience is useful for making the deliberation process more efficient in terms of time management; but the process is still likely to be lengthy (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986).

Another challenge is what Rothschild and Whitt (1986) call “emotional intensity”, which for Snyder (2003) leads to “suppression of conflict”. The need to reach consensus will inevitably result in conflict on divisive issues. Deliberation in a consensus setting requires face-to-face intimacy and, when disagreements arise, some people find the situation confrontational and threatening. As a result, some may avoid disagreeing to steer clear of open and personal confrontation. Here individual personalities are important and members who are not intimidated by confrontation may assume positions of unofficial leadership and exert more influence over decision-making. Experience, in this regard, could be enabling but also a limitation. On the one hand, more experienced members may be more inclined to engage in open discussions on divisive matters, whereas new members may be more reserved. On the other hand, experience could be acquired and those who were initially more timid could gain confidence with time. The conceptualisation of participatory democracy as an ongoing process that also includes personal growth and formation of consciousness is reflected here once again.

Many people in both modern and more traditional societies are not familiar with the principles and practices of participatory democracy and consensus decision-making. People are shaped by their environments and that means, with some exceptions, many people are accustomed to looking up to a leader or down on followers, being politically passive, competitive or having embedded in themselves other characteristics of hierarchical and
bureaucratic structures (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986). Freeman’s (1972) critique of the “tyranny of structurlessness” in horizontal groups is also of relevance here. Positions of power are no longer explicit in such structure; but, as Freeman notes, these are replaced by informal power relations that could be exclusionary all the same. For collective organisations to thrive, then, members need to overcome their own non-democratic conditioning and learn and gain experience with participatory democracy, which may be rewarding but requires more engagement and effort, and a different association with others.

In addition to people’s social preconditioning and the need to overcome it, horizontal organisations are subject to external pressure from mainstream hierarchical organisations and institutions, who may also perceive the former as antagonistic to them. Even if alternative organisations strive for autonomy, they are often still required, or choose, to be in contact with government agencies and other private institutions, such as finance institutions. Collectives might feel that their internal structure and dynamics are put under pressure by such institutions (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986).

What do such limitations entail for a project of creating counter-hegemonic democratic alternatives? The argument I put forward here is not that such projects are destined to fail because of these or other limitations. Instead, for the success of such alternatives, it is necessary to be aware of the challenges and engage with them in an open and explicit manner, rather than ignoring them. Achieving persistent and meaningful development by adhering to ideals of radical democracy, as this study will show, is already taking place. It may not be easy; but the potentials for bringing about change on a wide range of different aspects of people’s lives cannot, and should not, be overlooked or underestimated. In this research study, therefore, I ask how peasant-indigenous organisations frame and perform their struggles for social change and development. For answering that, I seek to gain in-depth understanding of the contexts, histories and realities of organised rural communities in two Argentinean provinces and analyse their discourses and praxes, their critique and their “moving beyond” – that is, their alternative integral development model.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter I have established the theoretical background and context of the research field. To that end, I have critically engaged with an array of academic topics which are all
components of an integral development approach, both in terms of livelihood and social challenges of the peasantry, and of potential solutions. Inherent to this model are critiques of the hegemonic, albeit arguably slowly changing, neoliberal political-economic paradigm, with its restructuring of the agriculture sector and marginalisation of small-scale producers and peasants. Thus, whereas the topic of this research seems to relate mostly to the field of rural development of peasant communities, in effect these are political and organisational aspects that come to the fore under an integral approach to development. This broader approach seeks not only to improve the material wellbeing of rural communities but also to contest and change existing inequalities and structural impediments to economic and social development, having in mind a socio-political project. This, in turn, is reflected in the discourses and praxes of the two case-study organisations of this research.

From a critique of the prevailing political economy and the dominant representative democracy model, and within a post-development framework, prefigurative social movements offer important and meaningful alternatives. A prefigurative political paradigm focuses on constructing more egalitarian and just societies through practicing radical democracy and theorising-by-doing. Central to prefigurative politics, then, are concepts of “horizontalidad” (horizontalism), “autogestión” (self-management) and “autonomy”. With the rejection of vertical social relations and dominance, these ideals hold important potential for creating enabling spaces for inclusive and empowering development and change. Such practices are often accompanied by a consensus decision-making rule, which is also understood here as an ethical undertaking. Such collectivist organisational forms, however, are not without challenges, and addressing them is an important step towards mitigating their potential pitfalls.

In synthesis, an integral development model stems from a critique but its importance lies in its notion of “moving beyond”, in the alternative it offers. Social organisations that strive for an encompassing change by means of an integral development model often adhere to principles of radical democracy and prefigurative politics as these, discursively and practically, contest power inequalities that lead to domination and marginalisation. The discourses and praxes of the case-study organisations in this study offer valuable experiences and insights into the advantages and challenges of prefigurative politics in the field of rural (integral) development.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

All academic studies are guided by a research methodology. In the field of human geography the choice of methodology is particularly interesting because the discipline has historically been a “battle zone” between quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research. Rather than being mutually exclusive, however, these methodological approaches can be negotiated so as to complement each other. The increasing prominence of post-structuralist epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences, especially regarding the politics of knowledge and representation, mean that the positivist paradigm associated with quantitative methodology has lost much of its appeal in favour of the subjective-interpretive proposition found in qualitative methodologies (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010). This research study is situated within the human geography discipline and is very much concerned with issues of politics, power relations and representation, and thus adheres to a qualitative methodology.

The purpose of this methodology chapter is to present the philosophical conceptions underlying this research, as well as to discuss the research design, the methods used to gather
data in the field and subsequent data analysis. To be more effective, however, in this chapter I will not merely present or neutrally discuss the preferred methodology but also justify it in the light of the issues at hand. Overtly, the choice to use a particular methodology and methods has to do with a particular research question or issue; but, implicitly, this choice is often related to the researcher’s philosophical position regarding the production of knowledge (Dwyer and Limb, 2001).

The first step, then, is to identify the research topic and decide which methodology is best suited for performing the reality that I, as the researcher, am interested to enact. Inherent to this philosophical stand is the performativity of social science methods, which recognises the link between activism and the production of knowledge (Gibson-Graham, 2008), and believes that the social sciences do not merely “discover” a reality but also assist in bringing it into being (Law and Urry, 2004).

Within the wide subject of “rural development”, this research is concerned with the social mobilisation and organisation of peasant, or campesino, and indigenous communities in Argentina in response to their political, social and economic marginalisation. The focus is on the realities as lived and created by these social groups. This social mobilisation has become increasingly notable and celebrated since the mid 1980s. The phenomenon of campesino organisation has attracted significant academic attention in Argentina; but, dissimilar to some neighbouring countries, this interest has come primarily from local scholars and publications have been mainly in Spanish. These studies can be positioned within the disciplines of rural sociology and geography, and they were guided by a qualitative methodology. This research adds to this existing body of literature and expands the scope of readership by using English as the language of analysis.

This research study focuses on two campesino-indigenous organisations in Northwest Argentina, MOCASE-VC from Santiago del Estero Province and Red Puna y Quebrada from Jujuy Province. These organisations have received some academic attention and, even though this study is similar to previous studies in its adherence to a qualitative methodology, its emphasis on the structure of these organisations and the related discourses and praxes is an important aspect that sets it apart. This study looks at both organisations in order to analyse how their similar discourses find expression in somewhat different contexts. My positionality as a researcher and the temporal variation from previous studies are yet another source of
difference. Due to its performative nature, rather than producing “another perspective” on the organisations, the research enacts another reality (Law and Urry, 2004).

The first section of this chapter briefly presents the research topic and the fieldwork locations. The chapter then discusses, and justifies, the methodological approach that was chosen for this research. The following section explains the sampling procedure of this study, including the different target populations and how participants were contacted. The fourth part of this chapter discusses how data was collected during the two periods of fieldwork and the important aspect of ethics inherent to this kind of research. The subsequent section discusses the significance of positionality in qualitative social research and how my own positionality has affected this research. This chapter then attends to the limitations of the study followed by a brief discussion of issues related to data analysis and reporting of findings.

**Research topic and location**

The aim of this research is to examine and analyse particular forms of discourses and praxes employed by two campesino-indigenous grassroots organisations of marginalised communities in Northwest Argentina; MOCASE-VC in Santiago del Estero Province and Red Puna y Quebrada in Jujuy Province. Throughout this research study I conceptualise the actions and underlying philosophical approach of these organisations as components of an “integral development model”. As discussed in the previous chapter in the light of relevant literature, this model is integral because it combines economic, social and political aspects, and is embedded within a conviction that without contesting the hegemonic neoliberal political-economic order and the underperforming model of liberal democracy, a meaningful and sustainable development of the peasantry cannot materialise.

Even though I refer here to a single integral development model, in effect there are differences in the ways these two organisations operate. Still, I wish to argue that, fundamentally, they represent two experiences of the same approach: experiences that are shaped by the specific context of each organisation. This context is, in itself, a complex matter consisting of historic and current social, economic and political processes that had shaped and continue to shape society across space and place.
In order to unpack and analyse the potentials, as well as the challenges, inherent to this integral development approach, this research examines the discourse and strategies employed by the two organisations using a “case study” model. The key merit of this model is that “it deals directly with the individual case in its actual context” (Bromley, 1986, p. xi). Moreover, rather than trying to apply an abstract theory on a particular case in a “top-down” fashion, this model promotes an inductive “bottom-up” approach to research (Bromley, 1986; Willis, 2007). Whereas this bottom-up approach is often regarded as valuable, Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that social science has not been very successful in generating general, context-independent theories, but rather it is much stronger in offering context-dependent knowledge, for which a case-study approach is best suited. This argument has at least some merit and thus reveals a limitation of the case-study approach used in this research.

The geographic locations of the case-studies, the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Jujuy in Northwest Argentina (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2 respectively and Map 1.1), were not chosen randomly. The Introduction Chapter already provided some indication of the particular relevance of these locations. Key aspects are the prevalence of a peasant sector within these locations, the marginal position of this sector within society and the somewhat different ways in which capitalism is being manifested in each. Following this line of justification, the Province of Santiago del Estero is the least urbanised of Argentina’s provinces and has a dominant peasant sector in a country that is, in economic terms, a large exporter of agriculture commodities. Moreover, this province is located to the north of the fertile and humid Pampa region, where intensive commercial agriculture is already well established. Technological changes, among other factors, are pushing the “agriculture frontier” of intensive farming into the adjacent and previously marginal less productive land. Therefore, the “agriculture frontier”, and its associated problems, is currently in Santiago del Estero, and this, in turn, makes the province a place of conflict and discontent.

The organisation under this study’s focus has its roots in the MOCASE (Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero). This organisation was formed in the late 1980s, when a number of localised associations of campesinos had amalgamated into a larger regional organisation (Barbetta, 2007). This grassroots social movement was established with the explicit objective of fighting against agribusinesses that dispossessed campesinos from their land, for which the campesinos usually do not have legal land titles. Another objective was, and still is, to improve the standards of living experienced by rural communities in the province of Santiago del Estero (Durand, 2009). Despite the common objectives that had
united the different groups, in 2001 a rupture within the organisation had resulted in the separation of the movement into two separate factions (Durand, 2009). These are known today as MOCASE-Vía Campesina (VC) and “historic” MOCASE.

The other research location chosen for this study, the highlands of Jujuy, is also characterised by a dominant rural sector of campesino-indigenous communities. In recent times this region has experienced a significant rural-to-urban migration, but many of those who had migrated to the region’s urban centres maintain close relations with their rural communities and thus are positioned on an often blurred boundary between the rural and the urban. Unlike Santiago del Estero, the “agriculture frontier”, or intensive agribusiness production, is not an important threat to campesino livelihoods in this region. Instead, in the mineral rich highlands of Jujuy the position of agribusiness is taken, to a large extent, by the mining industry. These may seem far apart, but both are manifestations of global economic forces, lead by multinational corporations, that have similar effects over local rural and historically marginalised

Figure 3.1: Landscapes of Santiago del Estero

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communities. Thus, the highlands of Jujuy provide a different context to Santiago del Estero in which a similar grassroots development model can be examined. This difference, as will be revealed in the latter chapters of the thesis, has some significant bearings for campesino mobilisation and organisation in these territories.

![Figure 3.2: Landscapes of the highlands of Jujuy Puna Quebrada de Humahuaca](image)

Beyond this difference, MOCASE-VC and Red Puna also share many commonalities. Both are of significant size in terms of their membership and, most importantly, both have a prolonged trajectory as grassroots organisations, dating back over twenty and fifteen years, respectively. This entails important and rich experiences of struggle for securing land-tenure, of social organisation and of cycles of economic crises and agrarian change. Also, these organisations are associated through the National Peasant Indigenous Movement (MNCI) and thus collaborate with one another.

Their long organisational trajectory also means that these organisations have attracted academic attention (for examples on MOCASE-VC see Agosto, Cafardo and Calí, 2004; Durand, 2008, 2009; Barbetta, 2007, 2009; and on Red Puna see Pelicano and de la Cuétara,
CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology

2006; Cowan Ros, 2003, 2007; Cowan Ros and Schneider, 2008). However, virtually all these academic materials – theses and publications – were written by Argentinean scholars and primarily in Spanish (and Portuguese), hence not for audiences beyond the Latin world. Beyond language barriers and accessibility of materials, the primary foci of these written accounts are varied, and are also different from this study. The focus on radical democracy as a vehicle for change (as was discussed in Chapter Two) in particular as well as the analysis of two similar organisations that operate within somewhat different settings sets this study apart. Yet another point of difference is the period in which research was conducted. Social processes of mobilisation and organisation often span over prolonged tracts of time, in which different challenges and events shape and reshape their character and direction. Temporal variations, therefore, are important. Thus, whereas existing literature on the case-study organisations is more useful for analysing the histories and trajectories of these organisations (as will be further discussed in Chapter Six), it is likely to be of more limited benefit when analysing contemporary events and processes (as will be discussed primarily in Chapters Eight and Nine).

Methodological approach

Above it has already been mentioned that a case-study approach was used in this research. In wider theoretical terms, however, this research adheres to a qualitative methodology. This, in turn, was guided by the interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand and explain “how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Neuman, 2000, p. 71) and which incorporates the personal values of the researcher (Davidson and Tolich, 2003). This research philosophy implies a subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is multiple and socially constructed. Qualitative methodology in social sciences is of particular value in examining processes that are incompatible with measurements of quantity and frequency (Wagner and Okeke, 2009).

The belief that there is no single reality “out there” to be discovered resonates also with the philosophical notion of performativity. According to this approach, rather than constricting different perspective of reality, social science helps to produce the realities it analyses and describes (Law and Urry, 2004). This does not happen out of a void; there are already different elements of realities being enacted. The social science, then, “re-works and re-bundles these and as it does so re-crafts realities and creates new versions of the world”
(Law, 2004, p. 143). J.K. Gibson-Graham (2008) embraces this theoretical attribute of social science, seeing it as allowing researchers to help constitute the new realities they envision in their writings. For them, knowledge is performative rather than reflective or realist.

This qualitative methodology, with its performative trait, is most appropriate for this research since both the political and the economic settings that have adversely affected the livelihoods of the rural communities in these case-studies are human creations; no natural rule has brought them into being, and their historic evolution implies that, although they may seem rigid, they can be modified. I believe that many of the participants in this research would agree with this proposition. The performativity inherent to research methods in the social realm is, therefore, indicative of the potential of enacting alternative realities. Moreover, themes such as globalisation, trade liberalisation, indigenous rights and land-tenure are contentious and potentially charged; different people may have different opinions regarding these themes and in this study I was interested in how individuals interpret their socio-economic and socio-political environments. Qualitative research, thus, generates in-depth knowledge of how individuals construe and experience “their” realities in a particular context. Since this methodology accepts that there is no one objective truth in the social sphere, its flexible nature allows for interviewees to address and emphasis what they perceive as important (Sarantakos, 2005; Bryman, 2008); that is, their own truths. This research, then, is primarily concerned with how individuals from organised campesino movements analyse the sources of and solutions to their own livelihood challenges and socio-political marginalisation.

Methods are another important component of methodology, which contain practical as well as epistemological aspects. After a qualitative approach and an interpretive paradigm were chosen, research methods were carefully assessed and selected upon their merits. As noted above, a case-study approach was chosen as a general framework for this research and in-depth data was required in order to reach a profound level of knowledge and understanding of the specific realities and challenges of the campesinos in the particular geographic settings of each case-study.

Therefore, the first and most central method used during fieldwork was semi-structured in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions. Such interviews are “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words”
(Taylor and Bogdan, 1988, p. 88). This method allows interviewees to draw more attention towards what they perceive as more important, while enabling the researcher to cover common themes with all respondents. Furthermore, it allows for adding questions if an unforeseen theme arises in previous interviews (Bryman, 2008), a situation that did eventuate in the field. Yet again, it is the inherent flexibility of semi-structured interviews that is paramount for an inductive research process, such as this one.

A second method employed during the fieldwork was focus group interviews. This method was also conducted in a semi-structured manner for the same reasons as for the other interviews. However, focus groups, in contrast to individual interviews, “would avail the researcher of the opinions of a large number of subjects in a relatively easy-to-access fashion” (Frey and Fontana, 1993, p. 24). In addition to the merits of “quantity”, this method’s key strength lies in the dynamics of the group session, where group members stimulate each other and potentially generate more valid in-depth data (Frey and Fontana, 1993). When studying social organisations like the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna it is also beneficial to interview individual members as a group since collective action is intrinsic and integral to social organisations of this kind. Thus, a focus group can enrich the researcher’s understanding of the dynamics of the studied organisation.

Questions in interviews with members of campesino-indigenous organisations were mainly designed to address the second and third research objectives. The second research objective was to gain insights into people’s lived experiences and reflections on their realities. For that, questions asked about their livelihood challenges and strategies, about their experiences in the organisation and about their opinions regarding their position as peasant producers in their respective specific location and region. The third research objective was to analyse the discourse and praxis of the development model the case-study organisations adhere to. Questions relating to this research objective asked participants about what has changes as a result of their organisation’s activities, what were the main achievements and challenges of the organisation, how the organisation functions and why, and what should be the organisation’s focus in the near future (party politics was a notable topic here). Interviews with other research participants such as academics and government workers included mainly questions about development in Argentina and the current challenges to peasant livelihoods.

I conducted two focus group interviews in two different Centrales (second-degree entities) of the MOCASE-VC (see Table 3.1 on page 69) and another two were held with Red Puna
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members (see Table 3.2 on page 70). In all groups, participants knew each other well and therefore seemed comfortable speaking in front of the group. However, in the MOCAV-VC focus groups, women were under-represented, as in the individual interviews, and those who were present tended to be more reserved and quiet. I tried to have a focus group session only with women but because the campesinos houses are scattered in the countryside, with often a number of kilometres separating them, it was very difficult to organise focus groups, let alone of solely women.

The third research method that was chosen is observation. While in the field I attended numerous formal and informal gatherings of members from the two organisations, as well as of several other organisations in both provinces, and observed how these meetings are managed, how participation takes place, and, of course, what was said. A non-participatory approach was the most appropriate here, but not in the strictest manner where the participants are not aware of the observer being a researcher (Sarantakos, 2005). There is an ethical issue in not disclosing the true nature of the observer/researcher and particularly when working with marginalised groups, such as in these cases; the notion of trust between the researcher and the subject group(s) is paramount. Thus, the most appropriate method of observation was an open but passive one (Sarantakos, 2005). I was often asked to introduce myself before the meeting so that everybody would know who I was and what the purpose of my presence was; but I usually did not take an active part in further discussions. In spite of that, on a few occasions I was asked for my opinion or knowledge regarding different matters, especially after familiarity and trust were formed.

Although I was not sure what the nature of my interactions with local rural communities would be prior to the fieldwork, while designing the research I intended to learn firsthand about the daily lives of research participants and to develop trust and familiarity with communities by spending time with them. This is another, particular, type of participant observation research method, which stems from ethnographic methods, where the researcher studies a group of people in its natural setting for a substantial period of time, participating and experiencing the group’s daily lives (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Because the scope and time span of this research did not allow for comprehensive ethnographic fieldwork, it could only be regarded as a secondary research method in terms of its importance in generating data. My concerns about accessibility, however, evaporated short after I had arrived in Santiago del Estero for my first of two fieldwork trips. The cooperation I have received from members of both the MOCAV-VC
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and the Mesa de Tierra, which is a small *campesino* organisation that has some links to the “historic” MOCASE, was beyond any expectation. I stayed at people’s homes and spent a few days at times with *campesino* families. In other instances I made short visits to the homes of members of the different organisations, was invited to join family meals, and occasionally managed to conduct interviews during these relatively brief visits. This aspect of the fieldwork was without a doubt the most prominent and memorable part of conducting the research. My experience during the second trip to Jujuy was no different. I was invited to people’s homes and social communal gatherings, which allowed me to have some genuine firsthand experience of rural life in the Quebrada and Puna regions of Jujuy.

In spite of the warm hospitality I received, it did not always feel appropriate to take out the digital recorder and conduct a “formal” interview during short visits to people’s homes. Nevertheless, I managed to meet and talk, at times for hours, with people who are not, in a strict manner, official research participants, because those conversations were not recorded. Still, the information and insights I obtained through being a participant observer, be it by attending the livestock in the morning, collecting firewood or visiting a sick neighbour, have greatly contributed to my ability to comprehend the realities and understand the worldviews of research participants.

With the many merits of the different research methods used in the field, arguably one important limitation of qualitative research is its inability to generate validated generalisations, beyond the specific context within which the data was generated (Bryman, 2008); in this case *campesino*-indigenous organisations in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. Malcolm Williams (2000, p. 210), however, argues that “the interpretivist attitude to generalisation is rather like that of the Victorian middle classes toward sex. They do it, they know it goes on, but they rarely admit to either.” He asserts that reserved generalisations are both possible and desirable; he names them moderatum generalisations. I would like to adopt this advice and promote the idea that qualitative research can generate generalisations when carefully drafted. As Flyvbjerg (2006) points out regarding the case-study approach, context-specific knowledge is the cornerstone of social science, and much can be learned from qualitative research of a single case-study and perhaps even more so when examining a number of case-studies.
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Sampling procedure

As already mentioned, this research includes two sets of fieldwork. The first was conducted between February and April 2010 in the province of Santiago del Estero, and the second between December 2010 and February 2011. The second period of fieldwork included a week in the Central of Quimilí, Santiago del Estero, where I revisited some key informants and conducted a few additional interviews, and the rest of the time was mostly spent in Jujuy. During both trips I spent some time in Buenos Aires, which, beyond being the main arrival and departure port in Argentina, is also home to a number of academics and government officials who have either studied these organisations or worked with them.

Broadly defined, there are two separate research populations, or groups of interviewees, in this study. The first consist of non-peasants who provide information from an expert’s standpoint. In relation to campesino organisations in Santiago del Estero this group consists of twelve participants, including five academics, three government employees, one official from the provincial government and three representatives of the agribusiness sector. It should be acknowledged that some of these interviewees are personally affiliated with a particular faction of the MOCASE; hence they do not by any means represent an impartial position. In relation to Jujuy and Red Puna, there were eight non-peasant participants, including three academics, two personnel from the Ministry of Social Development in Buenos Aires (who also addressed the MOCASE-VC, as their group works in all the provinces of Northwest Argentina), and one militant who used to work with the Red Puna.

The second group of interviewees, which is this research’s primary target population, is composed of campesinos from the different organisations. It was important to me to interview leaders, or dominant figures, from the different organisations; but I believe it is also highly valuable to include ordinary members in the research. This allowed me to evaluate differences between the more and less knowledgeable and articulated members. In practice, it was much easier to engage with dominant figures in the organisations, where in the case of both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna some of them are not strictly campesinos but rather militants who had become an integral part of the organisation (further discussed in Chapter Eight). Arguably, they could be positioned in a grey area between the two main research populations, but I include them in this target population out of respect to the organisations who see them as comrades in the struggle. However, many interviewees from outside these
organisations did see them as leaders or técnicos (experts) that should be differentiated from the popular base of the organisations.

In Santiago del Estero, the first research location, a total of 40 members of the MOCASE-VC took part in interviews and focus groups (including four so-called técnicos), and six more members of the “historic” MOCASE and Mesa de Tierra, including the presidents of the two organisations (see Table 3.1). In Jujuy, 42 Red Puna members took part in interviews and focus groups (including one so-called técnico), and also two members of the Red Kolla, another social organisation from the Puna, were interviewed (see Table 3.2). In total, including all target populations, 110 individuals could be regarded as “formal” research participants. This figure, however, does not include the many others who shared their time, experiences and knowledge with me and who have greatly enriched this research study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-campesinos</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>5 (of which 2 worked or were working closely with MOCASE-VC and 3 with MOCASE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government officials and workers</td>
<td>1 official from the Provincial Government</td>
<td>1 official from the Provincial Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 officials from agencies of the National Government</td>
<td>3 officials from agencies of the National Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness representatives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campesinos (peasants)</th>
<th>MOCASE-VC</th>
<th>21 members</th>
<th>4 “expert” activists</th>
<th>2 focus group interviews (1x9 + 1x6)</th>
<th>Total: 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOCASE</td>
<td>1 president</td>
<td>MOCASE</td>
<td>1 president</td>
<td>MOCASE</td>
<td>1 president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesa de Tierra</td>
<td>4 members (of which one used to be and two were members of the MOCASE)</td>
<td>Mesa de Tierra</td>
<td>4 members (of which one used to be and two were members of the MOCASE)</td>
<td>Total participants from peasant organisations: 46</td>
<td>Total participants: 58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Research Participants – Santiago del Estero
The numbers of participants and their organisational affiliation clearly indicate an emphasis upon the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. These organisations were chosen to be the main focus of this study because they promote complex and comprehensive discourses and praxes of a particular and similar development model. Still, information received in interviews with members of the other two campesino organisations in Santiago del Estero – MOCASE and Mesa de Tierra – coupled with interviews with government officials and academic researchers who do not work with the MOCASE-VC, provided different insights to and criticism of the MOCASE-VC’s proceedings, adding to more balanced and rigorous research. The same applies to the two participants from the Red Kolla in Jujuy. Since the discourses and actions of the organisations under focus here are often subject to debate and disagreement it was important for me to include in this study different sides of some of these debates. I believe this approach adds to academic rigour and contributes toward better understanding of these debates.

Above I have provided a quantitative summary of research participants and have alluded to the rationale of allowing for different voices to be heard. However, the process of choosing and locating potential participants is a paramount issue when designing a research. This research used a “snowball” or “chain” sampling procedure, where a researcher accesses additional informants following recommendations that were provided by other informants.
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This process carries on adding more and more contacts, hence the snowball metaphor (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2000; Noy, 2008).

With that, a snowball needs to form and gain enough energy to start rolling downhill, and although I already had personal contacts in Argentina, they had very limited relation to any peasant organisation. I had, therefore, to establish contacts in Argentina prior to the first fieldwork trip. From the moment the topic was suggested to me I started looking for relevant materials and I sent emails to authors of academic articles I found (all of which in Spanish). This initiated the snowball and allowed me to make a direct contact with the MOCASE-VC and the Mesa de Tierra well before arriving in the field. These contacts, in turn, facilitated further ones, allowing me to gain access to additional key informants.

Chaim Noy (2008) sees a clear relation between the quality of in-depth interviews and snowball sampling. Since the researcher relies on participants for referrals, the quality of their interaction has implications on the quality of both the information obtained and on referrals. Assessing the true quality of researcher-participants interactions is, of course, subjective and open to debate. However, in the case of this research, I did not feel subjected to barriers in accessing further participants, apart from those of time and physical distance.

The reason this sampling method was chosen is its ability to enable “access to previously hidden populations” (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p. 2). Campesinos are occasionally subject to harassment from resourceful land owners and agribusinesses, and therefore they may be suspicious of “outsiders”. Snowball sampling helps to overcome this problem, by allowing trust between the researcher and participants to be developed. In the case of the MOCASE-VC, all unknown visitors are directed to the Central in Quimili, where many of the so-called “técnicos” reside. They, together with other activist members, are better equipped to assess the true intentions of visitors. Once trust was built they assisted me in everything I needed and encouraged me to spend time in small isolated communities and even made the required arrangements. They were also the link through which I established a contact with the Red Puna in Jujuy. Once a rapport was built with the MOCASE-VC the access to the Red Puna, with which it has close working relations, was made easy.
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Data collection and ethics

Success in fieldwork cannot be achieved without the comprehensive and thorough recording of data, and therefore attention is required throughout the planning and execution phases of the research (Laws, Harper and Markus, 2003). The preferred method of data collection was recording individual and focus group interviews using a digital voice recorder. It allowed me, the researcher, to focus only on the ongoing conversation, rather than on taking notes. Although recording the conversation may cause people to be self-conscious, Steven Taylor and Robert Bogdan (1988) suggest that participants who have agreed to be interviewed know that their words will be weighted by the researcher and thus they should not be too worried about being recorded. However, given the reality in which campesinos live in Northwest Argentina and their historic marginalisation, I feared participants might decline to be recorded out of fear, perceived or real, that the recordings would eventually end up in the hands of people who might harm them. Fortunately, this fear was largely unfounded. Interviewees had no concerns about being recorded, and most participants fairly quickly forgot about the presence of the recorder. In Jujuy, however, some individuals were reluctant to be interviewed at all; but it was not the recorder that had deterred them. I was still able to have numerous conversations with some of these individuals who avoided being interviewed.

In addition to recording interviews I took notes and photographs throughout the fieldwork. As noted above, I had many and long conversations with many campesinos which I could not record, and keeping notes was crucial for recording information from these encounters. Photos were taken to document events and sights, but also placards containing information and even products with the information on their labels.

Even the most meticulous data collection during interviews cannot circumvent the limitation of qualitative methodology, which relies on people’s subjective experiences and opinions. For this reason, I believe, it is important to use other sources as well, when possible, in order to triangulate information given in interviews. Such a source exists in the documentation of the organisations. During a relatively short period of fieldwork, it is not easy to gain unrestricted access to such documents; but I obtained some written documents of both organisations that I later used to support and complement data from interviews.

Another highly important aspect throughout the research, but especially during data collection, is Ethics. Ethics, or the “principles of right and wrong behaviour,” have become increasingly important in social research (Griffith, 2008, p. 237), and even more so when
researching with marginalised groups. Concerned with the conduct of researchers in the field, many universities have established ethics committees that focus on researchers’ conduct during and after fieldwork and their responsibilities to the subjects they work with (Dowling, 2000). I believe paying serious attention to ethics is paramount, not only in academic research but also in many other aspects of life, and even more so surrounding issues of development, which often involve power imbalances between the relatively more affluent and formally educated “agents of development” and the relatively more disadvantaged “subjects of development” (and hopefully not “objects of development”) (for discussions on similar issues see McKinnon, 2007; and Matthews, 2008). Therefore, it is of high importance to avoid deceit and harm to research participants and make sure they know their rights to remain anonymous and withdraw from partaking in the research study without any consequences to them. Honesty and good faith are, thus, not only important for procedures of data collection but also for engaging ethically with marginalised groups.

In qualitative geographic research the notion of participants’ confidentiality is primary (Griffith, 2008). Before each interview I assured complete confidentiality to participants and, even though I was told by a number of interviewees from the MOCASE-VC that they have no problem with their names being used since they have nothing to hide and they have a movement behind them, all names mentioned in this thesis have been changed. Thus, for many research participants being part of a large organisation meant they can express their opinions without fear of retribution; but it was still important to make sure participants understood their right to withdraw from the research or refuse to answer questions without any consequence to them. This project was approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (reference number 09/203).

**Positionality in qualitative geographic research**

Another issue of concern in any social research is the positionality of the researcher. Like ethics, self reflection on positionality is important at all stages of the research process (Barker and Smith, 2001). Linda McDowell (1992, p. 409) argues that as researchers “we must recognize and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice.” However, notwithstanding the wide recognition that the knowledge generated in human geography research is not “value free”, disclosing all
aspects of one’s positionality is not an attainable task, and thus some uncertainty regarding reflexivity in research is unavoidable (Gold, 2002; Rose, 1997).

Perhaps most significant to my positionality and reflexivity is me being a foreigner in Argentina. It may not always be physically apparent; but, once engaged in conversation, my accent and imperfect Spanish immediately “exposed” me. Being a foreigner, however, may entail difficulties as well as benefits while working in the field. On the one hand, participants may be suspicious towards a foreign researcher, or worried about disclosing sensitive information. James Sidaway (1992) points that the origins of social research in the Third World, including those of human geography, are linked to colonial and imperialist history. It also bears on issues of power relations, given that I am not only a foreigner but also a “white” educated male from a so-called “developed” country. On the other hand, it was suggested by one of my contacts that perhaps as a foreigner I would have some advantage in getting access to various organisations and other potential research participants. After the MOCASE was divided in 2001, researchers that had engaged with the movement needed to align themselves with one of the factions and since then this division has, to some extent, remained in place. As an “outsider”, so it was suggested to me prior to the fieldwork, I might be able to interview members from both factions of MOCASE, which is usually less attainable for Argentinean researchers. I did interview members of all parties involved and this was known to all participants and did not seem to be problematic. I do not know for sure, however, if this had to do with my particular positionality as a foreigner.

Another aspect of my positionality is my Argentinean family background. Although not born in Argentina, and having only a limited knowledge of Spanish as a third language, both my parents grew up in Argentina and I still have family there. It means, perhaps, that I am not a “complete” foreigner, but rather situated somewhere along an imaginary “outsider-insider” continuum. Moreover, my family, there and elsewhere, belongs to the urban middle class. This positionality is important when researching rural, marginalised and often non-European communities, such as in this research. However, I grew up in an Israeli Kibbutz, which is a cooperative rural community, and worked in agriculture throughout my adolescent years and into my early adult life. Thus, living in a small community, working the land and practical issues of participatory democracy are not unfamiliar to me. Notwithstanding my personal experience, as noted above, power relations and ethics are still central to this research process.
CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology

Limitation of the study

Reflexivity should be part of any quality research process and part of it also includes addressing the limitations of the study. The limitations, then, begin with the qualitative methodology, including the interpretive paradigm, chosen to guide this research. These are already mentioned above and include the contested suitability of qualitative methodology to generate knowledge that is not place or context specific (Bryman, 2008) and the significant effect of the researcher’s own positionality on the research process and outcomes (McDowell, 1992; Barker and Smith, 2001).

Beyond those limitations, during the different research stages I faced a number of challenges that could be considered limitations. First, being able to spend more time in the field would have meant not only more data but also more opportunities to visit relatively remote communities and to draw upon views and experiences of people from more parts of the study-areas. Spending more time in field would have also allowed me to attend more meetings at different organisational levels and gain better understanding of how horizontalism and consensus decision making function under different circumstances. Moreover, my visits to the field were both around summer when there is less activity in the organisations, and when climatic conditions in Santiago del Estero are not favourable due to the intense heat (regularly around 40 degrees Celsius), which made mobility between and within dispersed communities difficult.

However, while time constraints are often a limiting factor in social research, of greater significance to me was the inability to easily go back to the field and ask further questions regarding themes I felt were not adequately or sufficiently covered initially. An ongoing contact with research participants has the potential to improve the quality of work, but the geographical distance and the difficult channels of communication with participants limited this option. This geographical constraint also limited my ability, sometimes, to access published materials on different topics which are available in Argentina.

These limitations, nevertheless, do not compromise the overall integrity or validity of this research project. A conscious decision was made to obtain a diverse representation and research participants came from a number of different locations within the study-areas and I attended numerous meetings and events. The limitation of distance from the field is one that is not easily mitigated; but nevertheless, by maintaining ongoing contacts with research participants via emails I have been able to be updated regarding events that took place after
my work in the field was completed. This limitation is embedded in the temporality of research on social processes, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, and it should be acknowledged that while things are dynamic, there is often a time gap between the fieldwork and the publication or completion of a study.

**Data analysis and reporting**

Data that is generated through in-depth interviews and observations often results in a large volume of textual material. Analysing this material is usually not a simple task. Undertaking the analysis of such data may be overwhelming and daunting, and there is no standardised analytic procedure that a researcher should follow. Essentially, there is no consensus regarding analysis methods for qualitative data (Sarantakos, 2005). There are, then, different approaches for this kind of analysis, but no single one is superior. This theoretical assertion and its practical implications require some attention.

Regardless of the exact philosophy guiding data analysis, Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1994, p. 10) perceive analysis to consist of “three concurrent flows of activity.” The first one is “data reduction”, where methods such as summarising, coding and excluding irrelevant themes from the data are employed. The second one is “data display”. This refers to decisions regarding how the data should be presented in a way that could efficiently and effectively communicate a large amount of collected information. The third “flow” is “conclusion drawing and verification”. Some preliminary conclusions are often being made already during the fieldwork. The task is then to validate these conclusions, while acknowledging they could be changed. This is, by all means, an important analytic engagement with the collected data. These three “streams” are interconnected and often take place in a cyclical progression (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The importance of addressing the different analytical currents lies in their notion of continuity along multiple stages of the research process, and not merely during the post-fieldwork writing stage.

Data reduction, one of the flows of activities associated with any data analysis, is of significant importance. There is a range of methods that could be employed, but coding is one of most widely used. Coding the data according to themes that re-arise in interviews is a useful tool for dealing with the large quantities of qualitative descriptive data (Bryman, 2008). In this study I employed NVivo as a means for coding and managing interview
recordings. This is a particular Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), designed as a tool for qualitative research analysis of different forms of data, including text and multimedia. Here I used this software for coding, organising and analysing the audio recordings from the fieldwork, and later retrieving the data. Using NVivo, I coded all the interviews according to different themes and attached comments to each section of audio as it was coded. Numerous themes were identified and covered while researching in the field and later these themes guided the coding process. The themes/codes were grouped into four broad categories, each of which containing a number of more specific themes. These four categories were (1) the organisation (including themes such as organisation’s history, objectives, achievements, organisational structure and discourse); (2) activities and actions (including identity, organisation, mobilisation and participation, politics, production and commercialisation); (3) challenges (including land, poverty, livelihood, health, education and political consciousness); and (4) general themes (including development, agriculture frontier, politics in Argentina, neoliberalism, and globalisation and campesinos). Later, during the writing of the empirical chapters, when I needed information and quotes about the different themes, in a click-of-a-button the programme provided me with all the audio parts I had coded under a particular category. I then transcribed only the quotes I wanted to use in the text. This process was very systematic and assisted me immensely in organising the data and in allowing me to easily access it time and again. In addition, the process of coding the audio files is far less time consuming than transcribing those recordings in full, especially when researching in a foreign language.

This, therefore, was one partial solution for a challenge associated with researching in a cross-lingual setting. But language barriers still presented some challenges to data analysis, especially regarding transcribing and translating selected quotes from interviews and literature. My level of Spanish was sufficient for researching in the field without an interpreter, although it was not perfect. During data analysis it was paramount to have some quality assurance over translations. This “quality” includes linguistic as well as more political aspects of translating information and meanings. Therefore, a native Spanish speaker assisted me with maintaining the highest level of accuracy and rigour in transcribing and translating materials. This, then, occasionally led to discussions not only over different literal translation options, but also their different embedded meanings. Translating spoken, as well as written, language is a task that requires some degree of consideration and knowledge, especially when participants use a very colloquial jargon. The translator needs to decide how literal should a
translation be and consider the possible, and sometimes inevitable, trade-offs between trying to maintain the original spirit in which a passage was articulated and modifying it in order to make it clearer to the reader. According to Fiona Smith (1996, p. 162) “any translation seems always to be a reduced and distorted representation of other social texts and practices.” She further argues that when translation is involved, the researcher, or the translator, plays an important interpretive role. For Martin Müller (2007, p. 210), who argues that multi-lingual geographical research has not received enough critical attention, “translation is not merely representation or reproduction – it creates something new and unique.” This is, however, unavoidable when researching across different cultures and languages, which is very common in the discipline of human geography.

Furthermore, the nature of the chosen qualitative research methodology already incorporates the researcher’s positionality and reflexivity, as discussed. Thus, the challenge of translation in writing a thesis is yet another facet of the problems associated with this methodology. My conscious decision here was to keep close or give priority, as much as possible, to the form in which opinions and experiences where articulated, even at a risk of some vagueness or lapses in clarity. In addition, in a number of instances I kept the Spanish word in the translation or used Spanish terms within the English text in order to preserve their concealed meanings. In some instances I also explicitly addressed such embedded meanings. And even so, there is always a degree of interpretation in translation; being aware of this is, thus, important.

The final stage of the data analysis, and where challenges of translation become of moment, is writing the report itself – the final “product” of the research. Here, as mentioned above, ethics come to the forefront once again. Issues of anonymity and fair representation of informants are of high importance (Griffith, 2008). The anonymity of participants should also be considered when using photographs (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001) in the written report. Therefore, this thesis does not include photos that would allow the identification of participants. Feeding back the findings and conclusions of the research to individual participants and their communities is also of ethical importance (Sidaway, 1992). However, since this thesis will be written in a language foreign to the research participants, communicating back the information will be somewhat problematic. Translating the thesis and published materials from this research, whole or in parts, is a possibility.

15 Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) refer to using photography as a research method, but the ethical issues are also relevant to using photos of people in written reports.
Conclusions

In this chapter I have outlined the chosen methodological approach for this research and the practical aspects of data collection and analysis. A qualitative methodology and a case-study model where found most appropriate given this research’s topic and aim to analyse the discourses and praxes (conceptualised here as an integral model of development) of two campesino-indigenous organisations in Northwest Argentina. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of this methodology accept that there is no one absolute truth; rather people are understood to have their own diverse interpretations, or truths, of their lived experiences and realities. Under this methodological umbrella the interpretive paradigm provided a framework in which the diverse understandings and subjective truths of participants can be developed through the analysis of semi-structured interviews of individuals and groups, along with non-participant and participant observations. The methodological approach of this study, nevertheless, has its limitations, such as the relativity of findings. Non-probability sampling and the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher in shaping the research design and analysis have the potential to create limitations as well. But still, this qualitative research methodology can generate valuable knowledge that with some care and appropriate measures could inform similar research in other contexts.

Besides the somewhat more “standard” discussion of the different methodological and practical aspects of this research, it was my intent to emphasise two particular issues. The first one relates to my “insider-outsider” positionality as potentially being both a restrictive as well as an enabling factor. The second issue was the cross-cultural and cross-lingual component of this research and the challenges this poses for discourse analysis and presentation of findings. The issue of interpretation through translation and its inherent political and subjective nature is of great importance in qualitative geographic research, and which according to Müller (2007) has received insufficient attention within the discipline. Like with ethics, being aware of the “politics of translation” is, therefore, an important first step in mitigating the shortfalls of working in a cross-lingual environment. Again, the inherent merits of a qualitative methodology and its ability to generate context-sensitive knowledge and accommodate difference allow for politics in research to be acknowledged and valued, rather than ignored.
CHAPTER FOUR: *Campesinos*, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures

**PART II**

Chapter Four

*Campesinos*, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

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**Introduction**

Argentina is a large agriculture exporter, in economic terms, and it has a well established and politically powerful agrarian sector. This country is often associated with images depicting cattle ranching over vast green plains of lush and fertile arable land, typical of the Pampa region and the gaucho culture. Such images are iconic and carry a strong symbolic importance. However, while the famous Argentinean cattle industry and the more recent and controversial proliferation of soybean cultivation receive much attention, the Argentinean

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16 Between 2005 and 2007 Argentina produced 8.4 per cent of agriculture output in the world and accounted for 2.9 per cent of the world value of agriculture trade (this reflects low level of added value to agriculture output). In the same period Argentina was the world largest exporter of soybean meal and oil (36.1 and 46.9 per cent of world share, respectively) and second largest exporter of corn (10.8 per cent), sunflower meal (17.5 per cent) and sunflower oil (19.8 per cent) (Lence, 2010).
peasantry, or campesinado, characterised by the utilisation of family labour and simple modes of production, was until relatively recent times virtually ignored. In formal government jargon, for instance, the term “campesinos” is often absent, and in official statistics and reports the peasant sector is usually dissolved into the politically uncharged and socioeconomically broad term of “small producers”. In spite of that, the campesinado still forms an important social and economic role in some parts of Argentina.

In this chapter I will provide some foundations for a better conceptualisation of some of the key aspects of this research study, embedding them in geographical and historical contexts. It will clarify why land-tenure is a contested matter in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, and why there are strong peasant organisations in these provinces. This chapter will also seek to establish the characteristics of the Argentinean campesinado, presenting some statistical data by tracing this “elusive” sector in published governmental reports. The chapter will then examine what is the current socioeconomic status of the campesino sector in the two provinces under examination. This chapter, therefore, contributes directly to the first research objective of this study, which seeks to situate current social peasant mobilisation within different historic processes in the territories under examination.

Once the present characteristics of the campesino sector are established, this chapter will contextualise the current state of the campesinos and their livelihood challenges, associated mainly with issues of insecure land-tenure, by situating them in the historical processes of agrarian structure and change in the two provinces. This chapter will provide an important social, political and economic context for better understanding and for further analysis of social mobilisation and organisation of campesino-indigenous communities and their discourses and propositions for a different, politicised and democratic, development.

The Argentinean campesinos

The rise of social science disciplines of Western culture was concurrent with the disintegration of European peasantries as a result of the industrial revolution. In other parts of the world, however, peasantries were reconfigured by colonial rule to satisfy the needs of the newly industrialised societies of the European colonisers. In Western culture, the term “peasant” has often been related to a form of life that contradicts (industrial and scientific) modernisation (Bryceson, 2000). Moreover, in this science-driven modernisation process the
peasant way of life and economic logic have been devalued and relegated. Instead, science promoted a model of an agriculture entrepreneur. This model is associated with high levels of commoditisation, integration within markets and adoption of the market logic of profit maximisation (Van der Ploeg, 2008).

In present-day Argentina, “modern” entrepreneur farmers and “backward” peasants coexist, but not always in harmony. In fact, land conflicts, physically violent at times, have been a feature of the tense relationship between these two social groups of agriculture producers. However, these conflicts may not be directly seen as part of a class struggle. In such instances of conflict the term “campesinos” is often being replaced with “smallholders” or “small producers”. This uncharged terminology was championed by the sub-discipline of development economics, with the intention to draw away from the view that saw peasants as politically subordinated producers (Bryceson, 2000).

In contrast, for Teodor Shanin (1990, p. 23-4), the “peasantry consists of small agriculture producers who, with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power.” Thus, the term “peasant” alludes to a relation between family labour and small scale agriculture operations using simple tools, but also to at least some degree of social and economic subjugation. Addressing this last point, Shanin (1990, p. 43) adds that “land tenure, political power and market centralization operate here as the major mechanisms of exploitation.” This conceptualisation of the peasantry as a dominated social group (class?) is of much importance, and overlooking this is most likely politically motivated.

Past studies in Argentina often distinguished between poor, medial and rich campesinos. This typology, however, aided the rhetorical and conceptual absorption of the peasantry within the “small agriculture producers” (pequeños productores agropecuarios) group (Manzanal, 1993). This latter term is still widely used and it serves for concealing the significant and structural differences between the campesinos and the relatively more capitalised family farmers. The main difference between the above mentioned types of campesinos is, therefore, the level of systematic accumulation of capital, which is often subjected to structural restrictions. These restrictions often include limited access to credit and technology, and precarious accessibility to resources such as land and water (Manzanal, 1993). I agree with Mabel Manzanal’s argument that the term “peasant”, or “campesino”, refers primarily to
CHAPTER FOUR: Campesinos, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures

those the above typology describes as “poor” or “medial” because these groups reflect the lowest level of capital accumulation and the greatest degree of subjugation to external forces (for a discussion on the different categories of peasants and family farmers see Bernstein, 2001).

The term “small producers”\(^{17}\) (hereafter SP) is used in the Argentinean National Agricultural Census (Censo Nacional Agropecuario) and therefore it is worthy of some attention. The Census uses the term “agricultural exploitation”\(^{18}\) (explotación agropecuaria) as the units of organisation of agriculture production. These units resemble what the New Zealand Agriculture Survey terms “farm”. The last two censuses of this type in Argentina were conducted in 1988 and 2002,\(^{19}\) and these allow the analysis of trends such as rural poverty and land concentration. However, since the term “campesinos” is not used, it is necessary to examine the results with some caution.

The term “peasant” may have somewhat different interpretations, depending on a particular time and place; but nevertheless, definitions are reflections of conceptualisations and beliefs and this is where their importance lies. In Argentina there is a widely accepted discourse that offers a definition that is frequently used in academic studies and in development programmes, both social and agricultural. According to this conventional definition the campesinos (1) are agriculture producers under any tenure arrangement, which produce under scarcity of resources; (2) use primarily familiar labour; (3) produce crops, products from animals and other related products such as handicrafts and charcoal; (4) obtain monetary and non-monetary income from selling their products and their labour, and from barter; (5) and lack accumulation of capital (de Dios, 2006a).

A critical engagement with this definition requires not only addressing what is included but also what is not. Absent from this list of criterions, therefore, are notions of social and political subjugation, which are key elements in some definitions of what constitute being a peasant (Shanin, 1990; Bryceson, 2000). For Deborah Bryceson (2000, p. 2), “external

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\(^{17}\) A “producer” is the physical or legal agent (person, company, organisation, etc.) that in a form of proprietor, contractor, leaser, occupant, etc., exercises technical control over an “agriculture exploitation” (Slutzky, 2008).

\(^{18}\) An “agriculture exploitation” must be larger than 500m\(^2\), inside a single province, produce agricultural goods, may have multiple parcels, has a single address, utilise the same means of production and the same labour in all of its parcels in a long lasting manner (Slutzky, 2008).

\(^{19}\) Another Agricultural Census was conducted in 2008, but it has failed to adequately survey the agrarian sector and thus scholars disregard it.
subordination to state authorities as well as regional or international markets...” is a key characteristic. Also notably absent from this list of criterions is the notion of class differentiation, which is evident in Shanin and Bryceson’s conceptualisations. In Argentina, the struggle of the campesinos was not necessarily perceived as a class struggle. This, however, might be gradually changing. In fact, many peasant organisations identify themselves also as indigenous organisations, and there is a dual struggle, where both class politics and indigenous politics take place (further discussed in Chapter 5). Moreover, the view of the peasantry as a subordinated social group (or class) resonates with the politicised development model analysed in the research study. This model wishes, inter alia, to contest the social and political marginalisation of the campesino sector.

For the National Agricultural Census, however, the definition of a SP makes no reference to social stratification. For the Census, SPs must work on the farm, do not employ permanent non-family workers, do not have a legal status of an Incorporated Society and have no more than a specified maximum amount of land, depending on the region and the nature of agriculture operation. In the Santiago del Estero Province, SPs are those who have in total up to 1000 hectares, of which no more than 500 hectares are under cultivation, and in Jujuy Province it is 2500 hectares and 200 hectares respectively. (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). Notably, these amounts of land are substantial, but further discussion will clarify that there are vast differences and disparities within the SPs groups.

The authors of this 2007 report from the Agriculture Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Production developed a methodology for identifying three different types of SPs (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007), in parallel to the typology criticised by Manzanal (1993). This report is useful for estimating the extent of the Argentinean campesino sector from existing census data; but avoids having any social or political connotations.

The authors of the report differentiated between three sub-groups of SPs: “type 1, 2 and 3” SPs. “Type 1” includes the most resource abundant cultivators and “type 3” the least. “Type 3” SPs, therefore, are those operating under greatest scarcity of resources. They do not have a tractor, have less than 50 Livestock Units (LU) (unidades ganaderas), do not have fruit orchards and have no more than two hectares under irrigation. This group, then, could

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20 1 LU = 1 bovine = 5 sheep = 5 goats = 2 llamas.
21 “Type 2” SPs: have a tractor older than 15 years, between 51 and 100 LU, no more than ½ha of fruit orchard and between 2-5ha under irrigation. “Type 1” SPs: have a tractor of less than 15 years, more than 100 LU,
arguably be used as a proxy for the extent of the peasantry. Implicit to this assumption is a view that, at least in the Argentinean context, what separates the peasantry from other small-scale producers is the level of capital accumulation. Therefore, the level of capitalisation and the mode of production are pivotal to this interpretation of the census data. The peasant is also different from the agriculture entrepreneur by not following the logic of the market, but this boundary is often not clearly demarcated (Van der Ploeg, 2008) and because this difference is qualitative in nature, it could not be identifiable in quantitative census data.

SPs in Argentina, as a group, have 65.6 per cent of the national “agriculture exploitations”, and 13.5 per cent of the country’s total agriculture land (1,748 billion hectares in the last 2002 National Agricultural Census). “Type 3” SPs account for 52 per cent of total SPs and occupy 25 per cent of the total land surface held by SPs as a whole (see Figure 4.1). Thus, there is an unequal land distribution, both at the national level and within the SPs group. When examining the average land holding of each group another striking difference emerges. While the average land size of a “type 1” SP is 242ha, for a “type 3” SP it is only 52ha (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007).

In economic terms, the estimated value of SP production accounts for 19.2 per cent of the total estimated value of agriculture production in Argentina. Among “type 3” SPs, corn is the most cultivated crop in terms of the absolute number of “agriculture exploitations”, followed

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more than ½ha of fruit orchard (but less than 500ha) and more than 5ha under irrigation (but less than 500ha if under cultivation).
CHAPTER FOUR: "Campesinos", Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures

by tobacco, yerba mate and soybeans (see Table 4.1). When examining the shares that “agriculture exploitations” of “type 3” SPs have in relation to the absolute number “agriculture exploitations” of different crops, tobacco is highest (66 per cent of total “agriculture exploitations” of tobacco), followed by cotton and potatoes (59 per cent for each), and yerba mate (57 per cent) (see Table 4.1). Although these shares do not represent absolute production or value of production, they do indicate the importance that agro-industrial raw materials have for “type 3” SPs (or campesinos) and this, in turn, influences the economic orientation of the Argentinean peasantry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>16168</td>
<td>14299</td>
<td>1069</td>
<td>2409</td>
<td>10728</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>11062</td>
<td>9725</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>2045</td>
<td>6561</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>5863</td>
<td>4855</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>3485</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerba mate</td>
<td>17766</td>
<td>15290</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>4770</td>
<td>10075</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>7555</td>
<td>6426</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>2110</td>
<td>4008</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>69750</td>
<td>49161</td>
<td>8495</td>
<td>12275</td>
<td>28391</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>52795</td>
<td>28328</td>
<td>8835</td>
<td>12174</td>
<td>7314</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Shares of Small Producers in “Agriculture Exploitations” (AE) for Selected Crops (Source: Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007)

Interestingly, all three types of SPs demonstrate higher value of production per hectare, compared with non-SPs. On average, the gross value per hectare is 53 per cent higher for SPs compared with non-SPs (but notably far less in the fertile Pampa region) (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). This statistical finding certainly challenges the perception that larger “agriculture exploitations” are more economically efficient. Notwithstanding this data, on a national average and within the SPs group, “type 3” productivity is lowest, followed by “type 1” and “type 2”, which has the highest value of production per hectare. It suggests that some scale and mechanisation of agriculture production result in better productivity, at least in monetary terms.

Rural poverty is another important aspect of the Argentinean agriculture sector. However, establishing levels of rural poverty is a problematic task. First, the National Population Census classifies as “rural” all settlements of fewer than 2000 inhabitants. And second, what constitutes poverty is open to debate, especially when differences between urban and rural
setting are considered. A 1994 study that was commissioned by the Executive Committee for the Study of Poverty in Argentina (Comité Ejecutivo para el Estudio de la Pobreza en la Argentina - CEPA)\textsuperscript{22} established criteria\textsuperscript{23} for a “poor agriculture exploitation” that resemble the characteristics of “type 3” SPs (Mathey, 2007). Applying this methodology on data from both 1988 and 2002 censuses, in Argentina, as a whole, there was a reduction of 19 per cent in the number of “poor agriculture exploitations”, but there was also a decrease of about 20 per cent in the number of “agriculture exploitations”, so that while in 1988 “poor” “agriculture exploitations” accounted for 39 per cent of the total, in 2002 their share was slightly higher at 40 per cent (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). There may be different reasons for these changes, but a very likely one is a rural-to-urban migration. In absolute terms, considering the methodological differences, in 2002 there were 113,234 “agriculture exploitations” of “type 3” SPs, or 132,672 “poor agriculture exploitations”, in which resided 436,910 people (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). For comparison, according the National Population Census, in 2001 there were 1,230,408 poor rural dwellers\textsuperscript{24} in Argentina (Mathey, 2007).

Poverty, in its material manifestation, is a main factor causing campesinos to out-migrate, seeking work. From a review of 48 rural “case study” investigations, of which 45 were about rural poverty, Clara Craviotti and Susana Soverna (1999) distinguish between two different contexts of rural poverty in Argentina. The first one is poverty in what they termed “dynamic regions” (p. 27). These areas are abundant with suitable land for agriculture, climatic conditions are favourable or there is cultivation under irrigation, there are employment opportunities in agro-industries, there are labour intensive cultivations and there are urban centres that offer more options of employment. People in these areas have more employment opportunities but they are also more vulnerable to adverse changes in the market. The second context is of regions with “chronic scarcity of resources” (p. 27). These regions lack what is abundant in the dynamic areas. The provinces of Santiago del Estero and Jujuy have both relatively dynamic and chronically scarce regions, with the main difference being available


\textsuperscript{23} Managed directly by the producer, do not have a tractor, do not contract services of machinery and do not use non-family permanent paid workers.

\textsuperscript{24} The methodology used in this census emphasises standards of living and socioeconomic variables. Settlements with less than 2000 inhabitants are also included.
infrastructure, primarily regarding irrigation. The parts of these provinces where the MOCASE-VC and the Red Puna are active are of chronically scarce resources, which is indicative of the great need for integral development in these territories.

Regardless of the difficulties in establishing the extent of the peasantry in Argentina, this statistically “elusive” sector has some characteristics that are embedded in the context of the historical process of capitalist economic development in Argentina, which was most notable from the 1930s (Manzanal, 1993). This process of economic development was distinguished by inward looking policies of import-substitution industrialisation (ISI), which included the intensification of trade barriers and the enhancement of state involvement in the economy. In Argentina, these were even more evident under the populist rule of Juan Domingo Perón, from the military’s coup d’état of 1943, through his election in 1946 and until he lost power in 1955. ISI was the preferred economic development policy in Argentina until the mid 1970s (Brennan, 2007). Notwithstanding, this process was not unique to Argentina, and it was present also in other Latin American countries, dating back to the 1940s (see Kay, 2006).

However, compared to the parallel experience in other Latin American countries, in Argentina it had incorporated the peasantry into the agro-industry chain more profoundly (Barbetta, 2009). Thus, the ISI strategy is part of the political-economic context but not necessarily the main point of distinction between the Argentinean peasantry and their Latin American counterparts. According to Manzanal (1993), in Argentina this economic process not only facilitated rural-to-urban migration, but also coincided with a frail indigenous and peasant culture, a product of the country’s colonial experience.

In addition to the influx of rural dwellers into the urban centres as cheap manual labour, the ISI economic policies also developed and modified the Argentinean internal market. A consequence was the expansion of regional, more marginalised, economies as suppliers of produce and raw materials for consumption and industries (Manzanal, 1993). At this historical point family based agriculture producers outside the fertile region of the Pampa were incorporated into the capitalist market system, and the peasantry was transformed into their current form – tied to production of final or intermediate goods for the internal market. There were, of course, already campesinos in those marginal regions; but since their productive capacities were limited primarily to self subsistence they were not closely tied to the market economy. With the new economic policies that incorporated the campesinos into the market came a change in the variety of crops cultivated by campesinos. Existing and newly established agro-industries demanded cash crops such as sugar, tobacco and cotton,
which were not part of the traditional crops of the peasantry, and that not only tied the peasantry to the market but also exposed them to the risks associated with the capitalist market (Cáceres, 2003; Durand, 2009).

Despite market oriented production being a characteristic of the Argentinean peasantry, production for self subsistence has never been completely eradicated. Nevertheless, it is not as diversified as among peasantries in other Latin American countries. The ramification is greater food insecurity that results from the same economic system that had previously altered the peasantry’s production (Cáceres, 2003). Patricia Durand (2009) argues that this is one of the reasons why the Argentinean campesinos are often labelled as “rural poor”.

Another characteristic of the Argentinean peasantry is the pursuit of work outside of the family’s agriculture operation. That is, campesinos often supply their labour on the market in order to meet their material needs. Some of the occupation opportunities available for campesinos may be either similar in nature to those they pursue while working their own land, or different, such as working for agro-industries. This livelihood strategy of rural semi-proletarianisation is often temporal. That is, migration may be of limited duration around times of high labour demand, such as periods of harvest. Migration may be within the same region or province, whereas other instances require campesinos to migrate afar (Manzanal, 1993). The need for this strategy originated from the structural operations of commercial agriculture production, which benefited from the continuous crisis in marginalised regions of the country (Reboratti, 1986, cited in Manzanal, 1993). This livelihood strategy could also be analysed as a process of proletarianisation of the peasantry, since they become, partially or in full, waged labourers (Durand, 2009).

Yet another characteristic of the Argentinean peasantry is its coexistence within the agrarian structure along other types of agriculture producers. Small family-based producers, whether campesinos or not, supply to the market the same products as median and large commercial producers (known as “empresarios”).²⁵ That is, agriculture production is not monopolised by a single economic agent or group (Durand, 2009).

²⁵ An empresario is a businessman, a capitalist employer, which in the rural context refers to a capital abundant, commercial farmer who utilises modern means of production.
CHAPTER FOUR: *Campesinos, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures*

**The peasantry in Northwest Argentina**

The two provinces under examination in this study, Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, are both located in the northwest region of Argentina (which also includes the provinces of Salta, Tucumán, La Rioja and Catamarca). This region, commonly known as NOA (*noroeste argentino* – Northwest Argentina), is characterised by relatively low levels of capitalist development, and by the persistence of more traditional and marginal modes of production and *campesino* livelihoods. The persistence of the *campesino* sector is also associated with one of the main characteristics that depict this region; that is, the high number of “agriculture exploitations without defined boundaries”. 26 Those refer to farms that do not have clearly recognised or demarcated boundaries, and therefore are often associated with precarious land tenure. According to the 2002 Agriculture Census, in the NOA region there were 24,806 such agriculture exploitations, compared with only 766 in the Pampa region. In this geographic region, *campesinos* who live in “agriculture exploitations without defined boundaries” account for 40 per cent of total rural structure, and hence their importance. Beyond this type of insecure land tenure, the share of total producers represented by small-scale agriculture producers in the NOA region, be they *campesinos* or more capitalised producers, is higher than in any other region in Argentina (Paz, 2006b; Paz, 2008).

**The peasantry in the Province of Santiago del Estero**

The Province of Santiago del Estero is situated in the centre-north of Argentina (see map 4.1), and it is part of the semiarid section of the Gran Chaco region. The province has a surface area of 135,235 square kilometres, 27 between the parallels 25°33’ S and 30°40’ S, and the longitudes 61°32’ W and 65°10’ W. It has two main rivers (Rio Salado and Rio Dulce) that flow from the northwest to the southeast of the province. About 80 per cent of the province’s surface is flat, and three small mountain ranges traverse towards in southeast. The climate across the province is fairly uniform, with maximum temperatures that may climb above 45°C in summer and drop to a minimum of below zero in winter. Precipitation levels gradually decrease from 750mm in eastern parts of the province and to 500mm in the west (Durand, 2009; de Dios, 2006a).

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26 Those agriculture exploitations are usually not bordered by fences and are common among campesinos that have their livestock grazing in the forest (Paz, 2008).

27 Ranked 9th out of 23 provinces and one territory.
According to the 2010 Census the province has 896,461 inhabitants (INDEC, 2010), an increase of slightly over 11 per cent from the 2001 Census. From data of the 2001 Census, 34 per cent of those inhabitants live in the countryside (compared with 6.9 per cent for the whole country). Moreover, 41 per cent of the population resides in the city of Santiago del Estero and its immediate surroundings, which indicates a very low concentration of people in the other parts of the province (de Dios, 2006a, 2006b). According to the 2001 Census, the province is among the five most impoverished provinces in Argentina; with 26.2 per cent of households complying with at least one of the criteria of Dissatisfied Basic Necessities²⁸

²⁸ More than three persons in a room; unsuitable housing; no toilets; a child (age 6-12) who does not attend school; four or more persons per employed family member, where the head of the family had not completed three years of primary education.
CHAPTER FOUR: Campesinos, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures

(Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas - NBI). Moreover, within the households with Dissatisfied Basic Necessities it is the province with the highest level of households without the provision of water in houses (83.2 per cent) (INDEC, 2003).

The agricultural sector is central to the economy of the province, being second only to the services sector (de Dios, 2006b). “Agriculture exploitations” of SPs constitute 83 per cent of the province’s total. These account for only 16 per cent, or 849,289ha, of the total agricultural land (65.6 per cent and 13.5 per cent respectively for Argentina as a whole). The proportional difference between “Agriculture exploitations” of SPs and their share of agriculture land in Santiago del Estero is the highest in the country. This is also an indication of a high level of land concentration. In economic terms, the value of SP agriculture production in Santiago del Estero accounted in 2004 for 26 per cent of total economic value of agriculture production in the province (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007).

As established above, “type 3” SP related data is the best approximation available for assessing figures for the peasantry. In the Province of Santiago del Estero 72 per cent of all SPs can be characterised as “campesinos”\(^{29}\) (see Table 4.2). This group, with 377,491ha, represents 44 per cent of the total “agriculture exploitations” of SPs (25 per cent for Argentina). These figures indicate the prevalence of the campesinos in the province. In spite of that, their average size of “agriculture exploitation” is a mere 30ha, which is 42 per cent lower than the national average.

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<th>Total AE</th>
<th>Total AE of SPs</th>
<th>‘Type 3’ SPs</th>
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<td>N’</td>
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<td>Santiago del Estero</td>
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<td>257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 4.2: “Agriculture Exploitations” (AE) of SPs and “type 3” SPs in Santiago del Estero and Argentina (Source: Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007)

\(^{29}\) Note that a “small producer” (SP) does not refer to an individual. In the case of the peasantry, a SP is a better approximation for a family.
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Using the “poor agriculture exploitations” methodology discussed above, in 1988 there were 13,538 out of a total of 21,122 “agriculture exploitations” in the province that qualified as “poor”. By 2002 this number had climbed to 14,063 while the total number of “agriculture exploitations” had decreased to 20,949. This change represents both an absolute increase of nearly 4 per cent in the number of “poor agriculture exploitations” and an increase of the relative share of these “exploitations” from 64 per cent in 1988 to 67 per cent in 2002 (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007). If we accept that both this methodology and the “type 3” SPs methodology can be a proxy for the population size of the peasantry, then in 2002 there were about 14,000 families of campesinos in the province.

Map 4.2: Zones of homogenous production, Province of Santiago del Estero
(Source: Zurita 1999, cited in Durand, 2009, p. 64)
Although there are similar climatic conditions throughout the province, it is possible to distinguish between six different “production zones”, with consequences for agricultural production (see Map 4.2). In the northern zone (1) extraction of resources from the forest and livestock rearing are the main economic activities of the campesinos. In this region campesinos tend to occupy land in a precarious manner and their production is oriented towards self-subsistence and the sale of excess production. In the north-western zone (2) a process of deforestation enabled greater cultivation of cash-crops such as beans and soybeans. Campesinos in this region also use to extract resources from the forest and have livestock, but deforestation means greater pressure on their livelihoods. The southwest zone (3) is dominated by large cattle breeding farms, while the campesinos tend to have herds of goats and sheep, and cultivate for self-subsistence. The Southern zone (4) is characterised by low levels of agriculture modernisation and traditional (non-intensive) livestock rearing is common. Small animal livestock such as sheep and goats are common among the campesinos. The eastern zone (5) has more favourable conditions for agriculture. As a result the transformation of this region is most notable. Cultivation of oil seeds in this region has

Figure 4.2: Typical peasant production in Santiago del Estero Province
increased dramatically from about 4000ha in 1985 to 334,881ha in 2002. Cattle ranching is also an important economic activity in this part of the province. The central zone (6) has much better infrastructure compared to the other zones. There are irrigation canals that allow cultivation of different varieties of crops. Cultivation in small parcels is very common in this region (Durand, 2009; de Dios, 2009). Figure 4.2 depicts typical campesino production in this province, including stockbreeding of small farm animals (sheep and goats), cultivation (corn and cotton) and forest products (charcoal).

In spite of these differences, SPs have a significant importance in the agriculture sector in the province, and there is a notable presence of campesinos in most regions (Durand, 2009). The eastern zone is of particular importance for this study. Because the climatic conditions in this part of the province allow for intensive commercial cultivation, peasant livelihoods have been put under severe pressure, dating back a number of decades now. This is the rational for conducting a large part of the fieldwork for this study in this area of conflict over resources and livelihoods.

The peasantry in the Province of Jujuy

The Province of Jujuy is located in the northwest corner of Argentina, bordering with Chile in the west, with Bolivia in the north, and with the province of Salta in the south and east (see Map 4.3). The province is one of Argentina’s smallest and it has a surface area of 53,219 square kilometres, 30 between the parallels 21º 46’ S and 24º 37’ S, and the longitudes 67º 13’ W and 64º 09’ W. Politically, the province is subdivided into sixteen Departments, in which, according to the 2010 Census, reside 672,260 inhabitants at an average density of 12.6 inhabitants for a square kilometre (INDEC, 2010). However, nearly 40 per cent of the population is located in the Department Dr. Manuel Belgrano (see Map 4.4), where the province’s capital is located. Hence, there are large disparities in terms of population density in the province. Founded in 1593 and located in the south of the province, the capital city of the province is San Salvador de Jujuy.

30 Ranked 20th out of 23 provinces and one territory.
The province has four main ecological regions, with vast range in terms of climate, vegetation and altitude. The largest and highest region is the Puna, an extension of the Bolivian Altiplano. The Puna of Jujuy is a high altitude plateau ranging between 3,000 and 4,000 metres above sea level, and surrounded by peaks of 5,000 meters. It includes the Departments of Yavi, Santa Catalina, Rinconada, Cochinoca and Susques (see Map 4.4). The Puna covers 26,403 square kilometres (nearly 50 per cent of the provincial territory) and has 21,736 inhabitants at a density of 0.8 inhabitants per square kilometre (INDEC, 2010). The climate of the Puna is arid, oscillating from an annual average of 340 millimetres in the northwest to less than 100 millimetres in the southwest of the region. Rainfall is concentrated in the summer months (November to March) and the winter is dry and very cold. High solar radiation, wide daily temperature variation and frosts are also typical to this region. The characteristic vegetation varies between shrub steppe, herbaceous grassland and a few

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31 According to Ian Rutledge (1987) there are three eco-regions, and he places the Departments of Capital (currently the Departments of Dr. Manuel Belgrano and Palpalá), San Antonio and El Carmen as part of the Quebrada de Humahuaca ecological region. However, note that the eco-regions of Jujuy do not correspond exactly to the political borders of the Departments.
restricted pockets of wetlands where short grasses grow (Yacobaccio, Morales and Samec, 2009). This vegetation is suitable for animal grazing and the tola, a tough wind-resistant shrub, is the only usable burning material. In addition to livestock, in some areas, especially in the Department of Yavi, conditions allow for some cultivation. Thus, peasant production in the Puna is based primarily on stockbreeding, with llamas and sheep being most prevalent (see Figure 4.3).

The second ecological region of Jujuy is the Quebrada de Humahuaca (Ravine of Humahuaca). This is a narrow mountain valley, stretching some 155 kilometres along the trajectory of the Rio Grande from near the capital San Salvador de Jujuy, at an altitude of 1,259 metres, and reaching almost to the town of Tres Cruces, the entryway to the Puna, at an
altitude of 3,693 metres above sea level. The climatic conditions in the Quebrada vary due to
differences in altitude and its natural vegetation changes from subtropical humid forest in the
south, to shrubs and cacti that prosper in its cold semi-arid northern part. Politically, the
Quebrada de Humahuaca consists of the Departments of Humahuaca, Tilcara and Tumbaya.
It covers some 9,079 square kilometres and has 35,634 inhabitants (INDEC, 2010). Peasant
production in this region is characterised by a mixed agricultural-livestock model (see Figure
4.3), with cultivation of vegetables and fruit on small parcels of land under irrigation along
river beds and livestock breeding on communal land.

Peasant stockbreeding in the Puna (about 3600m above sea level)

Peasant agriculture in the Quebrada de Humahuaca (about 3000m above sea level)

Figure 4.3: Typical peasant production in the highlands of Jujuy Province

The other two ecological regions of Jujuy are the *Valles Centrales*\(^{32}\) (Central Valleys) and the
*Valles Subtropicales Orientales*\(^{33}\) (Eastern Subtropical Valleys). These regions consist of
3,986 and 10,809 square kilometres, and 416,917 (62 per cent of total) and 177,338
inhabitants, respectively (INDEC, 2010). The *Valles Centrales* are situated in the centre-

\(^{32}\) Including the Departments of Dr. Manuel Belgrano, Palpalá, El Carmen and San Antonio.
\(^{33}\) Including the Departments of Valle Grande, Ledesma, San Pedro and Santa Bárbara.
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south of the province, and are a transition area between the semi-arid Quebrada to their north, and the lower Valles Subtropicales Orientales to their east. The climate is subtropical with dry and wet seasons, and the vegetation is of dry yungas (Delgado, Fandos and Boto, 2006). The climate of the Valles Subtropicales Orientales is hotter and more humid. Its vegetation changes with altitude, like in the other regions of the province, but it is generally a humid yungas in the lower parts and a more open forest in the higher ones (Teruel, Lagos and Peirotti, 2006).

These regions have had somewhat different processes of economic and social development, and since the Red Puna y Quebrada is not active in them, they are of less interest to this research study. Their main importance here, however, is their agro-industries (notably sugar and tobacco), which are both a traditional source of employment for the people from the highland regions of the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca, and a favoured sector among influential political-economic groups in Jujuy.

The agrarian sector in Jujuy is highly important. The sugar and tobacco industries are perhaps the most notable but citrus plantations and other fruits and vegetables are also cultivated. In addition, the livestock industry is important, particularly in the Puna. Jujuy has a total of 8,983 “agriculture exploitations”, covering 1,282,063 hectares, at an average farm size of 143 hectares (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007).

When the small agriculture producers share of “agriculture exploitations” is examined, it is evident that they comprise 85 per cent of the provincial total. However, these account for only 31 per cent, or 398,593 hectares, of the total agricultural land. The average land size of a “small producer” (SP) is 52 hectares, but this number reveals very little if the characteristics of the land are unavailable. If irrigation is available, for example, then this is a viable farm size. However, if it is land in the Puna it is certainly not economically viable for stockbreeding. In economic terms, the value of SP agriculture production in Jujuy corresponded in 2004 to 23 per cent of total economic value of agriculture production in the province (Obschatko, Foti and Román, 2007).

Like in Santiago del Estero, of most importance here is the “type 3” SP category, which best matches the characteristics of a campesino mode of production and social organisation. In Jujuy this group composes 77 per cent of total SPs (see Table 4.3). It accounts for 51 per cent of “agriculture exploitations” (25 per cent for Argentina). This is equivalent to some 202,536 hectares, or nearly 16 per cent of the total agriculture land of the province. In terms of
farming units, or “agriculture exploitations”, “type 3” SPs comprise nearly 66 per cent of total SPs and non-SPs units combined (34 per cent for Argentina) (Obutschko, Foti and Román, 2007).

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<th>‘Type 3’ SPs</th>
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<td>Average</td>
<td>AE  Surface</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N’ Hectares</td>
<td>Ha/AE</td>
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</tr>
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<td>7,646 398,593 52</td>
<td>5,903 77 202,536 51</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4.3: “Agriculture Exploitations” (AE) of SPs and “type 3” SPs in Jujuy and Argentina (Source: Obutschko, Foti and Román, 2007)

In the Puna eco-region, which also includes a large part of the neighbouring province of Salta, but most of its population lives in Jujuy, 87.3 per cent of EAs are SPs, a higher proportion than in any other eco-region in Argentina. This is probably due to the limited economic viability for agribusiness in this high altitude and arid region. Those “agriculture exploitations” account for 50.9 per cent of total agriculture surface, also higher than in any other region, followed by the Dry Chaco region (28.7 per cent of agriculture surface) (Obutschko, Foti and Román, 2007).

Using the methodology for identifying “poor agriculture exploitations”, in the Agriculture Census of 1988 there were 6,580 “agriculture exploitations” in this category. They accounted for 77 per cent of total “agriculture exploitations” in Jujuy. In the Census of 2002 the number of “poor agriculture exploitations” declined by 4 per cent to 6,295 “agriculture exploitations”. The relative number of “poor agriculture exploitations” had also decreased to 70 per cent of the total. If this methodology and the “type 3” SPs methodology are used as proxies for estimating the size of the campesino sector in Jujuy, then it is evident that both present a similar estimate, 6,295 and 5,903 respectively. Comparing Jujuy and Santiago del Estero, the campesino sector in the former is much smaller in absolute terms, but about the same size relative to the total agriculture sector. In economic terms, “type 3” SPs in both Jujuy and Santiago del Estero have a similar share of the total value of production (11 and 9 per cent respectively) (Obutschko, Foti and Román, 2007).
Rural change and socioeconomic integration in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

Thus far in this chapter I have addressed the peasant sector and its prevalence in the study areas. For better understanding the current situation of the peasantry, including insecure land tenure and conflicts and other livelihood challenges in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, it is paramount, I believe, to uncover the historical processes of rural change and integration into the market economy. This will provide some foundations for how land-tenure, labour and their interchanging relations have evolved over modern history in these provinces. In turn, this will shed light over current land disputes, agrarian structures and wider social and economic contestation over material and symbolic resources, which are all important to current social mobilisation of the peasantry.

Undoubtedly, the historical era that has had an unprecedented impact over all aspects of life across the American continent was European colonisation (Kay, 2001). The region under focus in this research study was under Spanish rule for nearly 300 years, from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century and until the Argentinean Independence War in 1810. However, the effects of Spanish rule persisted long beyond this historical point.

According to James Lockhart (1969, p. 411), “what the Spanish colonial period added to pre-Columbian America can be described briefly as the contents of two complementary master institutions, the Spanish city and the great estate.” The former institution is of lesser importance here, even though the city of Santiago del Estero was the first to be built by the Spaniards in modern day Argentina. The latter institution of the great estate, also commonly known as hacienda or latifundio, is, however, of great significance for grasping how the agrarian structure had been modified and reshaped by the conquistadors. Moreover, it had been more difficult for historians to understand the complexity of the structures and origin of the great estate, compared to the city. At the centre of this complexity was the relationship between the hacienda, which is associated with the more mature colony stage, and the institution of encomienda, which is associated with the earlier conquest period. Some scholars thought the encomienda to be the predecessor of the hacienda, while other, more recent ones, disputed this linear connection between the two (Lockhart, 1969; Keith, 1971).

The institution of encomienda also has some complexity to it, and in different places and times its meaning and practice were somewhat different. In general terms, the encomienda was a right given to individual persons of Spanish origin to demand labour and tributes from a group of indigenous people. In return, the encomendero had to take care of his serf-like
endowed people’s welfare. Importantly, the *encomienda* did not give any land tenure rights to its beneficiaries. In theory, this socioeconomic structure was similar to prevailing pre-Spanish ruling traditions and was intended to keep the local populations’ social structure unbroken (Keith, 1971).

Towards the end of the 16th century the Spanish Crown made changes to the system of *encomienda*, which caused local elites in the colonies to lose some of their privileges and power. As a response they started to acquire land in order to preserve their status (Keith, 1971). In some instances, like in modern day highland Jujuy, *encomenderos* lobbied the Crown to receive land (*merced*) in the same area where they had their *encomienda* (Rutledge, 1987; Lockhart, 1969). This process resulted in the creation of large landed estates and a direct rule over indigenous population in a feudal-like form (Keith, 1971). However, there were far more estates than *encomiendas* and land was often granted as a *merced* by the Crown in places where there were no *encomiendas*. Thus, there were connections between the two institutions, but the hacienda is developed from the *merced*, not the *encomienda* (Lockhart, 1969).

Notwithstanding the exact origin of the Latin American *latifundio* structure, of importance here is the creation of the landed elite in Latin America and its impact on the indigenous rural population. In the social sphere, Robert Keith (1971, p.438) asserts that “while the *encomienda* system required the survival of the indigenous society without radical change, the development of the *hacienda* system required that this society be largely destroyed and its members transformed into an agricultural proletariat.”

The proliferation of the *hacienda* as the hegemonic socioeconomic structure of the rural Argentinean interior for several centuries has had important ramifications for the indigenous peoples, the original occupants of this territory. It has also had bearing on non-indigenous peasant producers (this distinction will be further discussed in the next chapter), and it is necessary to contextualise the particular processes of agrarian structure and change in the provinces under focus here, from the Spanish colonisation to the present.

**Agrarian structure and change in Santiago del Estero**

The agrarian history of Santiago del Estero and its integration into regional and global markets since the colonial period is composed of periods of boom and bust, closely linked
with foreign capital, global demand, introduced cash-crops and over-extraction of natural resources. When the conquistadors arrived, there was only a small area in the vicinity of the two main rivers, Salado and Dulce – the Mesopotamia Santiagueña – which had a stable population of indigenous cultivators (Tasso, 2003-4). The Spaniards founded the city of Santiago del Estero, and from there they advanced to the northwest in a quest of establishing a trading and communication route with Alto Perú (Upper Peru), modern day Bolivia (Rock, 1986).

The social and economic change brought about by the colonisers was threefold. First, traditional agriculture practice was abolished and replaced with new techniques and crops (for example, beef, cotton and wheat). Second, encomienda rights were handed to the conquistadors, allowing them to extract labour and other tributes. Third, land was appropriated and given as mercedes (royal property grants) to the same colonisers (Barbetta, 2009).

The missionaries brought cotton to Santiago del Estero in 1556, and it soon became the main crop and raw material for the newly established textile industry (Vessuri, 1972). This industry utilised indigenous labour in a servile manner as part of the encomienda system (Barbetta, 2009), and together with animal breeding, the other important agriculture activity installed by the colonisers, supplied local demand but was also part of a larger system of trade with the mining industry in Potosí and Alto Perú. In this trading route, animals and textiles were traded for gold and silver (Vessuri, 1972; Dargoltz, 1985; Rock, 1986). This early form of trade over long distances commenced the Argentinean international trade (Dargoltz, Gerez and Cao, 2006) and the Northwest region, including Santiago del Estero, became the economically most important region within the Argentinean territory (Dargoltz, 2003).

The colonial period came to a close with the Argentinean War of Independence (1810-1818). The provinces of the Northwest, including Santiago del Estero, lost some of their status as political and economic hegemony was further consolidated in Buenos Aires. Important to this shift was a prolonged economic decline during the last decades of the colonial rule, which were marked by disrupted trade between Buenos Aires and Alto Perú, via the Northwest provinces (Rock, 1986; Rossi, 2007). This economic crisis pauperised many workers in the interior parts of Argentina. According to Barbetta (2009) the latter, coupled with the nearly

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34 Barbetta (2009) does not give a detailed account of the relationship between the encomienda and the mercedes, which subsequently lead to the formation of large haciendas.
extinction of the indigenous population who worked in inhumane conditions in the textile industry, were the preceding factors that initiated the first massive outmigration of the Santiagueño population. This phenomenon will perpetuate in centuries to come and until current times.

After independence the main economic activity in the province shifted from textile industry to large estancias of stockbreeding. Between 1810 and 1820 land used by the oppressed and depleted indigenous populations was legally appropriated by the local powerful elite (Rossi, 2007), and landowners that had received mercedes in the colonial period appropriated more land than was formally designated to them in titles. In later years and in order to conceal their illegitimate holdings, many land titles were “lost”. After independence this situation allowed the local landlord class to obtain more extensive parcels of land. By the mid nineteenth century the provincial government was selling public land to the local landed elite, and an active market for land was in place. These processes of accumulation of land intensified the hegemony of the political-economic oligarchy in the province (Rossi, 2004).

In the second half of the nineteenth century military expeditions took place along the main rivers of the Gran Chaco. These expeditions, driven by economic interests of the local elite, aimed at increasing available land for cultivation and pasture for stockbreeding, while also improving navigable trade lines across the main rivers (Rossi, 2004). However, journeys into the Chaco region were not without risks. According to Russell Smith (1903, p.132) the area of the Gran Chaco was “held by a few wandering tribes of hostile Indians, who have thus far resisted all efforts to explore the interior.” These expeditions, therefore, had a military character and a line of forts was instituted for permitting the further colonisation of Santiago del Estero.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the handcrafted textile industry was completely extinct and the province’s economy was primarily based on agriculture-stockbreeding operations (Barbetta, 2009). However, in the same period there was an attempt to establish a new agro-industry in the province with the construction of a number of sugar mills, or ingenios,35 of French capital adjacent to sugarcane fields. This industry had been already established in other provinces, particularly in neighbouring Tucumán Province, and it represented an economic model much in vogue within political and business circles of that time (Tasso, 2003-4). However, within a short period of time the industry went into crisis.

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35 Ingenio means sugar mill, but here it refers to a complex of sugar mill and adjacent plantations.
There were different possible reasons for this crisis, among them rapid growth of sugar production in Argentina (410 per cent between 1880 and 1897), which coupled with protectionist import tariffs, oversaturated the domestic market and drove prices down. The national crisis of this agro-industry led to its complete demise in Santiago del Estero (Tasso, 2003-4; Dargoltz, Gerez and Cao, 2006). The crisis of the sugar industry created massive unemployment of rural workers, and much of this surplus labour was absorbed in a newly emerging industry – logging (Tasso, 2003-4).

The consolidation of political power in Buenos Aires in the decades after independence was subsequently followed by an attempt to integrate regional economies within the Argentinean territory into the national economy, now heavily concentrated in the national capital (Rutledge, 1987). This national economic integration was to be achieved by linking the provinces on the periphery with Buenos Aires by train. The construction of thousands of kilometres of railroad initiated a new industry in Santiago del Estero that has had an important effect in the following decades. This industry was the logging of pristine forest for train sleepers and other timber products.

In the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century a region previously ignored and marginalised within the provincial territory, the Chaco Santiagueño, became the centre of economic production due to the expansion of railroads and the demand for timber. This “timber rush” led to the largest public land sell in Argentinean history. Four million hectares of land were sold to private hands, primarily of the Buenos Aires oligarchy, for 23 cents of a peso per hectare, while the British company who built the railroad paid 1.50 pesos for each sleeper. This wholesale sale of public land created large forest latifundios. The most iconic one, Tornquist, owned more than 800,000 hectares and employed five thousand workers (Dargoltz, 1985).

The promise of adequate wages and living condition resulted in thousands of families leaving their homes and domestic production and migrating into the forest to work in the timber yards. The textile industry, characterised by its servile labour of the indigenous population, was replaced by the timber industry, ostensibly based on free waged labour. However, the owners of the logging companies exploitatively overcharged their workers for the services they provided, such as the provision of groceries, which led to a heavily indebted workforce that could never repay its debt. Thus, in effect, forestry workers and their families were semi-
slaves or at least constituted a new form of feudal serfs, and lived in dreadful conditions and extreme poverty (Dargoltz, 1985, 2003).

For Raúl Dargoltz (2003), during this period a powerful trinity was formed in Santiago del Estero. This union included the railroad, logging industry and large latifundios, who complemented each other economically and politically, and were reliant on massive privatisation of public land that contained most valuable woods and that was ostensibly unoccupied. Dargoltz (2003) also argued that the destiny of Santiago del Estero as the provider of timber for the construction of the railroad and fencing of the Pampean ranches was essentially dictated by the rapidly industrialising countries of Europe that demanded meat and cereals. This political economy, outlined by Dargoltz, was an integral part of the first food regime, when settler colonies fed the emerging industrial classes of Europe (McMichael, 2009). However, while this trade largely benefited the landed oligarchy of the Pampa region and the port of Buenos Aires, the exploitation of the human and natural resources of Santiago del Estero reinforced the long process of the impoverishment of this province.

The timber industry was immensely affected by the First World War. Problems in the provision of coal were matched by producing charcoal from the Chaco forest. However, the war halted the expansion of the railroad and demand for sleepers fell drastically. The industry gradually went into a crisis that caused unemployment and subsequent outmigration of families from the logging hinterland. Simultaneously, between 1914 and 1937 small-scale agriculture exploitation of minifundistas had significantly increased in what some analyse as a process of peasantisation of rural workers who lost their jobs in the timber industry (Barbetta, 2009).

Between 1935 and 1960 there was some revival of the forest industry in Santiago del Estero, but not to the extent it had during the period of the construction of the railroad. This expansion of the industry was driven primarily by global demand for tannin, a product used in processing leather and found in high concentration in red quebracho (Schinopsis lorentzii) trees in the Chaco forest (Dargoltz, 1983).³⁶ Although this industry was in the midst of

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³⁶ The tannin industry was already well established in other parts of the Gran Chaco, monopolised for 80 years by La Forestal del Chaco, a London based company that exported most of its production. Tannin was not initially extracted from the Santiago red quebracho because of its inferior concentration, compared with the Chaco red quebracho (Schinopsis balansae). Once the latter specie was exhausted, the former became economically viable (Dargoltz, 2003).
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decline it still employed 25 per cent of the province’s workforce. However, in spite of the relative importance of this agro-industry, by the end of World War Two Argentina had adopted a strategy of import substitution industries and that resulted in large rural to urban migration, primarily to Greater Buenos Aires but also to regional urban centres in the provinces, such as the City of Santiago del Estero (Barbetta, 2009; Brennan, 2007).

The Agrarian Census of 1947 shows that the peasantisation process of the previous period was reversed and the number of agriculture exploitations of less than 25 hectares fell by 42 per cent. However, during the 1950s there was once again a process of (re-)peasantisation, to a large extent due to the crisis and liquidation of the tannin industry and the subsequent unemployment of its workforce (Dargoltz, 1997). Many of the loggers who lost their jobs stayed with their families where they were and turned to agriculture for subsistence. However, their possession of the land was not legally regularised and their vulnerability for not having land titles exposed them to evictions in places where land hungry agribusinesses coveted public land for cultivating cotton (Paz and Jara, 2012). Interestingly, between 1947 and 1960 the agrarian structure of the Pampa region also experienced some land tenure changes. Only that in this case deliberate government intervention allowed many family agriculture producers under land lease to buy the land and become proprietors. (Barsky and Dávila, 2008). Thus, while in the Pampa region public policies facilitated some redistribution of land ownership, in the peripheralised province of Santiago del Estero, an “unplanned” process of (re-)peasantisation resulted in precarious land possession and vulnerability of loggers who became peasant producers.

The decade of the 1960s was marked by a sustained increase in agriculture output in the province, primarily due to investment in irrigation infrastructure and modernisation of the agrarian sector. During this decade of modernisation there was a notable expansion of the “agriculture frontier” and, importantly, a significant increase in the number of large agriculture exploitations (over 1000 hectares). However, these developments have had an uneven effect across the province, as they did not reach all parts of the territory (Barbetta, 2009). Thus, the importance of this decade in the agrarian history of Santiago del Estero is in the initiation of a prolonged process of modernisation and further integration into the capitalist market; a process that in current time has arguably reached its crest and has had severe ramification for the peasant sector of the province.
These developments are also associated with the first antecedent of campesinos’ struggle for land. A number of unemployed loggers and their families settled in a place called Suncho Pozo, in the east of the province, during the 1940s and became campesinos. In the 1960s, when their land was already conditioned for production and the cultivation of cotton became economically worthwhile, a company bought the land from its historic owner and intended to evict them. This conflict lasted for over a decade and included a trial (in which the campesinos lost), an appeal to President Perón and an active resistance when the police came to evict them. Finally, with the intervention of the province’s Governor, the campesinos received alternative parcels in the vicinity in return for the disputed land. They had to reconstruct their houses and prepare the land for cultivation, but they did not see it as a defeat. Rather, they managed to obtain land formally and that was of much significance to them (Durand, 2009). This early land conflict was an omen for decades to come, where the expansion of agribusiness operations came into conflict with campesinos who possess land with insecure tenure.

Starting from the 1970s a process of neoliberal economic structural change was truly under way across Latin America. Within this context, Santiago del Estero experienced processes of further modernisation and integration of its agrarian sector into the capitalist market; processes that had already started in a more limited capacity in the previous decade. The further expansion of the “agriculture frontier” was, and still is, led by capitalised agriculture companies, often from outside the province. These agribusiness companies contributed to the introduction of crops with export potential (such as cotton, corn and beans) to the more arid parts of the province. In addition, there was a significant expansion of cattle stockbreeding using modern techniques and technology. This agrarian change has had immense environmental and social ramifications (de Dios, 2006b).

This expanding demand for bringing more land under intensive cultivation posed a direct threat to campesino families who in many instances occupied these territories. The appropriation of land and its use for intensive modern agriculture caused enhanced deforestation and destruction not only of natural ecosystems but also of an important social and economic resource for campesinos, whose livelihoods are directly connected to the forest (de Dios, 2006b). These pressures, associated with the neoliberal export-oriented agriculture model, entered a new phase in the second half of the 1990s with the introduction and aggressive use of a new technological package of genetically modified seeds and agrochemicals. In précis, the modernisation of agriculture production coupled with neoliberal
economic policies has led to land appropriation and concentration in hands of capitalised agriculture companies. In addition, conflicts over land tenure between campesinos and those agribusinesses intensified, alongside increasing environmental degradation of the Gran Chaco forest. This historical context of changing agrarian structures (political, social and economic) provides the foundations for understanding and analysing the (relatively) recent conflicts over land that initiated the mobilisation and organisation of the campesino sector in Santiago del Estero.

Notwithstanding the importance of the agrarian structure for understanding current conflicts and social mobilisation in the Santiagueño countryside, the recent political culture is also of much importance. From 1949 and until their forced removal in 2004, the northern Argentinean Province of Santiago del Estero was under the political hegemony of Carlos Juárez and his wife Mercedes Aragonés de Juárez. The former is often characterised as a Perónist caudillo, referring to charismatic militia leaders from the 19th century post-independence Argentinean interior. For over half a century Juárez was the virtual political owner of the province. When democracy was reconstituted in 1983 Juárez was re-elected as Governor, and during his incumbency period he managed to enhance his control over the provincial polity by manipulating the democratic system in his favour and by oppressing his political rivals and their supporters (Gibson, 2005; Dargoltz, Gerez and Cao, 2006).

Using the democratic system, Juárez changed electoral laws in the province so as to enhance his hegemony. Under his legislation votes in the countryside, where his Perónist Party was traditionally strong, will have much more weight in terms of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, compared with seats allocated for the urban centres of the City of Santiago del Estero and the adjacent city of La Banda, strongholds of the rival Radical Party. Under this structure, 70 per cent of seats were held by representatives of the countryside. Rural votes, however, were secured by a profound system of patronage, where rural dwellers, many of whom were campesinos, gave their votes to their patrons, or landlords (Gibson, 2005). The patron-client social structure stems from a system of severe economic inequality, but also of social, political and cultural inequalities between the rural landed elite, on the one hand, and campesinos or rural labourers, on the other. In Santiago del Estero such inequalities created an extensive and long lasting system of patronage, where the patron provides work, protection, credit or other material favours, and the subjugated clients supply him with labour, prestige and political support, when elections were held (Vessuri, 1972).
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Moreover, Juárez used federal funding to expand employment in the public sector. During the last decades of his rule close to 90 per cent of people formally employed in the province were employed by Juárez’s government. Thus, the patronage system, historically entrenched in the countryside, was extended to all sectors (Gibson, 2005). Edward Gibson (2005, p.123) asserts that “where institutional control and clientelism failed to neutralize opponents, outright repression filled the void”. Perhaps most notable was Juárez’s control and use of the judiciary system and the police to impose his rule, and this within ostensibly a democratic context.

In 2003 two young women were murdered and their death was soon after linked to members of the provincial elite and Juarez’s notorious secret police. This event initiated massive popular mobilisation in the province and this caught the attention of national media. At this point what was known to Santiagueños for decades was made public nationwide, and most importantly – in Buenos Aires (Dargoltz, Gerez and Cao, 2006). President Néstor Kirchner then exercised his right to intervene. He ordered the arrest of Juárez and his wife, the acting Governor at the time, and appointed a temporary Governor with the official task of preparing the province for free elections, and the unofficial task of securing support to the Kirchnerist faction in the Perónist Party. To his disappointment, in the 2005 elections the Radical Party’s candidate, Gerardo Zamora, was elected as Governor (Gibson, 2005).

These events have arguably changed, at least to a certain degree, the prevailing political culture. The *campesino* organisations in the province have always wished to contest the prevailing closed and exclusionary political culture and, now that it is arguably changing, they need to assess their relations with the provincial authorities. With that, changing such a political culture is a lengthy process at best, and *campesino* organisations are not unanimous in their analysis of the new reality.

**Agrarian structure and change in Jujuy**

The agrarian history of the province of Jujuy has both similarities and differences to the experiences of Santiago del Estero. The most comprehensive and commonly cited account of Jujuy’s rural transformation, development and integration into the capitalist market is Ian Rutledge’s doctoral thesis from the University of Cambridge, presented in the early 1970s, published in parts (Rutledge, 1975, 1977), and then translated into Spanish and published in Argentina as a book in 1987 (Rutledge, 1987). This academic work is still very influential.
and it features in the bibliography of numerous university courses in Argentina (for a critique of Rutledge, 1987, see Aramayo, 2009).

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors the highlands of Jujuy (the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca) were occupied by two main indigenous groups, the Atacamas and the Omaguacas. Agriculture in these regions was mainly based on maize and stockbreeding of llamas and vicuñas for meat and wool. While these societies were to a large extent sedentary and culturally relatively advanced, the indigenous people of the lowlands, the Tobas, were semi-nomadic hunters-gatherers, typical of the Chaco region (Rutledge, 1987).

The conquistadors arrived in Jujuy during the second half of the 16th century but the “pacification” of the highlands was hindered due to fierce resistance by the indigenous people. By 1600, however, the region was completely contained by the Spaniards, and prior to that the local population was already divided into ten different encomiendas, which were, again, “not so much an institution of “land possession” but rather of ‘possession of people’” (Rutledge, 1987, p.86, my translation). Land was also gradually granted as mercedes reales to powerful people from the elite, and although officially this institution was not intended to complement the institution of the encomienda, the evidence suggests that was not the case in the highlands of Jujuy. The combination between the merced and the encomienda formed a unified agribusiness operation, not dissimilar to the later colonial institution of the hacienda. In Jujuy, there was some level of continuity from the encomienda to the hacienda but there was no such rigid or fixed process. (Rutledge, 1987).

The socioeconomic model of the encomienda, however, lingered in Jujuy well into the 18th century, longer than in any other province in the Argentinean northwest. Coupled with a process of further land concentration through marriage, inheritance and acquisition of additional land, by both traditional encomenderos and other families, a very dominant landed elite was established and reproduced in Jujuy (Rutledge, 1987; Sica and Ulloa, 2006; Paz, 2006a).

In spite of the installation of the exploitative colonial rule, colonial Spanish law allowed for indigenous populations to legally posses their land. According to Gabriela Sica, María Bovi and Lucía Mallagray (2006), in the Quebrada de Humahuaca almost all the communities had kept their land while land parcels given as mercedes were usually suitable for animal grazing and did not form part of communal land. In the late 18th century, however, there is evidence that suggests there was pressure from hacenderos to expand their possessions over communal
land. In contrast, Raquel Gil Montero (2006) notes that at the end of the colonial period, in the Puna only about a third of the indigenous communities owned their land while the rest lived on colonisers’ *haciendas*.

The economy of Jujuy in the colonial period was, as in the case of Santiago del Estero, directed towards trade with Alto Perú. The Quebrada de Humahuaca and the Puna were along the main trading route between the lowlands of modern day Argentina and the mineral rich highland region of Potosí, and their economies were very much integrated into this commercial circuit, which included in particular the exportation of cotton, cloth and mules. By the 18th century the stockbreeding industry became the main economic activity in Jujuy, but during the colonial period a local mining industry was also developed, with silver and gold at its centre. In synthesis, from the onset of colonial domination, the economy of Jujuy, including its agriculture sector, was oriented towards the market, and increasingly relying on the indigenous population as semi-slaved workforce (Sica and Ulloa, 2006; Rutledge, 1987).

The Argentinean Independence War (1810-18) put an end to almost three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule, during which, according to Benito Aramayo (2009, p.26, my translation), the “indigenous population was subject to excessively cruel exploitation and feudal oppression, and to the contempt of its culture.” In 1813 the revolutionary government in Buenos Aires abolished the *encomienda* and in 1835 the Province of Jujuy prohibited the sale and alienation of land belonging to its indigenous communities. In reality, however, such measures only marginally modified the *hacienda* system so that the patrons’ right to exploit their indigenous workers was limited. That somewhat liberated the indigenous population and gave them a status of *arrenderos* (tenants) rather than serfs. Regardless of the above legislation, the demands of indigenous communities in the Puna for recuperating their communal territories was largely ignored and the existing *latifundio* land-tenure structure remained essentially unchanged (Rutledge, 1987).

With that, the social and economic relations between the *campesinos* of the highlands and the landowners were somewhat altered and monetarised. Payments were made annually according to livestock numbers and land cultivated by the *campesinos*. However, monetarisation was not complete and the local population still had to pay rent with their own labour, working on the landowner’s *hacienda*. The payments the *campesinos* had to pay were augmented frequently and resulted in numerous strategies to evade these payments including
the issue of formal complaints to the provincial authorities, addressing abuses of the local population by landowners (Paz, 1991).

In 1872 the tension over land-tenure and payments to landowners reached a boiling point and an open rebellion of the indigenous population erupted. Some communities in the Puna argued in front of the Governor that their land should be appropriated from its colonial owner, the largest landlord of the Puna, Fernando Campero, the inheritor of the Marquises of Tojo in modern day Bolivia, which owned large properties in both Argentina and Bolivia. The campesinos demanded that Campero’s land on which they lived should become fiscal land. Given the existing legislation, they hoped to reclaim their ancestral land as their own. The Governor of the province accepted their request, and subsequently the campesinos adopted this strategy of claiming land to be public land and hundreds of arrenderos ceased their payments, and numerous violent conflicts took place. In 1874 the arguably pro-indigenous Governor was removed by a rival politician, a friend of Campero. He then embarked on a military campaign to suppress the uprising in the Puna and return the land rights to the landed elite. In 1875 the rebellion was crushed and the old land-tenure order was reinstated. However, another political change in the province led to the matter of the Campero’s ownership of land in the Puna being argued in front of the Supreme Court in Buenos Aires. At the heart of this legal battle was a debate regarding the complicated relationship between the encomienda and the hacienda, and its implications for establishing rightful ownership of the land. The court’s ruling was against Campero and in 1877 his land was handed to the province. In yet another twist, in 1891 the Provincial Government sold large parts of this land, and it was of little surprise that one of the main buyers was Campero. This reinstated the hacienda regime prevalent prior to 1872, but these events have had an important effect on the indigenous peasant population of the highlands and at least some campesinos benefited from their land being held by the province (Rutledge, 1987; Paz, 1991, 2004). In the Department of Santa Catalina, in the northern part of the Puna (see Map 4.4 on page 97), a number of campesinos managed to acquire private land titles in 1886. This was then extended to other parts of the Puna in the following decades. According to Ana Teruel (2005) this was possible due to the association of arrenderos and financial backing by the Provincial government.
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During the 19th century, while the indigenous population of the highland tried to contest its historical grievances and exploitation, the lowland of Jujuy, the San Francisco Valley, experienced a profound process of capitalist economic development that would have long lasting effects on the populations of both regions. The driving force of this development was the sugarcane industry. Initially this industry relied on the workforce of African slaves but when slavery was abolished, labour was mainly supplied by the semi-nomadic indigenous people of the Chaco, who worked under inhumane conditions for meagre pay. By the turn of the 20th century the sugar industry became the most important economic activity of Jujuy, and the owners of the ingenios became economically and hence politically powerful (Rutledge, 1987).

Similar to Santiago del Estero, following the post-independence consolidation of political power in Buenos Aires, the last decades of the 19th century and the first ones of the 20th century were characterised by further economic integration of peripheral provinces into the national economy. This integration was strongly associated with the expansion of the railroads. However, by the turn of the 20th century, the rural society of the highland of Jujuy was largely unaffected by the capitalist development of the lowland. The inhabitants of the large haciendas of the highland maintained their traditional economy and livelihoods, caring for their herds of sheep and llamas, cultivating, where possible, small plots of maize, potatoes, quinoa and alfalfa, and paying rent to their respective landlords. Additionally, in some parts of the highlands extraction of minerals and salt was also an important source of income, and traditional textiles were yet another vital economic activity (Teruel, 2005).

Thus, the panorama of land-tenure in the highland of Jujuy was somewhat complicated. In some regions indigenous campesinos managed to cling on to their land. Others were able to purchase land and by doing so broke the colonial chains of land ownership. In other regions the hacienda model, where the indigenous campesinos were arrenderos, stayed intact.

Towards the end of the 1920s some landowners in the Puna looked for better economic returns for their properties. They found a solution in selling their haciendas or leasing them to the owners of the ingenios of the lowlands. Essentially, the sugar barons were not interested in the land but rather saw these haciendas as a mechanism for acquiring cheap and reliable manual labour for their industry, which demanded large quantities of labour only around

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37 The San Francisco Valley includes the Departments of San Pedro, Ledesma, El Carmen and Santa Bárbara (see Map 4.4).
harvest times (Rutledge, 1975). Under this new arrangement, the campesino arrenderos were to pay their landlords with their own labour and not in currency, in some resemblance to the 16th century’s colonial logic of the encomienda or the early hacienda model, rather than to the early 20th century’s liberal-capitalist logic of “free waged labour”.

Under this model many indigenous campesinos became semi-proletariats, working in the sugar plantations for about six months and then returning to their communities in the highlands. This arrangement secured seasonal labour for the ingenios when required while avoiding the need to deal with the support of the workers during the “off season” (Rutledge, 1975). Working conditions were abysmal and even teenagers as young as twelve years old had to work in the sugar plantations (Schwittay, 2003).

During the 1930s two other important industries came to the fore in Jujuy. The first one was the tobacco plantations that were established in the southern valleys of Jujuy and that initially demanded much manual labour. The second industry was large-scale mining in the Puna and the more elevated parts of the Quebrada de Humahuaca. Among the first companies to invest in this industry were the American National Lead Company and owners of sugar ingenios in the San Francisco Valley, the most prominent of them were two of the Leach brothers (Teruel, 2006), a family that came from England and had an integral role in the mechanisation of sugar processing in the late 19th century and subsequently became prominent sugar barons themselves (Rutledge, 1987).

The coup d’état of 1943 and the following elected government under President Perón marked a turning point in the official attitude of the State towards its indigenous peoples and towards working conditions of rural workers. As a result, the coercive disciplining methods used on the ingenios were outlawed and working conditions were indeed improved. Moreover, the indigenous campesinos in Jujuy were freed from their obligation to work in the sugar plantations. However, Perón did not implement his plan for agrarian reform due to fierce opposition from within his party (Rutledge, 1987). In May 1946 a group of well over hundred people from the Puna embarked on the Malón de la Paz (Raid of Peace), a march that started in the town of Abra Pampa and reached Buenos Aires two and a half months later. The march was joined by other indigenous people from the northwest along its route and had become a symbol of indigenous protest in Argentina; the “march had an important spatial dimension; it was a trek from the invisible margins of the nation to its material and symbolic core” (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003, p.14). The protesters demanded that their ancestors’ land, on
which they lived and worked, be returned to them. Perón did meet with them in Buenos Aires, but later they were forcibly sent back by train to northwest Argentina. Their demands, however, were not totally ignored. In 1949 Perón signed a decree expropriating 58 haciendas in the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca. Notwithstanding the importance of this act, the decree said nothing about how land was to be redistributed and it stayed in the hands of the Ministry of Hacienda of the National Government. In 1959 this land was brought under provincial jurisdiction (Rutledge, 1987; Schwittay, 2003).

Rutledge (1987) notes that the reforms of labour laws and land-tenure structure were not accompanied by much needed public investment in the highlands in order to establish a prosperous peasant economy. This situation, in turn, caused highland rural dwellers to voluntarily seek work in the ingenios for the first time and the proletariatisation process of the campesinos was intensified. This seasonal, or indeed permanent, outmigration for working as free employees, mainly in agriculture, would become an invaluable source of livelihood for many indigenous campesino households in decades to come and into the present. With that, the modernisation of the sugar industry meant that demand for labour plummeted and thus workers were forced to seek work further away.

The decade of the 1960s is the last in Rutledge’s study. During this period he notes that while the Jujuy Province had experienced notable economic development in terms of income per capita, the distribution of this income was highly unequal. Poverty in the province persisted with high indicators of illiteracy, under or un-employment, child mortality and bad tenement conditions. Moreover, although subsistence farming was still practiced, the vast majority of peasant production was destined to the market.

From the late 1970s the Argentinean economy had started to go through a process of structural adjustments aligned with the neoliberal economic doctrine. The overvaluation of its currency changed its terms of trade and as a consequence domestic industry was adversely affected. This, in turn, affected the mining industry, an important source of income in the Puna (Teruel, 2006). Moreover, importation of agriculture machinery for the sugar and tobacco plantations reduced demand for manual labour. Thus, the intensification of the neoliberal economic structure affected employment both in the highlands and in the traditional destinations of work migration for the highlands semi-proletariat campesinos. As a result, migration as a livelihood strategy was no longer a viable option for many and the indigenous communities of the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca faced a serious
economic and social crisis; an important source of income was no longer available and scarce productive land came under greater pressure by the increasing rural population (Cowan Ros and Schneider, 2008).

Over the last two decades both the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca have experienced an exodus of their rural population to regional and national urban centres. More than two thirds of the adult inhabitants of the urban centres of the Quebrada were not born in them. About a third of those who had migrated came from the towns’ adjacent rural surroundings. Among the main drivers of this rural to urban migration are a lack of work in the countryside, lack of education options and a wish to receive land in the urban centre (Sica, Bovi and Mallagray, 2006). Moreover, in 2003 the Quebrada de Humahuaca was declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). This has significantly increased tourism, which in turn created economic opportunities that prompted in-migration of both rural dwellers and people from other parts of the province and beyond. However, the now urbanised indigenous population is not capturing the lion’s share of this economic boon, especially for lack of economic capital for investment. In addition to that, land values along the main transport artery and in towns along it have risen significantly and that poses a threat for the local indigenous population of this region.

Conclusions

In synthesis, the Argentinean campesinos share some characteristics with peasants elsewhere, such as employment of familiar labour and production under severe scarcity of resources. But in Argentina this sector is relatively integrated into the market economy. This is mainly due to the particular historical process of capitalist economic development and integration that took place in this country since the colonial era. In addition, from the 1930s Argentina adopted ISI policies and many rural dwellers were incorporated into the national market. This included a massive rural-to-urban migration. This history has led to a situation where a peasant sector is still present but is highly marginalised, fragile and subject to land grabs and other atrocities.

From an examination of available census data some broad patterns emerge. Even though the data does not refer directly to the campesino sector, it is still possible to identify it in the data,
CHAPTER FOUR: Campesinos, Land-Tenure and Agrarian Structures

using “type 3 small producers” as the best proxy. The data reveals that in some parts of Argentina, including Santiago del Estero and Jujuy in the Northwest, the campesino sector is still a sizable one. The data also indicates severe land concentration in hands of a relatively small sector of farmers. This process has occasionally involved forced evictions of campesinos who had occupied the land without legal tenure.

Thus, land-tenure is an important aspect of current conflicts in the Argentinean countryside. The historical account provided here reveals a complexity of events and experiences that help to contextualise current land disputes and livelihood challenges for the peasantry. Some of these events and experiences are relevant to both study areas, such as the colonial institutions of the encomienda and the hacienda, which dramatically changed the lives of the pre-European population of Northwest Argentina, and the incorporation of the indigenous campesinos into capitalist production as wage labourers. In contrast, other events are more place-bound, like the 1870s indigenous rebellion in the Puna or the forestry industry in Santiago del Estero. An historical examination of agrarian structure and change are invaluable for understanding the origins of land-tenure conflicts today and the historical demands of campesino and indigenous groups for agrarian reform and socioeconomic change.
CHAPTER FIVE: Identities and Discourses in Social Mobilisation

Chapter Five

Identities and Discourses in Social Mobilisation towards Integral Rural Development

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the characteristics of the peasant sector in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy and established the importance of securing land-tenure for the peasant-indigenous inhabitants of these territories. This chapter is also concerned with the struggle for land, focusing on social mobilisation and struggle in the countryside. Central to this mobilisation is the notion of “identity” and how identities are formed, shaped and reshaped as part of this social mobilisation, and the ramifications for promoting integral development. Like the previous chapter, this chapter also addresses the first research objective of the study and discusses the importance of identities in social and political processes. “Identity” has both practical and analytical aspects. These are evident in the ways in which “ordinary” people understand themselves and how they are similar or different in relation to others. Similarly, identity is also used by political actors to influence how people perceive themselves in relation to others by developing a sense of sameness and affiliation. This, in turn, is used to
mobilise and authenticate collective actions and demands. Identity, therefore, may serve as a day-to-day form of social classification and as a strategic political tool in the form of “identity politics” (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). In the recent and current postmodern mobilisation identity politics has become a key focal point, increasingly along lines of ethnicity and more particularly, of indigeneity. Identity, I shall argue here, plays an important role in recent and current social mobilisation, both as a progressive enabling force and as a negative restrictive impediment.

The use of the terms “indigenous” and “campesinos” in both published literature and popular discourse is of much relevance for examination of strategies employed by different rural organisations across Latin America, including Northwest Argentina. These terms are often used interchangeably, sometimes in conjunction, but in some other occasions in explicit or implicit disjuncture. There is no doubt that grievances of rural populations and their subsequent reaction are increasingly positioned within the indigenous rights-based framework, stressing the *ethno-cultural identities* of these communities. At the same time, their struggle is decreasingly constructed within a Marxist class-based framework, which emphasises the *social identity* of these rural communities. Thus, while socioeconomic objectives, such as equitable and sustainable development, solidarity, fair distribution of wealth and political autonomy, have not been altered much, some discursive shift from *campesinista* to *indianismo* (Pallares, 2002) has been definitely notable across Latin America.

*Campesinista* and *indianismo* discourses are also evident in and important to social mobilisation in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy. In spite of the relative geographic proximity of these two provinces, the arguably similar socio-political context and the organisational links between MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, indigenous and *campesino* identities were not articulated by members of these two organisations in the same way. While both organisations include elements of *indianismo* in their discourses, the MOCASE-VC’s adherence to *campesinista* aspects is not being matched by the Red Puna within the context of Jujuy.

However, while the *campesinista* to *indianismo* discursive shift is of much relevance for the analysis of how identities are being shaped and politicised in the Latin American context, the political theoretical work of the French historian and philosopher Jacques Rancière is useful for taking the discussion to a higher level. His concepts of “presupposition of equality” and “subjectification” are valuable for the analysis of social mobilisation towards a bottom-up
CHAPTER FIVE: Identities and Discourses in Social Mobilisation

socio-political change. Where this is an important aim, campesinista and indianismo are both means for achieving a common goal.

In the initial part of this chapter I will position the emergence of indigenous politics with the macro-level framework of neoliberal democracy. Then I will focus on identities in rural Argentina, deconstructing them in order to better understand the historical processes that had affected them to create an imaginary homogenous society. In the following section I will link rural identities to mobilisation of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna and how they find expression in their counter-hegemonic discourses. In the last part of this chapter I will use some of Rancière’s theoretical work in order to further our understanding of social mobilisation in rural Argentina. Key here is the prospects of merging class consciousness as campesinos with ethnic consciousness as indigenous people for expanding social struggle.

*Indigenous mobilisation within the neoliberal democratic framework*

The role of governments as drivers of development had expanded throughout many Latin American countries, particularly following the Second World War. Those regimes, some more democratic than others (and some altogether authoritarian), gave little regard to the socio-political order and traditional practices of their indigenous groups, and while they did not tend to protect individual rights they did offer conditional social and economic development. Those regimes implemented populist reforms that gave them more control over rural populations through increased patronage, stemming from provision of social services and access to state resources. However, in order to gain access to these state resources, indigenous groups were often forced to define themselves as “peasants”. The term “campesino” (Spanish for peasant) was favoured by different states because of its “modern” notion of class status, in contrast to the ethnic and colonial connotation of the term “indio” (Indian). Behind these policies was an intention to assimilate indigenous groups into the mestizo (of mixed race) culture in an attempt to create an imagined homogenous society, while compelling rural indigenous groups to organise as peasant corporations (Yashar, 1998; Langer, 2003). According to Erik Langer (2003, p. xvi), “although well intentioned, the policies led to a type of cultural ethnocide and did nothing to change the denigration of native groups, their languages, and their cultures.”
According to Deborah Yashar (1998), the most recent wave of democratisation and economic liberalisation over the last two decades of the 20th century is different from previous ones. Individual rights are still often being ignored but states no longer offer favourable policies for their campesino sectors, which are often ethnically indigenous (Korovkin, 2006). The main reason for this withdrawal of state support is embedded in the neoliberal economic restructuring that had accompanied this democratisation process. The roll-back of the state, privatisation and different sorts of deregulation, all notable features of this economic doctrine, have had an extensive effect on the agriculture sectors across Latin America, and particularly on small-scale agriculture producers (Teubal, 2009).

In her analysis of the reasons underlying the recent politicisation of marginalised Latin American groups along ethnic lines, Yashar (1999, 2005) argues that fundamentally at stake are what she calls “citizenship regimes”. These include three dimensions of citizenship; its boundaries (who has citizenship), its form (the terms under which citizenship operates), and its content (what rights and practices it entails). Yashar (2005, p. 283) also argues that “contrary to what one would expect from the social science literature, corporatist citizenship regimes at mid-century unwittingly provided relatively secure local spaces in which indigenous communities and governance structures survived.” When citizenship regimes changed from corporatist to neoliberal, the privileges shifted from organised actors to individuals as the subject of citizenship. This prompted indigenous groups to contest the newly established neoliberal citizenship regimes, demanding space for different forms of citizenship; forms that grant individual rights alongside collective rights, which are inherent to indigenous groups. Indigenous movements, therefore, demand greater autonomy and recognition from Latin American states for their own multiethnic and multicultural composition (Yashar, 2005). Tanya Korovkin (2006) argues that current indigenous social mobilisation, in the Andes region, has its roots in the preceding peasant political mobilisation era, where agrarian reforms were pursued within a class-based framework. The increasingly widespread disillusionment with this class-based struggle, the disappointment from unfulfilled promises of development policies, the marginalisation of indigenous perspectives and desires from national development projects and the spreading information on the experiences of fellow colonised groups in other parts of the world had all contributed to the social politicisation of indigenous identity (Stavenhagen, 1992).

Somewhat ironically, the structural adjustment policies imposed on many Latin American countries by the West through its Bretton Woods institutions, and which are said to have had
an adverse effect on already marginalised groups, have also championed democratisation and decentralisation of authority. This liberalisation has enabled groups of marginalised citizens, such as indigenous groups, to voice their grievances and in some instances even to resonate with discourses of social capital and community solidarity that fit well within the neoliberal framework (Jackson and Warren, 2005; Sieder, 2002). While under such democratisation and embracement (at least in official legal terms) of multiculturalism indigenous and other marginalised groups can make their demands openly known, it could indeed be argued, nevertheless, that it is merely a strategy used by the ruling elites to portray an attentive state; hence neoliberal democracy. Under neoliberalism the ability of the state to address the poor’s material needs is curtailed and therefore adoption of multicultural policies could be politically beneficial for ruling groups (Van Cott, 2006; Sieder, 2002). Notwithstanding this argument, Donna Lee Van Cott (2006) shows that in Latin America there is actually an apparent inverse relationship between the extent of adoption and implementation of multicultural policies and economic adjustment reforms. For example, Argentina adopted a comprehensive, or “strong”, economic structural adjustment reforms and moderate multiculturalism policies, while Ecuador went through relatively limited, or “weak”, structural reforms and its adoption of multicultural policies was strong.

Providing a possible explanation to Van Cott’s analysis, Jean Jackson and Kay Warren (2005, p. 553) argue that “neoliberalism’s professed multicultural neutrality allows unique historical and political forms of oppression to be glossed over. An illusion of a level playing field is created, and issues of race, power, and privilege are obscured.” In other words, neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual rights and legal equality serves for maintaining existing social inequalities, which in the Latin American context often reflects ethno-cultural difference.

Still, the neoliberal shift in Latin America, as in other parts of the world, has both challenged the ability of many marginalised campesino-indigenous groups to improve their socioeconomic status while also, concurrently, providing them a space, national and transnational, for presenting their demands. With that, presenting demands and fulfilling them are two separate things, and the possibility of a meaningful and comprehensive realisation of

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38 As outlined in footnote 7 on page 30.
39 According to Van Cott (2006), moderate multicultural policies, such as instituted in Argentina, include provisions for limited use of different languages, education programmes and collective land rights. More substantial multicultural policies include significant political representation and cultural autonomy.
demands within a neoliberal democratic context casts many doubts. On the one hand, it could be argued neoliberal reforms involved the roll-back of the government but also the opening of political space for the emergence of civil society and for greater local control over decision-making. On the other hand, civil society organisations are not democratic by default, and Tina Wallace (2004), for example, warns us that development NGOs might act as Trojan horses for neoliberalism. Moreover, decentralisation of political authority created new problems for many indigenous Latin American communities who lacked the resources for making this autonomy meaningful (Jackson and Warren, 2005).

Although Argentina has adopted only moderate multicultural (and strong neoliberal) reforms (Van Cott, 2006), identity-based campesino-indigenous civil society organisations have proliferated in the countryside. This rural mobilisation has often been accompanied by development-oriented NGOs, many with anti-neoliberal sentiments. With that, the emphasis on particular rural identities is an important strategic aspect in current discourses of rural social organisations in Argentina. The ramifications of the differences between these identities pose some political and organisational challenges and thus are interesting and worthy of some attention.

In spite of some tendency to generalise from particular experiences and trends to Latin America as a whole, it is clearly not without at least some limitations. Latin America is an extensive geographical area with many different ethnic groups, cultures, contexts, histories and realities. This particularly comes to light when discussing literature about indigenous/peasant movements. Although there are some similarities among different countries in the region, Argentina, with a relatively small share of its population regarded as indigenous, is definitely different from, say, Ecuador or Bolivia.

**Deconstructing identities in rural Argentina**

The Argentinean population is predominantly of European descent, and indigenous peoples constitute a mere one percent of the population, and have historically been subject to exclusion and ethnocide (Hirsch, 2003). This one per cent figure, however, should be dealt with much caution, as it could indeed change in face of the recent ethnic re-emergence in Argentina (Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003). Historically, the Argentinean state perceived its indigenous groups as obstacles to the consolidation of a homogenous modern society. As a
consequence, the state appropriated native land through bloody military campaigns, forced relocation of communities and imposed cultural assimilation through different mechanisms, such as education and proletarianisation of the peasantry (Hirsch, 2003; Gordillo and Hirsch, 2003).

This reality is gradually changing in Argentina. In 1985 a new law was passed in parliament that led to the establishment of the National Institute for Indian Affairs (INAI), an institution used by indigenous leaders for bringing matters in front of the state (Hirsch, 2003; Schwittay, 2003). In 1994 the Argentinian constitution was revised, and for the first time a provision that recognises indigenous rights, including the right for ancestral land, was included (Article 75, Clause 17). However, in order to benefit from this historical amendment, individuals and groups need the state to recognise them as “indigenous” (Occhipinti, 2003).

In the face of these positive changes in the way many non-indigenous people perceive their indigenous compatriots and the favourable international and national legislation, recognising the rights of pre-Columbian populations, it is of little surprise to see the role of “indigenous” identity gaining more prominence among struggles of different rural social movements. In contrast, the “campesino” identity of such movements is becoming increasingly, and often strategically, undermined or devalued. At stake here is not strictly the formation of a new collective identity for enabling and assisting mobilisation. Rather, what is often required in the Argentinian context is to remove associations of shame and disgrace from these identities, or in other words, destigmatise them.

From the 1980s onwards many Latin American countries have adopted multiculturalism and/or pluriethnic legal frameworks that recognise, albeit in different ways, their diverse ethnic and cultural composition (de la Peña, 2005). Given this trend towards accepting and valuing pluriethnic diversity, destigmatising the indigenous identity has become much easier, compared with the campesino identity, with its associated class and even revolutionary connotations. Be that as it may, not all rural movements can easily choose which identity, indigenous or campesino, they would or indeed can strategically emphasise. That would mainly depend on the ethnic composition of any particular organisation.

“Identity” and its ability to transform and reinvent itself are of much importance here. According to Richard Jenkins (2008, p. 5), “identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence ‘what’s what’)… [It is] a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as
members of collectives.” Linking the concept of “identity” to the realm of academia, Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) argue that “identity” is an ambiguous term, which does not make a sound analytical tool. To support their argument they show that identity is being used as an analytical tool in (overly extensive) different forms; such as a basis for understanding social or political action, as a collective phenomenon of sameness, as an indicator for the contemporary elusive and ever changing “self”, and more.

I do not wish to use “identity” as a tool here. Rather, I am interested in exploring how marginalised rural groups navigate the muddy waters of ever-changing currents of “identity”, and how identity is being utilised by them in framing their struggles and actions for integral development. Of course, identity is neither rigid nor simple. Instead, it is multi-dimensional, complex and fluid; it is a continuous process that depends, *inter alia*, upon the specific configuration of a particular social context (Taylor and Spencer, 2004). Inherent to many such social contexts is the state, which since its rise as a dominant political paradigm has also served as a major factor in shaping social identities of often very diverse populations.

In order to understand why we can observe these two identities – indigenous and *campesino* – and understand the subtleties between them it is necessary to deconstruct them by tracing the processes shaping their (changing) meanings. In colonial societies of the “New World”, the ethnic and cultural origins of peoples were very important in determining their political rights. In general terms, it is possible to identify three main ethnic, or so-called “racial”, categories: indigenous (Amerindians), *mestizos* (half-casts) and people of European descent, including both Iberian colonisers and those already born in the Americas – *criollos* (creoles). 40 Under colonial rule the only of these groups without any specific political rights was the *mestizo* group, including here all people of mixed heritage and descent. Being a *mestizo* meant not only a “mixed” genetic composition but also a conjectural “illegitimacy” of birth, since in the colonial period white men did not tend to marry indigenous or African women 41 and thus their children were usually born out of wedlock. After several centuries of colonial rule, however, there were relatively few people who were not *mestizos*, either genetically, culturally or both. This process of *mestizaje*, nevertheless, was not consistent

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40 The Spanish colonisers had a comprehensive taxonomy of racial composition. Here I use the term “*mestizos*” to include all categories of “mixed blooded” people, while acknowledging that in official terms “*mestizos*” were those born to Spanish fathers and Amerindian mothers. African slaves and their descendants constituted another important “racial” group in some parts of Latin America.

41 Those born to a Spanish father and an African mother were officially classified as mulattos, but here I regard them as another form of *mestizos*, referring to a *mezcla* - a mixture.
across all places and spaces, and it resulted in different non-white identities being formed in different parts of the continent (Smith, 1997).

Initially, the term “criollo” distinguished between those born in the “Old” and “New Worlds”, and it was applied to both Europeans colonisers and African slaves. Thus, this term stood in contrast to *mestizo* to mean “purity of blood”. With the abolition of slavery in the early 19th century there was no longer need to discern between those born into slavery in the “New World” and those brought from the African continent, and *criollo* was used for European descendents. This was also the period of independence wars across Latin America, and many independence movements were led by *criollos* who wished to emphasise a “local” unified national identity, as opposed to the foreign European identity that was attributed to the colonisers (Stewart, 2007). Simón Bolívar, the great Latin American *Libertador*, urged in 1819 that “we are not Europeans, we are not Indians but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards” (Bierck, 1951, cited in Palmié, 2007, p. 70; Stewart, 2007). Charles Stewart (2007) notes that at that point *criollo* identity became overlapping with *mestizo*.

Oscar Chamosa (2008) asserts that while some Latin American elites toiled hard for constructing and portraying their respective national societies as homogeneously *mestizo*, as noted above, the Argentinean elite wanted to portray their society as homogeneously “white”. Nancy Stepan (1991) links the somewhat later preoccupation of numerous Latin American scientists and intellectuals with the importance of their societies’ racial composition to the late 19th – early 20th century Eugenic Movement. This movement advocated “better breeding” and social and reproductive controls in order to improve the “human race”, or in order to maintain the “purity” of a particular group. Stepan (1991) notes that the fact that the indigenous population of Argentina was already very reduced by violent means, and massive immigration, mainly from Spain and Italy, shifted the discussion towards which European culture should be reflected in Argentinean society. In contrast, Eugenics in Mexico also wanted to “improve” the genetic composition of their society, but they believed the *mestizo* “race” to be superior. Regardless of the particularities of the representative identity sought by national elites, of importance is their aim at creating an imaginary uniform identity, preferring homogeneity over multiculturalism and diversity (Chamosa, 2008).

The creation of a new and *imagined* homogenous society in Argentina did not include the *mestizaje*, or “mixing” of the population, but the assimilation of non-white populations into the hegemonic, and supposedly superior, population of European lineage, or *criollos*, as they
were classified under the colonial taxonomy. This assimilation, although more feasible in cultural terms, could not, and therefore did not, result in a uniformly white population. A white Argentina was merely a discourse of the national elite, and it was a successful one. In order to facilitate the creation of this myth, Argentinean intellectuals and government officials alike managed to assign a much broader meaning to the term “criollo”. Through academic work and census classification, criollo identity was attributed to any person born in the national territory, regardless of one’s ancestry or identity (Chamosa, 2008). That is, “[w]hite descendants of colonial Spanish, as well as people of African descent, mestizos (also called gauchos, and sometimes even chinos), or descendants of previously tributary indigenous peoples could equally be called criollos” (Chamosa, 2008, p. 79). Missing from this definition, however, are the many immigrants that migrated from Europe to Argentina during the early decades of the 20th century and their descendents, which although born in the “New World”, are not usually regarded as criollos.

This confusion regarding who is criollo is neither limited to Argentina nor new. José Arrom addressed this confusing issue of who are the criollos in a short article published in 1951. He agrees with the original meaning of this identity, resonating with Stewart’s (2007) observation that as early as the beginning of the 17th century criollo meant native of the territory, which is not indigenous, regardless of skin colour or social status (Arrom, 1951). Arrom (1951, p. 175, my translation) concludes that

*Criollo*, in Spanish language, is a term which indicates distinctions of cultural natures, and the criollos are we who, without being indigenous, have been born on this side of the puddle and talk and think in Spanish with subtle American nuances.

With that, he also notes that this identity is better suited to people from the countryside or from small urban centres, where the population is more traditional, compared with residents of large cities, which are more culturally cosmopolitan.

From published literature concerning the origins and ever changing use of the criollo, it becomes evident that this identity has considerably and long ago departed from its original meaning to become widely encompassing and often a-racial. It is unclear whether disregarding one’s “race”, or ethnicity, for forming a unified national identity was progressive or positive. There was an attempt at social and cultural engineering that wished to create homogenous nation-states. However, there is difference between creating a “race-less” new society, as in the case of numerous Latin American countries, and creating a myth of a
white (European) nation-state, as it was in the case of Argentina. Notwithstanding the merits of such social engineering, in the current postmodern era this process has been challenged by different groups, which advocate for diversity and multiculturalism.

Reversing the cultural loss that resulted from the long colonial period and the following period of independence and nation building is no simple task. Cultural and ethnic identities play a central role in this contestation of the singular (imaginary white) Argentinean identity. This contestation includes both material and symbolic demands from the state, but the grounds, and often the perceived legitimacy, on which demands are based are embedded in the identity of those articulating them. Hence the importance of identity for social struggle, and the significance of which identity a particular organisation should, and indeed can, legitimately emphasise. With that, it is still important to acknowledge here that there is never one identity but rather a multiplicity of identities.

Class and ethnic identities in current counter-hegemonic discourse in MOCASE-VC and Red Puna

When examining identities of agriculture producers in rural Argentina, which also find expression in current social and economic struggles, it is possible to distinguish between a number of cultural, social and ethnic identities. These identities are by no means the only ones, and some of these identities could also be further broken down. For example, campesino identity encompasses both social and cultural aspects, but here the emphasis is laid on its social meaning. Social identity is used here in its more traditional and narrow scope that make reference primarily to economic relations and logic. This is, of course, a limited conceptualisation of social identity, but it serves the following discussion well. Also within the complex field of identity, ethnicity is increasingly perceived as a social classification that includes biological as well as cultural aspects. I do not wish to contradict this constructivist epistemology, but here I use this term to emphasise somatic characteristics of primordial common ancestry. In other words, there are no clearly defined boundaries between these different facets of rural identity, and the changing relationships between these categories of identity are important. Notwithstanding these limitations, I believe the typology provided in Figure 5.1 is useful for deepening our understanding of the role different and multilayered identities have in current rural struggles for integral development of marginalised groups in Argentina.
Figure 5.1 reflects the multitude of identities a rural person may hold. It does not reveal, however, a particular hierarchy of identities, if such exists. Each of these categories could have supremacy over the others, and the fluid nature of identity means that a particular identity could shift to the fore or to the background, depending on particular socio-political contexts and processes. Moreover, this figure does not indicate which combination of identities is more, or less, common. While all the above intertwinements are possible, empirically, it is probably more common to encounter a criollo campesino that identifies herself culturally as Argentinean, than, say, Argentinean-European campesino who sees himself as culturally Argentinean.

![Figure 5.1: A typology of rural identities in rural Argentina](image)

Figure 5.1: A typology of rural identities in rural Argentina

Of most interest to this research study is the recent fluidity of ethnic identity among rural communities and individuals. As noted above, the worldwide impetus toward the recognition of pre-colonial indigenous populations, and the 1994 revision of the Argentinean constitution, serve as catalysts for the adoption of an indigenous identity, at the expense of a criollo identity. A member of the MOCASE-VC explained the process her community underwent in (re)discovering their ancestral heritage:

"being in the MOCASE [VC], we have begun to think beyond our ancestors, of the culture that we have, and the way we live… Then, being within the MOCASE, we started to think about many things like these, and we started to reach out, to investigate, to talk to our elders, some of whom today are one hundred years old, ninety years old. We then heard from them about what they knew from their grandparents, and they began to tell us that their grandparents were descendants..."
Thus, social movements are also important catalysts of identity change. Moreover, an activist of the Red Puna attributed the recent revival and adoption of indigenous identity in highland Jujuy to social interventions of the Catholic Church and NGOs that work on the issue of identity in rural communities. However, as I will discuss shortly, this is by no means unproblematic.

Whereas the shift from being identified as criollos to acquiring an indigenous identity could be explained by the wider social, political and legal changes in Argentina, I am more interested in understanding the relationships between ethnic identity (changing from criollo to indigenous) and social identity (as campesinos) of organised rural groups. The first step, of course, is realising that these two identities are complementary, rather than contradictory. As depicted in Figure 5.1, these could be two separate dimensions of a single multifaceted identity. With that, while researching in the highlands of Jujuy it became clear that the term “campesinos” was not very popular and hardly used by members of the Red Puna. In contrast, indigenous identity was often emphasised by research participants, and their communities’ pre-existence to the modern state was frequently mentioned to validate demands for communal ownership of ancestral land. Even though I cannot provide a definitive explanation for this observation, discussions with research participants raised a number of possible reasons, which I shall mention throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Another member of the Red Puna noted that although the organisation participates in the National Peasant Indigenous Movement (MNCI),

> there are people who don't like to talk about this issue of the campesinos. Many of us speak of the indigenous peoples, of the Kolla people… and the truth is that I’m not against [the term campesino] because the campesino is the same as the indigenous, who lives in the countryside, lives off his animals, lives from his harvest. That is a campesino to me (Carlos, Red Puna, interviewed 20.1.2011).

Here the overlapping relationship between being campesino and indigenous is clear. If indigenous people live from their own production in the countryside then they are also campesinos. This research participant also recognises that people prefer to talk about being
indigenous rather than campesinos. Differentiating between ethnic and social identities, a prominent militant from the MOCASE-VC explained that being indigenous has to do with having a continental root, with cultural identity, with a worldview that is tied to the historic processes of the pre-Hispanic and pre-Columbian Latin American continent, of before the conquest. The campesinado, when speaking of campesinado is speaking of a form of technology, a way of living life and a way of using the land. In that sense there are indigenous peoples who joined the campesino way [vía campesina], in the sense of understanding that the campesino way is a way, an idea, a programme, a way of living life. Because there can be indigenous peoples and individuals who relate more to capitalism or identify more with the mercantilist scheme (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

Even though both these quotes resonate with one another, it seems that in Santiago del Estero, due to its historical context, demographics and trajectory of social mobilisation, the differences between these two identities is clearer. It follows that the campesino identity is more central there than in Jujuy.

According to a young member of the Red Puna, resistance to the term “campesino” stems from the historical practice of imposing identity and related terminology on the local population from above and according to the objectives of the hegemon. He then asks, “why are you a campesino? Because [a campesino] works the land, because [a campesino] lives in the countryside. What do I know? Let’s say, a campesino is created by the bourgeoisie… We don’t see [ourselves] like this over here” (Leonel, Red Puna, interviewed 25.1.2011). This argument resonates with an argument made by an Argentinean academic who asserted that “small producers” is a word imposed by the state, ‘campesinos’ is imposed by the técnicos, ‘indigenous’ is given now by the state, ‘Kolla’ was imposed by the Spaniards. They speak of the ‘people’” (Cristian, interviewed 14.2.2011). Thus, identity and its related terminology were colonised, captured and used by ruling elites throughout recent centuries to align with their own political objectives.

As briefly discussed in Chapter Four, even though the campesino identity was historically associated with class struggle and subordination to political and economic elites (Bryceson, 2000), within the Argentinean context this aspect was often neglected from written accounts on campesino communities. Now, reassigning the class struggle component to current social mobilisation of the Argentinean campesinado is an important objective to some of those engaged in current social contestation. I will further develop this idea theoretically in the following section, but for now it is sufficient to note that politicising the campesino identity
in Argentina is no simple task, and undoubtedly it is easier to politicise the indigenous identity, which is much in vogue across the Latin American continent and beyond.

Many activists who are involved in social organisation in the countryside emphasise the differences between (bio-)ethnic and social identities in order to promote a united front where both criollos and indigenous people join forces by assuming a shared campesino identity. This is important since the struggle of campesinos, both criollos and indigenous, is very similar in many different places and aspects. Again, in Santiago del Estero this is more obvious. A MOCASE-VC militant noted that

the interesting thing is that in the past there were many problems, in Argentina and in Latin America, between criollos and indigenous people. Today our movement, the MOCASE [VC] for example, is formed in part of campesino-campesino communities of criollos, and of campesino communities of indigenous people. In addition, there are communities that are made of both indigenous people and criollos and are “base communities” [of the organisation]. They recognise and understand that we must have a common proposition, a programme that unites us… (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

This depiction of MOCASE-VC’s communities reflects a diverse composition in terms of ethnic identity within the organisation. In addition, the indigenous ethnic identity is also diverse and includes different ethnic groups such as the Sanavirónes, Guaycurús and Lule-Vilelas.

Whereas in Santiago del Estero ethnic identity could be regarded as diverse for having indigenous and non-indigenous people, in the highlands of Jujuy the vast majority of rural communities identify themselves as indigenous, and most have also legal status as such. As indicated in Chapter Four, there are also different indigenous groups in Jujuy, but they have been collectively known as Kollas (also Colla or Coya). Even though this identity correlates with ethnic identity, no evidence is available for the existence of such an ethnic group in pre-colonial times (Karasik, 2006). Instead, Kolla includes several indigenous groups, such as the Omaguacas, and the origin of Kolla as a collective term is unclear. In the 1930s the term “Kolla” was clearly and officially used for referring to campesinos from the highlands of Jujuy. This social characterisation, in turn, is linked to a past debate about the “authenticity” of the Kollas as indigenous people (Karasik, 2006). In her anthropological study among Kolla people in Iruya, Laurie Occhipinti (2002) found that being Kolla is often connected to a

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42 Iruya is located in the Province of Salta but both geographically and culturally it is part of the highlands of Northwest Argentina.
specific rural lifestyle, which also entails a certain economic logic. Thus, Kolla identity in her study area was deemed incompatible with urban lifestyle. Even though she is cautious in projecting the particularities of the Andean communities which whom she engaged on communities in neighbouring areas of the highlands, it seems the revival of indigenous identities has not been linear or without problems across the territory. In spite of the reservations of some rural dwellers of the highlands in regard to adopting an indigenous identity, as found by Occhipiti (2002) about a decade ago, it seems that at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century an indigenous identity has been widely adopted in this territory. Moreover, the historic use of the term “Kolla” as a social synonym to “campesinos” may be another explanation for why the latter term is not very popular in rural highland Jujuy.

Somewhat contrasting MOCASE-VC, the Red Puna has also historically had urban “base communities” (first-degree organisations). With that, there is by no means a clearly defined dichotomy between rural and urban in highland Jujuy. Although plenty of rural inhabitants migrated into small urban centres, many of them maintain regular connections with their rural communities and often even engage directly with agriculture production. In this reality, the boundaries of identity between being campesino and urbanite, and perhaps as Occhipinti (2002) points out, even between being Kolla and criollo, are very much blurred. Therefore, for an organisation such as the Red Puna, to have a strong emphasis on a campesino identity may indeed be alienating. In contrast, an emphasis on a common denominator, namely indigenous identity, could be more inclusive and hence beneficial. In spite of that, members of the Red Puna definitely recognise that although urban dwellers may not be agriculturalists, they have more in common with rural dwellers than merely ancestral or cultural roots. Rather, they all face some similar challenges, such as poverty, insufficient public investment in physical and social infrastructure, historical social and political marginalisation and more. A shared ethnic identity can be inclusive enough to include the aspirations of both rural and urban marginalised people, but it makes no reference to their socioeconomic status, or, using Marxist terminology, their social class. This is partly why a purist indigenous discourse is problematic; it can avoid addressing economic marginalisation, unequal distribution of wealth and class differentiations. In order to overcome this potential pitfall of overly emphasising indigenous identity, organisations such as Red Puna should also incorporate into their discourses elements of class struggle, even if Marxist terminology is deemed out of fashion and has been made discursively redundant.
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The postmodern paradigmatic shift, also characterised by the “cultural turn” of the social sciences, has been increasingly adopted not only within academic circles but also within the wider social realm. This, however, runs the risk of indigenous groups opting for self-imposed “enclosure ethnicity”, where an ethnic community becomes exclusive, inward-looking and maintains a distance from the rest of society (Nederveen Pieterse, 1997). This needs not happen, however. The most notable Latin American example of ostensibly successful indigenous politics is Bolivia. Undoubtedly, indigeneity has had a significant role in discourse and popular mobilisation in Bolivia, but as Douglas Hertzler (2005, p. 47) notes, rather than seeking ethnic division, most of the discourse of Bolivia’s social movements has sought to encourage Bolivia’s diverse urban and rural populations to see themselves as belonging to popular classes that share common historical experiences of domination by an elite group connected with foreign capital.

Thus, the “indigenous trap” was circumvented by maintaining an inclusive class discourse as part of the struggle of marginalised groups. Moreover, the articulation of indigenous and class discourses has enabled social movements in Bolivia to be more inclusive and to blur imagined social boundaries over spaces, places and time. While the importance of class in social mobilisation did not evade Bolivian social movements, Hertzler (2005) strongly argues that the reason why many perceive social unrest in that country as indigenous strife is the tendency of social theorists to de-emphasise the importance of class in current social mobilisation. In other words, as social analysis and theorisation along Marxist lines have lost grace in favour of postmodern conceptualisation of identities and geographies, and replacement of metanarratives with localised narratives, so did the popular perception of social struggles.

Amalia Pallares (2002) also addresses identity-based mobilisation and organisation in Latin America by examining social mobilisation in the Ecuadorian Andes in the latter part of the 20th century. She highlights the shift from campesino-based to ethnic-based struggle, in what she calls a shift from “campesinismo” to “indianismo”. The former refers to the once common struggle framework of peasants’ class consciousness, expressing arguably more material demands related to working conditions, wage, access to land and the like. The organisational manifestations of this framework were syndicates or labour unions.

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43 The ismo ending in Spanish is the equivalent to “ism” in English, often used for coining a particular ideology, praxis or discourse, often also attached to people’s names. For example, kirchnerismo, menemismo and peronismo, but also neoliberalismo and postmodernismo.
campesinista organisations were highly linked to the political Left. This organisational link implicated limited grassroots autonomy due to the tendency of leadership to be of non-indigenous middle-class origin.

In contrast, indígenismo has brought racial domination to the fore, stressing its importance over class domination. As a result, of course, indígenista politics appeals not only to campesinos, but to indigenous people of all socioeconomic strata and lifestyles. Another important point of departure from campesinista politics is that indígenismo is not aligned with the Left, at least not by default. Non-indigenous people do have room within this political paradigm, but not as leaders. In terms of setting objectives, indígenista organisations also focus on land but demands are framed and conceptualised as cultural, rather than as pertaining to a particular marginalised social class. Another important objective of indígenismo is achieving political autonomy, and in some cases, as in Ecuador, also engaging in mainstream party politics (Pallares, 2002). Notwithstanding the recent form of indígenismo, indigenous revolts are not intrinsically novel; there were numerous such revolts across Latin America, starting in the colonisation period. Instead, Pallares (2002, p. 4) argues that recent “politicized Indian identity … simultaneously represent a new institutional basis, new organizational forms, new modes of leadership, and new political strategies.”

Rather than perceiving campesinista and indígenista discourses and praxes as mutually exclusive, and similar to Hertzler’s (2005) analysis of indigenous mobilisation in Bolivia, Pallares (2002) argues that in Ecuador double consciousness was formed among highland activists and organisations. That is, class and ethnic consciousness were both apparent, at times intertwined and at times in disjuncture, in the actions of rural based social organisations. Thus, the notion of double consciousness serves in explaining why, while indígenista discourse has gained supremacy, campesinista discourse has not altogether disappeared in that country (Pallares, 2002).

The experiences from Bolivia and Ecuador show that to stay true to the challenges and aspirations of marginalised agriculture producers, rural social movements need not abandon class discourse. They can opt for an indígenista framework, but by itself it will not be sufficient. In Northwest Argentina, indígenista and campesinista discourses, and more importantly their interconnections, are also of importance. Due to its social composition and its organisational trajectory, class consciousness is more profoundly embedded in the discourse of the MOCASE-VC, but it is by no means absent from the Red Puna’s discourse.
In interviews, some members of the Red Puna clearly recognised that alliances with non-indigenous individuals and groups are important, and strategically necessary for bringing about a meaningful social and economic change. A Red Puna militant commented that

…the campesinos and indigenous people are two excluded sectors, although with different culture, or with some different cultural practices, which aren’t much, but the oppression remains the same, the exclusion is the same. I think there is a need to engage both [identities and groups] (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

In this statement this militant does not differentiate between social and ethnic identities, but he clearly articulates ideas of class struggle, of a common denominator for these marginalised and excluded groups.

Forming such alliances, however, is not always an easy task, even when their importance is recognised. The same Red Puna militant asserted that some people are

sowing seeds of discord, [to prevent] the unification of the campesinos and indigenous people. Therefore, in the communities, someone is sowing, planting, trying to divide, to separate, because such a union doesn’t suit many, because it can be quite an interesting force of an excluded sector. But well, they are sowing seeds of discord… many lawyers who [say] “no”, that participation should be reserved only for communities and this is like closing, putting a barrier and don’t allow unification; because they see danger there, perhaps, or some danger (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Participation, in this context, refers to communities taking part in second-degree organisations, and the nature of their involvement in those collaborative spaces. According to this Red Puna activist, some people encourage the autonomy of rural communities to the extent that they get isolated, preventing them from engaging with counter-hegemonic organisations or competing social actors. This activist was not the only research participant to express concerns over attempts by influential people, often politicians, to promote a more “purist” indigenous discourse and identity among rural communities in Jujuy. Being able to proclaim indigenous identity themselves, those influential people could arguably take charge over those communities, influence their internal affairs and gain political support for themselves. This is likely to result in political patronage, only too familiar in this region, which would not assist integral development.

In synthesis, identities are important to processes of social mobilisation and protest; but as much as they could be beneficial, they could also have an adverse affect, acting as a double-
edged sword. As the Bolivian example of social mobilisation teaches us, incorporating notions of class struggle can serve to avoid some of the pitfalls, or risks, associated with indigenous politics. Whereas within the context of Santiago del Estero, with its ethnic diversity, the MOCASE-VC has developed a clear discourse combining class (campesino) and ethno-ancestral (indigenous and criollo) aspects, the Red Puna, within the historical-social context of highland Jujuy, finds it more difficult to assimilate the class component of social struggle in its territory.

**Campesino and indigenous identities and political subjectification**

Avoiding an exclusionary indigenous politics, I would argue, is paramount for bringing about integral development for marginalised rural communities in Northwest Argentina, as in other parts of the world. One way of achieving this, as mentioned above, is by positioning struggles of indigenous people within a wider framework that includes elements of class struggle of excluded sectors. With that, mass mobilisation along ethnic lines, and indeed of any kind, is not an uncomplicated task in itself. Therefore, meaningful social change requires social mobilisation, but also that this mobilisation will be directed towards egalitarian ends.

Some of the relatively recent work of the French historian and philosopher Jacques Rancière provides useful theoretical tools for understanding the dynamics of exclusion and domination, and, more importantly, for how a democratic society should take form. Rancière’s writings are associated with a critique of mainstream politics, which he equates with policing, a theoretical line of thought that feeds into a critique of the state and is related to anarchism. His contributions are also very useful for analysing social relationships at different scales. Here, of course, social movements are the main focus.

Rancière’s conceptualisations of the “presupposition of equality” and “subjectification” are of importance in the context of social struggle for bringing about a socio-political change from below, directed at achieving integral development. Rancière (1999) perceives mainstream politics as policing and, *inter alia*, as stratification of society into those who command and those who obey. According to Todd May (2007, p. 25), “[t]he effect of the presupposition of equality is to undo the classifications of the police order – classifications by which some are given authority over others, whether by virtue of wealth, race, gender, or status.” For Rancière (1999), if people are intelligent enough to understand orders and understand that
they need to execute these orders – which they are – then they must be equal to those who order them. Thus, the presupposition of equality is about negating domination, about active participation in political processes and social life, and, of course, about the belief that people are capable of having a meaningful contribution to their own lives and societies by engaging with other (equal) people (May, 2007, 2010).

Also of much relevance to this research study, which is very much concerned with social mobilisation and counter-hegemonic contestation of the existing socio-political and socio-economic order, is Rancière’s theoretical idea of “subjectification”. Rancière (1999) identifies the concept of subjectification to be a key element of democratic politics. It involves producing something that was previously absent, or at least unidentifiable as such. It then requires this something to be reconfigured in the sphere of experience. That is, this something is produced through a succession of actions and enunciations, which, in turn, produce a collective subject (May, 2010). According to May (2010, p. 47, emphasis in original), “[a] subjectification emerges when a we comes to be as a result of the coordinated actions and enunciations of a group of people.” May then returns to Rancière’s (1999) example. In 1832 Auguste Blanqui, a French revolutionary political activist, was put on trial. When asked by the magistrate for his profession, he answered “proletarian”. The magistrate then argued against him that there is no such profession. Blanqui replied that it is the profession of 30 million people in France, who rely on supplying labour for their vocation while lacking political rights. The court then agreed to classify “proletarian” as a new profession. In this encounter, the term “proletarian” became a term of subjectification, forming a “we” from previously disjointed individuals. True, there were both workers and workers’ movements before Blanqui, “but there were proletarians only when there were workers as a movement of equality” (May, 2010, p. 48).

Similarly, campesinos have existed in Argentina, as elsewhere, long before peasant movements emerged as political actors. However, when the term “campesinos” went through a process of subjectification, which included both collective actions and enunciations, it created a meaningful “we” that reaches much further than a profession, a way of life or a particular mode of production. Surely, this “we” provides a certain form of identity, but democratic politics is not about creating a communal identity. Yes, identity is part of democratic politics, but the latter wishes to have no predefined identity borders. Essentially, of most significance is not people’s shared identities, be they campesinos, indigenous people, migrants or gays, but rather, of importance here is their mutual striving for equality (May,
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The campesino movement’s struggle is not about peasant-ness; it is about equality. What is new about this movement in Argentina is precisely that: campesinos ought to be equal to any other agriculture producer, and ought to be equal to any other citizen.

The process of subjectification charges ostensibly “neutral” terms with political significance. It also has the power of converting terms with a negative connotation, such as “campesinos” or “indigenous people”, into positively charged identities. Referring back to the “proletarian” subjectification, Rancière (1999, p. 38) notes that “what is subjectified is neither work nor destitution, but the simple counting of the uncounted, the difference between an inegalitarian distribution of social bodies and the equality of speaking beings.” The same also applies to the subjectification of the campesinos; their struggle is about cultural revitalisation and dignified life as agriculture producers of a particular kind. But more profoundly, it is about counting the uncounted and creating a more egalitarian and thus just society.

The subjectification of campesinos, and the inherent (and in fact much needed) political charge, are far from being unproblematic. Under particular inegalitarian and clientelistic political systems, of the kind often found in Argentinean provinces of the interior, the uncounted campesinos are vulnerable and have much to lose. Therefore, confrontational politics is perceived by many as dangerous and thus unwise and unwanted. This observation is useful for partly explaining why in the highlands of Jujuy the term “campesinos” is not in much vogue. Rather, as discussed above, most rural dwellers there, as well as those who had migrated to the urban settlements of the region, prefer to identify themselves as indigenous people. Under current legislation in Argentina this identity grants people with special rights, mainly to do with land tenure. But also, as of yet, the subjectification of indigeneity has not resulted in a “we” that could upset local elites. Furthermore, the recognition of the existence of indigenous populations and the grievances inflicted on them by the European colonisers is now prominent in different parts of the “New World”, and therefore demands of indigenous people are often perceived by the wider (non-indigenous) public as having more merit.

The same cannot be said of the “campesino” identity and its political subjectification in the Latin American context. More often than not this identity is associated by the ruling elite and the wider non-peasant public with a backward class, a remnant of the past, subject to chronic poverty and misery, and in some cases as revolutionary. Moreover, this identity has an unmistakeable Marxist connotation attached to it. The fall of the Communist bloc and the
almost unrivalled hegemony of the (neo)liberal doctrine has certainly affected class-based analysis of socioeconomic and socio-political structures (Jung, 2003).

Courtney Jung (2003) also notes that initially the Zapatistas’ discourse used the terms “indigenous” and “campesinos” interchangeably, perceiving these two identities as belonging to the same people who are all subjected to the same marginalisation and poverty. In subsequent years the Zapatistas have adopted a more explicit indigenous-based rights discourse. However, May (2010, p. 70, emphasis in original) argues that “[r]ather than taking on the indigenous struggle as a struggle of specifically indigenous people, instead the Zapatistas have taken on indigenous struggle because of the equality of indigenous people.” This, he notes, allows them to reach beyond merely the “indigenous people of Chiapas” and relate to any group striving for equality. Therefore, emphasis may be on indigenous identity, campesino identity, or both; it does not matter as long as the struggle is for solidarity and equality, and not sectarian and exclusionary in its nature.

Be that as it may, in Argentina, as in Bolivia and Ecuador, the subjectification of people as indigenous has been at least somewhat connected to the subjectification of people as campesinos, as many rural dwellers assert both identities. Pivotal in this process of subjectification has been, of course, the issue of precarious land-tenure. Land, or territory, coupled with the ability to have at least a certain degree of autonomy over this territory, or territoriality, have been invaluable for campesino producers as a resource for both social and economic wellbeing, regardless of ethnicity.

The Argentinean Peasant Indigenous National Movement (MNCI), of which both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are members, articulates the grievances and demands of campesinos (of all ethnic identities) and indigenous people together, as a unified political subject, as a unified “we”. Interestingly, the MNCI also includes urban based organisations from Buenos Aires. Even though the main focus of the MNCI is on campesino livelihoods in the countryside, its struggle for promoting integral agrarian reform, or integral development, reaches much beyond the campo (countryside); “we are also convinced of the importance of popular unity, of the imperative need for spaces in which organisations of campesinos, students, employed and unemployed workers converge” (MNCI, 2009, p. 2, my translation). Discussing the prospects of a unified campesinos – indigenous front, a militant of the Red Puna resonated with the aspiration of the MNCI to form an even wider popular front;
I believe that we must begin to join forces with the proletariat, …with those sectors of the unemployed. In this way we could maybe form a very thick [political] front. Because there is a need to support this [political initiative], or otherwise, if we pursue this line of indigenous communities, [and] the peasantry, we are a very small sector. Even if the unemployed and the proletariats are of indigenous origin, we present and sectorise ourselves as an indigenous community of [agriculture] producers and nothing more (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Using explicitly Marxist class terminology, this militant expresses the importance of incorporating class-based campesinista notions into their more explicitly indianista discourse. According to him, however, even the campesinista framework would have to be expanded to accommodate the proletariat and the unemployed, or alternatively, the working class, the urban poor and other marginalised groups – collectively known as the popular classes.

Moving beyond discourse, it became very evident while researching in the field that Red Puna members highly value their organisation’s participation in the MNCI, which is in itself a manifestation of the subjectification process of campesinos and rural indigenous groups in Argentina. Thus, in spite of wide ambivalence towards adopting a campesino identity, and in spite of some voices in the Andean region that articulate discourses associated with the notion of “enclosed ethnicity”, the Red Puna is seeking greater alliances, recognising that social change is embedded also in political consciousness of class and marginalisation, as reflected in the quote above. Association with the MNCI, however, is further politicising the Red Puna, aligning it with some very militant voices of change. Thus, this association runs the “risk” of upsetting local elite groups in Jujuy, in a way the subjectification of indigenous identity has not.

The MNCI is also widely perceived as a space of cooperation with and learning from fellow organisations;

We want to share; how do you live? How do you live there on your land? What problems do you have? Actually, we always have common problems, and it’s like experience is worth much to you. …like those experiences give us more strength, [direct] the way we can fight, [influence] the way we can resist (Focus Group 3, Red Puna, interviewed 13.1.2011).

The objective of subjectifying both campesinos and indigenous people as a unified front is embedded in the mutual recognition that these groups’ material, legal and often cultural rights and needs are regularly being subjugated to resourceful economic and political elites.
Also of importance to research participants was the notion that by cooperating with other Argentinean organisations through the MNCI, their struggle is not localised and isolated but rather shared and supported by many different groups and organisations in different places and in different scales, aspiring to promoting integral development. In only a few sentences, a Red Puna activist captured the local-national-global scope of the struggle;

We are a movement fighting for social politics, but not only of Jujuy. But rather, it is precisely a movement: we are many provinces that fight to strengthen the small producers. And another thing is that when you're going to tell about your reality... when there is a meeting with people from the government, you know that Suripujio [her community] is part of the Movement. … we are part of the Red Puna, but [also] we are part of the [National] Movement, which is much more. And being part of the Movement, we are not only of the Movement, we are at the Vía Campesina level, it's like we are already at the global level (Raquel, Red Puna, interviewed 16.1.2011).

Differently put, grievances and domination by others are shared by many around the world, agriculture producers and others, and forming alliances is necessary and beneficial for changing these material and non-material realities.

Conclusions

Neoliberal restructuring and democratisation of Latin American states have presented great livelihood challenges to economically and politically disadvantaged rural dwellers, but they also constituted some liberties needed for the emergence of a civil society. It is within this framework that identity and identity politics gained much importance. Thus, across Latin America rural mobilisation was increasingly focused on indianismo, which aimed at contesting existing racial domination within Leftist organisations, while class-based campesinismo has lost prominence. Notwithstanding, there is evidence to suggest that indianismo can accommodate material and other demands previously associated with a Marxist conceptualisation of class struggle.

In Argentina, indigenous politics is not as prominent as in some other countries in the region. However, social mobilisation, particularly in the countryside, is increasingly being positioned within a framework of indigeneity. Changes in national legislation have certainly assisted this process, but so did wider social changes at the global and local levels. Be that as it may, Argentina has a relatively small indigenous population and much of its peasantry is regarded as criollo, which in Argentina is usually synonymous with mestizo. Combining indianismo
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and campesinismo, therefore, is of much political importance in Argentina. Not merely in terms of incorporating the latter into the former, but in positioning elements of both together in order to construct a more inclusive space for cooperation of groups of different ethnic and social identities, and facilitating a politically charged, or subjectified, united front for a struggle for integral development.

The MOCASE-VC’s composition is more diverse in terms of its members’ identities, compared with the Red Puna, where the vast majority of its members are of indigenous identity. This difference between the organisations manifests itself in the discourses of these organisations and also in the way individual members articulate themselves. Although with somewhat different compositions, a combination of indianismo and campesinismo is reflected in both organisations. The MNCI reflects the creation of a unified subjectified “we”, including campesinos of criollo and indigenous identity, and even groups of marginalised urban dwellers. This inclusiveness, I would argue, is paramount for promoting integral development.
Chapter Six

Civil Society and the Formation of Peasant Movements in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

Introduction

The formation of current peasant movements in Argentina is strongly connected to the 1983 return of democracy that re-established civil liberties and enabled the re-emergence of civil society. While campesinos have historically been marginalised and land-tenure conflicts reoccurred for generations, their organisation and mobilisation as social and political subjects are relatively more recent phenomena. Like the previous two chapters, this chapter also addresses the first research objective. In this chapter I trace and analyse the conditions that triggered and enabled the formation of current campesino-indigenous movements in Argentina, focusing on the establishment and consolidation of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. These associative processes are contextualised within the history of civil society in Argentina, and its re-emergence after the collapse of the last military dictatorship.

Conceptually, civil society organisations are often situated between the state and market, but by no means are they completely separated from them. The nature of these relations often
serves as a focal point of research. Here I wish to situate the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna within the framework of civil society by adopting and distinguishing between ontological and epistemological approaches toward the analysis of civil society (Corry, 2010). These mean providing a workable definition (ontological approach) but mostly addressing how civil society is shaped, functions and how it evolves over time (epistemological approach). This latter approach is also interested in questions about how different observers conceptualise the formation and operation of organised civil society, and it allows for greater flexibility and complexity in the analysis of civil organisations.

This chapter’s primary focus, however, is on place-specific contexts and events, examining the creation and consolidation of the two case-study organisations. The discussion is based primarily on published and unpublished materials rather than on primary data. The history of the organisations was rarely discussed in interviews as I believe that contemporaneous written resources provide a more accurate and reliable accounts, compared to individuals’ memories of events that took place some twenty years ago.

Similar to other parts of this thesis, the structure of this chapter also reflects the importance of the scale at which social processes materialise, for gaining better understanding of the case-study organisations. Therefore, the chapter starts with a brief overview of the concept of “civil society” and its theoretical conceptualisation. It then narrows the focus on civil society in Argentina and how it was affected by and evolved through interactions with the political sphere. In a further attempt to “zoom-in” on the main subject of the study, the following part of the chapter addresses the formation of current peasant movements – a particular associative form of a previously limited part of organised civil society. Scaling down from the national level, the latter parts of the chapter depict the conditions for and establishment of the MOCASE-VC in Santiago del Estero and Red Puna in Jujuy.

**Civil society and the “third sector”**

There is only limited agreement on a precise definition for civil society. In spite of that, from the second half of the 1980s this term has become increasingly important not merely in academic circles, but also within the development sector and democratic governance praxis worldwide. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the democratisation process in different parts of the world, and the decline of the social role of the state as a result of the neoliberal economic
restructuring are key factors in the increasing importance of and focus on civil society (McIlwaine, 1998a, 1998b). The formation of current peasant organisations in Argentina, therefore, is situated within this global emergence of civil society organisations as important social and political forces.

Some attempts at conceptualising a practical definition of what civil society constitutes have stressed its distinction and at least some degree of autonomy from the state. For Axel Hadenius and Frederik Uggla (1996) civil society is a particular area of society, governed by particular kinds of interactions. To them, “the area in question is the public space between the state and the individual citizen (or household)” and the interactions “take an organized and collective form” (p. 1621). Cathy McIlwaine’s (1998b, p. 651) conceptualisation also resonates with this definition and asserts that civil society “broadly denotes the sphere of social interaction comprising a range of organisations beyond the direct control of the state.” Moreover, to her, “civil society is not an entity in itself but rather a sphere of social reproduction which has always existed in varying degrees in different societies” (p. 653).

Writing around the same time, Ernest Gellner (1994) also recognises the rebirth of civil society in the last decades of the 20th century. For him civil society “is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state… prevent[ing] it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society” (p. 5).

Synthesising the above conceptualisations, civil society, rather than an entity, is often perceived as a space of social networks that are detached from the state and act to counterweight it. Civil society, then, encompasses an array of different organisational forms and objectives, which must be, according to the definitions above, distinguished from the state. This would include less and more institutionalised organisations, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), neighbourhood associations, trade unions, social movements, religious groups, sport clubs and many more. Given this diversity of organisations, one must ask if all of the above are inherently independent from the state. The degree of autonomy from the state is an elusive matter, and it is closely linked to particular socio-political and cultural settings. Moreover, while the distinction from the state is well articulated in the above conceptualisations of civil society, they make no explicit reference to the market.

In contrast, other definitions of civil society distinguish it not only from the state but also from the market, a space where certain logic of profit making prevails. For Jean Cohen
(1995), for example, civil society is both comprised of associations and distinct from both state and economy. Thus, according to this conceptualisation, civil society includes organisations directly controlled by neither governments nor economic entities. These organisations, however, often try to advance their objectives by relating themselves to formal party politics and the economy. The form of such relations may be reformist in nature, or more confrontational and radical, with the aim of transforming governance and economic structures (Nielsen, 1995).

According to John Hall and Frank Trentmann (2005, p. 10), “late twentieth-century discussions show the on-going ambivalence about the pairing of commerce and civil society.” They ask if markets and commerce should be regarded as an integral part of civil society, or should they be regarded as a sphere of different ethical and practical modus operandi? They argue that one’s position regarding this question is influenced by the specific cultural, intellectual and material context within which that person lives. For example, commentators from relatively more liberal democracies are more likely to perceive civil society as a counter-weight to both state and markets, whereas civil society organisations and commentators operating under more oppressive regimes may arguably perceive commercial development as assisting civil society in countering the state.

Following more closely the theoretical tradition of perceiving civil society as a sphere distinct from both state and market, civil society associations who occupy this space have often been conceptualised as comprising a “third sector” or a “non-profit sector”. The former term was coined in 1973 by Amitai Etzioni (1973, p. 315), who noted that “this third sector may well be the most important alternative for the next few decades, not by replacing the other two [public and private], but by matching and balancing their important roles.”

In spite of much academic interest in the third sector since Etzioni’s initial publication, the third sector remains relatively under-theorised, especially in comparison to the first and second sectors (political sciences and economics respectively) (Corry, 2010). Olaf Corry (2010) distinguishes between “ontological” and “epistemological” academic approaches toward third sector research and conceptualisation. The former approach seeks to identify common characteristics of third sector organisations, and it is primarily concerned with defining what comprises this sector. Alternatively, the latter approach perceives the third sector not as a thing but as dynamic and changing processes and networks that shape society. In other words, the ontological approach assumes a third sector exists and it ought to be
defined. The epistemological approach, in contrast, is concerned with how the third sector is being perceived or theorised by different people across and within particular spaces and places, and also with how different observers understand the operations of third sector organisations. Here I wish to agree with Corry’s argument that the third sector should be seen as a fluid process and as such it should be studied (epistemological approach), but it should be accompanied by a formal definition (ontological approach) as a particular starting point.

Thus, while this study aims at understanding the discourses and various operational dimensions of some particular third sector organisations, in much agreement with the epistemological approach, it is also valuable to clearly define the third sector. Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier (1992, 1997) from the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies provide a number of different foundations for defining the third sector. However, the structural-operational definition for the non-profit, or “third”, sector is a particularly interesting and arguably more comprehensive definition. According to this definition, organisations of the third sector need to comply with five criteria: 1) organisation – at least some level of institutionalisation; 2) private – organisations may receive public funds but must be separate from the state; 3) non-profit-distributing – organisations may accumulate profits but these must not be distributed among their members; 4) self-governing – have their own governance procedures and are not controlled by others; and 5) voluntary – participation must be significantly, but not necessarily entirely, voluntary. With only minor changes, this definition of the third sector has been reinvigorated more recently by Salamon (2010), who argues that it is a practical definition in almost all countries. This definition, then, will be adopted here for framing the rest of the discussion on civil society organisations.

Civil society in Argentina

The origins of civil society in Argentina stretch back to the Spanish colonial era. Before statehood and the development of a market, in its modern sense, some voluntary private associations had already initiated provision of “public” services to the poor and also demonstrated a certain degree of political involvement. All of these organisations were directly affiliated with the Catholic Church (Campetella and González Bombal, 2000; Thompson, 1997).

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44 For a critical reflection on this structural-operational definition of the non-profit sector see Morris (2000).
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After independence the state became more involved in the provision of public goods and social services, but this period also witnessed the proliferation of civil society organisations. Relations between the State and the Catholic-oriented private organisations, however, were not without friction. Led by Bernardino Rivadavia, the young Argentinean state passed legislation to compel such organisations to be accountable before the state (Thompson, 1997). Lacking the ability to meet various social needs, coupled with a desire to weaken the Church (Thompson, 1997), in 1823 the State created the Sociedad de Beneficiencia (Society of Beneficence). This organisation was a public-private partnership, managed by women from society’s higher classes, and provided different social services. This organisation received funds from the government but maintained a large degree of autonomy as well (Jacobs and Maldonado, 2005). After nearly a century of much tension and friction over funding and autonomy, in 1908 the Sociedad de Beneficiencia became an official state institution. It was then shuffled around between different Ministries, until 1948 when the National Department of Social Assistance was created under President Perón (Thompson, 1997).

According to Andrés Thompson (1997), the Sociedad de Beneficiencia and its history are important for understanding the emergence and evolvement of Argentinean civil society. This experience reveals a number of key aspects in this public-private partnership toward provision of social services. Among these aspects are the reliance of seemingly voluntary associations on state funding, the tensions around accountability before the state and the important role of upper-class women in the Sociedad and in other associations. This “social zeal” of wealthy women is often criticised as an attempt to protect and promote straggling populations not out of benevolence, but rather in order to prevent social upheaval that could destabilise the existing social stratification and to assure the supply of cheap labour for the growing domestic economy (Viladrich and Thompson, 1996).

In the first decades of the 20th century the Argentinean economy flourished as an exporter of primary products. Within this context of economic expansion, state – civil society relations expanded as institutions of cooperativism emerged. A process of trade unionisation had begun and workers joined together for expressing their demands. Then the Perónist revolution of the 1940s transformed the Argentinean polity, promoted corporatist networks of unions and industries, and modified state – civil society relations by increasing statism and regulation. With that, this period is also characterised by initiating a process that led to the creation of a sizeable and educated middle class that developed a political consciousness and
became active, and has been since the cornerstone of civil society in Argentina (Jacobs and Maldonado, 2005).

Under Perónism, however, the mechanism for funding welfare goods and services was not fundamentally altered. In the late 1940s Argentina’s First Lady established and named after herself the Eva Perón Foundation. In effect, this organisation was not much different to the Sociedad de Beneficiencia, the organisation it wished to replace. Both were funded by the state and privately managed. However, the Foundation was not run by upper-class women and its discourse was of social justice rather than of Christian benevolence (Thompson, 1997). Nevertheless, Evita’s Foundation, similar to previous and more traditional civil society beneficence associations, was intended as social control. It was also highly politicised and served as a means to attract votes from the popular classes and cooperation from the industrialists and unions (Viladrich and Thompson, 1996).

A coup d’état in 1955 overthrew Perón and until 1983 Argentinean civil society has had to endure reoccurring cycles of state terrorism, economic downturns and political indifference toward provision of social services. Civil society organisations were often polarised into either supporting governments in delivering services or resisting them, at some extreme cases with arms. As a general process, in this period many civil associations were dissolved and a culture of fear restricted attempts by civil society to promote political and social change (Jacobs and Maldonado, 2005). The last military dictatorship (1976-1983), which was also the most brutal, persecuted leftist social activists and physically eliminated many of them (Pozzi, 2000). In spite of the ferocious state terrorism, not all forms of civil society organisations were annihilated altogether. Indeed, the politics of fear and the detention and “disappearance” of many civilians, some but by no means all of whom were social and political activists, affected civil society like never before. These actions, however, also prompted the emergence of a number of human rights organisations of relatives of the regime’s victims (Brysk, 1994). This early re-emergence of civil society was to become very important and inspirational in the following transition to democracy.

The return of democracy in 1983 enabled the re-emergence of a variety of civil society organisations. Until 1989 the welfare state was supportive of such associations, but this support also meant that civil society organisations had no real autonomy. The heavy burden of foreign debt on the Argentinean economy (of which a considerable amount was inherited

45 The best known of which was the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo).
from the military junta), coupled with other factors, had caused hyperinflation and severe economic crisis. (Jacobs and Maldonado, 2005). This climate of increasing political pluralism and economic instability facilitated the emergence of civil society organisations, many of which were devoted to the growing problem of poverty, focusing on political lobbying and raising political consciousness, but also on small-scale productive initiatives (Thompson, 1997).

The economic crisis was followed by a change of government and President Menem’s implementation of austerity measures and neoliberal economic and political restructuring. This, in turn, has had major ramifications for civil society organisations. During the 1990s government institutions had become more open and receptive towards civil society organisations, even allowing some of them to partake in the formulation and implementation of social policy. Pressure from both endogenous and exogenous factors was pivotal to this development. The former included the mounting social crisis of those sectors of society adversely affected by the ongoing economic restructuring measures undertaken by the Menem administration. This local pressure behind a greater public role for civil society was reinforced by outside pressure from foreign multilateral credit institutions. Therefore, the austerity measures taken by the state led to its withdrawal from some key social areas, creating space (and arguably also a vacuum) for the proliferation of third sector organisations, who then became key actors in meeting social and economic needs (Thompson, 1997).

A notable milestone along this journey of greater proximity of civil society – state relations was the creation of the Secretariat of Social Development in 1993 (now the Ministry of Social Development). The creation of this government entity aimed at effectively allocating social spending, *inter alia* by strengthening civil society organisations as intermediary actors in financing and delivering social programmes. With that, Thompson (1997) notes that many state institutions were, at that time, suspicious towards civil society organisations and often tended to assert control over them in different ways.

With the economic and political transformations of the 1990s, organised civil society had also significantly changed compared to previous forms. As in other parts of the world, third sector organisations went through a process of professionalisation and greater attention was directed toward quality of services, management and competition over resources. Thus, civil society organisations had to adapt to the hegemonic neoliberal market-oriented framework and had to develop capacity to fulfil corresponding demands, such as for strategic plans, budgets and
reports (Jacobs and Maldonado, 2005). With that, they also gained more autonomy from the state and thus became arguably less susceptible to political pressure.

**Conditions for the formation of current peasant movements in Argentina**

Civil society organisations have had a long history in Argentina. However, published literature about civil society in Argentina is mainly concerned with the urban realm. This does not mean there was no civil organisation in the countryside. Patricia Durand (2009) notes that there were antecedents to the current peasant organisations that were formed in the Chaco region in the 1980s and 1990s within the context of political and economic neoliberal restructuring. During the first decades of the 20th century there were instances of rural social struggle, including indigenous campesinos and wage labourers that fought for improving working conditions and prices of cotton. Thus, these early manifestations of rural organisation and struggle were related to the expansion of the capitalist market framework and the inherently inferior position of campesinos and rural labourers within it.

Starting in the late 1940s, the Catholic Church sponsored the formation of groups of small and medium size agriculture producers, which later formed the Movimiento Rural de la Acción Católica (Rural Movement of the Catholic Action). This organisation provided assistance to campesino and other small-scale farmer groups in different parts of Argentina, focusing on training and organising campesinos according to the “Christian spirit”, and addressing development issues and rural social inequality. In the early 1970s local rural associations called “ligas” (leagues) started to form under the umbrella of the Church. These associations then formed the Movimiento de Ligas Agrarias (Movement of Agrarian Leagues), which was very dominant in the provinces of north Argentina (Durand, 2009; Archetti, 1988). Underlying this organisation’s course of action were economic and social processes that marginalised its members, such as concentration of land due to rural development through modernisation. Small agriculture producers in the northern provinces protested against their socio-political marginalisation and spatial disparities between the “developed” Pampa region and the “underdeveloped” rural areas of the north (Galafassi, 2005), an issue that has featured ever since in rural civil mobilisation in that region. One of the main objectives of the Ligas Agrarias was to find solutions to challenges to production and commercialisation through the creation of local associations of producers, which also aimed at resisting mounting pressure from agribusinesses and the government. Cooperativism
and a comprehensive approach to development were also key objectives (Archetti, 1988). Many activists in this movement were influenced by the emergence of Liberation Theology across Latin America, and a process of political radicalisation became eminent. This, in turn, caused tensions with the predominantly conservative clergy of the Church that sponsored the movement. Thus, it was of little surprise that the 1976 military junta dismantled the movement and persecuted some of its leaders, who “disappeared” during the junta’s Dirty War (Galafassi, 2005).

The experience of the Ligas Agrarias as a “bottom-up” movement that through its democratic structure emphasised the involvement of its member families in decision making (Durand, 2009), was invaluable for the re-emergence of peasant movements in the region after the demise of the military dictatorship. In effect, the objectives and internal structures of current rural organisations, including MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, share some similarities with the Ligas Agrarias.

The role of the Church in civil mobilisation in the countryside is also of importance. As noted above, the Church has been involved in organised civil society for a prolonged period of time. During the last military dictatorship the more conservative clergy supported the regime and justified its repressive actions. At the same time, the regime persecuted and assassinated clergymen who were known for their progressive social worldview, such as those affiliated with the Movement of Priests for the Third World (Klaiber, 1998; Goldfrank and Rowell, 2012). After the return of democracy, organisations which were affiliated with the more progressive camps of the Catholic Church have had an important role in the creation of peasant movements. However, the Church has lost much of its credibility and dominance in the countryside due to disillusionment of rural communities with this institution’s will to address the political issues underlying their marginalisation.

The radical change in the political realm gave rise to civil society movements across Argentina, as noted above; but it is worthwhile to recognise that, in some provinces of the interior, corrupt and still repressive provincial governments persisted. Santiago del Estero is arguably one of the best examples. The five-decade long authoritarian regime of Carlos Juárez and his wife Mercedes, which lasted from 1949 and until their removal by the Federal

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46 Somewhat paradoxically, Eduardo Archetti (1988) notes that the Ligas Agrarias received much support from “colones”, migrants that settled in less fertile lands and were within a process of capital accumulation and thus could not be classified as “campesinos”.

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Government in 2004, was characterised by political patronage and domination over all aspects of life in the province. The incumbency of this regime persisted through periods of both democracy and dictatorship (Gibson, 2005). However, the new national political climate allowed campesinos to organise and address issues that were by no means new.

With this political liberalisation, however, also came economic restructuring and liberalisation. Similar to the effect on different disadvantaged sectors of society, the further adoption of the neoliberal doctrine adversely affected the peasantry. As discussed in Chapter Four, the implementation of neoliberal policies enhanced the modernisation of agrarian sectors and contributed to their further integration into the capitalist market. Thus, from the 1980s, but more severely during the 1990s, the livelihoods of many marginalised campesino communities were increasingly under threat from different powerful economic agents, such as agribusiness and mining companies. The roll-back of the government, precarious rural livelihoods, land conflicts and reintroduced civil liberties, therefore, created the conditions for the formation of organised peasant civil society movements.

Since loss of land is often at the heart of mobilisation of the peasantry, the issue of securing land-tenure has always been important. A change to the Argentinean constitution in 1994 could have assisted in settling land disputes that arise from such situations where people are forced from land that they peacefully possess without legal title; but, in effect, this has had only limited impact. According to this amendment, known as la ley veinteñal (the 20-years-law), anyone can claim ownership of land given that he or she were “improving” it, that is productively using it, for twenty consecutive years. However, in order to exercise this right, extremely poor people often have to prove ownership in court and pay for the whole legal process, as well as for surveying the land under examination. Needless to say, the campesinos cannot afford this expensive legal exercise, and thus they continuously live with the possibility of losing their land (de Dios, 2006b; Svampa, 2008). In this case agrarian reform is necessary; but that, by itself, will not guaranty the survival of the peasantry, let alone its prosperity.

To achieve that, the organisation and formation of social and economic networks are important. These enable the translation of seemingly micro local struggles into macro global ones. Through civil society networks, peasant movements in Argentina have positioned themselves globally and gained recognition and support for their cause. This support, financial and non-financial, is important not only for assisting campesino organisations to
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assert political pressure on the government for an integral agrarian reform, but also for improving the living standards of campesino families at present time.

Conditions for the formation of peasant movements in Santiago del Estero

Obviously, the conditions that led to the formation of peasant movements in Argentina are of much relevance to Santiago del Estero as a particular geographic place. Argentina, however, is a large and diverse country and its different territories have had similarities as well as differences regarding the organisation of marginalised peasant communities. Here I wish to analyse the particular processes that prompted the creation of peasant organisations in Santiago del Estero.

Compared with some other parts of the country the province of Santiago del Estero has had a somewhat different process of colonisation. Its rural population stayed largely criolla – of indigenous and European lineage – constituted to a large extent from campesinos that occupy land without having legal recognition as proprietors (Durand, 2009). This remains one of the main problems the peasant sector in Santiago del Estero is facing; that is, insecure land-tenure. Campesinos often do not have legal titles for the land they occupy, at times for generations (de Dios, 2009).

Conflicts over land possession are still very much relevant to current campesinos’ struggle, but they are not a new phenomenon. The first land dispute that consequently resulted in the eviction of campesinos dates back to 1963. The 1970s saw an increase in the number of judicial evictions and displacements of campesinos when a number of commercial agriculture companies claimed ownership over parcels of land that where already occupied by campesinos (Barbetta, 2009). The commencement of these conflicts coincided with the completion of a number of infrastructure projects, including two irrigation canals. At the same time a climatic change caused the 700mm isohyets to shift eastwards, increasing the share of land that could be cultivated without irrigation. This, in turn, enabled large commercial farming companies from the humid and fertile Pampa region to expand their operations into regions with low land values. Technological advancements of recent years, particularly in biotechnology of seeds, have made land in the province even more attractive for large commercial operations (Durand, 2009).
Thus, given that land conflicts were evident prior to the 1980s, why peasant organisations did not form there prior to the return of democracy in 1983? Despite the importance of the Ligas Agrarias elsewhere in Argentina, they were not very influential in Santiago del Estero. As noted above, during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983) civil mobilisation of the peasantry in Argentina was not feasible. But even during the 1960s and 70s associations of campesinos in this province were scarce (Agosto, Cafardo and Calí, 2004). It is important to note, however, that the mobilisation of the peasantry in this province was adversely affected by the long oppressive regime of Carlos Juárez, which made extensive use of the local security forces to restrict opposition, even during periods of democracy (Gibson, 2005). Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter Four, and in spite of Juárez’s regime, peasant families in Suncho Pozo did organise in the 1960s to fight for the land they possessed without legal recognition (Durand, 2009). This serves as evidence that, although social mobilisation was limited, it was not altogether absent.

Land conflicts and lack of peasant organisation in the past meant that the vast majority of evictions of campesinos went unnoticed by the wider public. This reality, known as “silent evictions” (desalojos silenciosos), had continued until the mid 1980s. Certainly, a part of this reality was embedded in the existence of a relatively despotic regime in the province, which did not allow for the establishment of organisations that might contest its hegemony, as did eventuate in other Argentinean provinces. According to Pablo Barbetta (2009), the absence of popular mobilisation in the province changed in the 1980s when a new agent entered the provincial social arena. This catalyst of mobilisation was the emergence of NGOs, most, but not all, of which were linked to the Catholic Church. These NGOs promoted the formation of associations in order to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged rural groups.

The formation of the MOCASE and its initial years of consolidation

More than twenty years after the first instance of land-tenure conflict, a new dispute erupted in 1985 in Los Juríes, General Taboada Department, in the southeast of Santiago del Estero. A number of companies intended to evict some 400 families of campesinos that had occupied about 120,000 hectares. With the encouragement and support of Roberto Killmeate, the local Pallottine priest\footnote{On July 4, 1976, five members of the Pallottine Order were assassinated in Buenos Aires by the hands of the military dictatorship for being “leftists”. The slain Pallottines were accused by the assassins for being} and an NGO he helped to create, the campesinos organised to defend their
land. Because the distance between the *campesinos’* houses was substantial, they chose representatives for each *lote* (allotment – where a group of families live in relative proximity). These representatives met in order to share information and make decisions. In a short period of time neighbours established small organisations, which together formed a Central Commission of Peasants (*Comisión Central de Campesinos*) (Durand, 2009; de Dios, 2009). This episode laid the foundations for the formation of the Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero (MOCASE). Although this social mobilisation took place before the sweeping neoliberal restructuring of the Menem era, and thus predates the more notable emergence of civil society that eventuated as a result, it is still very much a manifestation of the re-emergence of organised civil society after the military dictatorship.

The *campesinos* entered in negotiation with the provincial government and the companies, with a local Bishop as a mediator. The provincial authorities were hostile towards the *campesinos* from the outset, and supported the agribusinesses and their economic interests. The negotiations ran aground when the *campesinos* demanded, *inter alia*, that their right over the land as its possessors be recognised. At this stage the Bishop was no longer disposed to intervene in the conflict, an action that weakened the role of the Church in mobilising the peasantry, more so given the problematic history of the Church’s involvement in peasant mobilisation. Soon after this channel of communication was closed, the *campesinos*, supported by NGOs, decided to adopt a new strategy that would become an integral part of their fight in the years to come – confrontation and protest. Even though the provincial government supported the companies and refused to agree to the *campesinos’* demands, as a result of this struggle the following year 40 families in a single *lote* received land titles, but others were offered the option to relocate and receive a mere 20ha per family. This meant having a very small parcel of land, well below the 100ha mark, which is regarded as the minimum a family needs for its survival in the province’s semi-arid climatic conditions (de Dios, 2009; Durand, 2009).

The demand for legal titles to their land was not, however, the only objective of the *campesinos*. From an early stage the peasant movement from Los Juríes put an emphasis on improving their standards of living. That included improving production and

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members of the Movement of Priests for the Third World (MSTM), but although the Pallottine Order adhered to ideals of Liberation Theology, it was not officially part of the MSTM. Following his involvement in mobilising the *campesinos*, Killmeate received life threats and subsequently was repositioned by the Church. For more on the Pallottine massacre and Roberto Killmeate see Juan Pablo Young and Pablo Zubizarreta’s powerful 2007 documentary *4 de julio: La masacre de San Patricio* (*4th* of July: The St. Patrick’s Massacre).
commercialisation of products, addressing health and education issues, and contesting the grievances that made the campesinos socially and economically marginalised (Durand, 2009).

In the following years similar peasant organisations formed around the province, adopting the organisational model of Los Juríes: small locally based community organisations (first-degree or tier) that elect delegates who form a directive commission on a “departmental” or regional level (second-degree or tier). At times this structure was accompanied by the formation of a cooperative (Durand, 2009). This organisational structure is still used by the “historic” or “institutional” MOCASE, while the MOCASE-VC had departed from this vertical structure (see more detailed discussion on the separation of MOCASE below).

In late 1989 these regional organisations, or Comisiones Centrales Campesinas (Central Peasant Commissions), joined together and formed a new organisational tier at a provincial level.48 On August the 4th 1990 the MOCASE was officially founded in Quimilí, and the first Directive Committee49 was elected (de Dios, 2009). The newly founded organisation put for itself as objectives to

… search for solutions for shared problems, be representative of the campesinos before the authorities, support the petitions of each of the organisations that constitute it [the MOCASE] respecting their autonomy, promote the training in cooperativism and unionism, and improve the quality of life of small producers (Founding Act of the MOCASE, 04.08.1990, cited in Durand, 2009, p. 110, my translation).

Thus, from its beginning the MOCASE had clear objectives, which have not changed much in the course of its struggle and the years. Indeed, fighting for the land is the most obvious strategy of the organisation but it is not the end goal by itself. Although more than twenty years have passed since the formation of the MOCASE, these objectives are still as relevant as they initially were. However, a more immediate success of the organisation was putting an end to the “silent evictions”. That is, evictions did continue, at times by most violent means; but they were no longer “silent” once the campesinos were organised.

This process of mobilisation and organisation of the peasantry was intertwined with a process of forming a collective identity. These processes, in turn, are reflected in the epistemological view of the third sector as dynamic and ever changing networks (Corry, 2010). Arguably, the

48 The MOCASE had seven founding second-degree regional organisations.

49 The Directive Committee included a president, vice-president, secretary, vice-secretary, treasurer, vice-treasurer and public representatives.
common denominator used for creating this collective identity was the fact that many people were engaged with subordinated work coupled with low pay, or with occupations that did not require qualification and which were poorly remunerated (Barbetta, 2009). Thus, according to this argument the lowest common denominator at the early stages of mobilisation was more economic than social. Rubén de Dios (2009) has argued that at least a common social identity did exist among the campesinos prior to their self organisation. This was due to the homogeneity of their forms of living and modes of production. However, he argues that there was no collective peasant identity as a political subject. This, in turn, was a product of the movement through its continuous emphasis on political analysis of the reasons for the marginalisation of campesino communities. In other words, being campesinos was subjectified and transformed into a political “we” as a result of joint actions and enunciations (Rancière, 1999), as discussed in the previous chapter.

In 1998 a new land conflict erupted in the rural community of La Simona, General Taboada Department, in the southeast of the province. This event was to become an important milestone in the history of the organisation. Large bulldozers made their way towards the houses of the campesinos, destroying everything in their path, in an attempt to evict the occupiers of the land and make way for large commercial cultivation. Even though this act was not backed by a judicial order, the bulldozers were accompanied by the local police force and armed civilians. The campesinos organised themselves and, with the support of the MOCASE and other NGOs, stopped the advancement of the bulldozers. This event symbolises the attempts of powerful economic actors to evict, often illegally, the legitimate possessors of the land; but its importance lies beyond that. It was the first time national media covered the campesinos’ struggle in the province, making this reality known outside the provincial boundaries (de Dios, 2003; Durand, 2009). This event was a stepping stone in the organisation’s struggle, and instrumental for the process through which civil society is expressed and legitimised as a counterweight to state institutions and private economic forces.

During the 1990s a number of new regional second-tier organisations were formed and incorporated into the MOCASE, and in 1999 the First Congress of the MOCASE gathered in the City of Santiago del Estero, under the title of “United Peasants in the Struggle for Land and Justice”.50 The objectives of the Congress referred to

50 Campesinos y Campesinas Unidos en la Lucha por la Tierra y la Justicia
...the need to reflect on the current situation of the peasant sector in the provincial and national contexts, from which would be possible to formulate proposals for development policies. It was also intended to revise its current structure and functioning, so to progress both with regards to the expansion of its coverage to the entire provincial geography, both in terms of its consolidation as a democratic and a representative organisation with new and better forms of participation (MOCASE, 1999, my translation).

Despite of the unity regarding the importance of these objectives, disagreements between the MOCASE’s constituent organisations regarding the revision of the organisation’s structure flared and were soon deemed irreconcilable.

**Internal conflict and division of the MOCASE**

Durand (2009) commented that, at the same time that the Congress marked a moment of consolidation and unity, some differences had started to surface and become evident. Whereas the objectives of the movement were shared by all its constituents, the paths for achieving them were not. These differences led to the division of the MOCASE in 2001 into two separate organisations, adhering to the same name.

Durand (2009), who experienced the division first hand as a researcher while working in the field, offered three main points of contention that led to the partition of the MOCASE. The first matter of disagreement was the alliances among and sources of finance for member organisations. No one doubted funds were needed for the operations of the movement but from whom and at what cost were charged issues. Some member organisations had relatively close ties with governmental programmes of rural development, while others, although also benefiting from those programmes, wished to deepen their relations with NGOs. Hence, the level of autonomy in regards to development programmes, especially when the National Government was involved, was under debate. Those who opted for the government saw it as an obvious, almost natural, strategy and criticised the trips to Europe undertaken by some representatives of the other organisations as a part of their relations with foreign NGOs and with the intent of finding foreign finance. From the other side of the debate, those who preferred maintaining more autonomy from the State argued that the ties between the technical staff of the State and the peasant leaders resemble the political system they hoped to negate.
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The second point of contention was the internal structure of the MOCASE. For some organisations the Directive Committee was too authoritative and commanding, depriving member organisations from having a greater involvement in decision-making processes. These organisations promoted a “horizontal” organisational structure, where power is dispersed within the movement and members have more say in decision making. Other organisations, on the other hand, preferred the familiar hierarchical structure already established.

The third point of conflict according to Durand (2009) surrounded the criteria for establishing a new Central. Some argued that if new communities want to join the MOCASE they should join an existing “second degree” Central, if one exists in their geographic proximity. Conversely, others maintained that the right for self-determination should be kept in these occurrences.

Notwithstanding the above disputed issues, the reasons for the internal rupture of the movement are a source of debate by themselves. de Dios (2009) does not share Durand’s (2009) analysis of the division. He argues that since the mid 1990s, when a delegate from the Central of Quimilí was appointed as the MOCASE’s president, a dispute around the strategic actions of the MOCASE could be observed, particularly regarding the organisation’s role as a political actor. Moreover, de Dios (2009, p. 16, my translation) asserts that “the group of technical staff and peasant leaders linked to Quimilí and Tintina intended to hegemonise this [political] orientation, using the name of MOCASE to obtain material and symbolic resources.” This is a very strong assertion that reflects, inter alia, the discontent those who chose to stay with the established hierarchical structure have towards the relations with foreign NGOs and the resources that materialise from these.

In 2001 the MOCASE had to renew the authority of its Directive Committee. According to de Dios (2009), prior to this renewal of authority the organisations from Quimilí and Tintina, supported by the NGO CENEPP, 51 proposed changing the existing election system. Under the existing system each Central chose its delegates for the Directive Committee, which had representatives from all the Centrales regardless of their size. Under the new proposed system the Directive Committee would be elected directly by all members of the MOCASE.

51 Centro de Estudios Populares Participativos - CENEPP (Centre for Popular and Participatory Studies). CENEPP was formed in 1987 as an association for promoting rural development.
This proposition was debated and rejected by the Directive Committee, who wished to keep the equal balance between small and large Centrales.

This conflict resulted in the division of the peasant movement. Five Centrales assembled in the City of Santiago del Estero, and decided to change their inter-organisational structure. That included revoking the Directive Committee system for working in Secretariats according to different subjects. Later this organisation joined the international peasant organisation La Vía Campesina and thereafter was called MOCASE-Vía Campesina (VC). The other Centrales decided to continue with the established hierarchical structure (de Dios, 2009). Maintaining the name MOCASE, this organisation is sometimes referred to as “historic”, “constitutional”, or just “MOCASE”.

The MOCASE-VC put an emphasis on establishing and enhancing its connections with overseas organisations, such as the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Latin American Co-ordination of Rural Organisations (Coordinacion Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo – CLOC), the regional affiliate of La Vía Campesina. It also made alliances with European NGOs and the European Union. Relationships were also made with other Argentinean organisations of campesinos and urban unemployed. de Dios (2009) notes, not without some criticism, that through these connection the name of MOCASE was made known among some influential groups, mainly in Buenos Aires. Be that as it may, the MOCASE-VC has made important alliances and formed networks within the civil society sphere, both national and international, and rural and urban.

The “historic” MOCASE, in contrast, emphasised buttressing its relations with local actors, such as NGOs with connection to the provincial government, and from 2006 with the provincial government itself. On the national level, this MOCASE was linked to a national rural organisation but by 2010 it had revoked this alliance. At the same time, however, it kept working closely with an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, focusing on rural development of small agriculture producers.

Another area of division of opinion between the two organisations is local politics. Some leading members of the “historic” MOCASE had entered local politics and contested local,

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52 Initially the Secretariats were land, production, education, water and roads, communication, organisation and promotion, and health
53 The Sub-secretary of Family Agriculture and Rural Development (la Subsecretaria de Agricultura Familiar y Desarrollo Rural) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Stockbreeding and Fishery (Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca).
municipal level hegemonies (de Dios, 2009). In parallel, a peasant leader was also elected into the provincial parliament. This is a clear strategy of power contestation by means of translating peasant mobilisation and consolidation into political power. Such a strategy, however, could be problematically situated within the “in-between-state-and-market” conceptualisation of civil society, depending on one’s position and analysis of such hybridity or alliances.

The MOCASE-VC does not share this strategy. This organisation refuses to take part in party politics. It wishes to make a pacific social and political revolution from below without confronting the existing hegemonic elite via the political apparatus. This worldview can be found also in the Zapatistas uprising in Mexico. John Holloway (2002, p. 157) asserts that

Zapatismo moves us decisively beyond the state illusion. By the state illusion I mean the paradigm that has dominated left-wing thought for at least a century. The state illusion puts the state at the centre of the concept of radical change. The state illusion understands revolution as the winning of state power and the transformation of society through the state.

Thus, the MOCASE-VC, although not negating the State to the same extent, does have a (revolutionary) political agenda; but for them the existing political system is part of the problem, not of the solution. For this the organisation adopted a “horizontal” structure, trying to create a different democratic society (see further discussion in Chapter Eight). de Dios (2009), however, criticises the MOCASE-VC, arguing that on the one hand the organisation retreats from party politics and governments while on the other hand it sees these governments as sources of material and symbolic benefits.

Regardless of the exact reasons behind the division of the MOCASE, the result is undisputed: the historically marginalised campesinos in Santiago del Estero are divided. During my fieldwork in early 2010 I met with both leaders and ordinary members of the two organisations. From these meetings it was especially noticeable that members of the “historic” MOCASE had very limited knowledge of the actions and discourse of the MOCASE-VC. Furthermore, some criticised the MOCASE-VC for being violent, a criticism that according to MOCASE-VC members originates in smear campaigns against them run by the provincial authorities and agribusiness through popular media. Of importance here are not the merits of each of the organisations’ struggle strategies, but the deep and wide rift the 2001

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54 An example is the visit of the Argentinean Minister of Agriculture to Quimilí in 2009, where he met for the first time with members of the MOCASE-VC and the National Peasant and Indigenous Movement (MNCI).
division inflicted on the *campesino* sector in Santiago del Estero. That is, not only that at the
time of fieldwork in 2010 the two organisations did not have any channel of communication
between them, they also have limited knowledge of the actions and strategies the other
organisation pursues. Coinciding with my subsequent visit to the province, in December 2010
a meeting was held with representatives of the different *campesino* organisations of the
province. This meeting signifies a realisation among the *campesinos* that at least some direct
dialogue could be beneficial, even if there are disagreements regarding particular struggle
strategies.

*Conditions for the formation of peasant movements in Jujuy*

In Chapter Four I argued that the historic processes of agrarian change are important for
understanding more recent and current conflicts and realities in the study areas of this
research. I have emphasised their importance with regards to land-tenure, but these historic
processes are also of significance for the formation of social movements during the 1980s and
90s in the Argentinean countryside.

During the 20th century the economy of the highlands of Jujuy was primarily founded on a
few large mining complexes, small scale agriculture production and employment in the
commercial and public sectors (Cowan Ros, 2007). With that, *campesinos*’ livelihoods were
increasingly dependent on seasonal migration. Processes of rural integration into the capitalist
economy, which entailed a certain degree of proletariatisation of the peasantry, have had a
substantial effect on the livelihood strategies of the highlands’ rural population. As
mentioned earlier, seasonal migration to work in the agro-industries of the lowlands of the
province became an extremely important aspect of rural livelihood strategy (Rutledge, 1987).
However, this seasonal migration was not only the result of particular land-tenure
arrangements that permitted landowners to extract cheap and flexible labour from their
*arrenderos* (tenants). During the 20th century, the Puna of Jujuy has experienced a substantial
increase of population, having similar population growth rates to those of some Sub-Saharan
African countries. This rapid population growth was not matched by technological or other
measures for improving *campesino* production (Bolsi, 2005), and this resulted in even greater
pressure on precarious livelihoods. Thus, more than ever before, the *campesinos* of the Puna
and the Quebrada de Humahuaca have had to migrate for ensuring their subsistence and
social reproduction.
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From the second half of the 1970s, and while under the most repressive military dictatorship Argentina has known, neoliberal policies were implemented. From the 1930s until the mid 1970s import substitution strategies were the preferred policy in Argentina. This had entailed a substantial degree of state intervention in the economy as well as a relatively comprehensive welfare and public education systems (Lewis, 2002; Brennan, 2007). Among the effects of the neoliberal political-economic change, therefore, were the decline of the industrial sector, which had a profound effect on the mining industry, and the availability and introduction of new agriculture machinery, which reduced the demand for rural labour. These effects were further intensified during the 1990s, the decade infamously known for its radical neoliberal political-economic adjustment. These had a profound impact on the highland population of Jujuy. Employment in the mining complexes declined and seasonal migration for working on the sugar ingenios was no longer an option for many (Cowan Ros and Schneider, 2008).

Notwithstanding the adverse impact the neoliberal adjustment had on the semi-proletariat campesinos of Jujuy, other campesino groups in other parts of the country were subject to the same policies, and thus to their effects. However, unlike other regions – Santiago del Estero for example – during the 1980s social organisation in the rural highland of Jujuy was minimal and there were no second-degree organisations, or other spaces where delegates of different rural communities could meet. Instead, the main political parties and the Church occupied much of the political and social spaces in rural communities. Following the return of democracy in 1983 some communities acquired status as Centros Vecinales (neighbourhood or local centres), a legally recognised and hierarchical organisational form, assisting communities in negotiating with development and other state agencies, and addressing different social requirements (Cowan Ros, 2007). This is a form of organised civil society but it resulted from a requirement for accessing resources and it was not intended to transform rural peasant communities into mobilised social subjects.

During the 1990s a notable social change took place in the highlands of Jujuy. On the one hand, the intensification of neoliberal politics in Argentina during this decade exacerbated the already struggling economy of the campesino communities of highland Jujuy, further limiting migration as a livelihood strategy. In addition, the province experienced severe political instability, having eight different Governors between 1989 and 1998 (Cowan Ros, 2003). On the other hand, in this decade there was a notable surge of civil society, and new actors, public and private, promoting different aspects of development. Carlos Cowan Ros (2007,
p.234, my translation) characterises these actors as “new social mediators,” técnicos of non-governmental organisations and public agencies, most of whom had university education and originated from outside the region.

The interventions of these new “mediators” evolved primarily around technical and financial assistance to organised associations. The main objective of this intervention was to improve agricultural and artisan production while strengthening initiatives of association. Thus, different economic and social groups were formed. For instance, while the former included groups of agriculture producers and artisans, the latter included groups of women and youth. Once such small and place-bounded associations were formed, some técnicos from NGOs promoted and supported the cooperation of different groups, in effect creating second-degree organisations (Cowan Ros, 2007). Even though one of the primary objectives of many associations was to generate income to members, they can still be characterised as belonging to the third sector. These were not about profit making, but about strategies for mitigating the effect of the economic restructuring, often through collective action, both economic and social.

Simultaneously, with the influx of these “social mediators” also came the 1994 revision of the Argentinean constitution. In this revision, and for the first time in its history, the Argentinean state recognised the rights of its indigenous populations. At the heart of this new legislation is the option given to individuals and groups to be recognised by the state as indigenous. It then gives the right for indigenous groups to claim their ancestral land (Occhipinti, 2003).

These two factors, the “social mediators” and the new legislation, have had an important role in prompting social organisation among the rural indigenous communities of Jujuy. Cowan Ros (2007) argues that from the 1990s the formation of peasant-indigenous associations was triggered, and even imposed, by this new reality. He also asserts that even though their association was indeed important for achieving economic and social development, it was also a “requirement imposed on campesinos by the new social mediators in order to receive financial and technical assistance, and by the National State, to give them land titles” (Cowan Ros, 2007, p. 235, my translation). These arguments suggest that the process of social organisation of indigenous communities in highland Jujuy was not a spontaneous one, but rather driven by state requirements and “foreign” development actors. Obviously, one cannot determine what would have happened in the absence of these initiators of social mobilisation.
With that, the role of some of these actors has invoked some tensions within and between local social organisations in this region, as will be further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Problems aside, within a relatively short period of time between 1995 and 2000 four important civil society organisations, all of which are also second or third-degree organisations, were established in the highlands of Jujuy. In 1995 the association Warmis Sayajisunqo (Persevering Women, in Quechua) was founded by a former worker of OCLADE\(^{55}\) and the PSA,\(^{56}\) a native of the Puna, with the objective of having local people as the leaders of the organisation, in contrast to the many “foreign” técnicos working in the region. This organisation works on different aspects of development, including health and agriculture production. A year later, in 1996, the cooperative CAUQueVa\(^{57}\) was formed with the objective of improving the production and commercialisation of products of small producers from the Quebrada de Humahuaca. In 2000 the Red Kolla was created by rural indigenous communities from the Department of Yavi, in the northern part of the Puna. This organisation aims at revitalising the local Andean culture and at fighting for secure land-tenure. It is the only organisation in this group that has no técnicos, locals or others, involved in its activities (Cowan Ros, 2007). The fourth important organisation formed in this period was the Red Puna y Quebrada.

**The formation and consolidation of the Red Puna y Quebrada as a social organisation**

In November 1995, in the midst of social and economic crisis, six organisations interested in sharing their experiences of development in the Puna gathered in Humahuaca. These organisations demonstrated some diversity in terms of their work and composition. They included three NGOs – API,\(^{58}\) OCLADE and ICOS,\(^{59}\) a local cooperative,\(^{60}\) a governmental

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\(^{55}\) Obra Claretiana para el Desarrollo (Claretian Endeavour for Development) is a development NGO established in 1983 by a local clergyman for assisting communities in the Puna and the Quebrada de Humahuaca.

\(^{56}\) Programa Social Agropecuario (Agricultural Social Programme). A programme initiated in 1993 by the Secretariat of Agriculture (currently the Ministry of Agriculture) with the objective of assisting the production of small scale agriculture producers. This is the antecedent of the current Sub-secretariat of Family Agriculture.

\(^{57}\) Cooperativa Agropecuaria y Artesanal Unión Quebrada y Valles (Agricultural and Handicraft Cooperative Quebrada and Valleys Union).

\(^{58}\) Asociación para la Promoción Integral (Association for Integral Promotion). This NGO was formed by técnicos from the agroforestry development project of the German GTZ.

\(^{59}\) Instituto de Capacitación y Organización Social (Institution for Training and Social Organisation).
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institution – INTA\textsuperscript{61} and an international agency, the German Technical Cooperation – GTZ. Retrospectively it can be seen that in this meeting the cornerstone for formation of the Red Puna y Quebrada was laid.

This meeting also produced the founding document of the organisation – \textit{Puna, Promesa y Olvido} (Puna, Promise and Neglect). This document was further elaborated and published as a booklet in 1998 (Red Puna, 1998), following a general meeting of all the eleven organisations and institutions that comprised the Red Puna at that point. Even though many of the member organisations of 1998 were of urban and rural grassroots “base communities”, in quite a stark difference to the 1995 founding organisations, to a large extent the document still reflects the experiences and reflections of development practitioners. Be that as it may, the document provides a critical analysis of a multiplicity of problems facing the people of this particular territory, including environmental, productive, socioeconomic and political issues. The document also goes further in suggesting development possibilities, while emphasising the requirement for an active role to be carried out by local communities that need to be a driving force in this process, rather than passive recipient objects of development.

In this document it is argued that

The social programmes and projects that will also affect the Puna are designed in Buenos Aires, without any consultation or participation of the técnicos, the institutions and the grassroots organisations that know and live in the Puna (Red Puna, 1998, p. 9, my translation).

The organisations that put together this document also asserted that there was nothing novel about this poor approach to development;

Historically, the Puna lacked a comprehensive policy of development. This has not been changed: neither the province nor the nation have a proposition for socio-economic development for this region, especially for the rural poor who constitute the bulk of its inhabitants, who today are still migrating – farther and farther away – in search of work (Red Puna, 1998, p. 9, my translation).

Instead, the provincial and national governments were accused of having an inadequately fragmented and myopic approach to development. Projects may target some identified

\textsuperscript{60} Abra Pampa based \textit{Cooperativa Punha}.

\textsuperscript{61} Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (National Institute of Agricultural Technology).
problems, such as animal health or lack of grazing pasture, but there was no strategic plan that would include solving persistent structural impediments for development alongside investment in particular production related projects. With that, the authors of this document did not spare criticism of development actors in the region, including themselves, noting their own failure to articulate coherent propositions for development, and also their mutual mistrust and lack of coordination.

Adding to the above critical analysis and reflection, the document also addresses the local municipalities. Those are said to have an increasing importance in delivering development projects, especially in the more remote and isolated rural communities. However, some municipalities, on a par with the provincial government, “have a logic of clientelist operation and electioneering in the allocation of resources” (Red Puna, 1998, p. 10, my translation). This, they add, inevitably results in political clientelism and lack of transparency in using public funds. Such political culture hinders solidarity and horizontality, and thus prevents and defuses social organisation. Self-evidently, this cannot be an effective manner for achieving poverty alleviation and other development goals.

Notwithstanding these critiques of development in the Puna and of the counter-democratic local political culture, the authors of this document also note that they recognise that the governments get their legitimacy from being elected by the people and thus there is a need to work with them. The task of the NGOs, in this regard, should be assisting the communities to understand the roles and duties of governments and politicians, so that the communities could act in accordance to their policies and actions (Red Puna, 1998). In other words, the NGOs need to promote political awareness and provide tools for local communities to enable them to scrutinise politicians’ conduct.

The analysis presented in this signpost document can be easily classified as reformist, rather than revolutionist, or radical. However, it was sufficiently critical to cause INTA, the only state institution involved in the newly established space of development cooperation and discussion, to withdraw its participation. Within a relatively short period of time GTZ and ICOS finished their respective projects in the region and ceased their participation as well. In 1997 an internal conflict arose amid members of OCLADE, and between OCLADE and the Red Puna, especially around the wish of some técnicos of OCLADE to further democratise decision-making in the communities, in accordance with the main discourse of Red Puna. In opposition were the more conservative members of OCLADE, an NGO that stems from
within the ranks of the Catholic Church, who held a more paternalistic view of the relations their organisation should have with its “clients”. Thus, in 1998 OCLADE halted its participation in Red Puna. However, some técnicos broke ranks with it and stayed with Red Puna as independent professionals (Cowan Ros, 2003).

In 1996 this group of organisations met again. They approved the first version of Puna, Promesa y Olvido, and decided to invite more organisations to join their space of collaboration. They made a list of organisations they personally knew and started to systematically invite them to take part. This explains, to a large extent, why some communities and organisations were approached and subsequently entered the Red Puna, while many others did not. The space was open for all but there was no campaign for attracting organisations. Rather, work and personal acquaintances were the key. Thus, at the same time that some of the founding organisations left, as noted above for different reasons, more organisations, many with grassroots characteristics, responded positively to this initiative and joined in.

The Red Puna (2007) distinguishes between three distinct phases in the history of their organisation. According to them, the initial period of about two or three years was marked by overture and acquaintance between different organisations, while some joined in and others left this space. In 1998 there were already fifteen member organisations in the Red Puna. This period was then followed by a stage of consolidation, where much emphasis was directed, on the one hand, towards the intra-organisational dynamics, and, on the other hand, towards external institutions. A third phase then came into effect from the early 2000s, when the organisation had 35 member organisations, including some 1100 families from 60 different communities of the Puna and the Quebrade de Humahuaca.

The consolidation process of Red Puna as a social organisation is a very interesting case for discussing ontological and epistemological approaches for theorising and analysing civil society. The first phase and the transition into the second are of particular importance. Initially, the space from which the Red Puna emerged was created primarily by NGOs and a development oriented state institution (INTA). A strict interpretation of Salamon and Anheier’s (1992, 1997) ontological structural-operational definition of the third sector may see the involvement of such public institution as “disqualifying” this space as being part of the third sector. However, it could be argued that at that stage it was only a space for inter-organisational collaboration and not an organisation in itself (at that point, for instance, there
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were no institutionalisation or governance procedures in place). Be that as it may, an epistemological examination of this process is much more telling. From a “space” of diverse organisations, with their own professional expertise, structures and procedures, emerged a grassroots movement of indigenous people, most of whom were campesinos. This experience is strong evidence for the fluidity of civil society (Corry, 2010), and it epitomises the limitation of the ontological approach for examining temporal changes in organisational trajectories.

As the organisation grew during the second phase to include more “base organisations”, encompassing increasingly greater geographic territory, changes were made in order to accommodate both increasing number of members and their diversity. By the turn of the millennium the Red Puna came to include associations of neighbours, youth and artisans, as well as sport clubs and community kitchens. Some of these organisations predated the Red Puna and some were formed in order to incorporate into this second-tier organisation (Pelicano and de la Cuétara, 2006).

During 2001 the ongoing economic crisis in Argentina reached a climax point. In December of that year the country defaulted on its obligations to its international lenders and sunk into a severe political, economic and social crisis. In order to confront the escalating rate of unemployment and poverty the government initiated some social plans. One of the most notable plans was the Programa Jefas y Jefes de Hogares Desempleados (Programme for Unemployed Female and Male Heads of Households), initiated in January 2002. This plan offered 150 pesos a month for limited employment in different areas and projects, ranging from construction to community work (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2007). Importantly, this plan was delivered through and managed by local municipalities. According to a prominent Red Puna activist, this particular plan was utilised to neutralise social mobilisation and increase political patronage, an argument also supported in the published literature (for example Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2007). Thus, economic and social crises under the more orthodox neoliberal context prompted the emergence and proliferation of social movements, but when the government offered at least some safety measures, albeit concurrently with the persistence of neoliberalism, autonomous social movements were undermined and participation in them declined.

The economic crisis of the early 2000s and the subsequent social intervention mark the beginning of a fourth phase in the history of Red Puna. This phase is characterised by a
decline in the number of “base organisations” and people participating in the space of the Red Puna. An activist of the Red Puna noted that

The “Plan Jefe” was implemented by the municipalities and there it clashed with the social organisations… We in the Red fought for some plans to allow people to continue improving their production and receive that money as a contribution… But our struggle was in vain, because many people then left the Red for the municipality and this broke the organisation to a great extent (Marcela, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

Even though the decline in participation in the Red Puna is clearly evident, it is not entirely clear exactly when this withdrawal of organisation took place. On the one hand, the quote above cites a particular social plan as a signpost for the observed decline, while on the other hand Graciela Pelicano and Osvaldo de la Cuétara (2006) claim that according to data of the Red Puna itself, in April 2004 there were 39 member organisations in the Red Puna. A possible explanation for this disparity may be that at times it is not entirely clear if a “base community” is still active in the organisation or not. Participation often diminishes gradually, and therefore an organisation might still be deemed active when in effect it is only partially operational as part of the Red Puna or not at all. Be that as it may, currently there are “only” about 28 member organisations.

Conclusions

The formation and consolidation of current peasant movements in Argentina, including the two under focus here – MOCASE-VC and Red Puna – are processes that are directly linked to political and economic doctrines. They are also particular manifestations of a wider trend of events, namely the return of democracy, neoliberal economic restructuring and the re-emergence of civil society as an important agent for delivering social and material assistance, but also as a space for antagonism, protest and struggle for previously hidden populations. The space of civil society, however, is by no means homogenous. It uncomfortably accommodates both conservative and progressive associations, and different organisations that might be at odds with each other. But it is often also a space of cooperation, alliance and solidarity over different scales and geographies. An example for that is MOCASE-VC and Red Puna both being third-tier organisations and also partaking in national and transnational movements (MNCI and La Vía Campesina, respectively), which make them part of a global civil society.
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The formation and consolidation of the two case-study organisations also indicate a number of important and interesting features of recent and current mobilisation in the Argentinean countryside. One such feature is merely the organisation of the peasantry and the transformation of this subordinated sector into a power to be reckoned with. Another important feature is the nature of the involvement of NGOs and professional técnicos in the creation of grassroots peasant movements. They have had an integral role not only in the formation of the two organisations under examination here, but also in their subsequent years of consolidation and operation. Yet another interesting feature is the involvement of the Catholic Church in rural organisation and development work, historically and contemporarily, which must be examined with regard to the notion of autonomy, primarily from the state but also from other hegemonic institutions.

The history of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is also useful for understanding not only the conditions that facilitate such social mobilisation, but also the difficulties, disputes and challenges that such organisations may face. It is the relatively long trajectory of these two organisations, which stretches through cyclical political and economic changes, that makes their experiences of particular value.
CHAPTER SEVEN: Challenges for Peasant Life in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

PART III

Chapter Seven

Challenges for Peasant Life in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

Introduction

In the previous chapter I addressed the conditions that led to grassroots mobilisation in the countryside of Santiago del Estero and highland Jujuy, and the processes through which the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna y Quebrada were formed and consolidated. These processes were rooted in the sweeping political and economic reforms that were implemented in Argentina during the late 1980s and into the 1990s; reforms that, on the one hand, provided space and freedom for the re-emergence of civil society, while, on the other hand, adversely affected peasant livelihoods. These organisations have by now a long trajectory of struggle and development activities. This chapter moves on from the first research objective to the second, which seeks to gain in-depth understanding of research participants’ experiences and realities. In order to achieve this objective, in this chapter I will analyse the array of challenges campesino-indigenous communities are currently facing in the study areas –
Santiago del Estero and highland Jujuy. This temporal analysis will link the historical narratives, challenges and experiences with the more recent ones. These experiences and challenges, along with their political analysis, are keystones in the discourses and activities of Red Puna and MOCASE-VC, which reflect an integral approach to development and a critique of the logic of the prevailing political economy and its inherently unequal power structures. The activities of both organisations reflect their in-depth analysis of their marginalisation as social subjects and as agriculture producers. Consequently, this analysis has been translated into a comprehensive discourse and praxis of development.

My intention in this chapter is to portray the livelihood challenges as they were identified by research participants. Without any presumptions, I do not speak for these organisations; but instead my aim is to give them voice and agency within this study. Moreover, due to the limited scope of this study, some challenges, most notably securing land-tenure and improving production and commercialisation, will receive more attention than others, such as improving health and education, which could form a basis to further research projects. The discussion of the array of challenges to peasant life leads to the analysis of the aims and objectives of the current campesino struggle in those territories. Once the challenges are clarified, the logic of the struggle becomes much more comprehensible, and this is presented in the latter part of this chapter.

In the following discussion the livelihood challenges are addressed separately for Santiago del Estero and highland Jujuy, while the section on the struggle’s aims and objectives is integrated. This structure is useful for developing more context specific narratives of current challenges to peasant lives in the two different territories, while also portraying and linking the many shared experiences of communities in the two research areas. Securing land-tenure, the most symbolic aspect of many peasant struggles across time and space, is an obvious commonality, and so are the challenges of improving production and commercialisation. Of much importance are also the political challenges associated with the neoliberal political economic order. While members of both organisations are subjected to it, its manifestations are not entirely the same in these territories, nor are they completely different. In Santiago del Estero the most evident and immediate threat to peasant communities is the intensive modern agriculture production, with its hunger for land and use of biotechnologies and agrochemicals; whereas in the cold and arid highlands of Jujuy it is the mining industry that is challenging agriculture production and settlement of land claims. Notwithstanding the different contexts embedded in these livelihood challenges, both organisations articulate a
similar critical analysis of their marginalised position and a similar aim to increase standards of living through an integral model of development that strives for creating a meaningful social change by adhering to principles of food sovereignty and radical democracy.

**Challenges for peasant life in Santiago del Estero**

The process of land accumulation is not new to Argentina but it used to be more evidently manifested in the humid Pampa (*Pampa húmeda*) region of central Argentina than in other parts of the country. In the relatively arid province of Santiago del Estero arable land was not abundant and without irrigation the economic prospects of agriculture production has been somewhat limited. However, apart from technological changes, this province had also experienced a climatic change where parts of the province became substantially more humid. Coupled together, these factors have resulted in greater demand for land in the province, land that previously could not be exploited for large scale commercial farming of cash-crops. Therefore, starting in the 1970s but increasingly evident from the 1980s, tenure of arable land has become a central area of contestation and dispute in the province, as well as in other neighbouring provinces.

In Argentina there are peasant movements in different parts of the country but the challenges they face are not always the same. In the case of the Province of Santiago del Estero the principle challenge of the peasantry is securing land-tenure. In this province laws of inheritance and subdivision of land were not thoroughly constituted or imposed and that caused problems of land tenure over passing generations. This has subsequently created the current situation where many *campesinos* live on the land where their families have lived for decades but for which they do not have legal titles.

Thus, it is not surprising that when research participants were asked what are the main challenges they face, “land” was mentioned by virtually all of them. The struggle for land is not only the main driving force behind the formation of peasant movements in the province but also has a cultural meaning associated with it;

> the most serious challenge that we have is to defend the land. And defending the land means defending life, the life of our Pachamama, because the land is our mother (Marcos, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.2.2010).
However, the issue of land-tenure is also the most tangible. Forced evictions of peasant families off their land, bulldozers clearing native forest and people’s homes, and the advancement of the “agriculture frontier” with its associated fences, monoculture of soybeans and agrochemicals, are all vivid manifestations of threats to the livelihoods of *campesino* families. These threats are very real and visible, and hence their tangibility.

Notwithstanding the paramount importance of securing land tenure to *campesino* families, it is clear to many *campesinos* that their struggle must expand beyond the land. As a MOCASE-VC member explained:

> the MOCASE was born as an organisation for the defence of the land. After that it went growing. Well... what do we do if we have land and we have no water? Then it started to be done... talking about water. What do we do if we do not produce? What do we do if we produce and we have no health? What do we do if we do not have... if we have everything but we do not have the consciousness of producing collectively? That is why there are very important instances in the MOCASE (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010).

This realisation of the multiplicity of challenges that are embedded in the realities of the *campesinos*, and hence must be incorporated in their struggle for a better life, is an important turning point in this struggle. The MOCASE-VC in particular is working on different issues simultaneously, and it is clearly reflected in its organisational structure of working in secretariats.  

Moreover, the secretariats not only reflect the integral approach the MOCASE-VC has towards its struggle, but they also correspond to the challenges the *campesinos* are facing in Santiago del Estero. Thus, after the issue of land, come challenges associated with production and commercialisation. During initial interviews in the field it became clear that there are several such challenges of considerable significance, and hence the attention awarded to them throughout the fieldwork. For this reason these challenges are worthy of some detailed examination. The rationale behind the particular emphasis on issues of production and commercialisation in this research is embedded in my attempt to not only understand and analyse the realities of the *campesinos* in Santiago del Estero, but also to relate their struggle to other peasant struggles and to the wider neoliberal economic framework that affect their lives.

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62 The five secretariats of the MOCASE-VC are: (1) land, (2) production and commercialisation, (3) formation and youth, (4) communication and (5) health.
It was clear from early on while in the field that problems of production and commercialisation are both manifold and very important to research participants. While some participants found it difficult to discuss the more theoretical aspects regarding peasant mobilisation and the internal and external politics of their movement, when the issue of agriculture production was discussed all found it much easier to engage with. However, unlike the issue of land-tenure, problems of production and commercialisation are not eminent sources of mobilisation. Rather, they are perhaps the most daily and persistent challenges all campesinos face.

Starting with challenges associated with peasant production in this province, a very prominent problem, or challenge, is in fact a derivative of the issue of land. As one participant asserted:

the most severe challenge is that if we want to be free we must begin to produce food, produce our own food… And one of the most serious challenges for this is that the spaces and the land [campesinos have] are very small spaces that do not allow the development of the family, as a natural development (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

An important notion here is the stipulation of freedom on the ability to produce one’s own food, to be non-dependent. However, of even more importance here is the loss of land that in addition to its production related ramifications also acts as an impediment for the campesinos’ social reproduction. Traditionally, campesino families cultivate a small and private parcel of land while their animals graze freely in the forest, which is treated as a common good, alongside the herds of neighbouring families. The aggressive advancement of the “agriculture frontier” has encroached on these commons, in some parts of the province more than in others, to a point where campesinos cannot sustain the herds their families once had, let alone the natural reproduction of the family. If space constraints do not allow for social reproduction of the peasantry, then a process of depeasantisation along the Disappearance Thesis, where peasants become proletariats (Araghi, 1995) is inescapable.

Although the importance of land cannot be over emphasised, the MOCASE-VC is working towards improving production with what is at hand. The most serious challenge that was expressed by virtually all research participants is the harsh climatic conditions in the province with low levels of precipitation and the fact that it rains only during the summer months. Moreover, according to research participants, the occurrence of droughts in recent years has had severe adverse impact on their livelihoods. In spite of that, my time in the field was
blessed with large quantities of rainfall, which caused many participants to emphasise the fact that the abundance of water I saw was both temporal and increasingly rare. In short, scarcity of water is the main challenge for enhancing peasant production in Santiago del Estero. As a senior MOCASE-VC member commented, “the only problem we have [for production] is that sometimes it does not rain and the fruit of the land cannot be harvested, because of the drought” (Belén, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 27.3.2010).

Even during years of average rainfall, water is scarce and thus limits agriculture production. In the parts of the province where the fieldwork for this study was conducted, one of the main agriculture operations of campesinos is goat rearing. Although goats are well suited to the climatic conditions of the area, the rainfall regime still poses a great challenge. A regular member of the secretariat of production and commercialisation explained that here in winter it rains absolutely nothing. Then, the pasture dies out; the food for the goat runs out; for not having food it does not produce milk; for not producing milk we cannot make cheese; we cannot use this structure [cheese factory] if we do not have milk. One of the challenges is how we can make pasture grow so that the goat would have milk throughout the year (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010).

The cheese factory was recently built by the Spanish NGO Engineering Without Borders (Ingieniería Sin Fronteras), to give some campesino families the opportunity to add value to their goat milk, which in the absence of electricity cannot be refrigerated and stored. However, milk production is low due to a lack of good pasture year round, and thus the factory sits idle for long periods of time.

The problem of water, however, is not merely a climatic one. Annual rainfall levels range from 500mm in the western parts of the province to 750mm in eastern parts and overall the predominant climate is sub-tropical (de Dios, 2006a). These are by no means conditions that do not allow for year-round agriculture. Instead, what is required is more and improved water management infrastructure that would enable storage and diversion of water from areas and times of abundance to those of stress. Ironically, while rainy years and irrigation infrastructure increase the value and productivity of land, which could benefit peasant production, they also attract commercial agribusiness. This, in turn, may result in intensified land conflicts and pressure on campesinos.

This pressure is twofold. One is the issue of land and the other aspect is related to the effects that modern intensive agriculture practices have on campesinos’ livelihoods. This refers not
only to the geographical spread of intensive farming, but also to its reliance on controversial biotechnology and agrochemicals that affect the *campesino* production. A MOCASE-VC member from the Central of Quimilí explains:

a greater challenge that we have is to produce, and of great concern to us is the issue of transgenic crops that make you fail year after year, and one can denounce [it to the police but] the judiciary does nothing, only reacts for the system, for the agro-exporting model, which is installed for about 20 years here in the area where we live, which is an area that for many years was not being taken into account because [soils] were not fertile. But since these new genetically modified seeds [arrived] soils are fertile, and today they come for territory, for the land, and they don't care about the disasters they cause, like knocking down millions of hectares of woods, forest, native forest. And that is concerning because we know that there will be pollution, we know that these are poisons what these crops require, and we know that if these are poisons – poisons kill. Not only it is worrying for the contamination of our crops but also it is an assault on health, and well, the loss of biodiversity… it causes concerns about the health of people and the disappearance of nature (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

In only a few sentences this *campesino*-turned-activist captured much of the essence of the *campesinos*’ struggle in Santiago del Estero, beyond the issue of land-tenure. That is, the advancement of the “agriculture frontier” into previously marginal land, its severe consequences for local people and the protection the agribusiness sector has from the authorities. Large fields of genetically modified Roundup Ready (RR) soybeans are often being sprayed with herbicides by airplanes. In some parts of the province *campesinos*, as well as small-town residents, live in great proximity to such fields and thus are affected by residues of agrochemicals that are being sprayed from the air. Not only does the wind often carry the agrochemicals onto neighbouring *campesinos*’ fields destroying crops; there are also testimonies of airplanes spraying houses directly. Since many countryside dwellers collect rain water from their rooftops, agrochemicals make their way into drinking water deposits, contaminating them. Furthermore, there are primary schools completely surrounded by fields of soybeans and the children who attend them drink water that was collected from the roof. There are regulations in place that prohibit spraying from the air in proximity to people’s houses; but as noted above the authorities do not act to enforce them. This reality in Santiago del Estero is a vivid example of the economic, social and environmental costs associated with modern biotechnology and its current implementation, as described by Newell (2009) and Pengue (2005).
Another challenge for improving agriculture production is the lack of available credit for campesinos. A MOCASE-VC activist that also works on issues of production and commercialisation as “técnica” (non-peasant expert) elucidated that “today there are no credit lines for campesinos… you have no possibility to get credit, you have no possibility to get means of production, there is no way for getting tractors, there is no way for getting draft animals…” (Alicia, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 25.2.2010). Obtaining credit is often a great challenge for rural dwellers in the South that lack collateral, and when such credit is available it is often at a usurious rate of interest that corresponds with the risk associated in such loans (Norton, 2004). From a social standpoint this is a market failure and thus the intervention of the government is required. However, the neoliberal restructuring of many Latin American countries dictated a rollback of national governments and hence major cutbacks of public social expenditure (Kay, 2004). In spite of that, there are projects of rural development in Argentina. A MOCASE-VC activist explained, however, that although there are some programmes in the province, supposedly aiming at assisting campesinos, there are conditions in place. For example, a prerequisite for participating in these programmes is that recipients have legal land title. This is, of course, at the heart of the campesinos’ struggle. In some programmes credit is offered through private banks and these not only require borrowers to have some collateral but also land titles. Again, the issue of land tenure and agrarian reform comes to the forefront as an impediment for economic development of campesino production.

Challenges of commercialisation are also important for improving campesinos’ standards of living. As with problems of production, challenges of improving the ability of campesinos to sell their products were addressed by research participants from each of the three peasant movements (unequally) represented in this study. The president of the “historic” MOCASE explained that, due to poor road conditions, many campesinos who do not live in proximity to an urban centre are forced to rely on traders that travel into the countryside in order to buy young goats directly from campesinos’ homes. The animals are most valuable within a few weeks of birth, depreciating significantly thereafter. Therefore, those traders capitalise on the reality that it is difficult for campesinos to transport and sell their animals on the market. Under these circumstances campesinos have very little bargaining power. While conducting research in the far north of the province, in a community that belongs to the MOCASE-VC’s Central of Las Lomitas (see CCPN on Map 8.1, page 207), about 90 kilometres from the nearest main town, I witnessed firsthand such exchange. Traders from a neighbouring

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63 MOCASE, MOCSE-VC, Mesa de Tierra.
province arrived with a pick-up truck looking to buy young animals. My host explained they have little choice and, despite getting less than the market value, it is still better than selling nothing.

The example above reflects a complexity of issues that involve poor infrastructure, lack of financial means to reach the market (even where roads are better) and the importance of timely marketing of agriculture goods. These challenges disadvantage campesinos, and may even lead to their exploitation by more resourceful businessmen. Therefore, a MOCASE-VC member asserted that:

the challenges [for commercialisation] are to remove the intermediary, to be doing the production ourselves and be able to market more directly, instead of someone that would come to you, buy from you and then resell your product for a better price, so that the intermediary receives all the profit (Bernardo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.3.2010).

In other words, the challenge is to obtain better conditions for market access so that the intermediaries are either non-existent or have less bargaining power.

Sheila Page and Rachel Slater (2003) examined how small producers could better participate in the global food system. Building on Page (2003), they grouped into four categories the different obstacles small producers face for having better market access for their products: (1) understanding of market operations; (2) organisational aspects of production; (3) transport and communication, and (4) an adequate policy framework. Although all four categories are very important, it is mainly the first category, which includes aspects regarding knowledge of markets and knowing buyers and tastes that is more obtainable for peasant producers. That is, peasants may need assistance in developing their familiarity with the market but it would require relatively inexpensive assistance. In contrast, the components of the other three categories depend to a greater extent on exogenous actors. Aspects such as availability of credit and capital (category 2), transport and communication infrastructure (category 3) and a sound legal framework (category 4) are undoubtedly important; but marginalised peasants would find it difficult to either create or transform them for their own benefit.

Campesinos in Santiago del Estero indeed lack many of the required conditions for market access according to Page (2003), even if only the local market is concerned. One of the main obstacles for reaching the market according to research participants is the bad conditions of roads in the province. The importance of having roads in adequate condition cannot be over
emphasised when discussing campesinos’ access to the market, and subsequently their prospects for economic development. Investment in roads reduces significantly transaction costs and enhances marketing opportunities for agriculture producers (Binswanger, Khandker and Rosenzweig, 1993; Olsson, 2009). However, roads are only one factor affecting development. Economic and social benefits that may accrue from investing in roads may not fully materialise if other factors, such as adequate and affordable transport services, do not follow (Van De Walle, 2002).

Many campesino communities in Santiago del Estero are connected to a main tarred or gravel road by dirt roads. While tarred and gravel roads are passable in most weather conditions and thus allow better and more reliable links to the market, dirt roads do not offer such continuous accessibility and are often suitable only for trucks and off-road vehicles. My weeks in the field were considerably wet and rains often cut off communities until roads are dry again, and depending on the intensity of the rain it could persist for a few days at a time. For research purposes that meant being constantly aware of the weather forecast, knowing that plans must be altered if it rains. For trade and many other needs this situation poses a real challenge. For example, production in the cheese factory mentioned above is also affected by road conditions. While staying with the community where the factory is located I was not able to watch any cheese production. This was partially because milk production is not constant, but also because roads were impassable due to the considerable rainfall, which meant that the cheese makers could not bring their milk and produce, even though they all live in relative proximity. Since they have no refrigeration facilities and summer months’ temperatures are very high, the milk cannot be stored and thus cheese production will be lost. This example demonstrates that road conditions are not only important for accessing the market but also for production itself. Roads are also important for children to attend school and for reaching emergency services, among many other necessities. Furthermore, research participants noted that during the long dry season roads become covered with deep dust powder due to the geological characteristics of the soil and the lack of moisture, and that makes passage difficult as well, particularly since many rely on light motorcycles for transport.

Another important impediment for the commercialisation of peasant products could be linked to Page’s (2003) fourth category that includes policy frameworks. Commercialising processed food items requires complying with and obtaining certification from different
Food poisoning is a serious matter and having such regulations in place is not in itself inappropriate. However, it is not easy for campesinos to obtain certification for their products giving the conditions they work in and therefore it is a real obstacle.

Another problem that was mentioned in interviews by participants from both MOCASE organisations is about the insufficient slaughterhouse facilities. While there are several slaughterhouses for large animal (bovines) in the province, there is only one that is permitted to carnage small farm animals (goats, sheep, etc.). This slaughterhouse is located in Villa Ojo de Agua, deep in the south of the province, only a short distance from the neighbouring Córdoba Province. That means transportation costs are prohibitive for campesinos, who mostly subsist from herds of small farm animals. Therefore, if campesinos want to process the meat of these animals, as they do, they cannot possibly obtain the required certifications.

Notwithstanding the challenges of commercialisation, the main problem is improving production of agriculture goods. In the case of the MOCASE-VC, processing capacity of foodstuffs is greater than the raw materials that can be obtained, and so is the demand for these products. Therefore, there is a real opportunity for improving the economic wellbeing of at least some campesino families, and of the organisation itself (from each item sold collectively a portion goes to the organisation), if production is improved.

The other categories of challenges, beyond land and production and commercialisation, in accordance to the MOCASE-VC’s secretariats, received much less attention while researching in the field. That was not because they are less important, but rather for the limited scope of this study. Nonetheless, they are worthwhile mentioning. The next category of challenges includes “formation” and youth. Formación (formation) could also be translated into English as training or education, but “education” is perceived as a top-down way of transmitting knowledge. Instead, an objective of the movement, which is indeed also a challenge, is to form a social, cultural and political consciousness among campesinos in a collaborative and non-authoritative way.

With all the effort and resources invested in the promotion of consciousness, there are nevertheless still campesinos who do not take part in any organisation. When I asked a

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64 For selling processed food items it is required to obtain RNE (registro nacional de establecimientos - national register of establishments) and RNPA (registro nacional de productos alimenticios - National register of foodstuffs).
member of the MOCASE-VC why there are campesinos that are not members of any peasant organisation he explained that

yes, there are some that are not members of the MOCASE, which are not inside the organisation, which are not organised like this… because it is hard for them, it is hard for them to participate, to create conscience, to form [their social conscience]. It is hard for them because they have experienced many years of this… for years, for 500 years that the imperialism, the capitalism, has made us believe… to divide, to divide us in order to enable them to have more… so they could have a leading position. Because if we are divided we have no force (Marcos, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.2.2010).

Other research participants explained that some campesinos do not join the organised struggle because they are afraid of retribution from their patron, while others simply do not believe the land is theirs. Therefore, changing the effects of generations of oppression and subjugation is a real challenge, and the younger generation is of course at the centre of attention. The continuity of the struggle is to a great extent dependent on forming consciousness among the youth.

Although the MOCASE-VC’s discourse prefers the term “formation” over “education”, formal education poses some real challenges as well. Many research participants expressed much discontent with the public education system, mainly regarding primary education. As one research participant asserted,

... we want a cultural education, that our culture will return, our identity, that what we are doing as MOCASE will be known. Because the schools sometimes teach children what the “great ones” of capitalism are doing, they teach them much of that, no? They do not teach them about the life of the people, of the indigenous people, how they have lived in those days (Marcos, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.2.2010).

Other participants commented that the government allocates teachers to rural schools and those are usually not from a campesino background, and in some cases they undermine the struggle of the campesinos and the actions of their organisations. Even in less extreme cases, relevant information for young campesino children, both theoretical and practical, is not taught in public schools. Modern intensive agriculture practices of mechanisation and chemical inputs, however, are taught, according to some participants.

Communication is the next category of challenges, to which the organisation has a dedicated secretariat. The lagging infrastructure of communication technology in many parts of the province poses challenges of coordination and mobilisation. The ability to react in a timely
manner against attempts of evictions or illegal deforestation is highly important. Although modern communication technology is making such tasks much simpler than before, it remains a challenge. For the MOCASE-VC another aspect of communication is maintaining its national and international partnerships, which enable this organisation to be an integral part of a global civil society.

Health is the last category of challenges. Health services in the province, and particularly in its more remote parts, are very meagre. In a focus group discussion in a remote community in the north of the province, participants cynically commented that one needs to get sick only during attendance hours of the nearest clinic, which have neither adequately trained staff nor equipment anyhow; otherwise they would not receive even the very limited assistance this clinic can offer. In cases of emergency this poses real danger. The bad road conditions in the province, as discussed above, come to the forefront once again when health services are considered, reaffirming the importance of having an adequate transportation infrastructure. Beyond medical services, perhaps the most infamous health problem in the province is the high rates of Chagas’ disease. Many campesino families are affected by this fatal disease, and the primary transmitters of this disease are insects that carry the parasite causing the disease and that hide in cracks in walls and ceilings of the campesinos’ traditional adobe houses, known as “ranchos”.

Thus far in this chapter I have discussed the manifold challenges facing campesinos in Santiago del Estero, linking and organising them in accordance to the MOCASE-VC’s five secretariats. In the following part of this chapter I will address some of the challenges for campesino livelihoods in the highlands of Jujuy. In spite of some differences, I hope to show that most challenges are overwhelmingly similar.

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65 Chagas’ disease is a tropical parasitic disease affecting about 18 million people in Latin America. There are about 300,000 new cases annually, and approximately 50,000 people die as a result of the disease each year. The disease is caused by a parasite (Trypanosoma cruzi) transmitted mainly through the feces of blood- sucking triatomine bugs (but also through blood transfusions, organ transplantation, congenital transmission and oral transmission). The highest rate of infection is during childhood. At its chronic stage the disease affects the digestive and nervous systems but more often it affects the heart. The disease is incurable in its chronic stage but not all individuals will develop life threatening conditions (Bestetti and Cardinalli-Neto, 2008; WHO, 2002).
**Challenges for Peasant Life in highland Jujuy**

In recent decades there has been a notable rural-to-urban migration in highland Jujuy. Although much of this migration has been into local urban centres, it still reflects a socio-economic crisis in the countryside. Among the reasons accredited for this phenomenon are rural unemployment and lack of education services (Sica, Bovi and Mallagray, 2006). This depletion of rural communities, and particularly of young adults and families, is both a result of challenges to peasant and rural life and a further challenge in itself. Thus, many different types of challenges are present, and these could be classified, arranged or conceptualised in various ways; nevertheless they are more often than not interconnected.

The agrarian sector is important to Jujuy’s economy but mainly due to the agribusiness of the lowlands. The campesino sector, in contrast, is notable in terms of its proportion of the total farming units; but it accounts for a marginal part of agricultural land (as was discussed in Chapter 4). In the highlands the prevalence of “type 3” small producers is most significant. However, this eco-region is the most inhospitable for farming and hence there is less pressure from agribusiness, which means less confrontational contestation of land tenure.

The problem of land-tenure in the highlands of Jujuy is historic, and has been ongoing for centuries. Therefore, even though at present the Red Puna does not have a Working Area (Área de Trabajo) dedicated to land, as it used to have in the past, securing land-tenure is still a challenge for campesino communities and a much discussed matter. Since the 1994 constitutional change, legally organised and state-recognised indigenous communities are able to claim a communal land title for their ancestral territory. Unlike indigenous communities in Santiago del Estero, the Puna and Quebrada of Jujuy have historically had a stable and settled population, which arguably may have contributed to faster and more widespread recognition of its indigeneity. An activist of the Red Puna asserted that

> the problem [of land] is that historically the communities have been pre-existing to the state, including Argentina, and until today the complete return of the titles, [of] lands, has not been achieved. Then, as time goes by, there is always some law, there is something that always blocks it. First that there was no formalised community and the state requested that, and [titles] could not be [obtained]. Later, the configuration of communities was achieved, juridical personalities were obtained… that step was accomplished, then another step, and so on… Therefore,

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66 The equivalent of the secretariats of the MOCASE-VC.

67 Provincial politics is another factor that may affect this process of recognition.
the devolution or handover [of land] has not been attained (Manuela, Red Puna, interviewed 18.1.2011).

This statement emphasises the notion that indigeneity is linked to recognition of precedence to the modern state which entails a right of ownership over ancestral land. This, in turn, commands recognition from the state itself. Therefore, legal association of rural communities has been widely accomplished; but notwithstanding, not all communities have received the long awaited land titles.

It is important to note that communal land titles have been granted to many communities and some are still in the process of obtaining them; but that does not mean this issue can be put to rest – far from it. In some instances, for example, communal titles were issued but not in accordance with what the community had demanded. An activist explained what has happened in her community:

for us, as the community of Suripujio, we were given [the title], for example, but what have they done to us? We applaud them, we gave asado to all those people that came to hand it over, but what happened? When they gave us the title, we signed it – the president… the vice president – and later we got a small map, saying that two sections were urban, and these are the sections where we live in. Urban how? That means this belongs to the government [and] that this will never be given to us (Raquel, Red Puna, interviewed 16.1.2011).

The designation of the village as “urban zone” may have different meanings. It could allow the government to tax properties or affect local level planning and decision making, or it could be linked to the following experience of another community in the same area. According to a member of this community,

when the land title was given to us, the part of the mountain was not handed over. We did the surveying… we identified the geographical points where the community was going to manage. We have juridical personality, we have a decree, all of that, and we did just that and no… Later, when they gave it to us, we saw the land title, it wasn’t there; the part of the mountain was missing. It is the government that did that to this area. This is what we are fighting for now, that they will give us the area of the mountain. And, well, according to what people say, what they want to do now, let’s say, a strategy of theirs, saying that electricity will reach the village, the community… but then the other plan of the government is to use the same network, the electrical grid, for working with the mining companies, to work on the mountain (Leonel, Red Puna, interviewed 25.1.2011).
Again, the community complied with all the legal requirements and made a claim for its ancestral communal land. This time, however, it was the higher part of the mountain that was tampered with. So if land in this region is not particularly attractive for agribusiness and communities have successfully complied with all state requirements, why is land-tenure still an unresolved matter? Indeed, the second example provides a clear answer to this question. As with the first example, land-tenure in the region has been threatened by the mining industry, which exerts its political power to influence the process of returning land to rural communities.

Thus, some communities have managed to obtain land titles while some have not. According to an activist of the organisation, this was very much influenced by the existence of locations already explored for minerals. Once a communal land title is granted, a prospective mining company must enter in negotiation with the community, which is now protected by law. By not granting titles or altering land claims and thus maintaining land as public, the provincial government assists the mining industry. Another research participant noted that some people in his community hold private land titles and some do not (even though the community has a juridical personality as an indigenous community). Currently his community does not hold a communal land title but ostensibly this does not pose an immediate threat. He then added that, theoretically, if a mineral deposit is found there, the government would claim ownership over this land. Indeed, current legislation regarding indigenous land claims, and importantly also growing public recognition, assist indigenous communities in reclaiming land. But nevertheless, it is still a challenge that could evolve into a much greater threat to livelihoods of rural indigenous communities.

In places where families hold private land titles it could be easier for a prospective mining company to turn things its own way. Moreover, many of the private titles are under names of deceased people and their families often cannot find the required economic means to change it through the courts. Similar to Santiago del Estero and to other places around the world, indigenous communities in the highlands of Jujuy struggle for communal titles because it gives them greater protection, but also because it better resonates epistemologically with their worldview.

The mining industry is not only affecting the issue of land titles by the provincial government, but it also has ramification on one of the challenges identified by the Red Puna as key in its struggle for sustainable and integral rural development – production and
commercialisation. This constitutes an important Working Area of the organisation and many resources, human and financial, are directed towards progressing on this front. Before progressing to the numerous challenges for improving campesino production and commercialisation I would like to note that the livelihood threat presented by the mining industry is somewhat indirect. An activist of Red Puna explains this point, also with reference to other parts of the country, including the lowlands of Jujuy and Santiago del Estero where the main threat to campesino livelihoods is agribusiness:

The agro-exporting model, when they violently take a thousand hectares of land, and in those thousand hectares live some thirty families, but I don’t know how much labour is employed in those thousand hectares [when in the hands of agribusiness]; not these thirty [now] unoccupied families. These families don’t exist – they just leave. Mining is much more subtle. That is, it’s not going to sit in your house, it won’t come to knock down your house. It’s much more subtle. It goes to a mountain and rips it apart, where you aren’t present. In some cases it may be that there is a single house [up there]… but it isn’t that aggressive – more subtle. And the other thing is that it generates jobs; for example 3000-4000 pesos a month. For people that is a lot of money. So, when one comes to discuss it, internally, inside the community, this generates a conflict – mining yes; mining no. Because also there is no other alternative. What exists, the productive part, livestock or agricultural, is less in terms of income compared to what a mining company can offer. Then there is a disagreement, a debate (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Moreover, mining requires water, a very scarce and thus valuable resource in this arid region. The mines are usually located upstream from campesinos’ fields or grazing grounds and that entails greater pressure over water resources, as well as pollution from discharges from the mines. The environmental costs of mining, including air and water pollution, are well known in the region, but in spite of much resistance, as this activist notes, there is no consensus among rural indigenous communities regarding this issue.

The matter is not about the mere existence of mines. The two main mining complexes in the province have operated since the 1930s, and one of them particularly, Mina de Aguilar, receives quite a wide social legitimisation. Therefore, the same activist concluded,

[campesinos] do not clearly identify the mining industry as the enemy. But little by little it changes, awareness is being formed, in Abra Pampa, gradually

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68 The other mine, Pirquitas, used to be a close-pit mine but since about 20 years ago it operates as open-pit, which entails greater environmental pollution and hence is subject to more criticism and discontent.

69 Metal Huasi, a lead smelter, was in operation in this town for about 35 years, processing lead from the Pirquitas mine. Even though it was closed in the late 1980s, it has caused serious contamination and lingering health hazard to local residents, also due to the untreated waste that was left behind (Dulitzky et al., 2009).
awareness is formed. And this is good. Because neither can we lose the fight easily… Why must it be us who they continue to take [land] from? They stole it from us 500 years ago… and also that global politics and market that continue to plunder your land… it seems to me that there is a serious impunity there. Because they continue to ravage the poor, [and] it seems to me that this is a very feral capitalism (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Interestingly, and possibly due to the long history of mining in Jujuy, most research participants did not pay much attention to the fact that currently most of the mining companies are foreign MNCs. Some did protest, however, that most of the revenue leaves the region and that they, who bear the environmental impacts, should at least gain more from the industry. Thus, the similarities between the mining industry and agribusiness are greater than they may appear prime facie, particularly their connection to the neoliberal global market.

Mining aside, campesinos in this region face many other livelihood challenges. Many research participants noted that nowadays it is virtually impossible to live relying solely on one’s agriculture production. In essence, this reality is not new, as reflected in the different livelihood strategies employed by the rural dwellers of the region, most notably seasonal out-migration to complement income (Rutledge, 1987). Therefore, improving production and commercialisation is both possible and needed for improving people’s well being.

At this point, it would be beneficial to slightly distinguish between the agriculture production of the two eco-regions of the highland of Jujuy – Quebrada de Humahuaca and Puna (see Map 4.4 on page 97). In the past, rural livelihoods in the Quebrada de Humahuaca were based on a mixed agricultural-livestock model. People cultivated under irrigation small parcels of land in ravines (or quebradas) along river beds and had relatively large herds of livestock, which used to graze on the community’s common land. In current times, however, families cannot maintain much livestock. Strong rural-to-urban migration and the younger generation’s lack of interest in taking the animals to the open grazing land mean families can have only few animals grazing around their houses or on fodder. Thus, cultivation of fruit and vegetables is of most importance in that region. In the Puna, in contrast, livestock breeding is the main economic activity for most campesinos; and, due to the climatic conditions, cultivation of crops is limited and mainly confined to some places that have less hostile micro-climates.

Scarcity of water and its seasonality, however, is a challenge to campesino production in both eco-regions. Contamination of water resources and usage of water by the mining industry
only exacerbate the prevailing arid climatic conditions; but these are only parts of an all too familiar problem – lack of public investment in infrastructure for small-scale and marginalised agriculture producers. A member of Red Puna asserted that

the government sees us, on the one hand, as a burden. On the other hand, we are not a “number” for them… at the time of voting we are not of benefit to them. Let's say, to do [infrastructure] work here means a great expense to them and later in terms of votes 300-250 votes isn’t a [significant] number (Focus Group 3, Red Puna, interviewed 13.1.2011).

This proposition politicises the lack of water and points to structural impediments for improving agriculture production in the region.

Water is invaluable and scarce, but also poses challenges. First, for production:

another issue to resolve are the embankments. The river that crosses the community brings much sediment, which accumulates and raises the riverbed. It rises so much that the arable land gets below, on both sides [of the river], and it’s more prone to floods… and this is irrecoverable. Sometimes it buries produce ready for harvesting… Thus, that’s another problem, reinforce embankments, which would be durable and resistant against the rising water, or [alternatively] remove sediments from the riverbed (Rafael, Red Puna, interviewed 17.12.2010).

Occasionally embankments are in place but they also require maintenance. Rural communities lack the resources to build and then maintain such defences and it may have great consequences. While working in the field I witnessed first-hand the destruction caused by the rising water from the previous summer. An arm of the river cut through arable land, washed the topsoil and left behind debris and rocks. Sometimes there is concessionary machinery available for communities, but they would still need to pay for petrol and other associated costs. Again, public investment is required but to no avail.

Second, for commercialisation:

…the issue of commercialisation always arises, and that discourages you. Because when we harvest the vegetables here, in summer, from January, February, March, it precisely coincides with the rainy season, and here it rains and it cuts the road. Then, you can take the produce to Humahuaca, or that a greengrocer that comes from Jujuy [city] or Salta would come along, [but] this all become more difficult because there is no road… And sometimes this happens: you spend 2-3 days harvesting, preparing the load, and then on the night of the last day one of those downpours catches you, it cuts the road and there is nothing that can be done. Until you go to search for someone to fix the road, until you are able to repair the road, a further 2-3 days have already passed and your production goes off. This happens (Darío, Red Puna, interviewed 17.12.2010).
These challenges demonstrate the precarious conditions under which campesinos in the region must operate. Reducing such risks requires, yet again, as in the case of Santiago del Estero and elsewhere (see, for example, Binswanger, Khandker and Rosenzweig, 1993 on India; and Olsson, 2009 on the Philippines) investment in infrastructure, but also policies that would facilitate, rather than impede, market accessibility for marginalised producers.

While the importance of structural impediments for rural development cannot be overemphasised, there is also some recognition, through past experiences and critical self reflection, that sometimes the mindset of campesinos can be a barrier as well. Addressing livestock production in the Puna, the organisation has done some work on improving farming practices. For example, people in the highlands tend to sell sheep when they reach maximum weight, but this is not best practice. Under such a regime animals consume a lot of (scarce) pasture and force their young offspring to venture farther away in search for more feed. Campesino families could increase their productivity by selling lambs earlier, rather than later, and by utilising other farming techniques. Importantly, the aim of the organisation was by no means to replace peasant with capitalist logic of production; instead, the aim is to better adapt livestock management to the prevailing harsh climatic conditions and to improve household incomes. An activist that was involved in this project noted that while some have adopted at least some techniques, others have resisted change. Those who have modified their farming methods, however, have often faced problems with commercialising their lambs at the right time due to issues of transportation, of certification from local authorities, with (in)accessibility of certified slaughterhouses. These are all, of course, familiar exogenous structural barriers to development; but as this example demonstrate there are also endogenous challenges.

According to the same activist, collective commercialisation has also been influenced by cultural customs:

It’s true that we have many restrictions from the side of health, bromatology, SENASA, here in the province... that impose many obstacles for commercialising on a large scale. And on the other hand, there is no capacity for large-scale [commercialisation] among the small producers, in spite of one’s wishes. I believe that the little we have implemented on a large scale has failed because there is like no culture of selling on a large scale. I don’t know, [for example] every 15 days we need three llamas and twenty lambs. And that wasn’t

70 National Food Safety and Quality Service (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria - SENASA).
achieved. Because people say, “oh, I’m not going to kill so much and so fast.” That is, it’s like there is also something internal; to say, “I slaughter once a month and I can give you three lambs, but not every 15 days.” And the market requires one thing, and the people, even though they need that money, but they have a culture of not selling in this form (Marcela, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2010).

This example refers to a butcher shop the organisation had in San Salvador de Jujuy, and which was successful. Currently the organisation has a butcher shop in La Quiaca, in the north-most part of the province. Research participants involved in this operation continually argued that their main immediate problem is sourcing the animals, rather than selling the meat. Indigenous campesinos in the region do not perceive livestock purely as an economic asset. It is the main livelihood for many; but it is often seen as storage of value, as a security. Although disposable income is necessary, many are reluctant to increase commercialisation.

I am not, by any means, trying to argue that Kolla, or indigenous culture, serves as a hindrance to development in the highlands of Jujuy. To the contrary, the local indigenous culture is now being re-appreciated and re-embraced, and is an important social asset and a source of pride and strength. However, the current degree of integration of the traditional peasant production and the modern/capitalist market requires some adaptation of campesino farming practice. Again, the aim of the organisation is not to adopt a capitalist logic. This economic operation has a different organisational logic to it; but some research participants believe change and a pragmatic approach are imperatives.

Returning to exogenous challenges related to this economic venture, in the vicinity of La Quiaca there is no slaughterhouse licensed to carnage llamas and therefore under the current provincial law this shop is not allowed to sell its meat, which in the absence of an adequate slaughterhouse is sourced from animals that are being killed and processed on the farm. Since about 2009, however, the provincial government has not strictly enforced this legislation, allowing the organisation to operate their meat business without much interference from the authorities. This situation does allow local commercialisation, but it is not possible to commercialise the meat outside of the province. For that, adequate paperwork must be obtained. At current levels of production this is not a serious impediment for the organisation, since they struggle to supply even local demand. If production could be increased, however, under these conditions local llama breeders could not reach more lucrative markets in the larger urban centres of the country, had they wanted to.
There are other challenges beyond land, production and commercialisation. The main urban centres are located along the main road of the region, which traverses from the capital city of San Salvador de Jujuy in the south to La Quiaca on the Bolivian border in the north. Along this route there is frequent public transport, communication infrastructure and health and education services. However, communities that are located away from this regional lifeline live in substantial isolation and lack basic services and amenities. In comparison to Santiago del Estero, for example, more communities have been connected in the last decade or so to the electrical grid, but communication is a real challenge for the rural population, for the organisation, for travel, for trade and also for maintaining the younger generation in the communities. Education is another challenge, and while many research participants appreciate its importance they have also noted that it is an important factor affecting rural to urban migration. In this research study, however, I mainly focus on challenges of land, production and commercialisation partly because the organisations direct much effort to these challenges and in the case of Red Puna especially towards the latter two.

**Aims and objectives of the peasants’ struggle**

In the light of the challenges discussed and mentioned above, it is essential to examine the campesinos’ aims and objectives in their struggle. An analysis of both written materials and semi-structured interviews reveals an array objectives, some explicit and some somewhat more implicit. The demands and objectives put forward by Red Puna and MOCASE-VC reflect their comprehensive approach to the challenges they face and how to overcome these through participation and cooperation of active and conscious social actors.

Written applications for development projects are interesting sources for learning about the objectives of Red Puna and MOCASE-VC and their articulation. The rationale for financial assistance brought forward in these applications is only partly, and secondarily, based on figures and depictions of prevailing rural poverty among indigenous campesino communities in their respective territories. The more compelling arguments, in my view, are politically embedded and critical of the historical and persisting political economic order that has marginalised and exploited those communities for generations. Thus, their requests for financial assistance from state agencies are analytical and politicised, rather than “pragmatic” or entreatying. For example, such a project application of Red Puna denotes that
we no longer want an economic and political model that excludes us. We want to
drive with dignity in our land. We live off the labour of production and the day to
day effort, we produce foodstuffs for our communities, for towns and cities, we
are part of the land, the water and the seeds, we are life and culture. Still, as of
today our communal lands have not been returned to us. That is why the struggle
for food sovereignty and for the territory has permeated the dynamics of our
organisation, and our commitment (Red Puna, 2010, p. 1, my translation).

In another project application the MOCASE-VC states that

…the organised families defend themselves against the attempts of illegal and
illegitimate evictions on the part of the [agribusiness] companies, halting the
bulldozers, resisting the advance of the soybean production model and working
for food sovereignty, improving production, marketing, health, education,
communication; in a horizontal manner and placing special emphasis on the
participation of all (MOCASE-VC, n.d., p. 4, my translation).

Both quotes contain a critical reflection of the political economy, indirectly pointing a
blaming finger towards the state, which, as was argued in some published literature (for an
eexample see Davis, 1999), remains the main focal point for demands from marginalised
social movements in Latin America.

Another commonality found in these two passages is the articulation of food sovereignty as a
guiding framework, and arguably perhaps an end aim as well. This is not surprising given
that both Red Puna and MOCASE-VC are members of the National Movement (MNCI) and
therefore of La Vía Campesina. The concept of “food sovereignty” emphasises the
importance of access to land and resources for achieving sustainable rural livelihoods, but it
also addresses the right of societies to choose their own level of protective measures for their
agriculture sector (La Vía Campesina, 2011). This term was coined in 1996 to critique and
challenge the United Nations’ concept of “food security”, which as a result has since evolved
to include some of the themes put forth by its contender. Such themes include nutritional
values, public health and the aspect of social control over food production, distribution and
consumption (Patel, 2009). Food sovereignty champions a system of sustainable local
production directed primarily for local consumption, and based on small-holder agriculture
producers (Schanbacher, 2010), as an alternative to the current hegemonic neoliberal
“corporate food regime” (McMichael, 2006, 2009). Moreover, food sovereignty does not
provide a blueprint for how we should envision its praxis. Instead, it is a “call for a right to a
right,” criticising the “selective application of rights in support of capital, and which sees a
one-size-fits-all approach to agriculture, as opposed to the context specific results generated by democratic deliberation” (Patel, Balakrishnan and Narayan, 2007, p. 91).

Thus, the objectives of Red Puna and MOCASE-VC are embedded in and articulated through the discourse of food sovereignty. This concept also promotes a requirement for having forms of rural development initiatives to which I refer here as “integral development models”. These are adaptable and context-sensitive multi-faceted models, encompassing various social, economic, political and environmental objectives, which are reflected in the demands and the operations of these two campesino movements.

Securing land tenure is undoubtedly a key objective of the peasantry in Northwest Argentina and an inseparable aspect of any form of integral development model. Land has been symbolic in many peasants’ struggles and mobilisations worldwide, especially in relation to lingering colonial legacies and neo-colonial realities. For the peasantry, securing land tenure has bearings for each one of the integral development model’s categories above. As noted by one Red Puna activist, “without land there is no food sovereignty, there is no social change, nothing” (Manuela, Red Puna, interviewed 18.1.2011). However, it is almost a common wisdom that the land by itself will not guarantee the survival of the campesinos, let alone allow them to thrive. In other words, although the demand for agrarian reform is eminent, members of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna especially articulate a demand for an “integral agrarian reform”. Such a reform goes beyond merely giving people land titles. What they are seeking is for the government to “come and sit with us, who are those that really live [of the land and they should ask us] what do we want? How do we want to manage it? How do we want to implement it? That would be an agrarian reform; helping you with production, with commercialisation” (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010). An integral agrarian reform will take into account the structural impediments for development of the campesino sector, such as training, adequate credit lines and social services.

Whereas land is symbolic and a prerequisite for integral rural development, a participant in a focus group interview articulated nicely the true essence of the campesinos’ struggle, which stretches much further than merely securing land-tenure:

that is a goal of the movement: that each family would stay on its land and [campesinos] would be independent producers, and would not be employees of anybody; that they would not be exploited, that is the main objective of the movement... and the subsequent goal, well, is to improve the production, to
enable us to also have a decent life (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

There is a direct link between living on and from the land and having a decent life. Secured land tenure is a necessary condition for improving the standards of living of campesino families, and this view is shared across all the different peasant organisations with whom I have been working while in the field. What exactly constitute a desirable standards of living level is, however, debateable, but nevertheless virtually all agreed that improvements to current levels are needed.

Beyond a material improvement, social revitalisation of campesino rural communities is another key objective, vis-à-vis strong rural-to-urban migration. This requires improving rural livelihoods through better production and commercialisation, which in turn would allow for the social reproduction of the family unit, enhancing the well-being of rural communities. In order to achieve that, an important objective is to

strengthen the various indigenous campesino production chains, so as to achieve the commercialisation in an organised and communal manner, obtaining better prices and allowing the incorporation of links that not only add value to processed raw materials, but also generate jobs and reclaim ancestral knowledge (MOCASE-VC, n.d., p. 6, my translation).

Both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna put much emphasis on improving campesino production and developing economic chains of production and commercialisation. This objective is perceived as an immediate need, and one that the organisations could improve on in a relatively timely manner, unlike some other objectives which are deemed to require a much more prolonged period of time. Here, I am conscious to avoid analysing objectives as pertaining to short or long-run time spans. Instead, I would argue that most objectives require prolonged processes to be fully or nearly fully achieved; but some, such as lack of basic services and improving production, reflect greater immediate needs for people’s daily lives, and thus may receive more attention. It does not necessarily mean, however, that these are short-run objectives.

An example for an important objective that requires a prolonged period of time to take shape, and that features high in the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna discourses, is bringing about a profound social change. This is envisioned as starting from local communities and scaling upwards through multi-tiered organisations, to reach the wider nation-state society and then to the global scale. This socio-political aspiration is for creating a new and better pluralist
CHAPTER SEVEN: Challenges for Peasant Life in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy

society that is to be founded on egalitarian and radical democratic principles, replacing the current neoliberal world order and its inherent exclusionary and unjust nature, and which is deemed economically, socially and environmentally unsustainable. This society should have a free, vibrant and thriving sector of peasants and small-scale producers, and should also aspire to environmental sustainability. This, in my view, is the overarching aim of these organisations; this is the amalgam of the desired results of all the social, economic, political and environmental objectives, more often explicitly articulated by their members and in documents.

Notwithstanding this grander aim, pragmatism is by no means absent, neither theoretically nor in practice. This aim may well be utopian; but by acknowledging this the struggle then takes more pragmatic forms where terms are being negotiated and renegotiated through public involvement in processes of decision making. Drawing on Ben Anderson (2006), utopianism, rather than in its all too familiar “blueprint” form, is conceptualised here as a means for affecting processes that give hope for alternative possibilities. It is an ethical practice of striving towards an unreachable end; but the active envisioning of an alternative is in itself part of the utopian process. A genuine and direct democratic participation is thus held as key to the success of the integral development model as a utopian process:

to be good is easy; to be just is difficult. And I think there is justice in us having in mind societies where power is positioned, as much as possible, in the more democratising forms of participation, or in the most attainable direct democracies that we can construct. There we will have, obviously, diversions, corrections, criticism, self-criticism. As long as this would be in place: the balance, the appraisal, the mutual comptroller; and I believe that at that point democracy and participation become operational (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

Thus, the objective is not about achieving a utopian and hence unattainable aim; it is rather about having the best possible model of radical democracy, it is about generating as just a social model as possible.

In summary, the underlying aim of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is to create a more just and equal society that exercises food sovereignty. For their constituents this means improving the standards of living while maintaining and enhancing aspects of the local peasant culture. A real challenge here, though, is negotiating modernity with tradition, so as to achieve a (progressive and adequate) balance between the “new” and the “old”, a balance that would be accepted by the different communities. This aim for a socio-economic and socio-political
change is to be achieved through objectives articulated in the integral development model and active democratic participation through independent civil society organisations. The exact form in which this participation should occur is for communities to decide and negotiate; blueprints are neither available nor possible to be formulated. How, then, such a model could be scaled up from the local community level to include societies of millions is a question to ponder.

**Conclusions**

As discussed in Chapters Four and Six, the particular experiences of colonisation and post-colonial statehood have had substantial ramifications for the peasantry, both indigenous and *criollos*, in the research area. These experiences have shaped the (relatively high) level of integration of peasant production into the capitalist market, exposing the former to the boom and bust cycles of the latter. These experiences have also had much impact on land-tenure structure, where land was appropriated from the hands of its rightful possessors, a challenge that even after a few centuries is still the most symbolic in current peasant struggles.

With that, securing land-tenure is perhaps symbolic but definitely neither the only challenge nor the sole objective of the organisations under focus in this research study. Instead, *campesino* livelihoods and ways of life are being constantly threatened by an array of challenges that require a comprehensive, or integral, response, rather than isolated and specific interventions. This analysis is clearly evident and articulated in the MOCASE-VC’s and Red Puna’s discourses. It also underlies the framework of food sovereignty, which in the particular context of the organisations under the main focus here guides the integral development model they are engaged with. This integral approach reflects a broad analysis of social, economic, political and environmental challenges, some exogenous to rural communities and some endogenous, and demonstrates an interesting level of critical appraisal of both their surroundings and self.

Important to the aim of the peasant struggle, however, is not only increasing standards of living through sustainable development, as progressively and widely as it can be defined. This is a very important objective, undoubtedly; but the process of bringing about change, which must be genuinely democratic and inclusive, should ultimately transform our political economy and our society for the better. This aim acts to connect seemingly local struggles
with transnational mobilisation for solidarity and social justice, hence linking remote campesino rural communities in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy with, say, middle class urbanites in large cities around the global South and North. This novel facet of the campesino-indigenous struggle in Argentina manifests itself through the prefigurative horizontal politics of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, as I will discuss and analyse in the next chapter. This is a moral strategy that distinguishes these organisations (along with others) not only from past experiences of rural mobilisation but also from current rural organisations that operate in a more hierarchical fashion.
Introduction

Organisational structure and decision-making procedures are pivotal in the search for alternative models of development by social organisations. An important argument put forward in this thesis is that such a genuinely alternative development model must be political in nature and thus contain some degree of critical analysis of the marginalisation of individuals and communities. Elements of this political analysis are often reflected in the ways in which civil society organisations operate, often in an attempt, explicit or implicit, to promote a different, more inclusive and egalitarian, association between social subjects.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on this central pillar of the integral development model, as it is being conceptualised here. This chapter addresses both the second and third research objectives. It draws on experiences and reflections of research participants regarding the structures of their organisations (second objective), and it also deals with discourse and praxis of development through radical democracy (third objective). According to the MOCASE-VC
and Red Puna, organisational structure is a vital component in envisioning an integral (post-) development model. Organisational structures and decision-making rules are important in shaping human societies and are often ideologically and always politically driven. They could also be influenced by pragmatic measures, in the face of contestation and resistance. A basic belief held by many social organisations is that since organisational structure and decision-making procedure could impede or facilitate social equality, utilised progressively and inclusively they could empower communities and individuals, enabling them to exert agency and claim ownership over their social configuration, and hence on their socio-economic development.

In Chapter Seven I have argued that the core aim of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is to create a more equal society; the ultimate goal of development, conceptualised in the most broad and inclusive manner. As an important strategic means for promoting this noble aim, these two grassroots organisations have adopted and customised a horizontal organisational structure that, *inter alia*, breaks-away from hierarchy and domination, fostering instead a more direct and participatory democracy. In addition, the two organisations aspire for a consensus decision-making rule, which, again, requires the active participation and engagement of their members. These discourses and praxes stem from a particular political analysis of the hegemonic (and disempowering) political-economic order; but even with strong ideological conviction, and in spite of the inherent advantages these political structures embody, they also present numerous challenges. Confronting these challenges, then, is a necessary step towards mitigating them.

In the first part of the chapter an in-depth account of the structures of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is provided. This empirical yet somewhat more descriptive portrayal is important for better understanding how participatory democracy as part of prefigurative politics is being practiced in multi-tiered organisations. It is also of much importance for the following part, where the discussion of horizontalism and consensus decision-making becomes more reflective and analytical. Before concluding, the last part of this chapter addresses the notion of leadership, a crucial aspect in any organisational form which has specific and somewhat unique meanings and challenges associated with it under horizontalism. An interesting aspect of leadership, to which most of the discussion is dedicated, is the partnership between often urban middle-class *técnicos* (experts, professionals) and grassroots *campesino* communities. Despite receiving no significant academic attention, in the two case-study organisations
examined here this partnership constitutes an intriguing aspect of their integral development models.

The internal politics and structure of MOCASE-VC and Red Puna

Chapter Two addressed the theoretical foundations of horizontalism, but before turning to the all important critical analysis of this concept it is of benefit to start by portraying in considerable detail how horizontality is practised in the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. I want to stress the argumentative observation that “participatory democracy as a viable political practice independent of the state has seldom been a serious object of scholarly attention,” and that even though the Zapatistas and the MST attracted much academic attention as movements of participatory democracy, “little of this work addresses democratic practices in great detail” (Starr, Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2011, p. 103-4).

There are, nevertheless, more specific reasons for devoting time and space to the structures in which the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna operate. First, both organisations express a clear critique of and departure from the present hegemonic institutional political system to which they are subjected. Their organisational structure, then, reflects a break from mainstream representative democracy and offers an alternative at least for local or community level politics. Second, the postmodern logic, where theory avoids suggesting blueprints for practice, has become increasingly prevalent among some, more radical, academic circles. Published research about peasant movements, for instance, often, but by no means always, tends to put more emphasis on theory and issues of organisation while overlooking the structural mechanics of the organisation. Thus, some civil society organisations provide important and novel spaces for resistance and mobilisation which stem from their structures and the way in which they operate and therefore it is ever more important to dwell on how they translate theory into practice, and how practice informs their theoretical discourse. Horizontally structured organisations are a good example of such important and theoretically informed social spaces, but since they vary in the ways they operate, and since the place-bounded context of each organisation is different, it is of great importance, and interest, not to neglect how different organisations translate theory into praxis. The main purpose of this, then, is to share experiences, ideas, challenges and also achievements and success.
CHAPTER EIGHT: Models of Rural Organisation for Integral and Inclusive Development

While place-specific contexts and realities are of importance and thus need to be acknowledged and reflected in analyses, and indeed in numerous parts of this thesis I have done so, here I address and analyse the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna together. The rationale for doing so is similar to the reason for why the aims and objectives were jointly addressed in the previous chapter. Namely, while there are differences between the organised peasantry in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, they also share many similarities.

Taken together, the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna provide constructive examples for how inclusive and participatory structures and inclusive decision-making mechanisms could be imagined. First and foremost, according to these grassroots organisations, an integral development model should include a horizontal organisational structure where decisions are made not by a selected few but by as wide a public participation as possible. As one of the MOCASE-VC militants put it,

> even if one departs from the conviction that democratisation is the best way to build a historical subject … eventually it is always a group of the national bourgeoisie, or of the ruling class, managing everything. Then, *we should not reproduce this model* (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

But how could a different model be achieved in relatively large organisations covering a substantial geographic territory and where resources are scarce and transport and communication connectivity are highly limited?

In order to overcome these challenges of scale, scarcity of resources and deficient communication infrastructure the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna operate in three organisational tiers. The first tier includes the smallest organisational entities – the “base communities” (*comunidades de base*) (see Figure 8.1). The MOCASE-VC has over 200 “base communities” and each includes the families of a particular rural community. In the Santiagueño countryside *campesinos* usually live in family compounds, and there may be several kilometres separating these compounds. Thus, working on a community basis is of course sensible from social and geographic perspectives. While families cultivate their own small parcel of land, primarily for subsistence, their livestock traditionally graze in the forest, which is a common resource, shared by the community members, although the animals are not common property. People know which animals are theirs and which are not. However, rural communities are themselves often quite dispersed and communication may be a challenge. Meetings of “base communities” are, therefore, an important pillar of the movement. As Osvaldo, a member of the MOCASE-VC explained, “...each ‘base
 CHAPTER EIGHT: Models of Rural Organisation for Integral and Inclusive Development

community’ has its day of the meeting, once a week, twice a week, as warrants the need” (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010). In this forum, local everyday issues are discussed and debated, alongside issues that are brought from the other two tiers of the organisation. It is important to note that in some communities not everybody is a member of the MOCASE-VC, but they are still members of the community and therefore there may be community meetings not as a “base community”, depending on the issues.

Horizontal Organisational Structure – MOCASE-VC and Red Puna y Quebrada

The Red Puna is a much smaller organisation, having at present slightly less than 30 “base communities”, and these are held as the most important component of the organisation; they deal with the different problems of the community itself. It can be the problem of production, commercialisation, some planning of infrastructure such as a community hall, the protection of the plots from the rising rivers in summer times, and some communal work that arise from within the communities. The
organisation originates from there; the communities are its main pillars and roots (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

These communities, however, are somewhat less homogenous in their character. In the highlands of Jujuy some communities are dispersed and some are more closely set along river beds, especially in the Quebrada de Humahuaca region. There are also some differences in terms of livelihoods, where rural communities in the Puna rely more on stockbreeding, agriculture is the main rural economic activity in the Quebrada de Humahuaca. In addition, some “base communities” of the Red Puna are urban or semi-urban based, including the Cooperative Punha and the Vicuñitas Association who are not based in rural communities and are dedicated to traditional textiles and weaving of llama fibre.

The second tier includes the Centrales, short for Centrales Campesinas (Peasant Centres), in the MOCASE-VC and Micro-redes (Micro-networks) in the Red Puna (Maps 8.1 and 8.2 respectively). These second-tier spaces include a number of neighbouring “base communities”. The Red Puna effectively has four Micro-redes since the Micro-red Puna Centro currently includes only the Abra Pampa based Cooperativa Punha as sole “base community”. The MOCASE-VC currently has nine Centrales, located in the north, east and southeast of the province. Each Central organises its own regular meetings. For example, the Central of Pinto in the south-east of the province (CCCPinto on Map 8.1) has meetings “...every 15 days, on Sundays... where delegates from each place [within the Central] meet. There we get together; each place brings its concerns, its problems, projects and we discuss them in the Central” (Camila, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 27.3.2010).

The term “delegates”, however, is fundamentally different from the roles of representatives in a “representative democracy”. These delegates should rotate so that as many members take an active part in the organisation. On their return home these delegates update their counterparts in their respective “base community” meetings. In her own words, a MOCASE-VC member explained both the process and the objectives of their organisational structure:

what we are working on here is that when people come [to Central meetings] from other places [“base communities’] it is not that only one comes but sometimes up to five or six come. From one meeting to the next meeting those who have been before always come with new ones. Then the participation is becoming of more [people], and not of one, of two, because it is worthless if always we are the same faces that are gathered there... Well, that one [the delegate] returns and reports there [in his/her “base community’’]; but it is better having a big meeting, a big assembly, to discuss issues among all (Camila, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 27.3.2010).
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Map 8.1: *Centrales* of MOCASE-VC
Source: MOCASE-VC, n.d.

Map 8.2: *Micro-redes* of Red Puna y Quebrada

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Thus, a paramount objective is having as broad a participation as possible, appreciating it is not feasible for everybody to attend these meetings as some “base communities” may be located tens of kilometres away from the Central itself. The location of the meeting rotates so that the cost associated with travelling is more fairly distributed among all members, and decentralisation is further enhanced; but some would always have to make a long journey to attend. Moreover, travelling in rural Santiago del Estero and Jujuy is challenging. In the Santiagueño countryside people usually travel on motorcycles, and this limits the number of people that can travel. In Jujuy people rely more on public transport and vehicles of the organisation or its members. Having this geographic distance is indeed a challenge for both organisations; but in the case of the MOCASE-VC, a community cannot join as an individual “base community”. That is, in order to join the organisation, a community needs to join an existing second-tier Central, if one exists in its proximity, or form a new Central, bearing in mind that this requires the existence and cooperation of a number of neighbouring communities. The different composition of the Red Puna means it is possible for a single “base community” to have a Micro-red, such as in the case of the Punha Cooperative after a number of its proximate “base communities” ceased their participation and subsequently the Micro-red disintegrated. However, there are no rural communities without a second-tier Micro-red.

Beyond the role of the Centrales and Micro-redes as the second-degree organisational spaces, each of them is also a physical place. The facilities that may be found in a Central include an office, a butcher shop, rooms for accommodating visitors or travelling members, a “factory” to process different products such as meat, honey and dulce de leche (caramelised milk). In addition, some of the Centrales of MOCASE-VC also have a radio station. The existence of such facilities varies from one centre to another. The Central of Quimilí (CCPPAS on Map 8.1), for instance, has all of the above; but it also has a carpentry workshop and two computer rooms, one with Internet connectivity.

The third tier of this organisational structure is the General Assemblies of the two organisations and their Secretariats or Working Areas (Figure 8.1). This tier is the amalgamation of the nine Centrales and the four Micro-redes of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, respectively. At this level the organisational work in the MOCASE-VC is divided into five secretariats; (1) land, (2) production and commercialisation, (3) formation and youth, (4) communication and (5) health. Meetings of the secretariats are held once every two or three months and their location rotates among the Centrales. These reunions are also referred to as
the assembly and plenary of the MOCASE-VC. There, issues are discussed in the Secretariats and “after there is a plenary [session] where we come together with all the Secretariats and comment [on the issues], and if there are some debates between things they are done there, and everything reaches a consensus. The consensuses are not made directly in the Secretariats but are made in the plenary [session]” (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interview 1.3.2010).

Participation in these meetings is open to all members and in them no one imposes anything. Then we ask who likes to be in “land”, who likes to be in “health”, who likes to be in “youth”, and well, there we put in place each one in… where we can develop him in what he likes to do. We can rotate… but we try not to, because, what do I know? ... I am participating in the organisation for 13 years and in the 13 years that I am [participating], I am always in the secretariat of production and commercialisation, because that is what I like to do (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interview 1.3.2010).

Thus, the organisation has a self-appointing system where members can choose to be more active in working with themes and issues that are of special interest to them. Moreover, there is no predetermined incumbency period, and that is in spite of the objective of having as many active members as possible, using a rotation mechanism. It was clear from discussions with a number of research participants that they were aware of the potential challenge incumbency poses for a horizontal organisation structure. However, both organisations had clearly decided that it is more beneficial not to replace a capable member with a less capable member solely in the name of decentralising power. However, having at least some people in the same secretariat for long periods of time could adversely affect power relations. Despite that, a decentralised and yet effective governance mechanism could be achieved if some fundamental criteria are in place. Thus, as long as there is no cap on the number of participants in each Secretariat, and hence no impediment to other members taking an active part, and decisions are ultimately being made in the plenary session, this structure is compatible with the horizontal discourse of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna.

In the Red Puna there is less stability in the function of its Working Areas. Currently there are four Working Areas: (1) production and commercialisation, (2) gender and handicrafts, (3) training of leaders and (4) communication. Working Areas and Micro-redes meet once a month and the General Assembly is held sometimes once every 4 months, sometime every 6 months; the structure is not always fixed. Since the General Assemblies of the Red Puna are not always regular, the organisation has another third-tier space in the form of a General Coordination (Coordinación General). In this forum delegates from all Micro-redes and
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Working Areas meet to coordinate the activities of the organisation as a whole. This is the main difference from the way in which the MOCASE-VC operates. In the past the Red Puna had more organisational bodies; but time and necessities had modified them. Thus, the organisational structure of the Red Puna is dynamic and evolving over time as part of an organic organisation that continuously searches for better responsiveness and that occasionally may encounter lack of participation or other challenges that could influence the way in which the organisation operates.

The three organisational tiers of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are, however, only the internal ones. These organisations are also further connected to other national and international organisations through a network of more tiers. Within Argentina, these organisations are members of the National Peasant and Indigenous Movement (MNCI). This organisation shares the same principles of horizontality, participation and consensual decision-making, and it is also a member of the international peasant and small-farmers organisation, La Vía Campesina. The MOCASE-VC is also a member of La Vía Campesina as an individual organisation. This clearly reflects the complexity of the global networks and overlapping spaces of resistance. Moreover, the organisational structures of grassroots campesino social organisations reveal the ways in which marginalised rural communities envision and practice a different model of democracy; a model that is inclusive and empowering but one that also poses challenges and requires constant reflection and (re)negotiations of active social actors. Addressing the challenges of practicing horizontality in an organisation is, therefore, no less important than discussing its theoretical merits.

“Entre todos podemos”71 – Horizontal structure and consensus decision-making: potentials, impediments and reflections

Whereas the previous section on the structure of the organisations was somewhat more descriptive, in this part of the chapter I will critically engage with the discourse and praxis of the two organisations under focus here. The experiences of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna show that participatory democracy is possible and that it is workable at a scale of relatively large, in geographic and membership terms, and multi-tiered organisations. With that, the feasibility of a meaningful horizontalism is confronted with numerous challenges of this organisational structure.

71 Together we can.
Challenges that were identified in the literature include, *inter alia*, the time required for decentralised and consensual decision-making (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Polletta, 2002; Snyder, 2003; Gastil, 1993), the difficulty of “emotional intensity” and personal conflict (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Snyder, 2003), and pressure from the environment and from non-participatory democratic habits and values\(^\text{72}\) of members (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Freeman, 1972). I will address some of these common challenges, but do not wish to construct the entire discussion around them. Although there are many commonalities when groups adhere to ideals of participatory democracy and consensus decision-making, there are also context and place specific challenges. The mentioned literature, insightful and relevant as it may be, is not based on organisations and experiences of primarily low socioeconomic, marginalised indigenous rural communities from the Global South, as in the cases here.

Here, as in other parts of this thesis, the intention is not to compare and contrast the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna as distinct and discrete case-studies, but rather to analyse them as two separate and yet similar and connected experiences of integral development. Nevertheless, some comparison is inevitable. With regards to horizontal structure and consensus decision-making discourse, there are some differences worthy of attention. While in the field in the highlands of Jujuy, it became increasingly notable that, on the whole, horizontalist discourse was not as prominent as it was in Santiago del Estero. It was not completely absent but definitely not as prevalent. Two reasons stand out.

The first is related to the cultural and historical experiences of the people in these two territories. A militant from the MOCASE-VC explained that horizontalism in Santiago del Estero stems from two main sources;

> horizontality, it seems to me, has an origin that is very much embedded in the indigenous peoples… of these areas in the south of Latin America. The Vilelas, the Lules, the Comechingones, the Diagitas, the Sanavirones, [all] had very strong frameworks of assemblies, of very horizontal decision-making… I think that there is a second [reason] that had to do with the link to Europe and where European anarchism had an effect on our peasants, men and women (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

According to him, European migrants who came to Argentina in the late 19\(^\text{th}\) and early 20\(^\text{th}\) centuries, especially from the north of Italy, had brought strong Marxist and anarchist

\(^{72}\) Since values and practice of participatory democracy are foreign to most people, their behaviour and attitudes are often shaped by the more familiar environment that promotes competitiveness, obedience and command, depending on one’s position in the organisational or societal hierarchy.
sentiments. These were notable among the workers who had built the railroads and had helped to spread these ideas into the interior parts of Argentina. This militant argued that, while social structures based on assemblies were also important to the Maya, the Incan and the Aztec societies, by comparison, were hierarchical. Without similar reference to pre-Columbian social structure, a militant of the Red Puna argued that there is no strong discourse of horizontal organisation among her organisation’s base communities due to cultural aspects. However, this is changing with the emergence and politicisation of grassroots leadership. The communities in the highlands of Jujuy, which in pre-Columbian times were part of the Incan Empire, have grown accustomed to operating in a vertical structure for generations, a practice that was subsequently encouraged by different institutions including the Church and the State.

The second reason for the noted difference in the position of horizontalist discourse, as held by various militants of the Red Puna, is the severity of the conflict in Santiago del Estero and the effect this had has on mobilising peasant communities and forming people’s political consciousness. A Red Puna militant addressed this issue by arguing that

[a] discourse is becoming flesh when you are living it in practice. The person of the Puna today doesn’t have the bulldozer atop. By not having the bulldozer atop he doesn’t seek to find the enemy. He doesn’t have the enemy nearby, doesn’t see it. One cannot see the enemy. Therefore, when introducing a discourse of anti-globalisation, neoliberalism, unrestrained capitalism, impunity, it becomes flesh when you live it; and when you don’t live it, it doesn’t become flesh. But in Santiago del Estero they have the enemy clearly marked … Therefore it’s much easier to elaborate the concept of the struggle [against] globalisation, the topic of neoliberalism, of how capitalism operates… It’s much easier there, and it becomes flesh, because it is lived in practice, in the practice, it is being experienced in daily lives (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Although he does not refer specifically to the horizontal discourse, but to the anti-neoliberal and counter-hegemonic discourse, the argument still stands. In the face of immediate threat, campesino communities in Santiago del Estero appear to become more open to radical discourses that not only provide explanations for what they experience but also offer alternatives.

Therefore, prima facie horizontality in Santiago del Estero is being perceived by many rural communities as “normal” while in Jujuy it is more often seen as a “radical” organisational form. I do not wish to contest the belief that horizontality resonates with pre-Columbian

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73 He refers to the bulldozers that clear the forest and destroy the campesinos’ adobe houses.
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indigenous forms of organisation, but given the long colonial and post-colonial history of these two territories I believe that horizontalism should be viewed as radical in both instances. In Santiago del Estero, more vertical organisational structures were the norm until relatively recent times, and even today not everybody agrees with the way in which horizontality is being practiced in the MOCASE-VC.

Whereas the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna may articulate a horizontal discourse of different strengths, in practice both aspire for horizontalism and face some common challenges. For example, it is important to note that, given horizontalism’s arguably fundamental role in the internal division of the MOCASE in 2001, there are voices in Santiago del Estero, and elsewhere, that critique the MOCASE-VC for how it operates. One research participant, who is not a member of either organisation, asserted that

[the horizontality] has not been achieved, because although hypothetically it is possible for all to go to courses, to travel, it is starting to be always the same who do. Why? Because, for example, it is a person who has no children, then it is easier.

The same person also mentioned the centrality of Quimilí within the MOCASE-VC, and contemplated if it is indeed not hegemonic over the other Centrales, in accordance to the discourse. This participant then added, “this is all like a critique, but it’s like saying there are good intentions, there is a plan to work in this way, but what limits are placed by reality itself?”

In the light of this critique, I would like to begin with a challenge not mentioned in the literature above, but one that perhaps is more relevant to tiered organisations. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, the second-tier Centrales and Micro-redes constitute both an organisational space and a physical location with different amenities and resources. However, there are disparities between particular second-tier entities, including differences in physical infrastructure and facilities, and in levels of participation. In the MOCASE-VC it is the Central of Quimilí that is regarded by many as being more pivotal, and in the Red Puna these are the Micro-redes Puna Norte and Quebrada. Do such disparities affect the degree of horizontality of the organisation?

Starting from differences in the levels of participation, it is important that all second-tier organisations would have representation in each one of the Secretariats and Working Areas. However, in spite of the emphasis on participation and the effort dedicated to mitigate the
costs of travel to attend meetings, sometimes communities may struggle to send delegates to important gatherings, and this could entail some consequences. For example, a militant of the MOCASE-VC commented that “there are Centrales that do not have comrades in ‘production’. And, well, if they do not have comrades in ‘production’ it is because they are not able to get organised for everything. And, well, these Centrales do not receive any projects [of production]” (Teresa, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 24.3.2010). In a similar way, if some Centrales do not have representation on the third-tier secretariat level, information would not flow between the different organisational tiers in a satisfactory manner, and the aspiration for horizontality may be compromised. Thus, the links between the three tiers are highly important for the functionality of the organisation.

Mobilising members to actively participate in meetings, particularly when travelling is involved, is a challenge for the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. The organisations are well aware of this situation and thus enhancing or even maintaining participation is an ongoing process that requires attention and resources. An activist of the Red Puna elaborated on this issue:

Those of us who are going out [from isolated communities] are more in contact, we know [more], but those who don’t go are losing out much… In the first year that I joined the Red there were elderly people who were going to the [Working] Area of Training of Leaders, several used to go. Later their number began to decline little by little, for lack of time they said… Because almost all here have a family and sometimes leaving the house is difficult… Going out implies two days, three days, of being away from home (Felicia, Red Puna, interviewed 28.1.2011).

The expression “going out” is used because the community of this research participant is located some distance from important urban centres, transportation is difficult and there are no means of communication. This is not an “extreme” situation. There are rural communities in both Jujuy and Santiago del Estero which are even more remote and with more restricted public transportation services.

While the disparities in the extent of participation demonstrated by individual Centrales and Micro-redes at the third-tier level is perceived by members of the organisations as an obstacle, this is not the case – at least in the MOCASE-VC – for the disparities in the facilities found in the Centrales, as mentioned earlier. Still, it may seem the Central of Quimilí is more pivotal, or important, because it is where the vast majority of technical members (técnicos; further discussed below) of the organisation live; it is where the school of
agroecology is located; and it is the entering point for visitors to the organisation. Undoubtedly, the **Central** of Quimilí is often seen by people outside the organisation as having greater importance within the organisation, and the MOCASE-VC is often referred to as the “MOCASE of Quimili”. This, in turn, is perceived as another impediment for achieving a horizontal organisational structure.

Members of the MOCASE-VC do not, however, share this view. Their main arguments are threefold. The first relates to Quimilí’s geographic location in the centre of the province, from a north-south perspective (see CCPPAS in Map 8.1), meaning greater equity in travel from the far-north and far-south of the province. The second argument addresses the available infrastructure and services in this **Central** – electricity, internet and public transport – which are crucial for maintaining of the organisation’s channels of communication. The third argument draws upon the long history of this **Central** within the movement, with Quimilí being one of the earlier second-tier peasant organisations in the province and a driving force in the division of the MOCASE in 2001.

But still, does this concentration of activities in a particular **Central** pose a threat to the MOCASE-VC’s ambition for horizontality? According to its members, the answer is clearly negative. Alfonso, for example, noted that Quimilí is one of several centres the organisation has and

> it is not one of the places that in this case would be hegemonic over the rest of MOCASE; totally the opposite. …well, it does not bother us that it is called “MOCASE of Quimilí” because in reality it is very clear to us that the MOCASE is not Quimilí but a movement, and everything we have built in the different Centrales (Alfonso, MOCASE-VC, interview 18.3.2010).

Another representative comment about the actual level of horizontality members perceive within the organisation is that, above all, “it is horizontal. Because the decision, let’s see, is not taken by Quimilí. Quimilí receives the information and, as it comes, it is distributed” (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interview 1.3.2010). As reflected in these comments, it is the distribution of information and a decentralised decision-making that are deemed most important for achieving a horizontal organisational structure. That means that if the concentration of activities in a particular place is a result of a consensual decision, taken in a horizontal and inclusive manner, it does not contradict the organisation’s discourse, even though there are clearly some factors that in effect make this decision the only viable one.
In short, physical geography matters; it imposes challenges on both decentralisation and participation. In Jujuy and Santiago del Estero it is also an important factor contributing to the challenge of the extensive time required for participatory democracy. Similar to the literature on collectives and cooperatives, the meetings of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are often long and exhausting. In fact, I attended a meeting of Micro-red Puna Norte that lasted a full day and well into the night. In meetings of communities and groups of the Red Puna, it is customary to have a communal lunch and thus those are also valuable social gatherings. No research participant from the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna expressed any reservations regarding the time spent on meetings. Instead, as evident in some of the quotes above, the problem is not time spent in meetings but the duration of the absence from one’s home in order to attend meetings and activities. Travel also requires financial resources and the organisations have budgets designated for this purpose. These challenges are largely absent from the literature on cooperativism and collectivism.

Both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are fairly homogenous in terms of the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of their constituents, a trait that should facilitate horizontalism and consensus decision-making (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986). In contrast, pressure from the environment and non-participatory democratic habits are notable limitations. These entail both external and internal pressure on what the organisations want to achieve by working horizontally; namely, decentralisation of power that would empower people and communities to become active social and political subjects shaping their own trajectory in life. Dealing with these types of pressure, however, cannot be done by using the same strategies.

Regarding external pressure on horizontality and consensus decision-making, a Red Puna activist argued that the way in which development is being delivered by the state challenges the organisation, or better said, is incompatible with the practice of debating issues within the communities and reaching consensual decisions. When a development expert proposes a project, it has been already formed and it is not often open for further discussion and problematisation by its subjects, or all too often its objects.

Another form of external pressure is the legal requirements for obtaining development projects. As discussed in Chapter Six, during the 1990s it became in effect obligatory to form legally recognised associations in order to receive development projects. Then, by law, these associations must have hierarchical structure that includes a president, vice-president, treasurer and more. Thus, even though the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna aspire for
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decentralised horizontal structure, by law each legally recognised association within these organisations (base communities, cooperatives, Centrales and Micro-redes, and so on\textsuperscript{74}) has its own designated functionaries, and only they are able to sign agreements with the authorities and thus held accountable. This, of course, stands in contrast to the horizontal discourse and praxis. Nevertheless, this external pressure is arguably more of symbolic than practical significance. As long as the organisations do not hand any authority to their formal “leaders”, internal horizontality is unaffected.

Some research participants also noted that sometimes the organisation is given very limited time to apply for development projects, a timeframe which does not allow for the participatory process of large horizontal organisations. Time and urgency, however, are not the only forms of external pressure. Not all government agencies, for example, respect the autonomy of horizontal organisations to the same degree. Governmental development programmes often require the names and identification numbers of the direct recipients of projects. An organisation can decide upon these names; but it may also want to distribute the benefits differently. For instance, instead of having five members in a community benefiting from a particular project, the organisation may want, when possible, to have more families as direct beneficiaries by distributing the project differently. If the funding agency were to inspect the implementation of the project, it might find the organisation in breach of the programme. Whilst this is common, there are instances where funding agencies are understanding and supportive. For example, in a particular project for improving peasant production I witnessed while in the field,\textsuperscript{75} the people in charge from the funding ministry were interested in having as many families as possible benefiting from the available funds, understanding the community orientation of the organisation and its autonomy to internally allocate resources.

External pressures on participatory democracy, as mentioned above, are accompanied by internal ones. Addressing those pressures is more challenging as it requires people to be self-reflective, rather than critical towards others. A militant of the Red Puna noted that

for some comrades the easiest way would be casting a vote. For not fighting, not creating adversaries. Because there is also this apprehension that the discussion is fighting, and there is also this sensitivity of the comrades from base communities,

\textsuperscript{74} Some of these internal associations have obtained a legal status but not all.

\textsuperscript{75} This project included funds for acquiring farming tools, breeding animals, manure, fencing equipment and for non-farming community-led economic projects, such as ecotourism.
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this sensitivity that the discussions are fights. We need to change this, but it costs, it is hard to reverse this (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

Another activist commented that

the debate, beyond being problematic when taking place, [causes] you to take things away to think about, even if you don’t agree… Also, voting is like closed; you say “well, I vote for this and I need to think no longer.” [Or] “well, I have voted already, it’s done, I’ve decided” (Marcela, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

These comments reflect, on the one hand, the importance activists attribute to promoting debate over issues; but, on the other hand, “emotional intensity” (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986) is also evident. Despite voting being perceived here as “closed”, it has been the case in the Red Puna that in particular organisational spaces members have opted for voting. In practice this is a form of modified consensus that is sometimes used, albeit lacking formalised procedures. Some communities with shorter trajectories within the organisation tend to use voting more often; but as communities participate more in the organisation this gradually changes.

In a discussion I had with three activists of the Red Puna, they argued that the consensual decision-making discourse is theoretically sound but of limited operational prospect when more than a few people are involved in decision-making. Thus, they pointed to a gap between the discourse and the practice. It was argued that, often in MNCI meetings, very few people speak, challenging claims that decisions were truly consensual. In that sense, there is an active consensus, where many participate and express their opinions, and there is a passive consensus, where people keep their thoughts to themselves and conform to those who speak up. This passive confirmation may be a result of different reasons. It may be that people are truly in agreement with those who speak up; or, alternatively, they may have reservations but hesitate to express them for a variety of reasons. These activists agreed that a process of participation is constantly taking place within the organisation, and a process of consensual decision-making can enhance it; but occasionally it is not a practical method, in spite of its potential to strengthen the social fabric of the organisation.

Creating active consensus, which is an important objective of the Red Puna, is a slow and difficult process. This involves the formation of consciousness among the members of the communities and also the decentralisation of power, conventionally held by one or few leaders. Thus, not only the majority of a particular rural community needs to accept the idea
that power over decision-making of communal affairs should be decentralised back to the people, community leaders also need to “surrender” this power. This, in turn, is an ongoing process that requires much attention and support, and different levels of success are evident across different communities.

The MOCASE-VC, in contrast, takes a stronger stand regarding consensus decision-making and numerous research participants had expressed strong convictions in this regard. It seems that this discourse and practice are more normative among the base communities of this organisation; but it does not mean that people there have no internalised forms of oppression (Graeber, 2009). Gender inequalities, for example, are an area in which the organisation believes emphasis is needed. Active consensus requires that both men and women participate and express their views. But enhancing active participation of women living in a traditional society with distinct gender roles, where men are usually the decision-makers in the household and in the community, requires addressing such inequalities. With that, the need to encourage participation of both genders seems to be permanent, always to be present.

The difficulty of promoting political consciousness among indigenous communities in highland Jujuy, and the tolerance the Red Puna demonstrates towards practices that may not fit well with its horizontal vision, have also to do with the particular conceptualisation autonomy has in that territory. Autonomy has become a fundamental pillar for social movements worldwide (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer, 2010), and it often encapsulates notions of horizontalism and autogestión, with the latter referring to self-organisation and self-management but also with a particular socio-political connotation (Sittrin, 2006; Vieta, 2010). This conceptualisation of autonomy resonates strongly with the concept of autonomous geographies, where groups strive for greater solidarity and constructing a more egalitarian and non-capitalist social relations (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006).

The organisations under examination here have clearly established autonomous spaces and autonomy is of most importance to them. But while conceptually there is no apparent difference between these organisations, there are some differences regarding the practicalities of autonomy. In the MOCASE-VC the main emphasis is on the autonomy of the third-tier organisation. Base communities have a strong identity as being part of the organisation, and accessing resources is more centralised. The organisation wants to prevent competition over resources between its member associations, and thus their autonomy in this regard is limited.
By joining the MOCASE-VC first and second-tier organisations cede some of their autonomy for the greater collective benefit.

The Red Puna is quite different in this regard. There it is the autonomy of base communities that receives notable importance;

We are different. This we must make clear, that every community is different… and all are autonomous, making their own decisions…. And there are some that are much more centralised, like having a president, like there is directive commission that steers the community forward, and others where all decide in the community (Raquel, Red Puna, interviewed 16.1.2011).

Not only is the autonomy of communities highly regarded; but the organisation also tolerates non-horizontal practices, at least in the short-run.

The all important issue of autonomy was raised in interviews with activists of the Red Puna and most agree that it is a double-edged sword. According to a Red Puna militant, people commonly say that

“we make the decision in the community;” “nobody comes to impose anything on us.” Later this also ends mixing up with the interests of being able to manage things. That is, “we are autonomous, we are not only with the Red Puna but we are [also] with other organisations.” “Even though we are in the Red Puna we have the autonomy to manage resources from other places.” I believe this isn’t ultimately a bad thing, but such autonomy is very open, very open and dangerous at the same time; dangerous because this autonomy doesn't allow you to grow politically (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010).

In other words, depending on how autonomy is being exercised it may be positive or it may conceal egoism, self interest or a narrow social vision that impedes solidarity and change – grow politically – and for such reasons it may be dangerous rather than valuable. Autonomy can denote struggle against domination, resonating with notions of autonomous spaces or geographies; but in its neoliberal individualistic form, or in other regressive scenarios, autonomy can also reflect a “divide and rule” practice.
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“El jefe es el acuerdo”76 – Técnicos-campesinos alliance and leadership in horizontal organisation

Any critical analysis of horizontal organisation must address the issue of leadership. Are there leaders in horizontal organisations? Should there be? How is such leadership, if it exists, different from conventional vertical leadership? Some reflective literature on collectivism, some of which is situated within anarchistic and feminist frameworks, acknowledges the complicated and often unresolved issues surrounding leadership (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Polletta, 2002; Gordon, 2005). While the more radical and purist discourses correlate horizontalism with non-hierarchy and leaderless organisation, empirically it seems that certain forms of leadership do emerge. For example, Uri Gordon (2005) demonstrates that within current anarchist politics there are anxieties around the notion of “leadership”. People clearly have different personal skills and attributes, and thus power-inequalities become evident. Ignoring or negating this would be to bury a head in the sand. By openly addressing this issue it is far more possible, in my view, that leadership in participatory horizontal democracy would be non-decisive but sharing and inclusive, where individuals in positions of leadership act like coaches (Hendriks, 2010) rather than vanguards.

Now, while leadership and its implications for horizontal consensus decision-making in organisational structures are in no way insignificant or irrelevant, I would like to address another facet of the “leadership anxiety”, a facet shared by both the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. Here I refer to the so-called técnicos, or “campesinos de manos blandas” (“peasants of soft hands”), that form part of these organisations. This is a fascinating and complicated partnership, or phenomenon, within the social movement sphere that deserves more significant academic attention. It is a particular form of partnership in which predominantly middle-class, urban and university educated individuals and groups become part of a grassroots rural movement of marginalised peasants. In more general terms, this is an association of middle-class professionals with lower-class grassroots organisations. Unlike instances where NGOs collaborate with grassroots movements, here there is no “us” and “them”, all are members of the same (grassroots) organisation.

Sally Matthews (2008, p. 1035) notes that “an important question raised by the debate between post-development theorists and their critics is the question of how privileged people are to respond meaningfully to their own situation of privilege and to the contrasting

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76 The boss is the agreement. (Acuerdo could also mean compromise, resolution and consultative meeting.)
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situations of poverty experienced by so many.” I wish to take a position that resonates with hers in acknowledging the problematic language used here; however, I also argue that, in Matthews’s attempt to answer this important question, the option of meaningful partnership between the seemingly “privileged” and the “less privileged” was not considered. Since the “privileged” are not the main focus of this research, I will pay attention to this partnership and its role in creating integral change through participatory horizontal organisation.

As portrayed in Chapter Six, NGOs were involved in the mobilisation and formation of both the MOCASE and Red Puna. In the 2001 division of the MOCASE, the Centrales that opted for changing the structure of the organisations were supported by the CENEPP, a development oriented NGO. In subsequent years this NGO had dissolved into the MOCASE-VC, and became an integral part of the grassroots organisation. Similarly, API, one of the NGOs involved in the creation of the Red Puna, also went through a process of integration that resulted in its técnicos becoming members of a grassroots movement.

The partnerships between CENEPP and MOCASE-VC, and API and Red Puna are important initiatives of an integrated approach where the lines separating the technical experts and the peasants are blurred. This, however, could potentially entail some obstacles for achieving horizontality given the differences in levels of expertise and formal education. Indeed, a number of research participants expressed criticism of this partnership, referring to its nature and also to what they believe it implicates for achieving a horizontal structure. Some believe that the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are managed by the técnicos, or at least, as a leader from the “historic” MOCASE commented, “those who represent the campesinos [in MOCASE-VC] are técnicos, and we are campesinos ourselves who represent the MOCASE” (Gustavo, MOCASE, interviewed 16.3.2010). He added that técnicos may be better versed when dealing with the authorities; but to him it is important that the campesinos themselves would front the authorities. A member of a rural organisation from the Puna region was much more sardonic, arguing that

[having técnicos] for technical assistance may be good; but if they come to lead the organisation it’s bad for us. Because all those who came to this day and continue to lead the organisation [Red Puna] are foreigners [that] have another vision, occidental let’s say (Nicolás, Red Kolla, interviewed 25.1.2011).

Thus, for critics not only are the técnicos not campesinos, they are often not from the region and therefore may be labelled “foreigners”. There are a couple of issues apparent here. First, there is a class, or socioeconomic, divide separating the campesinos and the predominantly
middle-class urban técnicos. Second, in additions to class differentiation, the shift from “campesinismo” to “indianismo” (Pallares, 2002) in different parts of Latin America, as discussed in Chapter Five, highlights also ethnic divides. To overcome these differences individuals and groups need to bridge across both class and ethnic categorisations.

Such criticism is, nevertheless, utterly revoked by members of the MOCASE-VC. All participants saw the técnicos as integral and equal members of the organisation; but, while some “campesinos de manos duras” (“peasants of hard hands”) commented that the técnicos comply with what they want them to do, others just dismissed the allegations saying that “we see the CENEPP as MOCASE, same comrades; we are the same” (Marcos, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.2.2010). This notion was also shared by members in a focus group interview;

inside the movement there are no técnicos – they are comrades in the struggle, they are militants. Because all of the days they are [involved] with daily rural activities and do not feel much differentiated. There was a time we also said “peasants of soft hands” because [they come] from a university; but we have come to realise that we are all técnicos or we are all campesinos (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

When this issue was raised in discussion with the so-called técnicos of the MOCASE-VC, similar responses were given. One commented that “here there are no técnicos and campesinos. We are all militants of the MOCASE [VC]. We integrated into the movement and fulfil a task within the movement” (Alicia, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 25.2.2010). Another added that

it’s true, we are not Santiagueños, we may not live off the land, we live from another [form of] production. We are very devoted to writing projects to obtain the resources; we do a lot of these things, which is another way of producing – we produce other things (Teresa, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 24.3.2010).

In effect, a common response was that the técnicos and the campesinos complement each other’s knowledge and work together for the benefit of all.

Having experts within the organisation also acts to increase autonomy and allow for more resources to be allocated towards projects, rather than to the personal pockets of external experts. This, in turn, has created some friction with the provincial branch of the Ministry of Agriculture’s Sub-secretary of Family Agriculture, which is an important source of development projects. The MOCASE-VC wants the Sub-secretary to finance projects without sending their técnicos to manage them, as the organisation already has the expertise required.
The development agency insists, in contrast, that they will work with campesinos, not with the técnicos of the campesinos. This is indeed another form of external pressure on the organisation, which although not related to its horizontal structure still challenges the way in which the organisation operates.

Moreover, as mentioned in the previous part of the chapter, many of these so-called técnicos of the MOCASE-VC reside in Quimilí and this is a main reason why Quimilí is usually the entry point to the organisation. These particular members of the organisation have an important role in determining whether visitors have sincere intentions about collaborating with the organisation in an appropriate and beneficial manner, and thus avoiding harm and deceit. This, however, is not a manifestation of exercising control but rather a response to instances where some people tried to infiltrate or gather information about the organisation, apparently on behalf of the secret services or the police. Once a visitor is judged to be genuine, he or she will be assisted in reaching other Centrales, and even be encouraged to do so. In other words, the organisation believes that some people are better capacitated to act as gatekeepers.

Notwithstanding the unity within the organisation regarding the issues of their role and the perceived centrality of Quimilí, from discussions with different so-called “peasants of soft hands” it became clear that they are aware of the intrinsic potential for power imbalances embedded in their position within the organisation. Therefore, according to one of them, in assemblies they try to problematise issues in order to invoke further discussion, rather than exercise influence they may have as more capacitated individuals. Of significance here is to be reflective and being able to openly discuss these issues, instead of pretending there is no issue here at all. It seems to me that such reflectivity is present in the MOCASE-VC.

The Red Puna also shares this partnership experience, and as noted above, is also subject to similar criticism. One of these so-called técnicos addressed this criticism regarding their involvement in the organisation by arguing that it is more of a commentary to discredit, is a way to discredit the peasant organisation… It is a devaluation to say “the campesinos, the leaders, don’t have their own opinion and surely these are a few gringuitos who are there telling them what to say or to do.” That is a very serious devaluation that exists… In the case of the Red, since it has been left without técnicos in the past few years and

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77 *Gringo* means a foreigner, a stranger, often used for English-speakers of European descent. *Gringuitos* means “small” gringos
continues to operate, today we can see that [there is] a significant leading role of campesinos and their leaders. They are the ones carrying forward the Red, let’s say, the leadership. Therefore, with time this argument is going to have less weight, because in the past when we were 15 técnicos, well, this had some truth… but not now; now they are not here… (Laura, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

In addition to dismissing this type of comment as an attempt to discredit the trajectory and accomplishments of the organisation, this activist also perceived the relations between técnicos and campesinos as being among peers.

And that is the intent of the work that has been done all these years; the ability to complement knowledge, complement the expertise, the developed skills, the things that each one has from one’s history… We are all different, in the Western world and in the Andean world … And we see it as if we share a life project, a political project, and in that anyone joins-in who wants to contribute… (Laura, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

She noted that there are many apparent differences apart from the perhaps most commonly cited Occidental – Andean cultural divide. Therefore, within the seemingly homogenous social composition of rural communities that form the Red Puna there are several categories of difference. The animal ranchers of the Puna are different from the agriculturalists of the Quebrada; women are different from men; and those who had migrated and returned often hold different opinions to those who have never left the region. There is great diversity across various dimensions, but as long as all share an aspiration for achieving common objectives, inclusiveness is beneficial and fruitful.

Still, técnicos – campesinos relations in the Red Puna have had a fair share of tension. As the Red Puna activist above noted, from having more than a dozen técnicos, the organisation currently has only a few, most of whom are historical members from API. Concurrently, a cadre of grassroots leaders emerged and grew through the “leadership school” of the organisation. Unlike in the MOCASE-VC, the word dirigente (leader, decision-maker) is frequently used in the Red Puna to describe the more active members of the organisation. Leaders in the organisation assume the role of organisers rather than as the ultimate makers of decisions; but this is arguably another indication of the weaker horizontal discourse expressed by rural communities in Jujuy. Again, dissimilar from the MOCASE-VC, which also has grassroots militants working in collaboration with “foreign” militants, the grassroots leadership of the Red Puna had contested the técnicos’ role. A grassroots leader explained that
having passed four, five, years I believe that we have had a very important crisis where we leaders who had trained there [in the “school of leaders”] started to say “well, we are already trained to make decisions and such, to have a broader vision of reality, of the context where we live, of the social context.” And some more and others less put forward as to say “well, now enough of técnicos, we do not want to…” Let’s see, I felt as if there was a competition. To say, “well, if not us, for what are we here if the técnicos are going to continue to say what should be done?”; because in the beginning it was like this. …and I think that they understood this proposition that now we have grown, and with time we had started to see each other as equals, comrades. I can’t say at what exact time, it was a process of becoming more like peers. And today those who are here are our comrades… and are part of the organisation, because they have grown together with the organisation. For me, that’s how I see it. I have no difficulty to say to them “che, you are wrong on this” (Marcela, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

In essence, a genuine process of empowerment took place, but it also inflicted some tensions within the organisation.

Disagreements with técnicos were not confined to the period during which grassroots leadership was first established. This latter Red Puna activist also asserted that in recent years some politicised técnicos had joined the organisation and brought with them a strong discourse of revolution and social change. But they were also quite authoritarian and therefore were pushed out of the organisation, some having left amid mutual feelings of resentment. She noted that some were very combative and failed to understand the internal dynamics of the organisation. Another grassroots leader noted that militant técnicos are much politicised and when they realise that, on the whole, rural communities are not receptive to such strong counter-hegemonic political discourse they become frustrated. Similarly, in some instances communities and grassroots leaders resented the técnicos because of their discourse and proposed lines of actions.

One such militant técnico that left the organisation asserted that there are many positive aspects to the Red Puna but that it has arguably become an NGO that only delivers development projects to communities. This is because there is no politicisation accompanying the development process. According to this view, a social movement becomes an NGO once it becomes politically neutralised, or alternatively, because it was never politically charged, and as such it only delivers resources for development projects. According to this research participant, the grassroots leaders of the organisation are politicised; but since most of them no longer permanently live in their rural communities (a characteristic of a professionalisation process of local grassroots leaders that emerge through social organisation
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and mobilisation) their important political discourse and analyses do not permeate further to the popular base of the organisation.

There was wide agreement among many research participants that forming political consciousness among indigenous rural communities in highland Jujuy is a challenge, as discussed earlier; but I do not share the above critique that the organisation has been reduced to merely delivering development projects. Clearly, the Red Puna has a particular political agenda and vision for a different form of development; acknowledging the difficulty of forming political consciousness through more tangible and much anticipated development projects. Be that as it may, the experience of the Red Puna would suggest that a relatively low degree of counter-hegemonic political consciousness among the popular base of a grassroots organisation is likely to be an impediment for a partnership with politically motivated professional middle-class militants, or politicised técnicos. Still, the experiences of both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna demonstrate, although in a different manner, that such partnerships can be successful and a viable option for the so-called “privileged” to meaningfully engage with the “less privileged”.

Furthermore, grassroots members in both organisations did not perceive having técnicos as either a real or potential threat to horizontality or consensual decision-making. The matter, I believe, is not to merely judge the organisation as “horizontal” or “vertical”. Rather, the organisation’s aspiration to horizontality is clearly not an unproblematic process, and being aware of existing and potential impediments for achieving horizontality is an important step forward towards creating a meaningful participatory political model. I would conclude that the partnership between técnicos and campesinos, as uncomfortable as it may be to some, is a source of strength for these grassroots organisations. With that, this unusual partnership also adds another aspect to the already challenging issue of how to best accommodate leadership within horizontal organisations.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed a key aspect of an integral development model – organisational structure. The importance of grassroots social movements and their involvement in bottom-up development is by now a common wisdom; but if a broad sense of development is envisioned, one that includes not only improving incomes but that also
challenges existing forms of domination over marginalised communities, the means of achieving such goals are arguably as important as the goals themselves. Participatory democracy is often perceived by progressive social organisations as one such vehicle for bringing about meaningful economic, social and political change, all components of an integral development model.

MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are two organisations that adhere to a prefigurative political paradigm that strives for constructing alternative and counter-hegemonic socio-political associations through horizontal organisational structures and consensus decision-making rule (which in practice are often modified). These are means for forming and enhancing solidarity, empowerment and autonomy, while emancipating from domination and exploitation, social and economic. With the optimism and hope such initiatives provide, it is not constructive to overlook either the challenges they pose or those being inflicted by the wider social and political environment. Different challenges are associated with collectivism and cooperativism, some arguably more universal, others more place-bound. In Santiago del Estero and Jujuy geography and poor infrastructure, for example, are such specific impediments for achieving horizontality.

In the last section of this chapter I have addressed an interesting aspect of the organisational experience of both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna; the unusual partnership with so-called técnicos. The latter are militants, mostly from the urban middle class and often university graduates that in the early years of organisation assisted the grassroots peasant movements as NGO members and later were assimilated into them, becoming “peasants of soft hands”. Besides being an interesting experience and phenomenon, this is also an aspect of leadership in horizontal structures. In all, these experiences of participatory democracy are insightful and hopeful, but have their associated challenges.

In the next chapter I will address the achievements of the integral development model, as it has been practiced by the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. Having radical democracy and horizontalism as moral and practical guides for development, I will argue shortly, serve to politicise ostensibly apolitical income-generating projects, promoting social change alongside economic development.
Chapter Nine

Achieving Integral Rural Development

Introduction

Up until this point I have portrayed and analysed in detail the processes that led to the formation of campesino-indigenous movements in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy (Chapters Five and Six), the challenges these marginalised social groups face (Chapter Seven), the aims and objectives of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna (Chapter Seven), and the models these organisations use for achieving their goals (Chapter Eight). These topics are all significant for analysing the development model pursued by these organisations. I perceive this model as being integral in the sense of addressing an array of challenges, from more material ones to the social and political. As part of the third research objective, in this last empirical chapter I will discuss what has been achieved by these two grassroots social organisations, which adhere to this integral development paradigm.

The objectives of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, conceptualised as being part of an integral development model, resonate with the discourse of food sovereignty. This discursive model includes various social, economic, political and environmental aspects, and it is
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propitious to find that some achievements have been made on virtually all of these aspects, albeit to different degrees. As in other parts of this thesis, I will construct the discussion around what research participants have said during interviews, not in an attempt to represent them but to allow them to speak for themselves (which is indeed an achieved objective of the organisations in itself). Of course, the discussion, analysis and any errors these may include are solely mine.

I would like to begin with an overarching argument that captures the essence of the achievements of the organisations. This argument, articulated here in the words of a Red Puna militant, makes explicit reference to the Red Puna; but the same holds also for the MOCASE-VC;

on the one hand there is a long-term struggle for social and political change, but in turn the day-to-day has to be resolved. It’s necessary all the time to find that balance between the day-to-day and long-term and medium-term [objectives]. And it also seems to me that being able to work on the two things is an achievement of the Red; in order to permanently improve the income of the comrades, men and women, in their productions, …generating collective sales… and on the other hand working on the more political medium- and long-term objectives (Laura, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

This comment mirrors the integral development approach, emphasising the temporal aspect of different objectives and the need for achieving a good balance in working on the different objectives.

The chapter begins with an analytic account on how integral development is being promoted through collective production and commercialisation. This strategy addresses both short and medium term socio-political and socio-economic objectives and provides examples and evidence for its merits. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of social and political achievements, which are paramount for integral development models, and that are being realised through the many different activities of these organisations. Ending with an attempt to look forward, this chapter draws to a close with a discussion of the often controversial strategic option of bringing about change through engaging with party politics and contesting the institutionalised political apparatus.
**Achieving integral development through collective production and commercialisation**

As discussed in Chapter Seven, MOCASE-VC and Red Puna share an overarching aim to improve the standards of living of their constituents, as well as of other peasant producers, while respecting the local *campesino* culture and practicing food sovereignty. For achieving this aim there are also ostensibly more day-to-day objectives, like increasing income through improving production and commercialisation and more medium to long term objectives, such as creating a more equitable society. However, in effect, improving production and commercialisation is also a medium to long-term objective. The urgency of this objective is indeed greater, compared to some other socio-political objectives, but economic and livelihood related improvements are being pursued with an emphasis on challenging and changing social relations of domination in the production process.

Due to the nature of the organisations, as elaborated in the previous chapter, economic and social achievements cannot be easily separated. Through their economic strategies, and stemming from notions of radical democracy, the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna seek to promote processes of collective decision making and cooperativism that, in turn, guide a more sustainable economic development while reinforcing their constituent communities’ identities, ancestral practices and organisation. According to this strategic viewpoint, improving the standards of living of *campesinos* cannot be measured merely in terms of monetary or material accumulation, but must consider also social, cultural and environmental aspects.

Of great importance is improving peasant livelihoods, which include issues of production and commercialisation. For this reason both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna put much emphasis on improving and strengthening their economic strategies, trying to promote a process of development that is not only sustainable but also provides an alternative to the capitalist economic structure, or at least to its more predatory characteristics. This, in turn, makes it an interesting field for academic research that wishes to add knowledge and evidence for drafting more equitable solutions for current socioeconomic disparities.

Both organisations, therefore, are consistently working on securing funds for development projects relating to production. These projects are often related to more immediate challenges, such as water in Santiago del Estero. There are also ongoing relations with students from the Faculty of Agronomy in the University of Buenos Aires and other experts.
in order to facilitate research into other important productive aspects, such as improving pasture. Both organisations also cooperate with NGOs and universities, particularly from Spain, on projects of renewable energy and strategies of production and commercialisation of products.

The main aim is to promote communal projects that would benefit the community as a whole, rather than projects that are beneficial for individual families. This, however, is not always possible. Some communities are more scattered than others and it might be inevitable that the organisations take on projects, such as digging water wells or receiving quality breeding animals, which would benefit a single family. A MOCASE-VC activist explained that in general, projects have always been done for all the MOCASE and then discussed among all where they are most needed. We have certain criteria for receiving projects, not anyone can receive a project. For example, a new comrade that doesn’t have yet a course of participation and organisation will not receive projects, and that is said by experience, because they are the most likely to fail. Comrades who have not shown that they are going to fight for the land do not receive projects ... Here there will be no welfarism, we all have to be active actors if we want things to change. If not, it is the same as always (Teresa, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 24.3.2010).

Thus, for maximising benefits as well as chances for success, development projects would preferably be directed for the good of a community; but if an individual family is at greater need it could receive a project, given it had proven its commitment to the organisation and the struggle, hence Teresa’s comment on welfarism. Importantly, it is ultimately the members of the organisations who decide who would receive a project.

Part of the reservations behind giving projects to individual families stem from instances, in Santiago del Estero, where individual families “sold” their land after they obtained a project, usually relating to water, that increased its value. But the more profound reasoning behind this approach is embedded in the integral approach to development. Key here is the promotion of social change, resting on notions of communal ownership of resources and decision making, coupled with economic development; the social and the economic cannot be separated, according to this integral approach. Therefore, in its own words, the MOCASE-VC stated that it is intended to promote sustainable development in order to improve the quality of life of the indigenous-peasant families of the area, and to strengthen their organisation, revaluing the ancestral knowledge and improving the systems of
primary production, as well as their agro-industrial transformation and communal commercialisation (MOCASE-VC, n.d., my translation).

That is, development will not be sustainable if the local culture and the organisation of the campesinos are neglected.

The MOCASE-VC emphasises improvement of sustainable agriculture practices that utilise local indigenous knowledge, appreciating that even though economic activities such as making charcoal and wooden posts are important sources of income for many campesino families in Santiago del Estero, at present levels they are not environmentally sustainable. Therefore, much work has been done to capitalise on raw materials that are of sustainable sources, transforming them into consumable products by adding value to them. These products are traditional food items made and consumed by campesinos for generations as part of their subsistence form of life. As the above quote suggests, the production and commercialisation of traditional food items are done as communal, rather than individual, activities.

The joint economic activities of the MOCASE-VC, thus, are functioning as a cooperative, which according to Patrick Mooney (2004, p. 77) “can potentially pave the bridge between polity and economy with a democratic ethos.” A common definition of what constitutes a cooperative includes three principles: “user-owner”, “user-control” and “user-benefit”. The combination of these principles result in a cooperative being a “user-owned and controlled business from which benefits are derived and distributed on the basis of use” (Dunn, 1998, p. 85). A cooperative is an economic venture that is unique by being an organisation that is both a democratic collective of members and a business simultaneously (Gray and Stevenson, 2008). Furthermore, according to Carl Ratner (2009) the idea of cooperativism serves to analyse social grievances and assists in remedying them; and, therefore, it is also an effective tool for combating the adverse social and environmental effects of capitalism. Cooperatives are an important organisational form within the solidarity and social economy. Although not a new phenomenon, this economy has re-emerged during the last quarter of the previous century partially as a “reaction against neo-liberal principles and individualistic ideology” (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005, p. 2041).

In legal terms, the MOCASE-VC itself is not a cooperative. The Central of Quimilí does operate a legally recognised cooperative, but other Centrales may have different legal arrangements. In order to obtain required permits for processing and marketing food items,
and for issuing invoices, an economic venture must have a recognised legal status; and, somewhat ironically, it is required by law that a cooperative will have a vertical structure with a president, a treasurer and so forth. This, of course, is in contrast to the horizontal discourse of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna; but apart from having names down as holders of these positions it has no real bearing on the way in which communal economic activities are managed in these two organisations.

Focusing on the MOCASE-VC, currently there are six chains of communal “agro-industrial” peasant production across its Centrales (MOCASE-VC, n.d.). The first one is an operation of sweets and preserved food. This operation includes four small factories in different Centrales where value is added to raw materials such as goat milk and meat, pumpkins, watermelons and tuna (a prickly pear cactus of the Opuntia genus), which are processed into final consumable goods. All of these products are based on traditional recipes and work is done to ensure the consistency of products across all four factories.

The second economic operation is the cheese factory (see Figure 9.1) in a community that belongs to the Central of Quimilí. The cheese factory was designed and built by a Spanish NGO – Engineering Without Borders – which also assists with solving ongoing production problems. The small cheese factory works on solar energy and the pasteurisation process is done by heating water with a wood burner. This operation is still relatively small and it faces some challenges, both in terms of availability of milk and of technical difficulties.

The third economic operation is traditional wool weaving and fabrics. Campesino women in Santiago del Estero used to produce textiles; but, due to the low prices they received for these products from travelling merchants, many had lost interest in this traditional art and subsequently knowledge of spinning, dyeing and weaving sheep wool was lost among younger women, and kept only by older women. The organisation is trying to revive this traditional craft by collectively commercialising the products. There is demand for these textiles and the economic prospects encourage the younger generation to learn and preserve this art form (MOCASE-VC, n.d.).

The fourth economic activity is apiculture. Campesinos used to collect honey from wild bees for generations but bee-keeping is a relatively new industry among campesinos in the province. Apiculture is a valuable industry not only for its economic prospects but also for its appeal to young campesinos. The work involved in bee-keeping is not as physically demanding as in some other farm jobs, and it requires some specialised knowledge, which
stimulates interest in this field. Moreover, involving young adults in this industry creates occupation opportunities in their own communities and that allows at least for some to avoid migrating in the search for employment.

The fifth economic project of this organisation is capitalising on the most important source of campesino livelihood in the province – livestock. There are currently three butcheries operating in different Centrales. The meat sold in the butchers’ shops is sourced from members of the organisation; and, if they cannot supply all that is demanded, animals are bought from campesinos who are not members. The other products of the organisation are also sold in these shops. This operation provides some members with a channel for selling their animals, for which they know they will receive a fair price and will be paid in a timely manner. In addition, it enhances the ability of the organisation to exercise food sovereignty by protecting both local producers and consumers from external market pressures in this industry, which is highly important to the Argentinean culture and consumption habits.
The last communal economic activity of the MOCASE-VC is a carpentry workshop (see Figure 9.1). Although the organisation is cautious regarding the extraction of timber from the imperilled native forest, when carefully done it could be sustainable. The carpentry workshop sources its materials from fellow members, and some of its products are demanded by the organisation and its members, such as beehives and different types of furniture. It is not, however, limited to selling only to members.

The effects of these collective economic initiatives on peasant communities reach much further than merely improving income levels. As a matter of fact, at current levels of production it could be argued that the economic impact of these activities is not highly significant, and it is quite limited to the families who engage directly with these operations. However, the socio-political effect of these operations is invaluable, and they have a real potential for having a far more significant economic impact as well.

The non-economic effects of the MOCASAE-VC’s communal economic activities are important for promoting the discursive notion of integral socio-political change. These effects stem to a great extent from managing the economic operations as cooperatives. An active member in the Secretariat of Production and Commercialisation asserted that

when I say improving the life of the campesinos it is not only thinking of income, of profitability. Improving the lives of campesinos is [about] us waking up to see that sometimes there is no equality in the distribution of income - here we are doing it; there is no gender equality - here we are doing it; [we] practice what it is “cultural sovereignty”, don’t we? Cheese was ancestrally made here and we respect the tradition, only that we are giving more security to what is the [final] product (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010).

Taking the cheese factory, which is located in his community, as an example for the manifold effects these economic operations have on some campesino communities, the same participant commented that the cheese factory

reinforce[s] what is “cultural sovereignty”, “food sovereignty”, gender equity, fairness in the distribution, not to work with a patron. The bosses [are us], we make the agreements. We are autonomous; we meet, we make our meetings, we decide the price of milk, the price of cheese, when to sell it, how to pay, how to distribute the money, how to... and that is very important. It is very important to know that no one will come and say “you need to do so and so, and I will take the money, and you take...” no? – the unjust distribution... here it is all equitable distribution and we make the decision[s] (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010).
Thus, what it is important is the ownership of the means of production, being autonomous to choose and make one’s own decisions, not merely as individuals but as a community in which its constituents are mutually responsible for one another. This, in turn, further solidifies the solidarity and organisation of the campesinos, forming among them social, economic and political consciousness.

To better understand the non-economic ramifications of these communal economic activities it is beneficial to briefly explain how they operate. In a “base community” of the Central of Quimilí a group of women make and sell (through the cooperative) products they were already traditionally making at home, such as dulce de leche (caramelised milk) and other sweets. In the case of making dulce de leche, the women gather at the home of one of them and each brings some goat milk from her herd, and together they make the product, filling the jars so that they are air-tight and labelling them. Each time they produce they keep a record of how much milk each had brought, how many hours of labour each had worked and how many inputs, such as sugar, were used. After the goods are sold each woman gets her share according to her inputs. This operation allows them not only to capitalise on their goat milk, which otherwise has very little economic value, but also to earn money from their labour. However, time lags between production and sales meaning earnings lag as well.

Similar to the dulce de leche production, the cheese factory also uses goat milk from members of the organisation who live in the community where it is located, and each owner-user receives money according to his or her inputs in terms of milk and labour. Together they have decided how to price the milk and labour inputs, and by adding the other costs involved they have worked out the retail price of the final product. This price also includes a small amount that is paid to the Central as a “tax”. That is, a small portion of each item sold is paid to the Central in which it was produced. These funds are then used to finance the different activities of the organisation. Returning to the cheese factory example, the price of each cheese wheel reflects the price of the inputs of its production. What is not calculated in this price is a profit margin that usually goes to the owner of the factory, the capitalist. The calculated price, thus, reflects production costs without capitalist profit, but since it is based on production costs in the province it was soon found that in Buenos Aires this price was very low for such an artisanal food product and therefore they charge a higher price there, which in turn does leave a profit margin to the organisation.
By adhering to concepts of horizontal, equitable, participatory and democratic organisation structure, the members of the MOCASE-VC are taking an active role in shaping their socio-economic future. However, this form of operating a business is not without difficulties;

[horizontality] is not easy. Sometimes we linger for a long time for making a decision. But the decision, when reached, is consensual. These are all learning exercises. It is very difficult to move away from individual production to collective production, isn’t it? (Osvaldo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 1.3.2010).

The principle of consensus decision-making is of paramount importance to the MOCASE-VC and it guides all of its decisions, as was elaborated in Chapter Eight. Advantages of working as a collective within the contexts of social development and change are more obvious. It requires the participation of all members and thus demands greater commitment; it requires listening and openness to other members’ opinions and could potentially bring about more weighted decisions; it is a particularly empowering process when adopted by marginalised groups; and it promotes unity (Coy, 2003; Mansbridge, 2003). With that, as this research participant noted, operating in a horizontal structure is not always easy.

The adoption of a consensus decision-making rule coupled with a shift to working as a cooperative in certain areas of production is a very interesting sociological and economic aspect of the development process carried by the MOCASE-VC. Although grazing land has always been communal, production in terms of livestock and cultivation has traditionally been done on a family basis. Moving from this traditional form of production to working as a collective, therefore, is not an insignificant change. It may indeed be regarded as a valuable attempt to develop a particular form of “ethical community economy” (Gibson-Graham, 2003) that provides an alternative to predatory capitalism and its adverse effects, as suggested by Ratner (2009).

As briefly mentioned above, the collective structure of these economic activities is not only about the just distribution of income or consensus decision-making, but also about promoting gender equality. Gender issues were touched upon while in the field, but this study does not dedicate much attention to gender issues, which are nevertheless very important within the peasant movement and thus warrant further, more specific research. Be that as it may, although the MOCASE-VC’s economic ventures do not employ many people directly, a large proportion of those who take an active part in these activities are women, a fact that has further implications for the relations between gender and production in a society that still has some traditional patriarchal characteristics. Since cooking is traditionally the role of women
in the campesino household, it is not unexpected that they are a driving force in economic initiatives that involve food processing. This without a doubt has had some social implications; women can directly earn money, but for that they must be absent from home, leaving their domestic traditional duties for others to complete. Not all women get support from their families to take part in these activities; but the organisation is undoubtedly trying to empower women for generating a social change in this regard as well. Thus, the economic operations of the organisation have a positive effect on gender imbalances, which impede the achievement of a true horizontal structure.

Thus, while it could be argued that at current levels of production the economic impact of these collective economic activities on campesino communities is not highly significant; their most momentous value is embedded in the non-economic impacts. The use of horizontal and consensus decision-making crystallises and enhances notions of self-efficacy, autonomy, solidarity and empowerment. It assists in forming social, political and economic consciousness among members and also has a positive impact on gender imbalances since many who take part in these activities are women. This approach offers a model for development projects that promote social and economic development concurrently, making development political.

Even though many research participants acknowledged some production related achievements, they also noted that much more work is still required in order to make more substantial impact. However, while the collective economic ventures serve as a good example of how integral development materialises, when asked to describe the achievements of their organisation research participants from both movements indicated that gaining better market access and improving commercialisation are among the most significant achievement. This, in turn, was also identified as a key challenge for campesino livelihoods. A MOCASE-VC member noted that

> at the time of the sale of cotton, for example, one came and bought your product or exchanged it with merchandise, and like this he took your product. They put the price, they brought over the merchandise, put a higher price on it and took everything. For example, now, one has it better because he sells more directly [and collectively] to a cooperative (Bernardo, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.3.2010).

The campesinos can receive a better price for their production by being organised and selling collectively. The organisation circumvents the exploitive position of the intermediary by
uniting small producers and by negotiating better deals. Producers increasingly enjoy market access through the organisation and this is particularly important for the more isolated communities.

In addition, both organisations have workshops and training on different aspects of production, which also assist the subsequent commercialisation by improving and ensuring consistent and adequate quality. For a member of the Red Puna who lives in a fairly isolated location, for example, “the most notable achievements are in the accompaniment of our artisan work. The accompaniment as well as the subject of training, in searching for a market, in helping us with how to sell our raw materials” (Gabriel, Red Puna, interviewed 29.1.2011). Traditional artisanal weaving has been promoted by the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna as a viable source of livelihood while also maintaining and developing cultural customs and knowledge (see Figure 9.1).

Returning to the collective production of the MOCASE-VC, the Centrales produce goods separately but marketing is done collectively under the name of the organisation and using its social networks. Some marketing is done through the butcher shops, where they exist. These shops sell not only meat and processed food of the organisation, but also other basic food items and other produce of campesinos such as pumpkins and fruits of other cucurbitaceous plants. Outside of the province much of the sales are done through networks of the organisation. A notable channel of such marketing is through students from the University of Buenos Aires’ Faculty of Agronomy. The students sell the products in the university, to friends, in different fairs and to a cooperative in Buenos Aires that has its own channels of marketing. On the one hand, this is not a very efficient commercialisation and it is part of the reason for why long periods may pass from production to when income is received. On the other hand, it is an alternative way of marketing, using collective and personal networks that achieve a “fair trade” and circumvents the high costs associated with intermediaries.

Moreover, marketing products through such networks, and particularly in cooperation with young students, contributes to the struggle of the campesinos in Santiago del Estero far beyond the revenue generated. An activist in the organisation that works with issues of commercialisation commented that

to the extent to which people become acquainted with the MOCASE [VC] for its struggle, they also become acquainted with the products. There are increasingly more people wanting to buy, initially for knowing the MOCASE, for supporting the struggle, but subsequently we are told by our mates that are selling [the
products]; that no, that the people are looking for the products because they like the products (Teresa, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 24.3.2010).

Thus, buying products produced by campesinos in Santiago del Estero enables city dwellers to take part and support the struggle of the campesinos. The packaging of some products clearly indicates the link between this peasant production and struggle. For example, the label of the cheese clearly states it is a product of the peasant struggle for food sovereignty (see Figure 9.2). Hence, these products add to public visibility of the organisation, much beyond its geographic location.

Figure 9.2: Labels of collective products, MOCASE-VC

In spite of the seemingly non-institutionalised marketing system, sales of sweets and preserved food have increased exponentially over the last few years. These products are organic and could be labelled as “fair trade”. In addition, they are part of a wider socio-political struggle, which is a marketing tool in itself. Products such as dulce de leche from goat milk and natural honey, in particular, face an increasing popularity to the point that supply comes well short of demand. Thus, more investment is needed for capitalising on this potential market niche; capital for which credit lines are limited at best. For this reason, problems of production are more acute compared to those of commercialisation.

I have focused here on the politico-economic ventures of the MOCASE-VC but the same strategy is also employed by the Red Puna. The idea is to create production chains within the organisation in order to add value to raw materials and sell products collectively. At the time of my work in the field the most notable organised economic chain of the Red Puna was of artisan craftworks. Natural locally sourced sheep and llama wool is being processed and used
for a variety of quality traditional garments and crafts. In addition, the Micro-red Puna Norte has a butcher shop in the town of La Quiaca, selling llama and sheep meat and also processing the meat into sausages and hamburgers (see Figure 9.1). Similar to the MOCASE-VC, this shop often fails to meet the growing demand for llama meat. Decisions regarding the operation of the shop are discussed and made in the meetings of the Micro-red. This organisation has a further plan for establishing a flour mill to process locally grown grains. This would provide an affordable opportunity to members to add value to their production and opt for increasing their cultivation of grains, which entails less risk compared to vegetables that have to be marketed immediately when ripe. Again, the guiding logic here is of creating intra-organisational economic chains, operated cooperatively.

Achieving integral development through social and political change

As argued above, social change is being achieved through collective economic projects that empower marginalised individuals and communities; but social and political changes are also achieved through the many other activities of these organisations. Undoubtedly, inherent to its design, the horizontal participatory structure of these organisations, as discussed in the previous chapter, is in itself an important tool for bringing about change. With that in mind, I always tried to finish my semi-structured interviews by asking participants what they believe their organisation has achieved in the course of its struggle. Many participants pointed out the numerous social and political achievements accomplished thus far, and it is worthy to mention some of them in greater length.

Here I address social and political achievements together as these are often intertwined and not easily distinguished one from the other. Notwithstanding, in broad terms, the social achievements are more closely linked to the transformation, or at least the change, of oneself and one’s community, whereas the more politically oriented achievements have to do with the relations of the organisations with other state and civil society entities.

Starting with the internal social changes, perhaps the most notable achievement of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna, and for that matter also of many other social organisations, has been what these organisations call formación. This word could be translated into English as “formation”, “training”, “education”, “coaching” or “schooling”, but the Spanish word in this particular context refers primarily to forming social and political consciousness. This term is
different from and preferred over “education” because “to educate” connotes to a degree the authoritarian position of the “educator”. *Formación*, in contrast, embodies a sense of a collective process of learning and developing as conscious and active subjects.

For a militant of the MOCASE-VC, *formación* is about creating consciousness and being able to assume ourselves as social subjects, as subjects capable of collectively transforming reality. I think that is one of the main changes that took form in many comrades… To feel capable, to feel useful, to feel that one has the possibility to decide what one wants to do and join as part of that. That’s precisely it, change will not come from the politician who brings me or gives me, but instead we have to fight for things and to work collectively for them to happen, and that this is possible to achieve. And I think that, well, this is an important achievement in a province like this where the peasantry was permanently negated and it is denied possibilities by the institutions of the state, at school, in the hospital, [by] the politicians of the time, [by] the ongoing discrimination (Alicia, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 25.2.2010).

Thus, of much importance is the transformation of *campesinos* into active social subjects, in spite of years of marginalisation and discrimination. This militant also noted that discrimination and abuse of *campesinos* are still very prevalent in Santiago del Estero, but as a result of the activities of the organisation, and other social actors, some communities were empowered to fight for their rights. For instance, some communities had managed to replace abusive and underperforming rural teachers and confront discrimination by medical practitioners.

The empowerment of the community, a very important social entity for rural groups (for further discussion see Salamon and MacTavish, 2009), has been particularly mentioned by research participants in Jujuy. In the previous chapter I have addressed the relatively high importance attributed to the community as an autonomous body in highland Jujuy, compared to Santiago del Estero. Thus, it only follows that enhancing the autonomy and wellbeing of rural communities was important to members of Red Puna. A research participant from the Puna provided an example:

> at the community level, it’s not the same as I can say it was when I was a girl. Before … the politicians used to go during electoral periods, they came and gave a little bit of coca [leaves], some wine; they “fixed” them that way. To say, like lambs they took people to vote. Now it’s different, because we have grown as a community (Raquel, Red Puna, interviewed 16.1.2011).
The political formation that was gained through the activities of the organisation assisted individuals and communities in developing tools for a critical analysis of their social and political positions within wider society. This is indeed a momentous achievement.

Empowerment and self-efficacy, therefore, are very significant achievements of contemporary social organisation and mobilisation in rural Argentina. A 62 year old member of the MOCASE-VC who has been involved with the organisation for over 10 years noted that “being an old woman, I learned many things; I didn't know my rights but in spite of that, with the organisation, I learned a lot for defending myself” (Belén, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 27.3.2010). Another research participant from the same rural community added that “this organisation is like a school for us. We are going to those meetings in the Central and what are we doing there? We are learning” (Paco, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 27.3.2010). Similarly, a member of the Red Puna stated that

through the Red, in the Working Area of formación, one learns things there too, begins to form, as a person and as a community. It is a process that takes time. But my community, the way it was when I came here, it had no participation in any [forum]… (Felicia, Red Puna, interviewed 28.1.2011).

Again, the importance of gaining knowledge and developing at the individual and the community level is evident here. These comments truly reflect the concept of integral development, where improving incomes is accompanied by an analysis of the social and political order that marginalises and dominates campesino-indigenous communities.

Earlier in this chapter I have mentioned gender inequalities and how collective production has been a useful tool for empowering women. Both organisations are dedicated to eliminating these inequalities as part of their struggle for social change. While attending several meetings at different organisational tiers of the Red Puna, I noticed that the presence and participation of women was either at a par with or greater than that of men. This was discussed also in some length during interviews and on one occasion a “historical” técnico of the organisation explained that in the early days of organisation it became clear to some militants, especially the “foreign” técnicos, that there is a serious gender inequality among the social base of the organisation. For example, while women are usually in charge of the livestock, mainly men attended related training workshops. This recognition of existing inequalities prompted a strategic process of empowering women in the organisation. This, along the years, has caused some conflicts and tension; but today it is notably evident that
women are very active, visible and important in the organisation, and this is definitely a noteworthy achievement of the Red Puna.

Shifting the focus away from achieving self-efficacy and social change from within, and turning to the political achievements mentioned by research participants, one of the most notable accomplishments has been the positioning of the campesino issue on the regional and national political agendas. A MOCASE-VC militant commented that

what we have changed today is that the campesino issue got established and that it has been admitted that the campesino problem exists, not only among governments but also amongst the agro-exporters and business sectors. Therefore, there is respect for [our] existence and an admission that we exist, and that hence some place should be given to the sector in this historic process. We are admitted in history. This is no small feat (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

Through organisation and mobilisation the campesino sector has managed to become publically visible and subsequently to create enough political pressure to influence provincial and national legislation. Some provinces in Argentina, for example, have passed legislation that prevents, at least temporarily, eviction of campesinos and further deforestation. The same militant elaborated on this issue by saying that

… already the Parliament is preparing a law that is put together by us … of a moratorium for six years of evictions of campesinos [and] a collective recognition of land use for campesino agriculture… That is, with a collective recognition we are already talking about a departure from the schema of private ownership of land. Collective recognition already begins to have a semblance of agrarian reform without saying the word agrarian reform or collectivisation of land (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

This achievement is attributed to activity of the MNCI, the national movement in which the MOCASE-VE and Red Puna are members, and that voices the demands of indigenous-campesino communities as a united front on a national level.

A militant from the Red Puna also mentioned the recognition the organisation has gained as an important achievement;

among the other achievements, also, is that [the organisation] is well entrenched inside the province, that it’s known within the country, at the national level, within the [National] Movement, that it has been recognised as it is (Manuela, Red Puna, interviewed 18.1.2011).
Another Red Puna militant noted that being able to negotiate with the authorities is an important achievement. The authorities often recognise the organisation as a force to be reckoned with and sometimes it results in meaningful collaboration. This, in turn, is an important objective of many social movements in Argentina; namely, to influence state legislation and policy. In some other instances, however, some found the organisation to be threatening and occasionally this resulted in conflict. In any case, there is clearly recognition of the Red Puna as an important social actor in its region.

Articulating these different achievements in the various scales and contexts, a militant of the Red Puna provided a concluding sentiment;

it seems to me that having built collectively over the years a mode of work, a way to intervene, a way to discuss and to build organisation, to construct a discourse, to construct analysis; it seems to me that is not a minor thing. Because it’s something that has taken a long time, lots of energy, and it allows that today, in front of new conjunctures, in front of new contexts, these mechanisms and those constructive ways help us to be able to work, make progress, go deeper. It also seems to me that this is an achievement for the Red to be part of a national space such as the [National] Movement, being able to see beyond itself, see a wider sector and struggle within a broader context. It seems to me that this is an achievement because it’s not easy (Laura, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

Making a seemingly localised struggle national, and even global, and overcoming the physical and social isolation of many rural campesino-indigenous communities are, thus, perhaps as important as achieving economic development. Through this kind of contestation of the hegemonic capitalist order these organised communities improve their prospects for further and sustainable economic development, while also buttressing their social cohesion.

**Is it possible to achieve integral development through party politics?**

Integral development, therefore, is being achieved through grassroots organisation and collective work aiming at improving economic as well as social wellbeing. To point, the state’s role in this project has been marginal. In accordance with Davis (1999), the national state or the provincial governments have often been at the centre of demands by social movements, which instead of negating the state try to bridge their distance from it. But, while the state is the main addressee of demands, what role should it have in promoting development vis-à-vis the wish of social movements to maintain their autonomy? And more importantly, how should social movements engage with the state and its agencies? Petras and
Veltmeyer (2005) argue that since the 1980s the core focus of social movements was not contesting the prevailing political order or confronting their respective states, but rather on localised economic and social change. This for them is about applying micro-solutions to macro-problems, and hence they urge social movements to contest political power directly, instead of applying pressure from the outside. This, of course, stands in contrast to Holloway’s (2005) anarchist-inspired call to “change the world without taking power”, which, in turn, resonates with the internal politics of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. In the light of this debate, I tried to establish if research participants believe that the political system, which they so clearly condemn, could be changed for better from within and for the benefit of marginalised socio-economic groups.

Members of both organisations who took part in this research expressed a clear criticism of the political order in their respective provinces. For one member of the MOCASE-VC, politics in Santiago del Estero are still linked back to the last military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983);

it is a system, a device, which is installed from the dictatorship. Governments, these governments, have moved along since democracy [returned] for some 20 and a bit years, 27 years of democracy, but the same that have been postulated for disguised as democracy have been from the same line of the dictatorship (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

It is important to note that even though democracy returned in 1983 many local politicians had carried on into the new political era preserving praxis of clientelism and “politics of fear”, most notably the infamous former Governor Carlos Juarez and his wife (Barbeta, 2009). Moreover, many public officials that had been appointed during reigns of authoritarian regimes kept their positions when democracy was reconstituted. Perhaps the most notable in the context of conflicts over land tenure are judges that are hostile towards the campesinos and their demands. However, when the current Governor of the province, Gerardo Zamora, took office in 2005, he removed many of them (Barbeta, 2009). Nonetheless, the natural and political process of replacing non-elected public servants is slow and changing the prevailing political culture may be even slower.

For a Red Puna member,

…there are no possibilities to generate [change] from the provincial state. Let’s say, it’s like being highly closed and configured so that all the things that have
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appeared and that are different, alternative and for the popular sectors, arise and come into being in parallel to the state (Laura, Red Puna, interviewed 2.2.2011).

According to this participant, the provincial politics in Jujuy are controlled by powerful businesspeople that utilise political authority to further their personal interests. Similarly, numerous other research participants from Jujuy expressed much criticism of the existing political culture in their province and also at the local municipality level.

Is contesting political power directly through engaging in party politics, therefore, a strategy for promoting integral development? Is it possible to change the exclusionary political culture in many Argentinean provinces from within? Should social movements even try to generate such change or is the political system fundamentally flawed and thus beyond repair?

Interestingly, while virtually all the MOCASE-VC members who took part in this research articulated a strong critique of the prevailing political culture, they were not unanimous regarding how the organisation should engage with party politics. On the one hand, the most radical, and arguably revolutionary, standpoint asserts that the political system is faulty and therefore it would be in vain to take part in it. That is, in order to favourably change the lives of campesinos the political culture and system must be altered first by forming and fostering consciousness for another, more participatory political order. This view, of course, is not unique to members of this organisation, but shared by many social activists elsewhere.

On the other hand, some research participants from the MOCASE-VC would welcome an attempt by the movement to engage with party politics. The majority of participants, however, expressed views that could be positioned in between. That is, having a direct role in party politics is an option for the organisation but the time is not right as of yet to pursue such a path. In other words, the MOCASE-VC currently demonstrates a clear disjuncture from formal political processes; but that may not be a permanent position. The prevailing opinion was that

it is difficult to change the political [system], that is why the support of the MOCASE in the political is not giving [results], because we see that a politician… comes to tap on your back for this, for that, but you go with him and the moment he sits on his seat he does not know you. Directly so, does not know you. There is no help for anyone (Focus Group 1, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 8.3.2010).

When asked about the possibility of forming a political party, a MOCASE-VC militant replied:
why don’t we create a political party? Because today that doesn’t allow the transformation of anything. The Argentinean society is not in the condition for a transformation through that path, is it? …only work from the base is what guarantees the existence of the MOCASE, that the communities organise, resist, and that implies a great strength, say, of organisation. Really, the transformation would be from this side (Alicia, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 25.2.2010).

This comment represents a pessimistic, but arguably realistic, view that the political system cannot be changed from within and what is needed is to pressure it from the outside, primarily through mobilisation of civil society. Numerous participants hold the opinion that once a campesino enters politics he or she gets absorbed in the system and thus it is pointless having their people involved in party politics; the political system is not only corrupt but also corrupting.

Some participants, however, did not completely discount the idea of entering party politics; “it is important to have somebody in the Chamber of Deputies, Senators. [But] we are few… we must transform more people for all this. That is why [political] formation is very important” (Marcos, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 22.2.2010). This participant did think that having their own representatives in the provincial parliament would be beneficial, thus reflecting a less radical position; but more work is needed in creating political consciousness.

Sharing this view, another participant commented that

as of yet, as a movement we cannot present ourselves, nominate ourselves in elections, because yet … we do not have sufficient capacity, we do not have sufficient volume of votes … but it is possible working strategically with someone, but without the movement being attached (Focus Group 2, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 20.3.2010).

As is evident from this comment, conditions for forming a political party have not yet been achieved; but it is a strategy the organisation might consider in the future. Until conditions mature this member believes in cooperation with a political actor, but in a covert manner, similar to the MST and their relations with the Workers Party in Brazil (see Vergara-Camus, 2009b). Such a strategy will allow the organisation to maintain greater autonomy and to re-examine its alliances if matters change.

However, beyond the arguably anarchistic-inspired ideological component that leads some activists of the MOCASE-VC to strive against the state apparatus in an attempt to bring about an integral revolution from below, and the more pragmatic view that perceives party politics as a valid and useful vehicle for promoting socio-economic change from within that system,
demographics and solidarity are other factors to be considered if the movement is to jump into the deep and cold water of provincial party politics.

Although Santiago del Estero is the province with the largest proportion of its inhabitants characterised as rural dwellers among all Argentina’s provinces, this proportion (34 per cent) is still quite limited in electoral terms. Thus, assuming that this statistical figure more or less corresponds to the voting power of rural dwellers in the province, the potential electoral power of the Santiaguño countryside is unlikely to be greater than a third of an elected provincial government, taking into account that urban dwellers may support rural candidates and that towns of up to 2000 inhabitants are regarded as “rural” in formal statistics. In addition, rural organisations would need to consolidate into a political alliance in order to leverage this electoral potential. With the current division of the peasantry and the multitude of organisations in the province’s countryside, such alliance does not seem feasible, at least not in the near future.

Notwithstanding the need for and difficulty of joining forces with other social organisations, a MOCASE-VC militant explained that

La Vía Campesina has a very interesting logic regarding what we call autonomy … that if comrades decide, including comrades as a movement, [or] we decide to create a partisan tool … or incorporate into a party, they have to be individuals or groups of people, but as a movement we cannot be within an organised party structure for contesting state power (Alejandro, MOCASE-VC, interviewed 14.12.2010).

Membership in the transnational peasant and small farmers’ organisation is conditioned on not engaging directly in party politics and therefore the MOCASE-VC, and also the Red Puna or the MNCI, cannot form a political party. However, similar to the strategy of the Brazilian MST in supporting the governing Workers Party (PT) from a distance and allowing its members to run as PT candidates in local level elections (Vergara-Camus, 2009b), this militant added that

but I think that yes, that we would… we should… why shouldn’t we think of forming cadres that could become mayors, comuneros,78 delegates? Why not? I believe that this option shouldn’t be closed, in as much as these people don’t want to lead the processes of the movements and we maintain our autonomy.

78 Comunero has somewhat different meanings in Spanish. Literally it means a community member, but it could also denote, depending on the context, a community leader, and more recently in Argentina a representative of a neighbourhood assembly.
This means achievements could be made through the political system but affiliates-turned-politicians must not directly represent the social movement so that a critical stand and autonomy are retained, especially in front of the often “consumed” grassroots politicians.

The views of research participants from the Red Puna have many similarities to those expressed by members of the MOCASE-VC. Due to its proximity and cultural affiliation to Bolivia, I expected identity politics of indigenous character to be more prevalent in Jujuy than in Santiago del Estero. However, whereas the Bolivian President, Evo Morales, and his movement were frequently mentioned, references to local politics in the province were primarily of a critical nature and condemnation, and not as a possible arena for advancing change. Addressing the prospects of having an indigenous party in the province, a Red Puna member explained that in the past there was such an initiative; but talking about politics in indigenous communities in the highlands of Jujuy is difficult (see further discussion in Chapter Five). Therefore the viability of such initiatives is limited at best, given the current level of political consciousness there. This was mentioned in the previous chapter regarding the difficulties of promoting the political discourse of the organisation.

Numerous research participants from the Red Puna noted that the possibility of translating the organisation’s social power into political power through partaking in local or regional politics has not been discussed and debated.

We have been talking about politics in the Red, but of social politics. But we haven’t talked about party politics, which perhaps doesn’t make much noise, but well, I don’t know, we should start talking about it, because if not, I don’t know how we can make a change, on the other hand, right? Well, but this is a thing that we as Red Puna are yet to discuss, I believe. Maybe some comrades have discussed it, I don't know (Raquel, Red Puna, interviewed 16.1.2011).

This subject may not have been on the agenda of the organisation; but that does not mean its members are oblivious to the option of having party politics as another strategy for achieving integral development. A Red Puna member asserted that

unfortunately we don’t have indigenous representatives or representatives who are committed to our cause. In this issue we have a weakness, also, political if you wish, because we don’t occupy this space that we should occupy. The fact is that it’s a necessity, but we aren’t occupying this [political] space, unfortunately. We are enclosed in a social issue, if you wish, for now, and well, hopefully with time we could occupy that space (Rafael, Red Puna, interviewed 17.12.2010).
While other Red Puna members expressed similar notions about the potential of party politics to become strategic for the organisation’s cause, another prevalent view was that entering party politics without a wide electoral base will not generate change because the political system is already structured in a way that does not allow for alternative visions to take root.

In order to make party politics a viable vehicle for social movements for advancing meaningful change, an amalgamation and expansion of the electoral base is required. For a Red Puna militant entering party politics is part of a process where individuals and communities should “first be identified as indigenous and later go out in search for alliance with other sectors… I hold that what’s necessary is inclusion of sectors that are excluded from this system that go in search of this [alliance]” (Andrés, Red Puna, interviewed 21.12.2010). This participant does not believe that indigenous identity alone is enough for creating an anti-hegemonic political force, and thus alliance must be made with other popular sectors such as the urban unemployed and poor. This view breaks away from a purist indigenous discourse and reflects a wider Marxist-inspired analysis of popular class struggle. For achieving that, nevertheless, more advanced state of mobilisation and ground level political formation are still necessary.

Thus, using Petras and Veltmeyer’s (2005) terms, given that a central discourse among MOCASE-VC and Red Puna activists is one of addressing macro-problems, for which micro-solutions for local micro-problems are only the first step, it seems a reasonable judgement to withhold a direct engagement with electoral party politics (which would be problematic due to their affiliation with La Vía Campesina anyhow). However, with regard to social change, and similar to the MST and the Zapatistas, the organisations under examination here might “disappoint” Petras and Veltmeyer since they “only” fit their second model of social change, where social movements pressure the state from outside the formal political system. In spite of that, these organisations aspire to create a better and more just society, locally and globally, by organising and mobilising marginalised campesinos, mostly of indigenous origin. As they are well aware, formation of political consciousness among the peasantry is the first step towards a meaningful social change, which includes, *inter alia*, contesting the neoliberal framework that directs today’s economic structure. Moreover, this political formation and mobilisation may lead the campesino organisations, perhaps through the National Movement (MNCI) to engage with party politics, either directly or indirectly. For that to occur, alliances with similar organisations in Argentina are important. Such alliances
may be valuable for social movements facing the challenge of translating their social demands into political demands and for articulating a strategic plan for making them a reality.

Conclusions

Integral development, understood here as the improvement of the economic as well as the social and political wellbeing of active and conscious subjects, is being gradually and incrementally achieved through the different activities of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. Forming social and political consciousness and working for the elimination of inequalities entail prolonged transformative processes; but there is a far more immediate and urgent necessity to improve the material wellbeing of campesino families. Collective production and commercialisation are parts of a particular development strategy that embodies these aspects of the integral development model and thus being promoted and practiced by the organisations under examination here. Thus, in spite of the somewhat limited scale those economic initiatives currently have, they serve as an important example for how integral development is being practiced. This strategy assists not only to promote different livelihood and socio-political related objectives, but is also important for the temporal variation of the diverse categories of objectives. As part of an integral model, therefore, development projects must be concurrently responsive to the immediate material needs and also contain socio-political aspects. The economic component should be guided by the concept of “food sovereignty”, which, inter alia, emphasises environmentally sustainable production.

Without undermining the importance of the collective economic activities, when asked to name the most significant achievements of their organisation many research participants mentioned formación as a key area of success. This refers to the formation of social and political consciousness among members, assisting them to be reflective and critical towards the prevailing political economic order that marginalises them as campesino-indigenous communities. This consciousness, however, addresses not only external domination and marginalisation, but also internal social issues, especially regarding gender inequalities. The ongoing work of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna on promoting formación has had significant impact on self-efficacy and empowerment of individuals and communities, who were, and all too often still are, subjected to domination and oppression.
In the last part of this chapter I have addressed the contentious territory of state–social movement interactions and particularly whether participating in party politics could be a useful strategy for social organisations to promote their vision of integral development and change. While the political system was seen by virtually all participants as corrupt, elitist and exclusionary, there was no unanimity regarding the worthiness of taking part in party politics. Numerous participants did see it as a valuable option; others argued that conditions have not matured as of yet; and some were more pessimistic regarding the possibility of furthering the cause of the movement through this avenue. Nevertheless, by itself the campesino-indigenous sector is electorally limited and therefore creating political alliances with other popular sectors would be necessary, if the organisations decide to enter the formal political arena. In addition, member organisations of La Vía Campesina cannot form political parties or nominate their own people in elections. They could endorse a particular party but any such affiliation must ensure and protect their autonomy as independent social organisations. Be this as it may, entering party politics, perhaps in different forms and capacities, is still an option for advancing integral development, and it is a strategy that both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna may consider in the future; hence its importance.

Whether or not party politics becomes another strategy used by social movements for promoting their vision for a different development, the current practices and experiences of communities in pursuing integral development in their everyday lives have been of much value. Achievements such as self-efficacy, empowerment and public recognition of the campesino sector are important, and also is the construction of an inclusive and participatory organisational structure. However, an important question that still remains is how to bring about some form of an agrarian reform, or other programme that would secure land tenure for campesinos, given the lack of political will in Argentina for such undertaking.
Introduction

The main aim of this research was to investigate and analyse the development model of two grassroots campesino-indigenous organisations in Northwest Argentina. This research critically examined the discourse and praxes that form this development model, and aimed to explore how these grassroots organisations envision and practice the social, economic and political change they wish to promote. These organisations, MOCASE-VC and Red Puna from the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, respectively, are fighting to secure land-tenure and improve standards of living for their member communities, and provide insightful and rich experiences of what I conceptualise here as an integral model of development. This model of development goes much beyond merely “teaching a person to fish”, as conveyed by the proverb in the introductory chapter. Rather, the starting point of this model is a critical analysis of “underdevelopment” and the political, economic and social marginalisation of
individuals and communities. This critical approach prompts people to ask why a person cannot fish to begin with and why then that person should learn. This model also goes beyond “teaching” by asking who is to teach and how, and how does the community envision fishing in the future. Thus, integral development aims at generating an encompassing political, economic and social change; but the means and the process of doing so are of no less importance. Such an encompassing change, as this development model ought to achieve or at least promote, requires an analysis of the sources of inequality and marginalisation, an informed vision of desired alternatives and outcomes, and praxis that reflects this critical analysis and vision.

It is important to note that underlying this research study is a belief that both marginalisation of social groups and development are political by nature. As a result, the engagement with and analysis of development is predominantly political. This is to some extent a conclusion of this thesis, but also its starting point. While the importance of addressing poverty and social inequalities is rarely disputed, a political analysis stemming from post-development thought is not entirely uncontroversial; and it is to such debates that this study contributes. Interestingly, disagreements with post-development-inspired critiques are expressed not only by those who marginalise and dominate others. People who uphold the notion of development in the sense of improving people’s standards of living and eliminating poverty have also taken issue with post-development, although these types of disagreements are profoundly and inherently different. Debates are also prevalent within the civil society sphere, where social subjects and groups offer different discourses and praxes vis-à-vis development and relations with State institutions. This study engages with these debates and shows how the experiences of organisation among marginalised groups provide meaningful examples for how post-development critique is being translated into action.

In the light of such debates, this thesis contributes to understandings of the realities and challenges of rural campesino-indigenous communities in Northwest Argentina. It examines and analyses (sometimes competing or varying) visions and strategies of social organisations in their struggles for change. Within a similar context and facing common livelihood challenges, different social organisations and their supporters (NGOs, academics, development institutions, the public, etc.) diverge on how they understand the circumstances and on how they choose to engage in struggle against their marginalisation. The discourses and praxes of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna are of particular interest because these organisations operate in two of the most impoverished and least urbanised provinces of
Argentina, and because they have been more antagonistic and critical towards state authorities and the wider political economic order compared with other organisations in their respective territories. The organisations under focus have demanded greater autonomy and, resulting from this more critical stand, have generated debate around some of their strategies. In particular, operating in a horizontal structure and, to a greater extent in Santiago del Estero, withholding from partaking in spaces of dialogue with the provincial government, (spaces which the MOCASE-VC deems to be futile) are strategies subject to debate.

This chapter, then, reaffirms the main findings of the thesis and offers a synthesis of a variety of issues inherent to the social mobilisation of rural communities and their struggle for a different and better future. The chapter commences with an examination of the key empirical findings and theoretical implications of this research study. These are discussed according the three research objectives that where stated in the Introduction Chapter and have guided this study and provided logic to the structure of the thesis. The chapter discusses the need to situate the study in historical context, to concentrate on respondents’ lived experiences and to investigate the theory and praxes of their political organisation. Following this are some recommendations for future research. The topic of this study is multifaceted and there are issues that have not been the core focus of this thesis but nevertheless are significant. Therefore, further research could examine the same issues I have addressed here or focus on topics not covered in this study. The chapter then concludes with a brief reflection on the main argument of the thesis and its significance, advocating for an integral and politicised model of participatory development.

**Empirical findings and theoretical implications**

A critical examination of the integral development model practiced by the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna necessitates, as a starting point, situating the mobilisation and struggles of these organisations within a socio-political and socio-economic context. This includes historical processes and events that have affected the livelihoods and social fabric of rural communities. Therefore, **the first objective of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the context that gave rise to the formation and consolidation of campesino-indigenous organisations in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy** (Chapters Four, Five and Six). Establishing this context was no small feat. The particular histories of the peasantry in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy are undoubtedly important; but so are exogenous processes that have had
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tremendous effects on these territories. The examination of five hundred years of history was, of course, limited by the scope the thesis and purpose of the matter at hand. Nevertheless, the thesis developed a succinct yet sufficiently comprehensive narrative that situated current land conflicts, livelihood challenges and social mobilisation in the study areas.

In addition, although geographically both the highlands of Jujuy and the lowlands of Santiago del Estero are in the Argentinean Northwest, these are two distinct territories with different environmental conditions, indigenous groups, cultures and histories. As the thesis demonstrated, there are, nevertheless, also many similarities that allow the inference of some general trends regarding how the indigenous and peasant populations of these territories had been affected by historical processes and events. The thesis argued that situating the context of the study required an appreciation of both the commonalities and specificities of these two regions.

Therefore, in Chapter Four it was argued that the current situation of insecure land-tenure in both Jujuy and Santiago del Estero and associated rural conflicts and challenges stem, to a considerable extent, from the historical process of changing agrarian structures and (partial) capitalist transformation in these territories. Insecure tenure has had a decisive role in the mobilisation of rural communities after the demise of the military dictatorship and the reinstitution of democracy and civil liberties in 1983. But the history of land conflicts and cyclical subjugation of indigenous and peasant groups to capitalist forces stretches back for several centuries.

As Chapter Four explained, these historical processes of agrarian change were primarily economically driven and included the introduction of new cash-crops and agro-industries. Those who had implemented these industries and championed a particular form of capitalist transformation had little regard for local indigenous populations. However, these local populations were incorporated into these industries, and subsequently into the capitalist market, as labourers or as petty producers of industrial raw materials, exposing them to cycles of boom and bust of these capitalist industries and regional economies. As a result, many rural populations experienced periods of depeasantisation and proletarianisation or semi-proletarianisation, and (re-)peasantisation, according to economic peaks and troughs (Rutledge, 1987; Dargoltz, 1983, 1985, 1997; Barbetta, 2009). Thus, the colonial experience, the limited and partial capitalist economic development of agro-industries in particular parts of Santiago del Estero and Jujuy in the late 19th century and 20th century (Rutledge, 1975,
1987; Tasso, 2003-4; Dargoltz, Gerez and Cao, 2006), and the national import-substitution policies that prompted rural-to-urban migration (Manzanal, 1993) had all strengthened the Argentinean peasantry’s level of integration into and dependency on the market economy. At the same time, these historical periods of colonialism and capitalist development led to appropriation, revaluation, devaluation and abandonment of land. The current soybean bonanza in Argentina is only the most recent manifestation of such a historical period that challenges peasant livelihoods and affects land values, exacerbating the ramifications of precarious land-tenure arrangements.

Another important argument advanced in this chapter was that this turbulent history of agrarian change and integration was not the same in the regions where Red Puna and MOCASE-VC are located. A notable difference is that, whereas in the case of highland Jujuy capitalist developments that affected the local campesino population were exclusively extra-territorial, this was not always the case in Santiago del Estero. This has had implications for contestation of land-tenure, because in Jujuy land was sought by latifundios for extracting value from those campesinos that lived on it in the form of tax and labour. In Santiago del Estero, in contrast, the agro-industry that has had the most significant affect on the peasantry was the logging industry in the Chaco Forest. This industry attracted peasants, transformed them into loggers and created new settlements around the timber mills. During the gradual demise of the industry loggers and their families lost their source of income, stayed where they were and started cultivating the land for subsistence. After several decades this peaceful, but undocumented, possession of land was challenged by resource rich agribusinesses searching for cheap land. As this thesis demonstrated, the examination of this historical process is pivotal for understanding the contrasting claims campesinos and agribusinesses make over land possession. In both Santiago del Estero and Jujuy, however, land-tenure issues have not been settled due to political reasons, which are closely interlinked with economic ones. This assertion supports the argument of this thesis for a politicised development project where emphasis is given not only for income generating projects but also for contesting power inequalities and marginalisation of some social groups.

Another important contextual aspect that is directly related to social mobilisation in the countryside to contest insecure land-tenure and marginalisation is the (re)emergence of civil society in Argentina in the early 1980s. As Chapter Six documented, organised civil society in Argentina has a long history extending prior to the last oppressive military dictatorship; and, even though much of this history was located in urban areas, there were antecedents to
the social mobilisation of the peasantry during the 1980s and 1990s (Durand, 2009). The rise of civil society in those decades is attributed to two main factors. The first one, as noted above, was the return of democracy and the freedom to form social associations. The second one is that this took place within a prolonged process of neoliberal economic restructuring that, inter alia, adversely affected campesino livelihoods as a result of the restructuring of the welfare state and the deregulation of the agriculture sector. The economic restructuring facilitated the penetration of the global agro-industrial model, which champions modernisation and intensification of agriculture production and leads to concentration of land and production (Giarracca and Teubal, 2006). Thus, the liberalisation of the economy and polity has generated challenges for peasant producers and, at the same time, enabled them, with the assistance of NGOs, to mobilise and organise in order to contest their historically precarious position.

While context and history are clearly significant, the study aimed to analyse current discourses and praxes of integral development. Therefore, the second research objective was to gain in-depth insights into peoples’ current experiences and reflections on their realities and aspirations (Chapters Seven and Eight). Of importance here was to analyse how research participants create and understand their social worlds (Neuman, 2000), acknowledging the researcher’s subjective influence on the process (Davidson and Tolich, 2003). This approach situated participants’ views as the focal point of analysis and aimed to give a fair representation of their standpoints and actions. Therefore, a qualitative methodology guided by the interpretive paradigm was used in this research. This reflects a subjective epistemology and an ontological view that sees reality as multiple and as socially constructed.

It is important to note that while this methodological approach and research design (Chapter Three) were determined to be more suitable for generating localised knowledge, it was also necessary to gain a wider understanding beyond local realities. As the thesis has shown, there are different campesino organisations across Argentina and the livelihood challenges they face are not always identical. Each region has its own climatic conditions, history, social composition, prevalent industries and so forth. Nevertheless, and in spite of the above limitation, the thesis demonstrated how it is possible to draw similarities between the livelihood and social challenges faced by peasant communities in different territories, in the same way it was possible to do so regarding their historical contexts.
The issue of land-tenure was a case in point. Land has played a key role in all campesino struggles in Argentina and while I have demonstrated that current insecurity of land-tenure is embedded in historical processes of colonialism and capitalist transformation, the exact nature and manifestation of these processes vary from one territory to another as well as over time. During fieldwork it became evident that land was a most important issue, mentioned by virtually all participants as a major challenge to campesinos’ livelihoods and way of life.

Two matters are worth mentioning with regards to the importance of land in the peasant struggle. First, as was discussed in Chapter Seven, land conflicts in Santiago del Estero are driven by the expanding agriculture frontier where large commercial agribusinesses hunt for cheap land for soybean cultivation. This threat is tangible and immediate for campesino communities. In contrast, the climatic conditions in the highlands of Jujuy make the territory unattractive for agribusinesses and therefore we do not observe the same severity and intensity of land conflicts there. Still, it is difficult for indigenous communities, even when legally recognised as such, to obtain communal titles for their ancestral land. The lack of political will to issue those titles, according to research participants from the Red Puna, arises from pressure exerted by the mining industry. The highlands of Jujuy are rich in minerals and, as long as the land is publicly owned, access for mining companies is more easily obtained. Once under indigenous communal ownership it is much more difficult and expensive for companies to mine. Therefore, on the one hand, there are no violent evictions or immediate threats to campesinos’ land in the Puna and Quebrada of Jujuy; but, on the other hand, titles, when granted, often do not correspond with communities’ claims.

Second, securing land-tenure is seen by many as merely the first step towards more prosperous peasant communities, a view inherent to the integral development logic. For peasant producers land is imbued with much social and symbolic meaning, being their source of economic production and social reproduction. However, research participants emphasised the view that securing land-tenure would be futile unless families were able to produce and live off the land sustainably and with dignity.

Land, therefore, embodies symbolic and material importance; but, as indicated in this study, of great concern to campesinos is the need to improve production on their land and the ability to commercialise their excess output. Participants in both study areas asserted that the harsh climatic conditions they face are a serious challenge, particularly due to scarcity of water and the long dry season and short rainy season. However, the water problem is not solely a
climatic issue but also an issue of insufficient public investment in infrastructure and water management that would allow storage and diversion of water from times and places of abundance to those of stress. Again, as in the case of land conflicts, participants often perceive a connection between their livelihood challenges and their political marginalisation.

In Santiago del Estero there are irrigation canals, but the area under irrigation is very limited, and as a consequence water related projects are always highly prioritised by the MOCASE-VC. During the rainy summer months in Jujuy river levels rise and due to insufficient or eroding embankments campesinos’ fields are at risk of being washed away. Research participants noted that while the authorities assist the commercial tobacco growers in the lowlands of the province, the campesinos in the highlands do not receive the assistance they need from the provincial authorities for preventing or mitigating natural disasters.

Challenges of commercialisation were also identified by research participants as important impediments for raising the campesinos’ standards of living. Poor road conditions, lack of means of transportation, isolation of communities and the limited window of time for bringing produce and animals to the market adversely affect both the ability of campesinos to sell their products and their bargaining power with merchants who travel into relatively remote communities. The literature acknowledges the importance of investment in road infrastructure for reducing transaction costs for agriculture producers (Binswanger, Khandker and Rosenzweig, 1993; Olsson, 2009) and the importance of also having accessible transport services (Van De Walle, 2002; Page, 2003). The findings of this research reiterate and enforce the conclusions of this body of literature.

A critical analysis of these challenges of commercialisation, of improving production and securing land-tenure shows that there is a significant political component in all of them. The campesinos in Santiago del Estero and Jujuy face a historical and ongoing marginalisation, as agriculture producers and as citizens of the Argentinean State. Borrowing from Petras and Veltmeyer (2005), a development model that does not account for these political and structural barriers to development can only provide micro-solutions to micro-problems. A solution aiming at allowing campesino producers and communities to thrive as autonomous and free social subjects must, therefore, address macro-problems and offer macro-solutions.

The third research objective was concerned with these macro-level challenges and solutions. This objective analysed aspects of discourse and praxis associated with the development model placing particular emphasis on the role of radical democracy as a vehicle for
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*development and change* (Chapters Eight and Nine). As the thesis has demonstrated, this objective is of utmost importance in terms of envisioning an alternative post-development practice. That said, it was not possible to adequately address this objective without first gaining a thorough understanding of the historical processes of agrarian change in the study areas (first objective), and building on the experiences and reflections of research participants (second objective).

As noted above, a common feature of the way the two case-study organisations respond to their social, economic and political marginalisation is the explicit politicisation of this position. Solutions, therefore, must also be political in nature; for example, contesting unequal power relations through the formation of collective organisation. Put differently, for a development model to be considered “integral”, it must contain a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to development accompanied by a politicised engagement with economic and social challenges. It is this combination that offers both a critique of an existing situation and an alternative. The first component of an integral approach to development is arguably less contentious, comparing with the politicised approach. Few would disagree with a need to identify and address the multiplicity of challenges communities often face; however, combining such a development project with a political analysis of the underlying reasons for apparent inequalities is more likely to attract some resistance.

The approach to development of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna is integral, promoting simultaneously economic, social and political change. This approach is also pursued over different scales, from empowerment of individuals, to addressing inequalities within communities, to struggling against the marginalisation of the peasantry as a social group with a particular (non-capitalist) economic logic. Securing land-tenure is undoubtedly the most symbolic facet of the campesino-indigenous struggle in Northwest Argentina, but there is wide recognition among members of both these organisations that securing land-tenure alone will not guarantee the future of campesino communities. For that, a much more comprehensive strategy is required; a strategy that would address the multiplicity of challenges the communities face. The work in Secretariats in the MOCASE-VC and Working Areas in the Red Puna is a reflection of this integral approach of addressing a number of key challenges simultaneously.
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The other component of an integral development model – a politicised analysis of reality – is evident in both the discourses and the different praxes of the organisations. Some participants explicitly addressed the political nature of their struggle and their desire to generate public politics that challenge social and economic inequalities. The politicised approach of these organisations is also manifested in the emphasis they place on forming political and social consciousness among their members. Notwithstanding the importance of these activities, a pivotal facet of this critical and politicised standpoint towards development and marginalisation with inherent ramifications for various aspects of the campesinos’ struggle involves the structure and operation of the organisations. This is important because organisational structures not only reflect a set of values but also have implicit social and political implications. The adherence to principles and practices of radical democracy, then, is the basis from which to challenge the prevailing structures of exclusion and domination, reinforcing the importance of participatory organisations and how they operate.

The belief that radical or participatory democracy is an important vehicle for promoting development and change is embedded in the post-development critique, which sought to problematise the global development project by highlighting its underlying Western values and systems of power (Escobar, 1992, 1995). Whereas in the past post-development ideas were challenged for their failing to offer operational alternatives (Nederveen Pieterse, 1998), in more recent years there have been conscious and deliberate attempts by scholars to envision such alternatives in practice (McGregor, 2009).

Such alternatives, particularly popular among radical social movements and resistance networks, often contain some elements of prefigurative politics and horizontal organisation structures, which are aspects of a radical democracy framework. This antagonistic and counter-hegemonic model champions authentic and autonomous participation of social subjects in processes of decision making (Robinson and Tormey, 2005), where the emphasis is not on a particular end goal but on the means for getting there (Breines, 1982). While literature on these issues exists, it was established early on in the thesis that there is a gap in detailed accounts of how participatory democracy functions in practice (Starr, Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2011). This study is valuable in addressing this gap in relation to grassroots social movements and development, and it dedicates extensive attention to how horizontalism works in practice and what advantages and challenges it presents. Of particular relevance here is literature from a range of disciplines regarding cooperatives (for example, Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Mooney, 2004; and Ratner, 2009) and collectives (for example,
Iannello, 1992; Polletta, 2002; and Graeber, 2009), the former being more closely associated with economic ventures and the latter with social organisations.

In arguing for non-hierarchical structures and participatory decision-making, including decision-making through consensus, research participants emphasised the elitist and exclusionary nature of representative democracy, where decisions are ultimately made by a privileged few. The MOCASE-VC and Red Puna were intent, therefore, on not reproducing this model. Instead, and in order to overcome challenges of scale, scarcity of resources and limited communication infrastructure, these organisations operate in three organisational tiers, from the base communities, to the sub-regional entities (Centrales or Micro-redes), to the Working Areas and General Assembly. Information and decisions travel backwards and forwards between the different organisational organs, where they are being debated and discussed.

This research has found that the challenges of operating in a horizontal manner and striving for consensus decision-making resemble those found in the literature. Among these challenges are the time required for deliberation and participatory decision-making, environmental pressures, people’s intrinsic non-democratic habits and values, and emotional intensity (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986; Polletta, 2002; Snyder, 2003). A challenge the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna face, and which has been largely overlooked in the literature, is that of geography and distance. Decentralisation and participation are key aspects of horizontal structures and so are discussions and debate. Much of the literature focuses on urban associations, where distance is less significant and where communication infrastructure tends to be more easily available. In contrast the size of the territories covered by the case study organisations examined in this thesis coupled with poor communication and travel infrastructures requires members to undertake lengthy and expensive journeys to attend meetings, especially for participants from more remote communities.

The organisations’ horizontal structures are of much importance because they challenge existing exclusionary vertical structures and allow the members of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna to have an active role in shaping their future, individually and collectively. Moreover, by adhering to principles of radical democracy and prefigurative politics, everything these organisations do – be it managing development projects, running educational seminars or negotiating with government agencies – is laden with political meaning.
A contentious aspect of horizontalism and consensus decision-making is that of the role of leaders and leadership (Gordon, 2008). While there are various reasons for why having leadership is sometimes perceived as undermining horizontality, I examined this challenge through a fascinating phenomenon that was evident in both case-study organisations. This phenomenon is the partnership between non-peasant militants, often of urban middle-class educated background, also known as técnicos (experts) or “peasants of soft hands”, and grassroots organisations of marginalised groups from the lower socio-economic strata in society. Both MOCASE-VC and Red Puna have historically had such members. In both instances it was an NGO that was absorbed into the grassroots movement. While research participants from these organisations perceived this relationship as a source of strength in their struggle, other participants criticised this partnership and argued that those técnicos, or experts, manage the organisations. This, in turn, raises questions not only about the implication of such alleged power inequalities within horizontal participatory organisations, but also about issues of representation, authenticity, class and identity divides, and the possibility to overcome these. However, the thesis demonstrated that in the particular cases of these two organisations, and not without a fair share of tension in the case of Red Puna, this partnership is progressive and a source of strength where different know-how and skills (saberes) complement each other. This partnership, I have argued, is also an interesting example of how relatively “privileged” people can respond to situations of poverty and marginalisation with a post-development ethos (Matthews, 2008).

The last empirical chapter of this thesis ends with two important issues. The first one is how members of the organisations evaluate the achievements of their struggle. I asked all participants from campesino organisations what has changed, in their view, as a result of the activities of their organisation. The most common answer was formación, referring to the formation of social and political consciousness among members. This has had a substantial effect on individuals’ and communities’ self-efficacy and empowerment. There were, of course, also other notable achievements, such as putting the peasant problem on the political agenda in Argentina and improving production and commercialisation through the creation of collective economic chains. However, it is through the politicisation of people and their struggles that the peasant movement believes it could challenge the structural impediments to development that perpetuate the marginalisation of this social group of campesino agriculture producers.
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The second issue that ends the thesis is forward looking; can a meaningful change come from the State and is engaging in party politics a viable strategy for the campesino movement in order to bring about change? These questions arose because, on the one hand, many research participants expressed a clear critique of the national and provincial states and held them responsible for many of the conflicts in the countryside and the precarious position of the peasantry, while, on the other hand, they were also the addressees for much of the demands. Thus, while all participants perceived the political system to be corrupt and corrupting, opinions were not unanimous regarding the effectiveness or worthiness of engaging with party politics as a social movement. Many participants also noted that this is not something they had previously discussed in the organisation, but that such a discussion could take place in the future. It seems, however, that the position of the Brazilian MST of providing conditional support to a political party while maintaining distance and the autonomy of the movements resonates also with many members of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna. Party politics, in its current format, definitely does not fit within or alongside a framework of horizontal prefigurative politics. How to best promote a political change on a large scale remains, at least for now, a matter open to debate. Nevertheless, organisations such as MOCASE-VC and Red Puna provide valuable and practical experiences of how horizontal politics are being performed on a scale that is neither much localised nor very large.

Recommendations for future research

The topic of campesino-indigenous movements and rural development is vast. A great challenge I faced in analysing the discourses and praxes of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna was the necessity of drawing upon various theoretical components from different academic disciplines. No single framework, I believe, is capable of capturing the array of issues inherent to the topic at hand. Therefore, while development studies served as a flexible and loose guiding compass, the holistic nature of the integral development model required a multidisciplinary approach. And still, addressing all relevant issues was not possible and there is much scope for further research of themes directly related to these organisations and of the various theoretical issues.

First and foremost, social movements have an inherent temporality. Organisations change and evolve over time and that means research studies at different stages provide insights into the progressing and changing organisational trajectories. An example of the temporality of social
movements, evident in the case of Red Puna, is the changing structure where Working Areas were modified to reflect new challenges or priorities. This example also relates to the nature of prefigurative politics, which champions theorising through doing and shifting the focus from the end goal to the means of achieving this goal. Prefigurative politics promotes experimentation with organisational structures and procedures to better fit different cultures and contexts. Therefore, future research will enrich existing knowledge of how organisations practice prefigurative politics and how and why structures and procedures change over time. The case-study organisations in this thesis could continue being valuable sources of knowledge in this field.

Second, apart from the temporal aspects there are some theoretical and empirical topics worthy of further research. As noted above, there is a gap in the literature regarding the functionality of radical democracy. This study has certainly added to existing knowledge in this regard; but this issue should receive more theoretical and particularly empirical attention. This topic has become increasingly topical in recent times with the emergence of the Alter-globalisation movement and its numerous associated anarchist and other organisations. The Occupy Wall Street Movements is perhaps the most recent widespread manifestation of the discontent with the neoliberal world order and this movement also demonstrates the potential of radical democracy for creating a popular alternative. However, much of the existing literature focuses on the urban realm and there is much scope for rural-based research on radical democracy.

Another aspect of this research that warrants further research is the técnicos – campesinos partnership. As noted above, this phenomenon is shared by both case-study organisations and, while some see it as a source of strength, others do not. This could be studied from different perspectives, including development studies, social movements and civil society, and more. I examined this partnership and how its underlying power differences might affect horizontalism and consensus decision-making in grassroots organisations. However, this is a very interesting topic and further research of these and other case-studies are necessary in order to better understand the nuances, potentials and challenges of such occurrences in socio-economically and culturally heterogeneous groups, and particularly where “privileged” and “less privileged” people become members of the same grassroots democratic organisation.
There are also more case-study specific topics I was not able to cover in a satisfactory manner. Such topics include health, education and gender issues, which are all interrelated, and are of particular importance. These topics were mentioned in this study, as they are part of the challenges rural communities face and therefore constitute part of the integral development model; but each could be further developed in future studies. Gender issues are arguably of particular importance for bringing about a meaningful social change, and gender inequalities could also be analysed within the radical democracy theoretical framework.

**A final reflection**

This thesis departs from the conventional wisdom that the mere teaching of a person to fish would enable that person to feed himself for a lifetime, and argues for a politicised development model that promotes both income-generating projects and formation of political consciousness at the same time. The argument of this thesis, then, is rooted in the post-development critique; but of greater significance is its focus on envisioning post-development practice. This, in turn, adds to a growing body of literature that engages with the task of moving beyond a critique to suggest alternative visions of achieving (post-)development and change.

The integral development model of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna y Quebrada provides an alternative to mainstream development objectives and practice. It calls for a genuinely holistic approach to improving people’s lives by simultaneously addressing the multiplicity of challenges individuals and communities face. Therefore, this integral development model constitutes a post-development practice for two main reasons. First, the end goal of these grassroots organisations is not to reproduce a capitalist economic system and other exclusionary social structures. Instead, the emphasis is on improving standards of living by creating non-capitalist economic spaces, where preference is given to agro-ecological production, fair trade, more equal distribution of wealth and autonomy of producers and consumers. Similarly, in the social realm, the aim is to promote an egalitarian society by contesting the marginalisation of social groups, be they based in ethnicity, gender or other characteristics.

Second, the means of achieving these goals are also a source of difference and are of no less importance. By adhering to principles of radical democracy and striving for horizontality and
consensus decision-making, these organisations (along with many others) are continuously contesting structures of domination and exclusion, within and between communities and different social and political groups. Thus, development is seen not as a top-down project of modernisation, or even of improving incomes, but as a bottom-up *politicised programme* containing *economic as well as social and political objectives*. In practice, this politicised participatory model encourages people to be actively involved in the operations of their organisation, including both direct actions (demonstrations, resisting evictions, preventing deforestation and more) and the different decision making processes. The participatory model is also evident in the economic development projects the organisations undertake where individuals take an active role as equal members of the group, rather than as recipients of assistance. The experiences of the MOCASE-VC and Red Puna show that, while practicing radical democracy is challenging, for a variety of reasons, it is also an invaluable tool for achieving a comprehensive and meaningful change.
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