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## Rural Development and Territorial Dynamics in the Province of Misiones, Argentina

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2011

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Nardi, A. (2011). *Rural Development and Territorial Dynamics in the Province of Misiones, Argentina*. [Doctoral Thesis (monograph), Department of Human Geography]. Lund University.

*Total number of authors:*

1

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Avhandlingar 191

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND TERRITORIAL DYNAMICS IN  
THE PROVINCE OF MISIONES, ARGENTINA

María Andrea Nardi



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ISSN: 0346-6787

ISBN: 978-91-979006-1-4

Cover design: Fernando Nardi

Printed in Sweden by Mediatryck, Lund 2011

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## List of acronyms

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- AER: Agencia de Extensión Rural, INTA [Agency for Rural Extension]
- AFFM: Asociación Ferias Francas de Misiones [Association of Farmers' Markets of Misiones]
- AMIRBY: Área de Manejo Integrado de la Reserva de Biósfera Yabotí [Department of Integrated Management of the Yabotí Reserve of Biosphere]
- APAM: Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios de Misiones [Association of Agriculture Producers of Misiones]
- APHyDAL: Asociación para la Promoción Humana y el Desarrollo Local [Association for the Human Promotion and Local Development]
- APTm: Asociación de Plantadores de Tabaco de Misiones [Association of Tobacco Growers of Misiones]
- ARYA: Asociación Rural Yerbatera Argentina [Argentinean Rural Association of Yerba]
- CAFICLA: Cooperativa Agrícola, Forestal, de Industria y Comercio Limitada de Aristóbulo del Valle [Cooperative of Agriculture, Forestry, Industry and Commercialization of Aristóbulo del Valle]
- CCT: Comisión Central de Tierras [Central Commission of Land]
- CCTA: Comunidades Campesinas por el Trabajo Agrario [Peasant Communities for Agrarian Work]
- CLACSO: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales [Latin American Council of Social Sciences]
- COSPE: Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti [Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries]
- CTM Ltda.: Cooperativa Tabacalera de Misiones Ltda. [Tobacco Cooperative of Misiones]
- CTM: Cámara del Tabaco de Misiones [Chamber of Tobacco of Misiones]
- DDR: Dirección de Desarrollo Rural [Department of Rural Development]
- EAP: Explotación Agropecuaria [Units of Agriculture Production]
- ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe in Spanish)
- EFA: Escuela de la Familia Agrícola [Family Farmers' School]
- EMiPA: Equipo Misiones de Pastoral Aborigen [Misiones Group of Natives' Pastoral]
- ETDR: Enfoque Territorial del Desarrollo Rural [Territorial Approach to Rural Development]



FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FEDECOOP: Federación de Cooperativas Agrícolas de Misiones [Federation of Cooperatives of Misiones]

FET: Fondo Especial del Tabaco [Tobacco Special Fund]

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IADB: Inter-American Development Bank

IEA: Instituto de Enseñanza Agrícola [Institute of Agriculture Education]

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

IFAI: Instituto de Fomento Agropecuario e Industrial de la provincia de Misiones [Institute of Agriculture and Industrial Promotion of the province of Misiones]

IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

INAI: Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas [National Institute of Native Communities Affairs]

INASE: Instituto Nacional de Semillas [National Institute of Seeds]

INDEC: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos [National Institute of Statistics and Census]

INDES: Instituto de Desarrollo Social y Promoción Humana [Institute of Social Development and Human Promotion]

INTA: Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria [National Institute of Agriculture Technology]

INYM: Instituto Nacional de la Yerba Mate [National Institute of Yerba Mate]

ISCOS: Instituto Sindicale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo [The Trade Unions Institute for Development Co-operation]

MAM: Movimiento Agrario Misionero [Misiones Agrarian Movement]

MAYP: Ministerio del Agro y la Producción del gobierno de la provincia de Misiones [Ministry of Agriculture and Production]

MDS: Ministerio de Desarrollo Social [Ministry of Social Development]

MERNyT: Ministerio de Ecología, Recursos Naturales y Turismo del Gobierno de la Provincia de Misiones [Ministry of Ecology, Natural Resources and Tourism]

MIPE: Manejo Integrado de Plagas y Enfermedades [Integrated Pest and Disease Management]

MISEREOR: The German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation

NBI: Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas [Unsatisfied Basic Needs]

NGO: Nongovernmental Organization

ODHAT: Organización para el Desarrollo Humano, Ambiental y Tecnológico [Organization for Human, Environmental and Technological Development]

OIT: Oficina de Información Técnica del INTA [INTA Office of Technical Information]

OPFAL: Organización de Productores Familiares Agroecológicos Local [Agroecological Smallholder Producers Local Organization]

OSAL: Observatorio Social de América Latina [Social Observatory of Latin America]

PNTD: Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development

PPNEA: Programa de Crédito y Apoyo Técnico para Pequeños Productores Agropecuarios del Nordeste Argentino [Programme of Credit and Technical Support for Small Agriculture Producers of North Argentina]

PRODERNEA: Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural de las Provincias del Noroeste Argentino [Project of Rural Development in North-eastern Provinces of Argentina]

PROFAM: Programa de Fortalecimiento para Productores Familiares [Program to Strengthen Family Farmers]

PROFEDER: Programa Federal de Apoyo al Desarrollo Rural Sustentable [Federal Program of Assistance for Sustainable Rural Development]

PROINDER: Proyecto de Desarrollo para Pequeños Productores Agropecuarios [Project of Development for Small Agriculture Holders]

PSA: Programa Social Agropecuario [Agricultural Social Program]

RAOM: Red de Agricultura Orgánica de Misiones [Network of Organic Agriculture of Misiones]

RDP: Rural Development Programme

SAGPyA: Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentos de la Nación, República Argentina [Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food, Government of the Republic of Argentina]

SENASA: Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria [National Service of Sanity and Quality of Agriculture Food]

TRD: Territorial Rural Development [Desarrollo Territorial Rural, DTR]

UNaM: Universidad Nacional de Misiones [University of Misiones]

UNEFAM: Unión de Escuelas de la Familia Agrícola [Union of the Family Farmers' School]

UTCP: Unidad Técnica de Coordinación Provincial [Provincial Unit of Coordination]

UTTERMI: Unión de Trabajadores Técnicos Rurales de Misiones [Union of Rural Technicians Workers of Misiones]

## Presentation and acknowledgments

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The present study is a continuation of a research project started in 2001 at the Institute of Geography at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). The first study, conducted between 2001 and 2002 for my undergraduate dissertation in Geography, sought to reflect on the institutional organization of two rural development programmes and the extent to which they incorporated social participation and institutional cooperation with other actors in the province of Misiones, Argentina. As a result, later I conducted another research project for my post-graduate dissertation in agricultural economics about rural development and actors' cooperation and conflict in one specific municipality of the same province. The need to put this later study in a broader context was the motivation for this research project. The research began at the Programme of Regional Economies and Territorial Studies (PERT) at the Institute of Geography (UBA). It continued at the Department of Human Geography (KEG) at Lund University with the Development Geography research group. The collaboration with PERT has remained very important, since I share with them both theoretical premises and empirical information.

My research was made possible by a three year scholarship from the Alban Programme (European Union Cooperation Office) and, more recently, a PhD position at the Department of Human Geography at Lund University. I have received financial support from the Crafoord Foundation, the Swedish Society of Anthropology and Geography, the Foundation Landshövding Per Westling's Memorial Fund, the Argentinean National Agency for Scientific and Technological Promotion (project PICT 0188/2006) and from the University of Buenos Aires (project UBACyT F056).

I want to thank my supervisor Magnus Jirström (KEG, Lund University) and assistant supervisor Hans Holmén (Tema Institute, Linköping University) who have enthusiastically supervised my work and to Mabel Manzanal who, from the PERT, continues to guide me and give me confidence. I am thankful with my colleagues here and there: Johanna Bergman Lodin and Mabel Hungwe from KEG, Mariana Arzeno, Federico Villareal and Mariana Ponce from PERT. Cheryl Sjöström, Carolina Sternberg, Gabriela Schiavoni, Brian Ferrero and Alejandra Carvallo colleagues and friends who have read different parts and drafts of this thesis and given valuable comments. All of them in one or other way, with their companionship, support for reflection and perpetually interesting debates, have contributed to the study presented here. Special gratitude goes to Robina Ang, for her great work in the language correction, and Susan Paulson for her amazing dedication in reading and commenting the entire thesis.

I am grateful to the Centre of International Development Studies at Roskilde University for the opportunity in 2008 and 2009 to spend some time with them as a guest PhD student and to the Centre for Latin American Studies at the University of Copenhagen that welcomed me as a guest researcher in 2010 and provided a friendly environment for me to work in the final stage of the thesis. The opportunity to share my findings with other students working on similar subjects and in Latin American issues was invaluable.

I want to extend my gratitude to those who were interviewed in Misiones for giving me their valuable time: national, provincial and municipal government officials, field technicians from public agencies and non-governmental organizations, farmers and their families for allowing me to participate in their daily work and open their homes to welcome me. All of them work for a more equitable society in Misiones, with more opportunities for all. In particular I am thankful with Beatriz Sanchez, Germán Acosta, Mariela Seifert, Luis Grondona, José Luis Colluci, Leandro Kurrle, the Mattje family and all those women and men who participate in the farmers' markets, cooperatives and squatters' associations in San Pedro and Aristóbulo del Valle. The research presented here had greatly benefited from their close collaboration.

Finally, I thank my family for accompanying me from the distance and especially Thyge because without his close support I wouldn't have made it.



## Chapter I – Introduction

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### Conflicting geographies

During the 1990s, Latin America went through an important structural transformation. The restructuration process included not only macro-economic reforms and state decentralization but also the emergence of completely different ways to understand development. In fact, the continent experienced a profound alteration in the relations between the state, the society, the market and the natural environment.

The adjustments carried out by Latin American governments must be understood in the context of the Washington Consensus and the pro-market approach promulgated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to foster growth and development (Fanelli *et al.*, 1992; Girón, 2008). This new “paradigm” to enhance development emphasizes the importance assigned to market in bringing about economic and social wellbeing, the emphasis on public sector reduction and privatization and de-regulation. Many authors have referred to this paradigm as neoliberalism (Brohman, 1996; Gwynne and Kay, 1999 and 2000; Portes, 2000). The resulting reduction in the power of the state and the new functions assigned to civil society, market and nature has been framed as “neoliberal” development.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence shows that Latin American societies have been trying to accommodate, contest and resist this restructuring, particularly once it became evident its negative effects on poverty reduction and the increasingly social and geographical inequalities (Salama and Valier, 1996; Filguera, 2009; Leiva, 2008, Escobar, 2008, among others). The aftermath of structural adjustment programmes shows that poverty and inequality have not only persisted but also increased in the continent since the introduction of these policies. However, this remark should not be misinterpreted as a validation of the ability of that development model previous to the neoliberal - based on strong state intervention, industrial and endogenous development - to achieve growth and equality.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gwynne and Kay (1999: 13) state that “[t]he use of the term neoliberal has numerous problems because of its ideological connotations”, so for example some people refer to the term Washington Consensus “indicating virtually the same package of reforms”. Amongst Latin American social scientists, this development template is denoted as ‘neoliberalism’ and this is the use given in the present study.

<sup>2</sup> In this sense, I agree with Filguera (2009: 146) when he states that “The old model was definitely finished, and was not able to operate in the new globalized world. Nonetheless, what is only affirmed

Against this backdrop of great dissatisfaction with the neoliberal approach, many social protests, riots and civil mobilizations in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico or Argentina or transnational agrarian movements occurred and continue to occur today (Chase, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005; Svampa, 2008; Borras *et al.*, 2008, Bebbington, 2009). Alternative development strategies, policies and paradigms are under construction as a way to overcome this discontent (Harvey, 2006; Vilas, 2006; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2006; Santos, 2006; Leff, 2005, Escobar, 2010, among others).

In Argentina, the introduction of policies aiming at reforming the state and internationalizing the economy was conducted by the government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999). From 1991 a set of laws were passed in order to launch a process of transformation of the state and the market, and therefore also the society. In 1994, a modification of the national constitution had significant consequences for the Argentinean society, the state, market and nature.<sup>3</sup> In general terms, the adjustment in the country consisted of the privatization of public service companies (telecommunications, natural gas, energy, roads, railways, water and sewer systems); de-regulation of domestic economy and opening to global markets; parity of the national currency to the U.S. dollar; decentralization of public services (such as education and health care) to the provinces, and outsourcing of public sector functions to companies or cooperatives (e.g. water management), among other changes.

The adjustment process was nominally intended to strengthen the competitiveness of Argentinean interests in the world market. While the national and sub-national (provincial) states prepared to welcome foreign investment, no comprehensive policies were arranged to tackle the negative consequences that might emerge from rapid de-regulation, exposure to the competitive markets, public functions decentralization, etc.

This new model of development in Argentina failed to include some geographical areas and social sectors (urban workers, unemployed, small-scale farmers, agriculture workers for instance). This was notably the case for some of

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here is that the present model of global and regional accumulation increases inequality [more] in comparison to what was produced by the old model during its period of viability". Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>3</sup> It recognized, for instance, the provincial states' legal tenure over natural resources in their territories, the pre-state existence of native communities and their legal rights to the territories they occupy, and the special need of environmental protection and sustainable economic activities, among other rectifications related to international agreements and the national government's exercise of power.

the economic and social sectors located in the regional economies<sup>4</sup> that were previously linked to the domestic market.

The structural transformation has re-organized territories and societies around the country and in most parts of the continent. These dynamics can be observed in marked ways in rural areas and/or small urban localities. Indeed, the introduction of new technologies to make agriculture more competitive and to change the “sluggish” farming model re-arranged rural territories on many different levels and over different periods of time. While some geographical areas and some socio-economic sectors were able to successfully compete in the global market, other areas and sectors were left aside and impaired.

It is against this backdrop of re-organized territories and excluded sectors that daily practices of resistance but also adaptation can be observed and analysed. Indeed, in the case of the province of Misiones, in the northeast of Argentina, neoliberal-inspired territorial transformations occurred in the 1990s and 2000s which fostered the promotion of activities oriented to the international market (Manzanal *et al.*, 2010).<sup>5</sup> The clearest case is the expansion of the area dedicated to large-scale forestry, to tobacco growing and to nature conservation linked to biodiversity preservation and tourism.<sup>6</sup>

A strong national promotion of forestry through subsidies and tax exemptions significantly increased large -scale forestry production (mostly *taeda* and *elliottis* pine) by local and international companies. The paradigmatic case was the privatization of a provincial pulp and paper company and its acquisition first by a national holding and later by an international one, because it led to a process of land concentration in some areas of the province. This occurred simultaneously with a strong provincial concern for nature preservation. Indeed, between 1987 and 1997, with the creation of twelve nature parks, the total area under conservation in Misiones grew from 2.9% to 7.4% (Ferrero, 2005).

The above processes concurred as well with other social and territorial transformations. From the 1980s, tobacco growing by families of small-scale farmers became increasingly motorized once they were inserted in the tobacco

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<sup>4</sup> The regional economies have been conceptualized in Argentina as those economies outside the fertile lowlands of the pampas and the commodity crops production, linked to the domestic market.

<sup>5</sup> This is a small province bordering Paraguay and Brazil that presents an important number of family farms at the time that shows one of the highest numbers of rural poverty in the country. Its economy is inserted to the national one as provider of yerba mate, tobacco and wood. The territory of Misiones presents the major area covert with the last remain of the Atlantic rainforest in the South Cone.

<sup>6</sup> The development of Misiones contrasts very much with the nearby regions. In fact, while the province has inserted its economy to the Argentinean economy as a provider of yerba mate to the domestic market and timber, tea and tobacco to the international, the neighbouring areas of Paraguay and Brazil are the main regions within their national economies for the production of commodities (soya mainly). Moreover, the agrarian structure that characterizes this regional economy is regarded in Argentina as having one of the largest numbers of family farms.



chain of production under the control of international companies (Schiavoni, 1998). This expansion proved that the agriculture frontier was encroaching upon not only remaining public land but also large-scale private properties.

In addition, decades of soil overexploitation, crop mismanagement and deregulation of the provincial traditional crops have proven a decrease in yields, productivity and farmers' monetary incomes. In this sense, Montiel (2001: 94) affirms that "farmers are in a context of crisis in the regional economy, which is increased by the fall in prices of the main crops (yerba mate, tea, tobacco) and the retirement of the state from its role of regulator of the productive system".<sup>7</sup>

In some areas of the province, unproductive land was abandoned and families migrated to small cities, where their stock of capital was soon translated into urban poverty. The rural population that was not migrating away from rural areas was pushing the agriculture frontier towards the northeast, area of large-scale properties. Migration to new lands has helped farmers to maintain themselves in the agriculture sector, until recently.

On the whole, these transformations have meant a drastic reduction of land available for family agriculture. Along with decreasingly favourable market conditions for small-scale agriculture production, different conflicts over land were catalysed. Eventually the whole new economic development model based on the opening up of the provincial economy into wider markets started to be questioned by many actors linked to the farming sector, who questioned as well the traditional patterns of farming production. Agriculture based on slash and burn is no longer possible in a province where land is getting scarce and disputed.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, since the middle of the 1990s, some Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) implemented by the national and provincial public sector along with some other organizations began to promote a new approach to "rural development" with family farmers. In general terms, their strategies were not centred on the improvement of the traditional industrial crops (yerba, tea, tobacco) but on an "alternative agriculture", based on food production (horticulture, grains, small husbandry, poultry, etc.).

Their activities, discourses and narratives are motivated in part by the following: (a) the need to foster food security in the countryside and food sovereignty in the province (agroecology and food production as opposed to industrial crops), (b)

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<sup>7</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>8</sup> In some areas, land is being abandon because its lack of soil productivity. A large landholder in San Pedro comments upon this: "I went along the coast road... farmers' properties all over. Most of those farmers came here, because tobacco does not grow any more there. All dry, all... I say, if the state, for instance, instead of leaving all that abandoned [would help farmers to stay in the land]" (land owner in San Pedro with squatted land, Eldorado, 2008).

the importance of fostering farmers' autonomy to decide what to produce, how to produce it, whom to trade with (agriculture produce with adapted technology, organic production without agro-chemicals, as a way to be independent from big corporations), home-made industrialization (jams, marmalades, pickles, etc.), (c) the possibility to commercialize food production (small animals, horticulture, dairy products, etc.) surpluses in local markets, (d) the necessity of creating new channels of commercialization and new patterns of consumption, (e) the imperative to manage farms in an integrated way, with an agroecological perspective, and (f) the urgent need for legal tenure of land (Nardi, 2008).

Activities framed in the above mentioned ideas and discourse have gradually been creating new territorial dynamics in rural areas, which revolve around family agriculture and rural development. Schiavoni (2005a) mentions that "rural development" as networks of cooperation and conflict among projects of intervention in rural areas, constitutes in the province of Misiones a separate sphere of activities hinging not only on productive issues but also socio-political ones. Some actors (RDPs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)) represent the interests of those that have been excluded from the public strategies of agriculture modernization.

In this sense, progressively, a rural development arena has emerged where actors as diverse as farmers' organizations, public agencies, NGOs, social organizations, and grass-root associations converge. This arena can be described as a social and political space of participation and debate concerning the farming sector, an arena from which "alternative" rural development discourses and practices emerge (Schiavoni *et al.*, 2006).<sup>9</sup> The new ideas about rural development (that in Misiones are categorized as alternative) were discursively set in opposition to the liberal model of agriculture that has been promoted and in a particular antagonism towards the "conventional" or traditional rural development model that has marked the history of land occupation and economic growth in the province linked to a green revolution modernization in rural areas.<sup>10</sup> Schiavoni *et al.* (2006: 251) affirm that

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<sup>9</sup> De Micco (2008) refers to this space conceptualized here as an arena, as an "alternative pole of rural development".

<sup>10</sup> This can be observed in many different statements from local NGO: "Fifty years ago, the industrial model of forestry production with exotic species began on a small scale in Puerto Piray. Fifty years ago the forestry monoculture began and with it began the serious social and environmental impacts in the province of Misiones. Currently the government, along with international agencies and companies, is promoting this industrial model of production even more strongly. The government delivers thousands of hectares to foreign companies to eliminate the native forest with all its biodiversity. These plantations are not forests. They substitute natural ecosystems and biodiversity, causing unemployment, erosion and migration. The motives for this are the power and profits that accrue to those who promote it. They do not benefit local communities in any way" (farmer member of RAOM, quoted in Gorriti, 2001). The president of a local NGO advised in 2004 to: "Recover the essence of the peasant and also recognize the sector as a social actor. Recognize in the society an actor, the

“...the new paradigm emerges in opposition to the “productivist” model and to the standardizing and deterministic tendencies of capitalism in the agricultural sector. It [further] rejects the specialization and the subdivision of the agriculture sector, favouring the linking of numerous activities within the same rural space. It promotes decentralized actions with the aim of reinforcing the production of ecological, social and cultural capital”.<sup>11</sup>

In this way, from the mid 1990s, the new strategies conducted have fuelled interesting territorial dynamics that do not pursue insertion to the international market but rather focus on the creation of new local ways of life, agricultures and markets. It is possible to observe therefore the introduction of innovative agroecological techniques and farm management, the collective construction of original channels of commercialization and markets, and novel social and political mobilizations aiming to secure access and tenure to land.<sup>12</sup>

Diverse territorial dynamics around agroecology (an agriculture socially oriented and respectful of the environment) and food production comprise also the strengthening of local networks of organic production, the establishment of seed fairs and networks, the construction of a social movement to rescue seed and other local genetic material, the set up of forums to debate about land, water and forest use among other events and spaces where farmers participation is central.

The local farmers’ markets (*ferias francas*) are a paradigmatic example. They are well-known institutions that have garnered the attention of public policy makers and researchers in the area of family agriculture (Cametti, n/d; PSA, 1997; Carballo, 2000; Schvorer, 2003; Lapegna, 2005; Nardi and Pereira, 2006 and 2007, García Guerreiro, 2009). They have created new rural–urban linkages and at the same time facilitated women and young people’s participation in public life.

In the case of Misiones it can be observed that the creation of these markets for food commercialization has proven to be highly relevant to allow agroecology to take place and food production to be encouraged. The *ferias francas* are markets that bring together farmers from diverse localities but also, and most important,

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peasantry... Let’s say that is a political revalorisation, but also in terms of cultural identity it is very strong. This is to counter-propose a model that some people have tried to implement in Misiones, which is a model of extermination of the peasants and aborigines in order to replace them for a market economy, for the benefit of the forest industry and tourism”. Farmers’ leaders concur, saying: “We believe that this model that we are shaping - different from the model that they are forcing us to implement with agro-toxins and all those things -... our model has to be taken into account” (farmer, MAM, 2004). Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>11</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>12</sup> The terminologies on land tenure are taken from Bruce (1998: 5-8) who defines *access* as “the ability to use land or another resource”; *land tenure* as the “rights in land” and *security of tenure* (*tenure security*) as tenure held without risk or without risk of loss.

they are almost in every municipality's main town. These markets are new spaces of commercialisation that can be observed from 1995 and that have no other background than the close cooperation between farmers, farmers' cooperatives, RDPs, municipalities and NGOs (Nardi and Pereira, 2006 and 2007). They have proven to be a successful entrepreneurship that gathers farmers three times a week to sell vegetables, dairy produce, eggs, chicken, pork, baked goods, jams and other home industrialization products. The entire family is usually involved in the production and commercialization of these goods.

The participation of women in these markets has proven to be decisive. Certainly, women's role in the domestic economy in Misiones has always been linked to food production. Their work in horticulture, small animal husbandry and food preparation have long been vital to provision of food for the family. In general, when selling the food surplus in local markets, men do not engage in the commercialisation.

Similar to discourses and practices of NGOs, RDPs and other public agencies in the rural development arena, these markets share the objective of improving farmers' incomes and supplying towns with fresh and healthy food. They can therefore be described in terms of their contribution to food security and sovereignty. Certainly, the *ferias francas* work towards local dwellers and farmers' food security because farmers produce and consume their own food, selling the surplus in nearby towns. In addition, their effort goes in the direction of food sovereignty since farmers produce food for the provincial market (there is less dependence on food other provinces or countries) and they decide collectively with local consumers what to produce, how to produce it, how to commercialize it.

Another exemplary case of territorial dynamics is the seed fairs (*ferias de semillas*). These fairs are jointly organized by diverse actors and their aim is to facilitate and promote the interchange of local seeds and other genetic material used by farmers. Since the first provincial fair in 1997, an annual one has been organized by RDPs and NGOs who mobilize farmers from the countryside to the town where the fair is held. They also accompany them all year round in the collection, selection and storing of grains, seeds, cuttings and seedlings. The high level of participation of farmers in its organization is an exceptional feature of the event: without the material gathered and brought by the families the fairs could not take place.

These fairs involve not only families from Misiones, but also farmers' organizations from other provinces, from Paraguay and Brazil and from the cities. All this has benefited urban-rural linkages and fostered the importance of consuming local produce.

With the experience accumulated, the organizers created the Movement for the Peasants' Seeds of Misiones (*Movimiento por las Semillas Campesinas*). In 2005, the network of actors participating in the seed fairs decided to give itself a name, as a way to formalise their situation. Their slogan is "Seeds, heritage of the people at the service of humankind". One of the general aims of the movement is to make public the situation of family agriculture in the province. They seek to promote farmers' political and economic organization in order to strengthen their participation in those political decisions that concern them.

The presence of *ferias francas* and *ferias de semillas* in different localities indicates that something novel is taking place in Misiones, a province where the promotion of food production or the public debate about environmental care and access to land had never before been as issue of public debate. Agroecology, local markets, food production, seed fairs, among other, indicate that something new is occurring and it is important to address because it is working to benefit the great majority of people.

In the creation of these markets, fairs, networks, and forums diverse actors participate. Farmers' organizations, RDPs, NGOs, schools, churches, among others have been enthusiastically pursuing the creation of these original collective spaces. It seems, however, some other actors, such as agroindustrial companies (forestry, tobacco, yerba and tea), environmental public agencies or environmental NGOs do not participate or actively promote such multi-actor dialogue. Native communities have gradually been incorporated and participate in the seed fairs and land forums.

Actors concerned with these new social spaces and others that are not fully involved have different perceptions about 'development' or the use of 'natural resources'. Some actors present a discourse on development related to economic growth, macroeconomic stability to secure capital investments, flexible labour laws, and state support to guarantee profits. Some other actors sustain a development discourse more socially oriented, focusing on people's welfare and equal opportunities to access land, markets and public investment. This is a discourse that revolves around people and not capital investment and, furthermore, calls for people's organization and participation in those political, social and economic decisions that concern them. In this sense, it is easier for some to cooperate or enter into conflict with others. In any case, there is not only a disputation of territory but also development in Misiones' countryside.

In this thesis I argue that the abovementioned territorial dynamics contribute to the construction of a different socio-economic, political and physical space; a distinct territory where rural families have the chance to increase their power regarding the organization of their agriculture production, where the appropriation and use of natural resources in a sustainable way increases the livelihood opportunities in the countryside and where rural inhabitants

participate in social, economic and political life in a more autonomous way, appropriating political and economic spaces and disputing as well the state.

The research I present here demonstrates that the new territorial dynamics are both the result of and the impetus for changes in the relations between the society and state, market, and nature.

## **Aim and objective of the study**

In this context, the ultimate aim of the present research is to contribute to the current debate in Latin America about social change and development in rural areas, by exploring the linkages between rural development strategies - the ideas and activities that sustain them - and the construction of new geographies, new territories.

The objective of the study is to analyse the diverse understandings of rural development actors have, as well as the consequences of “alternative” rural development interventions in family agriculture, specifically the agroecological discourses and practices and the construction of local markets and seed fairs.

These are examples of new socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental processes taking place in rural spaces. They are occurring not only in Argentina but also elsewhere in Latin America, having emerged through the cooperation and participation of local actors and their deliberative projects and not merely through “market forces”. As original processes, they need to be addressed, analysed and understood.

In particular, I am interested in scrutinizing how different discourses and practices (material expressions) frame and create new relations between society and state, market and nature. The examples focused on are interesting illustrations of the roles played by the state, NGOs and farmers’ associations amongst others in putting forward new and diverse development projects and programmes. They also demonstrate the conflicts which arise with other local actors whose ideas about development are different and seem to be working for the benefit of few (large-scale forestry, international capitals, standardized agriculture, commoditisation of nature, and little state intervention). Indeed, discourses and practices aid in revealing conflicts over the construction of particular spaces and territories.

In order to do so, I have selected two different geographical areas to examine how discourses and their material expressions are locally manifested. The municipality of San Pedro on the agrarian frontier, and the municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle - one of the last planned settlements- have proven to be

good examples of the similarities and differences that the discourses produce in concrete spaces.

## **Research questions and theoretical perspective**

Following authors concerned with discourses on development(s) and the social construction of territories as spaces mediated by power relations (Escobar, 2010; Cox, 1991; Lopes de Souza; 1996 among others) I aim to answer the following research questions: What narratives and discourses on development are currently disputing the territory in the province of Misiones? What kinds of territories are under construction as a result of “alternative development” strategies and practices implemented by different actors in the rural development arena in interaction with “conventional” development strategies? In what ways are the new territorial dynamics reflecting the construction of an alternative development(s) and new territories and geographies?

I consider the relevance of using a critical territorial perspective to rural development that highlights power relations (cooperation, confrontation, and structural constraints) among actors, because it is useful to understand the ongoing territorial transformations and dynamics in rural societies. Local studies can be in this sense promising (Barbosa and Neiman, 2005) because they allow examination of how major structural policies transform local societies in diverse ways.

In Argentina there are not many studies about agriculture and rural development from a territorial perspective that take into account the conflicting construction of space. In Misiones there are studies going on mainly focused on the social transformations and dynamics in the frontier area (the formation of a different peasantry; the new social representations of farmers; the diverse conceptualizations around rural development that public agencies and NGOs have; or the creation of environmental territories).

These topics are relevant in the context of Latin American geography because there is a dearth of debate about issues of space production and territory construction in rural areas. Discussions of this kind have focused on urban or metropolitan areas. It is particularly attractive to do a study about territorial dynamics and social construction of territories in the context of structural adjustment and deregulation policies, because it encompasses new dynamics of power at different scales, new ways of creating territories and space that unfortunately have contributed to the production of poverty and exclusion. Therefore, this is a promising area of study between geography and development studies.

It is also worth mentioning that, paradoxically, much current debate in Latin American rural development is framed around the notion of territory. A Territorial Rural Development perspective (TRD) has been strongly fostered by intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank (World Bank, 2007) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB, 2003). However, the definition of territory used in dominant applications of TRD does not fully contemplate power relations and therefore the studies of territorial dynamics are done from another perspective than the one proposed here.

The thesis intends to build up the corpus of territorial theories as well as developmental studies from a critical territorial perspective. It is not an assessment on development, but a study that seeks to show how disputed 'development' and 'space' are. From a policy-making point of view, this study may encourage international development agencies that embrace territorial rural development when considering development in a territory to deal with a diverse range of interests and conflicts within the strong power structures that characterize most Latin American countries.

## Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured in the following way. After this introductory chapter, I present in chapter II the theoretical and conceptual framework constructed to guide the observations and analysis in the research. Following this, in chapter III, I introduce the methodology followed during the process of study and in chapter IV I describe the historical, geographical and institutional context of analysis, focused on the province of Misiones, the rural areas and the family agriculture sector.

In chapter V the diverse understanding and perceptions about development and particularly rural development in Misiones is presented, taking into consideration the different local actors' discourses and perspectives in the selected municipalities. Here, I reveal how different actors understand development, the role of the state in creating welfare and the use of natural resources which is proving to be conflictive and contentious. In chapter VI, I present those particular actors involved in family agriculture who create networks of cooperation and coordinate strategies in order to intervene in rural development in Misiones. I observe as well the actors that do not participate in this rural development arena. Although problems and concerns differ between the selected municipalities, there are common and shared ideas about family agriculture and the role of the state, market and nature for promoting people's wellbeing.

I dedicate chapter VII to the analysis of the agroecology discourse and its concrete manifestations such as the seed fairs (*ferias de semillas*) and local



markets (*ferias francas*) taking into consideration the study in the selected municipalities. I focus on the actors involved, their discourse and practical strategies implemented, the collective social and political spaces constructed to promote and construct a different agriculture in Misiones and the conflicts in the process.

Subsequently, in the concluding chapter VIII, I critically reflect on the construction of an “alternative” rural development model in Misiones and new territories. New actors, new interests and new possibilities are being created, which challenge dominant roles of the state, market and nature in development. These elements are signs of a gradual process towards a new, different kind of development in the province. However, how structural are these changes? How alternative is the alternative rural development? I also comment here upon the importance of the study in terms of theory generation and policy making. Finally, I propose some topics and research questions for further studies.

## Chapter II – Theoretical framework

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### Introduction

The analysis of territorial dynamics in the province of Misiones, Argentina, needs to be framed within a specific theoretical and empirical context. As concrete manifestations of particular understandings of development and concomitant state-market-society-nature relations, these dynamics are examples of the possibilities of constructing new, different, alternative developments.

Escobar (2010:1) highlights unprecedented levels of political support for alternatives: “Latin America is the only region in the world where some counter-hegemonic processes of importance might be taking place at the level of the state at present”. This author considers that Quijano (2008: 3) best describes the continent’s current situation in regards to the construction of alternative understandings of development: “it is time of *luchas* (struggles) and of options. Latin America was the original space of the emergence of modern/colonial capitalism; it marked its founding moment. Today it is, at last, the very center of world resistance against this pattern of power and of the production of alternatives to it”.

Nevertheless, the author affirms that the present social and political transformation in the continent are also influenced by swings in recent history: “Latin America was the region that most earnestly embraced neo-liberal reforms, where the model was applied most thoroughly, and where the results are most ambiguous at best” (ibid: 2).

Certainly, the emergence of new actors and networks in many rural areas of Argentina and other countries in the region during the 1990s can be best understood in the context of the socio-economical, political and cultural transformation that Latin American rural spaces have undergone. In fact, the continent shows a re-structuring of its societies as a consequence of changing economic policies during and after the *lost decade* (1980s).

The analysis of territorial dynamics related to family agriculture in Misiones is therefore framed in a particular political economy introduced in Argentina mainly at the beginning of the 1990s, which established a different way of understanding the role of the state, society, market and nature.<sup>13</sup> However, the context also includes the “resistance” by many socioeconomic sectors of the

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<sup>13</sup> This neoliberal political economy was introduced in the second half of the 1970s by the military governments.

society to this particular political economy, due to its general negative results in terms of development (equality, equity, natural resources preservation).<sup>14</sup> In South America, this model eventually reached certain limits and the present “left turn” dramatically challenges it.

According to Gwynne and Kay (1999) the previously dominant model of development reigned -with variations between countries- from the early 1930s to middle of the 1980s and was characterized by a strong involvement of the state in the direction of the economy and in fostering industrialization by import substitution. The subsequent liberal model of development launched later aimed at rolling back the state from promoting economic growth and welfare. Its new role was to set up the institutional arrangement to permit the market to take over that function.<sup>15</sup>

Latin America is characterized by a very heterogeneous patchwork of cultures, worldviews (*cosmovisiones*), landscapes and livelihoods. Current social mobilizations in many countries and the great majority of new elected governments in South America can be understood as contesting and resisting processes of exclusion and marginalization that resulted as a consequence of “neoliberal modernization” and insertion to global markets of some actors at the expenses of others. Bebbington (2009) argues that these movements are contesting the deepening of the extractive economy that characterizes the continent.

Within this historical, geographical and theoretical context, the territorial dynamics under study in rural areas of north-eastern Argentina might be understood in terms of both accommodation and confrontation to this model of development and therefore as concrete examples of the construction of *un otro desarrollo* (another development).

The territorial dynamics fostered by diverse local actors are proving that despite an adverse structural context for family agriculture, in some places and in particular circumstances, families and communities are finding new ways to continue living on small-scale agriculture in the countryside. These alternatives search to foster food security, food sovereignty, access to land and the construction of local markets in order to (re)produce peoples’ concrete materialities. On an abstract level, they seek also to create a different ontology: a different way to understand development. Thus, these new materialities are the result of particular social and political constructions. A constant readjustment of

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<sup>14</sup> Resistance that can be observed in the diverse social movements that appeared and in the creation of new discourses and practices to contest it.

<sup>15</sup> Harvey (2006: 25) states that “[t]he fundamental mission of the neo-liberal state is to create a “good business climate” and therefore optimize conditions for capital accumulation no matter what the consequences for employment or social wellbeing”.

social and physical spaces is taking place as a result of new relations between state, society, market and nature.

In this sense, the idea that diverse actors use “territorial strategies or territorial frames in order to actively resist the imposition of power by dominant groups” (Storey, 2001: 172) helps to explain why and how local actors in the rural development arena in Misiones have followed and pushed forward certain activities and strategies. These activities and practices are consequences of particular ideologies and conceptualization of the world and they have a concrete manifestation in the material world. For example, in those farms where tobacco is not grown, tobacco companies have no power of decision over the management of the farm, the use of natural resources, or the political space where farmers are engaged. By not growing tobacco, farmers create new physical and social spaces: new territories where control has shifted from one actor to another. Nonetheless, power relations mean that not all ideas and practices have an equal chance of materializing. Some actors have the power to push them forward, to materialize them and some actors do not.

In the province of Misiones, rural development programmes and grass-root organizations’ strategies have promoted new and alternative projects and activities from the middle of 1990s. They have eventually managed to foster particular territorial dynamics, such as the creation of local markets, the increase of food production (crop diversification), the introduction of agroecological practices for farm management and the distribution of land in the northeast of the province.

Since development interventions and projects respond to actors’ diverse interests, observing projects and strategies of local actors (farmers’ associations, NGOs, state agencies, companies, etc.) and the ideas that sustained them, can give an understanding of current changes in Argentina’s rural spaces in regards to rural development interventions.

There are some provinces in Argentina where particular networks of actors are constructing other kinds of developments. They are alternatives because they are new, they bring about other understandings and knowledges, they are not dictated by the mantra of following market forces, but are instead the result of coordinated efforts of local actors to find new and different projects and to accommodate and resist the abandonment of the state from its function of guaranteeing welfare. They are novel and bring about new alternatives because they are based on logics other than the dominant ones fostered by a technocratic state responding to the interest of a global market. Local culture shapes other conceptions of “development”. They put into play other knowledges to the service of welfare.

This chapter starts by presenting the theoretical discussion and approach in which the research study is framed. After this introduction, in the second section, a brief comment on the current debate about rural societies' transformations and rural development policies implementation is presented. In the third section the debate about Latin American development, particularly rural development, is explained. In order to do so, a historical approach is followed. There are some sets of ideas and conceptualizations that are particular to this region, which may explain the current preoccupations amongst local scholars.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the creation in Latin America of particular paradigms<sup>17</sup> and epistemologies to reflect on social change and development (the dependency school, the liberation theory, the post-development approach or the decoloniality epistemology) or the outline of new frameworks for understanding social transformation in rural spaces (new *rurality*, agroecology and rural territorial development) have shaped the preoccupation of many scholars and have made the continent a unique region with its own socio-political concerns that are reflected in the academic process.<sup>18</sup> In fact, Escobar (2010: 3) states that at the present time:

“Latin America can be fruitfully seen as a crossroads: a regional formation where critical theories arising from many trajectories (from Marxist political economy and post-structuralism to ‘decolonial thought’, a multiplicity of histories and futures, and very diverse cultural and political projects all find a convergence space” (ibid: 3).

Later, in the fourth section, a reflection on rural development in Argentina and the province of Misiones in particular is presented in order to understand the current theoretical and social concerns here. Subsequently, in the fifth part of this chapter the theoretical linkages between development and territory are shown. The conceptualization of territory as space in dispute has proven to be helpful to the analysis undertaken in the research.

## Theoretical context of analysis

Many studies document the remarkable transformations occurring in Latin America in the aftermath of structural adjustment programmes and the liberalization of the national economies. In Argentina, these studies focus on the

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<sup>16</sup> The Latin America Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) maybe the best example.

<sup>17</sup> In the present study, the use of “paradigm” refers to the general interpretative framework used to understand certain processes, in this case rural development, and the dominant values and ideas shared by collective networks about how to promote it (see Kay, 2001). Dominant paradigms can be contested by alternative ones.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Escobar, 1993; Grosfoguel, 2000 and 2007, Lander, 2000, Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992, Boaventura de Sousa, 2009, Mignolo, 2007 and 2009; Escobar, 2010.

reconfiguration of rural spaces not only due to changes in the agriculture sector and land use (Giarraca and Cloquell, 1998; Bendini and Steimbregger, 2003; Neiman and Cavalcanti, 2005; Billela and Tapella, 2008; Benencia *et al.*, 2009), but also due to increasing consolidation of land for nature conservation (Ferrero, 2005-2008) and at the same time native forest degradation (Zarilli, 2007) due to the advance of the agriculture frontier.

Some studies focusing on environmental problems on the continent observe that they are linked to agriculture expansion, deforestation and rapid urbanization and industrialization. At the beginning of the 1990s, Altieri and Masera (1993) identified industrial and agricultural pollution, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, deforestation and genetic erosion as the key environmental problems in Latin America.<sup>19</sup>

In connection to the agricultural sector, the transformations have been impressive. These new phenomena have kept scholars busy trying to analyse the expansion of commodity crops or the growth of forestry plantation (Reboratti, 2006; Domínguez and Sabatino, 2006; Zarilli, 2007), the introduction of new crops and the organization of agribusiness (Tadeo *et al.*, 2006; Craviotti, 2008) and the increase of pluri-activity and the “flexibilization” and/or “feminization” of rural employment (Aparicio and Benencia, 1999 and 2001; Neiman, 2001; Neiman and Craviotti, 2006; Cerdá and Gutierrez, 2009). These trends have been theorized by some authors as the “new rurality” (*nueva ruralidad*) in Latin America (Giarraca, 2002; Giarraca and Levy, 2004; Kay, 2008).

More recently, some studies are showing the conflicts and protests emerged in rural spaces as a consequence of these transformations which are conceptualized as processes of “modernization” leading to increases in rural poverty and environmental degradation (Giarraca, 2001; Giarraca and Teubal, 2001; Seoane, 2003; OSAL, 2003, 2004 and 2005; Piñeiro, 2004; Reboratti, 2006; Manzanal and Villerreal, 2010).

A common factor of these studies is their focus on structural transformations, the actors involved and the consequences of these transformations on social institutions in different regions in Argentina. The country is a representative example of the trend in Latin America: rural areas have become disputed spaces by farmers, corporations, native communities, NGOs and conservation activists.

The later also counts for scholars more concerned with the understanding of territorial transformations and their linkages with rural poverty reduction and/or rural development (Manzanal *et al.*, 2006, 2007 and 2010; Billela and Tapella, 2008). Indeed, once recognized the relevance of the new *rurality* (for instance the increasingly importance of non-farm incomes) to analyse social change in

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<sup>19</sup> For the case of Argentina in particular, see Di Pace (1992).

rural societies, it has been a gradual shift from a rural development focused on agriculture towards a rural development focused on the territory, as the local scopes where agriculture takes place.

Many recent studies seem to point towards a conceptualization of rural development in terms of territory. The analysis of territorial transformations and dynamics is currently a hot topic, an issue of great concern in Latin American studies. This is evidenced by the increasing quantity of studies using a territorial approach or focusing on the territory both from the Spanish-Portuguese speaking world (Schejtman and Berdegú, 2004a and 2004b; Schneider 2004; Manzanal *et al.*, 2006, Bengoa, 2007; Barsky and Schejtman, 2008; Billela and Tapella, 2008) and the Anglo-Saxon (e.g. Bebbington *et al.*, 2008a and 2008b).<sup>20</sup>

The *new ruralities*, the results of socio-economic, political and environmental changes in rural space, have lead to new ways to conceive rural development. This has generated some studies in which the role of the territory in the process of development and the promotion of local development is emphasized as: (i) a way to transform the local productive systems to obtain certain competitiveness in the global and national markets (Boscherini and Poma, 2000; Silva Lira, 2005) or else (ii) as a pathway towards the democratization of the local territory, when promoting and strengthening the citizen participation in the context of the political decentralization. These elements have been incorporated into the rural development policies of different national governments and into the agendas of most of the intergovernmental organization for cooperation and financing.

The increasingly popular TRD model introduces the concept of territory to describe local areas and the assets they have or lack in order to engage with dynamic markets, improve agricultural produce, create new job opportunities, attract investments, etc. The overall idea is that policies or interventions in rural development should not focus in the agriculture sector *per se* but the territory in which it is set.

Intergovernmental funding agencies have been instrumental in spreading this TRD proposal. This is partly because although the model has many facets, it is mainly centred on a monetary approach, stressing the need to increase incomes at local level through new agricultural or non-agricultural production and/or increases in productivity as well as through education for migrating to urban areas (Schejtman and Berdegú, 2003 and 2004a and 2004b; Bengoa, 2006; de Janvry and Saudolet, 2007).

The TRD, as promoted by donor agencies, is based on premises such as the promotion of economic competitiveness, increment in productivity through

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<sup>20</sup> These later articles are actually parts of the conclusions of a research project coordinated in Latin America by a Chilean NGO (RIMISP) about social movements, environmental governance and rural poverty reduction.

technological innovation and efforts to link rural economies to global markets. From this perspective the lack of development of many territories in Latin America is the result of their lack of engagement in the current process of globalization: as yet, they have not been able to benefit from this new possibility. The model assumes that it is necessary to do so and therefore that many territories should be reconfigured in order to be part of the global logic. Accordingly, it is considered a requirement to transform values, norms and traditions and create a good environment for private investment. This explains the predominant concern for institutional and social transformation promoted by the TRD as encouraged by intergovernmental agencies.

More recent critical studies were undertaken to reflect on the role of social mobilization in contributing to rural territorial development. In these studies, development is not understood merely as economic growth but as processes conducting to social justice, natural resource conservation, income distribution and equality). This kind of TRD advocates a link between social movements and territorial development (Abramovay *et al.*, 2008; Bebbington *et al.*; 2008a and 2008b), and social movements and chronic rural poverty reduction (Bebbington, 2007). The arguments in these studies are that grass-root organizations and social movements from below could, through political participation, change the current structures of income concentration, social injustice and environmental degradation that characterize the Latin American countryside.

Other studies have shown that the use of a critical concept of territory can be useful to comprehend the social processes and transformation taking place as a consequence of current globalization forces or internationalization of the local economies in rural spaces (for the case of Argentina see Bendini and Steimbregger, 2003 or Manzanal *et al.*, 2009 and 2010). The idea behind such studies is that structural changes and state intervention need to be addressed if a real distribution of welfare is to occur (Kay, 2006). Indeed, a kind of intervention that could shift the power structures present in the territories towards the welfare of the majority, particularly those social sectors that have been historically marginalized (Manzanal *et al.*, 2009).

## **Rural development paradigms and alternative development(s) in Latin America**

The debate on development in Latin America encompasses a particular characteristic within the global context. In fact, the region could be considered by some already “developed” but it displays the most unequal distribution of resources between diverse social and geographical sectors (Kay, 2006 among others) in reference to other continents.



In this section of the chapter I present a discussion on rural development. Three topics are discussed. The first deals with the current debates on rural development in the continent, its main concerns and the differing and sometimes antagonistic perspectives. The second topic is the rural territorial development or TRD approach, and the third and final topic is the debate on “alternatives”, “post-neoliberal” and “post” development.

### *Rural Development ‘paradigms’ in Latin America*

Under various political economic systems, rural development has been promoted in different ways on the continent.<sup>21</sup> Barsky (1990) accounts for two different sets of models or paradigms of development interventions in Latin America. The first took place between 1950 and 1960 and was known as Community Development Programmes. The second, Integrated Rural Development (IRD), held sway between 1970 and 1990. In the continent it was known as *Desarrollo Rural Integrado* (DRI). Barsky considers that from 1980-1990 rural development has been mostly market-driven, not state-driven.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was a (re) introduction of the idea of territory for thinking about and promoting (rural) development. Gradually, a TRD perspective was outlined and designed, which proposed and supported state intervention as a partner of market and private initiatives.

The study of development as local or territorial development has its background in diverse theoretical and empirical analyses from different social disciplines (economics, geography and political science). From an economics perspective of development, Albuquerque (2004: 156) points out that “the territorial (or local) nature of economic development has long suffered from a situation of theoretical marginality”. According to Albuquerque, the principal cause of this theoretical marginalization was the over-simplification of the development process that contemporary economic thought engendered by considering the company or economic sector as a unit of analysis, then studying them as abstract units, leaving aside their territorial contexts. He also indicates that, for some authors, the crisis of the Fordist model of series production has promoted the theoretical rediscovery of flexible production at local level.

From an institutional perspective, it has been sustained that economic development processes do not take place in a vacuum; instead they have important institutional and cultural backdrops (North, 1993). The processes

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<sup>21</sup> According to Kay (2001) rural development has to be contextualized in a wider political and economic project. The author sustains that for Latin America five paradigms can be described when reflecting on growth and welfare (development): (i) modernization, (ii) structuralism, (iii) dependency theory, (iv) neo-liberalism and (v) neo-structuralism.

linked to development come about in societies with their own cultures and mechanisms of organization. Vázquez Barquero (2000: 8) affirms that “every society encourages development through particular institutions and forms of organization, which will facilitate or obstruct economic activities, as the economic agents make their decisions in that [particular] organizational and institutional context”.<sup>22</sup>

In this sense, many contributions have helped constructing a more holistic view of development, incorporating local and institutional approaches as theoretical and conceptual backbones (Alburquerque, 2004). According to Vázquez Barquero (2000) this notion of local development constitutes a new different model to the one proposed by the dominant paradigm of development during the 1950s and 1960s, which stated that growth comes from the industrialization processes and concentration of productive activities in a reduced number of populated urban centres, then later spreads via market mechanisms towards the peripheral cities and regions, thus enabling their development.

Institutional analysis applied to the territory and development is a theoretical perspective under consolidation in Latin America, though it has already encountered opposition from critical scholars (Manzanal *et al.*, 2006). In countries with high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and strong economies, such as those in Western Europe, studies about local productive systems, institutional territorial or company systems, and the role of organizational and geographic proximity in the conformation of successful local economies, have proliferated. This has been reflected in the European policies to promote rural development, such as the LEADER programme (Ray, 1998).

Nevertheless, the case of low GDP countries is different. Brohman (1996: 232) mentions that during the 1980s there was an “alternative spatial strategy” which “call[ed] for decentralization measures to overcome problems of economic stagnation and underdevelopment in rural peripheries of Third World countries”. Brohman refers to the Territorial Regional Planning Approach. According to Friedman (1992: 73) the central participatory elements of this territorial approach entails...

“...the territorial character of an alternative development, greater autonomy over the life-spaces of the poor in the management of resources, collective self-empowerment, the importance of respecting cultural identities, and the democratic participation of the poor in all the phases of development practice” (quoted in Brohman, 1996: 235).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>23</sup> Friedman (1992) *Empowerment: The Politics of an Alternative Development*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Brohman (1996) mentions that this territorial approach is closely linked to the radical and neo-populist thrust of alternative strategies developed in the 1970s, which put emphasis on endogenous development as a way to strengthen autonomy and therefore proposed selective withdrawal from the international economic system (ibid: 233). The author states that “the territorial approach distances itself from neoclassical economics in favour of a more theoretical eclectic framework which often incorporates some Marxist elements associated with core-periphery concepts” (ibid).

The Territorial Regional Planning Approach tended to emphasize the role of the political sphere in the promotion of development “much more than the neoclassical models of functional integrations”. However, under review, it has been determined that this territorial approach paid little attention to class, gender, ethnic, and other social relations which may be interrelated with the political sphere in various ways (ibid: 236). According to Brohman, one of the main critiques is that it neglects social relations by treating regions and communities as undifferentiated totalities and assuming homogeneity within communities, despite different classes, genders and ethnic and other affiliations (ibid: 236-237).

Recently, some institutional studies that relate rural development to territory from a normative perspective have emerged in Latin America (Schejman and Berdegú, 2003 and 2004a and 2004b; de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2007; Bengoa, 2008). These neo-structuralist works have contributed much to the construction of a new model of rural development in the continent, focusing on the potential of the territory to improve the quality of life of local inhabitants. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2000: 408) comment on one of its main premises, asserting that:

“...the most important path out of poverty for the Latin American rural poor should rely on pluriactivity... Assisting this path out of poverty requires a redesign of rural development, focusing on a territorial and multisectoral approach that provides institutional support to the multiplicity of income sources that characterize the vast majority of the Latin American rural poor”.

These authors propose to take into consideration an integral approach, which emphasise

“decentralization, participation and collective action, devolution of managerial functions to communities, follow a territorial as opposed to sectoral approach (...) seeking coordination mechanisms with macro and sectoral policy, reconstructing a set of rural institutions following de-scaling of the role of the state” (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2005: 80).

This model, known as Territorial Rural Development (TRD) retains some elements of the territorial regional planning approach commented by Brohman (1996) such as the importance of decentralization and local participation, but it

differs in that the premises are framed in a more neoclassical theory (competitiveness, efficiency, global markets, dynamic economies) than in an interventionist one, even though it calls for a more active role of the state. This has been identified by Kay (2006) as a neo-structuralist approach or model to rural development in the continent.

Schejtman and Berdegúe (2004b) defined TRD as a process of productive and institutional transformation in a given rural space that aims to reduce rural poverty. According to the authors:

“The purpose of productive transformation is to articulate in a competitive and sustainable way the economy of a given territory with dynamic markets. The intention of institutional development is to stimulate and facilitate interaction and agreements among local actors and between them and relevant external actors, as well as to increase opportunities in order to make it possible for the poor to take part in the process and its benefits” (ibid: 9).<sup>24</sup>

They affirm that there is some common ground around basic concepts at the base of a territorial approach to rural development. Their basis for this claim is the existence of innovative interventions in diverse countries of the region, as well as the LEADER programme in Europe and other various proposals of intergovernmental cooperation agencies. According to Schejtman and Berdegúe (2004b: 9-10) these basic concepts include determination to:

“...put an end to the identity rural development = agricultural development; stress the importance of links to dynamic markets [and] the importance of technical innovation; press for institutional reforms, decentralization and strengthening of local government, [as well as] the importance of social, intersectional and public-private consensus” (ibid).<sup>25</sup>

This proposal is largely based on a document prepared by them to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in 2003.<sup>26</sup> They mention here seven features that must be taken into account for a territorial rural development intervention: (i) competitiveness of the units of production, (ii) technology innovation, (iii) competitiveness of the context of production, (iv) external demand as a main cause of productive transformation, (v) rural - urban linkages, (vi) institutional development, and (vii) territory as a net of social relations that

<sup>24</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>25</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>26</sup> The document made a significant contribution to this development project in Latin America because it is the first work that systematizes some ideas about the issue, such as the importance of institutional transformation, decentralization and local participation among others. The objective of the paper was to clarify the current debate on the topic of territorial rural development, and present TRD as a theory to guide the design of policies and projects to overcome rural poverty.

originates and express an identity as well as give a sense of shared purpose to a multiplicity of public and private agents.

De Janvry and Sadoulet (2005) referred to this new model with the term *integral* instead of *integrated*. They consider that while the integrated rural development (DRI) policies were top-down and government managed, the integral should be decentralized and participatory, multi-sectoral and territorial. The policies promoted by this approach build on four pathways out of poverty: smallholder farming, wage labour in agriculture, self-employment and wage labour in the rural non-farm economy, and migration. Through this, one can see that integral and territorial rural development are similar approaches.<sup>27</sup>

Different intergovernmental organizations have been increasingly promoting the TRD approach in Latin America. In particular, the IADB, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) have formulated their policies for rural development cooperation in the region from a territorial perspective. As de Ferranti *et al.* (2005: 103) suggest, “the spatial approach to development, which focuses on the territories within countries, is again fashionable”.

The notion of territory is better expressed in a document published in 2003 by IICA (Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2003) which defines territory as “...geographical spaces, whose cohesion is the result of specific social networks, particular natural resource bases, with their own institutions and organization forms, and particular forms of production, exchange and income distribution” (ibid: 4).<sup>28</sup>

According to the FAO (2005) a systematic vision of territory is important because it offers a useful point of view of a territory’s functioning and allows understanding of the vertical and horizontal integration between territorial scales and levels. Furthermore, it is claimed that:

“...working on a territorial level allows focusing on the assets of the territory (including the cultural and natural heritage), its potentialities and constraints. A valorisation of the territorial assets serves to develop synergies within a territory while taking into account linkages with other territories (competition, but also complementarities) and helps to revitalize formerly marginalized territories” (ibid: 9).

IADB (2006a: 86) states that “as financial resources are limited, it is recommended that this approach focus on the productive transformation of rural areas with sufficient potential for sustainable integration into markets outside of the targeted area”, but also it maintains that this strategy tries “to reach the rural

<sup>27</sup> In fact, in 2007 the authors published a paper on TRD and incorporated some of the arguments presented for an integral rural development (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

poor and mobilize the rural potential, seeks to empower people to participate in political decision, to bring public and private sector together and to improve the institutional and human capacity to identify and develop the economic potentials of rural areas” (ibid: 88). More recently, the World Bank (2007: 242) describes how:

“The Latin American countries are pursuing a distinctly territorial approach, promoting clusters of complementary firms in selected geographic locations. Local agricultural production systems can capitalize on the comparative advantages of a territory’s agroecology, proximity to urban centres, or institutional and cultural or historical endowments. Territory-driven development projects go beyond community-driven development to create new economic opportunities based on scale, local synergies, and market access”.

However, the perspective is facing critiques from both its premises and the operational point of view. Some recent documents on the topic point out that TRD presents difficulties for putting discourse into practice. For instance, FAO-BID (2007: 19) explains that “the conceptual advances of the territorial perspective on rural development in Latin America were not accompanied by similar advances in the field of implementation”. In order to understand “this gap between the rhetoric of the territorial perspective and the concrete practices that [would] strengthen development in rural regions”, both agencies have jointly published a study systematizing information about different rural development initiatives all over Latin America.<sup>29</sup>

In general, it can be claimed that the difficulties in operationalising the TRD are so many that this territorial model becomes simply one more out of many adopted in Latin America by intergovernmental organizations, which has failed to reduce rural poverty and inequalities. According to IADB (2006b), from the assessment of experiences, the main local level problems when trying to implement the policies are related to diverse issues, such as: (a) the inability of weak credit systems to foster private investment in production, (b) the lack of experience of local governments to execute rural development or economic policies (since they have always worked in the delivery of social services and urban infrastructure), (c) the difficulty of private and public actors to think in terms of territorial competitiveness instead of sector competitiveness, (d) the difficulty in motivating local collective organizations to identify economic opportunities and outline the main lines of development for the territory, (e) the

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<sup>29</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

impossibility of mobilizing some rural actors, and (f) the sectoral rather than multi-sectoral characteristic of the states structure.<sup>30</sup>

Certainly, one can argue that the above are not local problems but local manifestations of structural problems of nation-states in the continent. Paradoxically, these issues that restrict RDPs implementation are the reasons rural development policies are so necessary; they are both causes and consequences of rural poverty and inequality.

The following section focuses on the ideas and paradigms outlined and under construction by Latin American scholars in the context of an apparent crisis of the neoliberal model of development in the continent.

### *Post-(neo)liberalism, post-development or alternative (rural) development(s)?*

Without a doubt, the orthodox model of economic growth and (neo) liberal development model that has characterised the last thirty years of economic policies in the continent has failed to mitigate, and has even exacerbated, poverty (IADB, 1999; Gwynne and Kay, 2000; de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2007; Kay, 2009 among others).<sup>31</sup>

Many scholars, social movements and activists urge investigation and implementation of alternative development strategies/models within the political

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<sup>30</sup> The IADB (2006b) also states that main concerns of TRD policies during implementation are in determining: (a) the criteria to delimitate rural territories that have greater possibilities for success, (b) the most suitable institutional formulas to bring together the public and private sector, (c) the most suitable tools to promote TRD, (d) the proper mechanisms and incentives to guarantee horizontal and vertical coordination, and (f) the articulation and integration of local rural development into a policy of regional development. See IADB (2006b) for an analysis of concrete cases of “failure” in the implementation of RDPs.

<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the decade IADB (1999: 16) stated that, “after 15 years of adjustment, results are precarious in terms of low growth rates, the persistence of high levels of poverty, worsening income distribution and steadily declining profitability” and Gwynne and Kay (2000: 151) mentioned that, “during the 1990s neoliberalism achieved rapid economic growth but with increasing income inequality, more exclusion and less social protection”. More recently and referring to processes able to improve people’s well-being, reducing inequality and eradicating poverty, Kay (2009: 104) affirms that “neoliberal policies have utterly failed to resolve these urgent problems and may have made them worse”. For the particular case of rural poverty, see de Janvry and Sadoulet (2007: 68-71) who present comparative quantitative evidence among diverse Latin American countries and conclude that: (a) “the incidence of rural poverty has generally not declined and the number of rural poor has increased”, (b) “rural inequality is exceptionally high and increasing”, (c) “social development has improved, even though gaps between rural and urban social development remain large”, and (d) “urban migration has been the great escape valve in preventing a large increase in rural poverty. Poverty has been displaced toward the urban environment”. Harvey (2005: 156) claims that “[t]he reduction and control of inflation is the only systematic success neoliberalization can claim”.

changes taking place in the region from the middle of 2000s. It is precisely against this background that the present study intends to make a contribution.

Salama and Valier (1996 [1994]: 17) affirm that “alternative economic policies are based both on a different understanding of the crisis and of the mechanisms that generate increasing income inequality and an increasing levels of poverty, as well as on a redistributive ethic”.<sup>32</sup> The authors state that growth without redistribution is not enough to cause poverty reduction. The introduction of an ethics perspective ten years later in the context of the Argentinean debate proved their claims were important to the re-conceptualization of development based on equity, justice and income distribution (García Delgado and Nosetto, 2006). In fact, García Delgado (2006: 17) states that in the case of Argentina,

“Development returns to the public space and to the political and academic debate. This return is taking place after 30 years of implementing a true conservative revolution, which destroyed the social welfare contract and subordinated all social dimensions to the logic of maximisation of individual interest”.<sup>33</sup>

García Delgado states that within hegemonic neoliberal discourse, debate around development was absent in public policies, something that seems to be gradually changing:

“The debate on development returns to occupy a central position in social sciences and in Latin American politics. It takes place within the framework of the conflict between development policies and the dominance of financial capital based on a very debatable monetary orthodoxy and its negative effects in the region” (Dos Santos, 2004; quoted in *ibid*: 18).<sup>34</sup>

In this context, studies reflecting on the *post-neoliberal turn* or *neo-structuralism* in the continent emerged (García Delgado and Nosetto, 2006; Leiva, 2008; Arditi, 2008, Escobar, 2010 among others).

García Delgado (2006) states that the new scenario where development debate is re-introduced is different from that one in which it was first formulated (around the 1950s).<sup>35</sup> In Argentina the transformation under structural adjustment has included (a) a “devaluation” of the role of the state in the promotion of welfare; (b) a radical change in the productive structure which reduce the industrial

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<sup>32</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>33</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>34</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author. Dos Santos, T. (2004) *Neodesarrollismo en Latinoamérica. ¿Hacia dónde vamos?* REGGEN, Brasil.

<sup>35</sup> García Delgado (2006) affirms that during the introduction of liberal policies and the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, the concept of development was no longer used in public policies in Argentina. Something similar is stated in Schuurman (2000) when he argues that there was an impasse in development studies, particularly from the 1980s.



sector, “re-primarized” the economy (predominance of the agriculture sector) and fragmented and destroyed some productive sectors previously very dense and well integrated; and (c) a change in the social structure of the population, showing a society much more differentiated in its social composition, increasingly unequal and with a excluding configuration.

In this context, argues García Delgado, is no longer possible to think of the state as the only actor able to promote development. It is necessary to rethink its role and reconstruct it. This is one of the main concerns in the construction of alternative developments in the post-(neo)liberal context currently taking place in the region. Other concerns are (a) the emphasis on productive instead of financial capital, (b) the ethics perspective which is linked to the comprehension that (c) development entails multiple dimensions: environmental, cultural, ethnical and not only economical, (d) the new geographies: the need to think of ways to engage with the global economy in a different way than the neoliberal, while taking into consideration the importance of regional integration; and (e) the tendency and need to broaden consensus within the different sectors of the society. This author adds that

“The problem of development is a central issue not only in the current economic debate (...) but also in the political, social, cultural and environmental debates. This makes of the concept of development into a polemic and provisional space from the very moment its definitions becomes part of the field of debate and collective deliberation” (ibid: 21).<sup>36</sup>

Some of the arguments outlined above can also be found in Arditi (2008) who discusses post-liberal politics in the continent against the background of what is known as the *left turn*.<sup>37</sup> He argues that this concept (post-liberalism) describes properly the current situation since the so-called “left” governments in the region are more “post-liberal” than “anti-liberal” or “anti-capitalist”, arguing that the left in Latin America is the new centre. The author suggests that in this *turn*, liberalism has already ceased to be present. He states that, “liberalism is what we are but also what we are ceasing to be, whereas post-liberalism is a symptom of what we are in the process of becoming, an index of our becoming-other” (ibid: 74).

Nowadays’ debate in Latin American societies and among scholars is not completely new. In fact, critiques towards the modernization theory or a “developmentalist” approach to the so called Third World on behalf of the First World emerged some time ago. The novelty is that governments have placed in the centre political claims from the left, and that more active public policies have been designed and started to be implemented.

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<sup>36</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>37</sup> See also Leiva (2008).

The Latin America dependency school has had great impact among intellectuals of the region preoccupied with the introduction of foreign ethnocentric inputs to “develop the local societies”. The premises and concepts that support the *teoría de la dependencia* have implications in many of the critiques that emerged since the beginnings of the 1990s (for instance in Escobar, 1992 and 1995 or Slater, 1993).

However, Grosfoguel (2000: 368) states that even the most radical analyse of development in the region (those linked to the dependency school or to neo-structuralism) have failed to recognize the euro-centrism in their premises and claims. They express euro-centrism when, focusing attention on the white Creole-lead nation-states, promote social transformation and claim a neo-Marxist political economy approach that obscures the cultural dimension of capitalism in the continent. Grosfoguel considers that *dependentistas* have underestimated culture and that “leftists projects” in the continent “never radically problematized the racial/ethnic hierarchies built during the European colonial expansion and still present in Latin America’s coloniality of power”.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar line of arguments, Escobar (1995) proposed thinking in terms of *post-development*. Not in the sense of claiming the end of development as some authors later debated, but in that in some parts of the globe, some social movements are contesting the way “development” is understood. Certainly, the author states that the notion “intuited the possibility of *visualizing an era where development ceased to be the central organizing principle of social life*” (Escobar, 2010: 12).<sup>39</sup> He adds later that, “the same with post-liberalisms, as a space/time when social life is no longer seen as so thoroughly determined by the construct of economy, individual rationality, private property, and so forth as a characteristic of liberalism modernity” (ibid).

The contemporary debate in the continent about post-development is divided into what Escobar (2010: 11) names the “two potentially complementary but also competing and contradictory projects: (a) *alternative modernizations*, based on an anti-neo-liberal development model, in the direction of a post-capitalist economy and an alternative form of modernity (...) (b) *decolonial projects*, based on a different set of practices (e.g. communal, indigenous, hybrid, and above all, pluriversal and intercultural), leading to a *post-liberal society (an alternative to euro-modernity)*”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The author refers to Anibal Quijano’s concept of *coloniality of power*. He mentions that *coloniality* “refers to the long-term continuities of the racial hierarchies from the time of European colonialism to the formation of nation-states in the Americas” (Grosfoguel, 2000: 369).

<sup>39</sup> In italics in the original

<sup>40</sup> In italics in the original

The common characteristics of these approaches are the rejection in Latin America of the modernization paradigm/ontology linked with the premises and promises of developmentalism and liberal ideologies. These have made some intellectuals claim that understanding the continent current transformations should not be based on the right or left, but on cultural aspects of the transformation (Escobar, 2010).

In the particular case of ‘rural development’, the continent has witnessed an intermittent construction (with bursts and lulls) of alternative models or styles of development; some of them seeking to understand the logics behind ‘development’ and incorporating Grosfoguel’s critique.

During the 1980s some scholars started to think in terms of sustainable rural development under the influence of the global trend towards environmental care and social justice. Considering the abovementioned perspective, most of sustainable rural development ideas implemented in that period were circumscribed in a Eurocentric ontology that tried to fit the particularities of Latin America into one particular model of development. Nevertheless, this was an interesting period, because it was marked by the emergence of “new” actors in the development arena in Latin America with the reestablishment of democracy, the NGOs. In fact, the reflection of alternative rural development soon was put in terms of the future role of the NGOs sector in development and democratization.

An interesting argument for reflecting on this kind of organizations and the promotion of rural development can be found in Mitlin *et al.* (2007). The authors state that if one considers “civil society as a constituting arena in which hegemonic ideas concerning the organization of economic and social life are both established and contested”, then reflecting about rural development and NGOs needs to be placed both within the framework of programmes of intervention and “politics and political economy of social change”. The authors want to make a distinction between “a partial, reformist, intervention-specific alternative, and a structural changing, radical, systematic alternative” (ibid: 1701) when addressing and analysing NGOs and their role in alternative rural development.

In this fashion, for instance, studies about agriculture’s decreasing profitability due to soil degradation, environmental pollution and deforestation started to emerge. They were contextualized in the general political economy of large-scale agriculture modernization (gradually transforming into industrial agriculture) and the marginalization of the “sluggish” family farming in the political and economic discourse and interventions.

The idea of an alternative development model that would take into account the economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, ethnic and gender aspects of

peoples living in rural areas was probably first discussed in the *agroecological* proposal. The approach also stemmed as a critique to the way the 'green revolution' had been implemented in Latin America.

The debate was first put forward jointly by NGOs working at ground level and farmers' and peasants' organizations in different part of the continent. A multi-sited dialogue and initiatives, different from modernization development projects and approaches, were gradually created. They observed that small-scale agriculture had been showing good performance despite constraints and unfavourable contexts. NGOs involved in bottom-up interventions proved that the same farmers, peasants and native communities were applying agricultural techniques based on their understanding of the agro-ecosystem, and this in conjunction with their own socio-cultural production organization enhanced food production, efficiency of local resource use, and the quality of natural resources *vis a vis* industrialized agriculture and modern technology applied in large-scale farms.

In general terms, agroecology proposes a different way to organize the social and ecological aspects of agriculture than that promoted by the green revolution model. Following Altieri (1989: 38) agroecology "has been proposed as a new scientific discipline that defines, classifies and studies agricultural systems from an ecological and socio-economic perspective". The author agrees that it is not only a methodology to approach agricultural systems but "should delineate the ecological principles necessary to develop sustainable production systems". These ideas have been discussed in academia both in Europe (particularly France and Spain) and America,<sup>41</sup> but it is marginalized in current debates on food production, productivity and global markets in the main intergovernmental organizations (such as the World Bank or IADB's recommendation policies).

Nevertheless, Bebbington and Thiele (1993: 69) affirm that "among donor and international organizations operating in Latin America one can see a realignment occurring. Thus, some of the largest NGOs and grassroots group donors in Latin America (...) have reoriented their attention to sustainable production systems and agroecology". The authors argue - when analysing the shift in intergovernmental agencies' discourses and their new agenda for technological cooperation in the continent - that the "terminology of the so-called populist critics of agricultural research who spoke of low input, alternative and sustainable agriculture has now entered the lexicon of those they once criticized" (ibid: 79).

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<sup>41</sup> Miguel Altieri from the English speaking academia and Eduardo Sevilla Guzmán from the Spanish/Portuguese one are probably the most known scholars in Latin America (see for example Altieri, 1989, 2000 or 2002 and Sevilla Guzmán y Ottmann, 2000 among others).

In Argentina, such a marginalization is partly a consequence of the developmentalist approach based on the modernization of agriculture which dominates among policy makers, extensionist agencies and academia. The predominant discourse for food production and development in the country rests on the enhancement of large-scale and industrialized agriculture. Therefore, the promoters of ecological agriculture and ‘alternative rural development’ are limited to implementing agroecological approaches at the margins (for poor social sectors in the peripheries of the cities and in poor regions of the north of the country).<sup>42</sup>

In this sense, some authors agree that “as an agricultural development approach, agroecology cannot confront the structural and economic factors that are the cause of rural poverty” (Altieri, 1989: 43). In that case a broader approach to rural development would be needed. As a result, certain practitioners assert that agroecology cannot be implemented without a political claim towards a social change.

The interest in agroecology expanded during the 1970s and 1980s when the environmental awareness or consciousness became part of the international agenda (Costa and Canavesi, 2002). The ideas and propositions that agroecology tries to put forward are very much shaped in response to troubling empirical finding in many parts of the world: water and land pollution, small-scale farming displacement, natural resource degradation, high dependency on extra-local inputs and technology markets including seeds, vulnerability in food security, among others. The dominance of food production systems linked to global markets seems to have been detrimental to those linked to local and regional ones. This is one of the central claims of today’s rural social movements in Latin America.

Authors engaged in the discussion on the importance of conceiving other rural development models link industrialized agriculture and agribusiness with the inflow of large amounts of capital into the sector and the transformations that took place within the so called green revolution (Moreira and Carmo, 2004). They explain the need to move away from this model of agriculture that has proven social and environmentally detrimental. Agroecology is thus being promoted not only by some public extension systems but also from grassroots organization as a way out of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘poverty’, to bring about ‘rural development’, ‘climate change mitigation’ and a more equal income distribution.

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<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, since 2008 the national government presents a new discourse about family agriculture which may incorporate some these principles in those sectors of the country where family farming is high in terms of number of people employed and the production value.

In the case of Latin-American, Altieri (1989: 43) notes that there are many farmers' organizations, NGOs and other social organizations (such as churches or schools) working on the ground researching alternative food systems. They aim to (a) improve food production at farm level to improve families' nutritional intake, (b) encourage efficient utilization of local resources, (c) minimize risk by increasing agro-diversity, (d) preserve natural resources by rescuing and conserving local plant and animal germplasm, (e) "[reduce] the use of external inputs to reduce dependency, but sustaining yields with appropriate technologies", (f) guarantee that "alternative systems have an overall beneficial effect not only on individual families, but on the entire community".

Via Campesina, among other farmers' organizations around the world, have made of agroecology an interesting discourse not just to oppose industrialized agriculture, but to reflect on the social and environmental consequences of capital penetration in the agriculture sector -particularly when the capital is speculative 'hot money' - and the implications of this on the decline of family agriculture and rural exodus.<sup>43</sup> These actors stress the political and social aspects of agroecology, along with the idea of a more radical change to accomplish rural development (e.g. through land redistribution) (Costa and Canavesi, 2002).

Some scholars, though, call for a conciliation and claim not to put the agroecological discourse in tension with agribusiness, but instead to find common grounds to "modernize" agriculture in a way which seeks not only productivity and economic profit but also environmental and social improvement (Gudynas, 2000).<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, Gudynas (2000) states that some of the green revolution strategies are combined in some places with local practices of production, recognizing that in some cases they can bring about good outcomes (e.g. zero tilling). The author mentions that when the agroecologists sustain a forced dichotomy between green revolution techniques and agroecology, they lose the chance to create successful intermediate positions. Bebbington (1993) presents an example from the Andean region of Ecuador. Here, the author argues, the indígenas' federations have outlined agrarian programmes which incorporate "Green Revolution technologies to promote a form of development that nonetheless aims at reinforcing Indian culture and society" (ibid: 275). He adds that:

"This is essentially an attempt at a grassroots-controlled rural modernization which, to the extent that it strengthens local Indian society and culture, differs

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<sup>43</sup> La Vía Campesina is an international movement that coordinates peasants' organizations. It gathers small and middle scale producers, women, and indigenous peoples from America, Europe and Asia. It was formed in 1992 in the Congress of the National Union of Farmers and Livestock Owners that gathers farmers from Europe and North and Central America in Managua, Nicaragua. The members claim to be peasants' organization and not an NGO (Pimbert, 2009: 5).

<sup>44</sup> Holmén (2006) for the case of Sub-Saharan Africa.

from the type of modernization promoted by the Green Revolution and integrated rural development programs. It also differs from the conceptions of an indigenous agriculture development in the proposal of those “geographers among the peasants” who suggest that appropriate rural development should build only, or primarily, on farmers’ own techniques and innovations” (ibid).<sup>45</sup>

These had lead Bebbington (1993: 275) to suggest that alternative development does not need to be completely local or indigenous or agroecological. He argues that in certain places that is not possible and that,

“[i]n some cases, these “alternative” agendas do not reflect the perspectives of peasants and their local organizations as they compose their own strategies of agriculture and rural development. These local strategies involve both alternative and orthodox goals. Furthermore, some “alternative” goals, such as local control of the development process and cultural revalorization, are pursued through conventional means - such as the promotion of agrochemicals, new crops varieties, and market-oriented production. This apparently strange mix of means and ends reflects local groups’ pragmatic responses to increasingly difficult and modernized environments”.

In this context the notion of *food sovereignty* was introduced by social movements, in particular by Vía Campesina, as a way to distant themselves with the concept of *food security* used by intergovernmental organizations and with the purpose of introducing the notion of *local food systems* over the dominant idea of *global agro-food systems*.

The proposal is to delink from the hegemonic models and discourses of international development agencies and to create new/alternative local/regional narratives, discourses and approaches. In doing so, ideas of *buen vivir* (living well), food self-sufficiency, social justice, autonomy and self-determination, autonomous food systems and environmental sustainability, among others, are currently part of the agendas of social movements preoccupied with equity and equality, food production, consumption and family agriculture. Aspects of this proposal have been adopted by some governments in South America.<sup>46</sup>

Work towards food sovereignty involves the organization of a new agriculture, a different way of managing and appropriating nature, and the creation of autonomous spaces. In fact, this is something that has been already occurring in

<sup>45</sup> For a well-informed discussion about the impact of the Green Revolution in the peasant sector in Latin America see Bebbington and Thiele (1993).

<sup>46</sup> Bolivia, for instance, has changed in 2007 its Constitution and incorporated the notion of food security and sovereignty, giving the responsibility to the plurinational state to decrease inequalities in food access and environmental deterioration (Ejdesgaard and Prudencio, 2008). Argentina is in the process of framing its new family agriculture policy in terms of food sovereignty (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2010).

many places, but is not widely taken into account in national agricultural policies. Based on an analysis of current trends, Pimbert (2009) states that food sovereignty can be seen as an alternative paradigm. He mentions that it is primary new social movements rather than scholars or professional working groups who are promoting this new approach. He adds that, “this alternative policy framework for food and agriculture is a citizen’s response to the multiple social and environmental crises induced by modern food systems everywhere” (ibid: 5).<sup>47</sup>

Even though some initiatives surrounding food sovereignty can be criticized for romanticizing local food systems and, in the name of autonomy, imposing from below (but with international connections) certain rules and norms of production upon governments, there is a general agreement on the need for structural changes not only at the regional level but also in the global architecture of food trade.

## Rural development in Argentina and the province of Misiones

While the above paragraphs seem to be more concerned with Development (“development of capitalism”), the following discussion focuses on development (“development as an intentional activity”) (Cowen and Shenton, 1998 quoted in Mitlin *et al.*, 2007: 1701).<sup>48</sup> The former, Development, deals with structural change, a “radical, systematic alternative”. The latter term, development, refers to the “partial, reformist, intervention-specific alternative” (Mitlin *et al.*, ibid). This part of the chapter then is devoted to the more specific ways in which development was pursued in Argentina.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the national government, through the implementation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), acquired a significant presence in the family agriculture. These programmes focus their attention on family smallholders and provide training, technical assistance and financial assistance in the form of loans or grants.

The design of RDPs stipulated the need to create institutional linkages with other rural organizations (NGOs, social organizations, churches, unions, cooperatives, so forth). In those rural spaces where this was feasible and

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<sup>47</sup> Pimbert (2009: 7) makes a short summary about the notion of food sovereignty. It involves the rights of individuals, peoples, communities and countries to: (a) define their own policies of food production and natural resource management, (b) produce healthy and culturally appropriate food, (c) protect domestic production if necessary, (d) “choose their own level of self-reliance in food”, (e) “produce and harvest food in an ecologically sustainable manner, principally through low-external input production and artisanal fisheries”.

<sup>48</sup> Cowen, D. and Porter, D. (1998) “Agrarian doctrines of development: part 1”, in *Journal of Peasant Studies* 48 (2): 49-76.



accomplished, RDPs became important actors. The programmes have enhanced family farmers' image in the public debate and have facilitated the promotion of their organizations and networking with other rural agencies. Other achievements of these programmes include the introduction of environmental concerns, gender perspectives and the promotion of social participation into developmental agenda.

However, Manzanal (2008) argues that RDPs and other interventions designed and commanded by the national government were introduced as a social containment of rural populations, a way to prevent rural migration to the cities. The creation of RDPs was part of the neoliberal agenda, not a genuine effort to promote growth and welfare in rural areas or to promote authentic political and economic participation among the poorest sectors of the population. In fact, environmental and gender concerns for instance were imposed by intergovernmental cooperation agencies as binding conditions necessary for the delivery of funds.

A recent comprehensive study (Manzanal and Nardi, 2008) after fifteen years of RDPs implementation in the country points out the following issues:

(a) The programmes are not a rural development policy, but a set of specialized offers that come out in different political and financing contexts. Each of them has a different institutional structure and responds to different donors and politics. This has resulted in uncoordinated and inefficient management of public resources and superposition of beneficiaries.

(b) RDPs operate at the microeconomic level, and thus have to struggle against the grossly unfair macroeconomic structure characterised by monopolist competition, pressure from agro-food companies, input suppliers and supermarkets, and the rules and norms of standardization of production, presentation and delivery of global markets.

(c) RDPs have been implemented in isolation from other public strategies from the national, provincial or local government. They function with *ad hoc* structures that communicate with other agencies and dependencies. In some cases, it made complicated relations between the nation (central government) and the provinces (provincial governments).

(d) The programmes do not target poverty in a holistic manner, therefore they cannot solve it. In part, this is because they were designed to focus on increasing agricultural production, without taking into consideration other aspects such as commercialization, precarious land tenancy and no access to land, rural electricity, roads, irrigation systems, communications and transport, labour conditions, life quality, housing, rural education and health care, and environmental issues such as pollution or soil desertification.

(e) RDPs operate in an uncertain context where funds were not always delivered when scheduled, sometimes delaying a full crop cycle and therefore production, and at the same time holding up technical assistance or training courses.

(f) The programmes had no impact in the rural economies where they attempted to address both economic and social issues, due to the narrow promotion of groups of farmers and increasing access to financial and technical assistance.

In the province of Misiones in particular, public intervention by the provincial state on family farms dates back to the 1970s. Moniec (1991) notes that many of the activities undertaken in the period prior to the 1990s are presented as individual tools, not framed in a comprehensive program, with each agency generating its own projects, causing resource overlapping in certain areas while leaving others without coverage.

Currently, there is greater institutional collaboration among the various rural development actors active in the province. However, there is no progress towards building a comprehensive policy for the local agricultural sector. Despite the lack of state leadership in the construction of a rural development policy, the RDPs and NGOs engaging with farmers report evidence of an active grass-roots mobilization for the introduction of new ideas (crops, natural resource management, economic and political organization etc.).

Schiavoni *et al.* (2006) indicate that in Misiones there is increasing demand for the construction of 'an alternative rural development'. This sentiment results from a general deterioration in the quality of life of people in rural areas. These authors agree that the set of proposals opposes the neoliberal ideals that sustain the economic model promoted by the state, which has proven to be exclusionary and to widen the gap between poor and rich people. According to Schiavoni *et al.*, this alternative rural development also opposes the productivism paradigm based on capital penetration in the agriculture sector.

These authors analyze some experiences in Misiones and conclude that the actors involved actively contest the conventional model of agriculture development and the negative impacts of recent economic transformations in family agriculture in the province. They affirm that the valorisation of food production, through the application of an agroecological model and short chains of food commercialization, is at the heart of the new versions of rural development.

According to the abovementioned authors, this alternative model has increased the visibility of issues and actors that had been marginalized in the agricultural discourse in the province, and at the same time has broadened the support for surviving small agriculture holders. In retaining the rural population in

agriculture, “these activities eased, in part, the negative effects caused by the withdrawal of the state” (ibid: 265).<sup>49</sup>

Some of the RDPs and projects promote a specific type of agriculture amongst the vast majority of small and medium landholders or family farms. This prioritises food security and food sovereignty of rural families through family consumption of farm products, food security and sovereignty of local societies, autonomy of the farmers to decide what to produce, how to produce it and who to exchange with (production with diverse adapted technologies, organic production without the introduction of agro chemicals as a way to be more independent from extra-local and extra-farm capital), homemade industrialization, the trading of surpluses in urban markets, and the creation of new local markets and new patterns of consumption (Nardi, 2006 and 2008). It could be argued that they foster a “decentralization” of the value chain, placing more power in the hands of the farmers.

The abovementioned vision of development juxtaposes the focus on industrialized agriculture based on large investment of usually extra-local capital, the standardization of the production, non local technology, increase in yields with agro chemical inputs and the extensive use of natural resources taking into consideration extra-local markets and global markets in particular (Schiavoni *et al.*, 2006). This kind of development is mostly promoted by the provincial government and by some sectors of the national government, and by the main beneficiaries of an open and de-regularized market, such as the tobacco companies, the yerba mate mills and agro-industries or the forestry corporations.

Therefore it can be affirmed that in this province there are at least two competing discourses of rural development disputing the organization (access, use, management and appropriation) of natural resources and livelihoods. These models fuel complex territorial transformations and dynamics that need to be analyzed in order to comprehend the complexity and potential of the various rural development policies and strategies.

## **Territory, (rural) development and linking concepts**

Hägerstrand (1985: 7) argues that the main area of investigation in the discipline of geography is “the study of the struggle for power over the admission of existences in time and space” (quoted in Holmén, 1991: 55).<sup>50</sup> If this is the case, then the present research is more a geographical one than a developmental. Certainly, the focus of this research is on understanding these admissions

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<sup>49</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>50</sup> Hägerstrand, T. (1985) “Den geografiska traditionens kärnområde”, in *Geografiska Notiser* 3: 3-7.

through the analysis of territorial dynamics, rather than an assessment of development strategies.

The discussion that follows hinges on the notion of *territory*, one of the guiding concepts in this research, and its theoretical connections to *development* and *territorial dynamics*.

### *Discussing territory and territoriality*

The concept of territory has long been defined and applied in natural sciences and social sciences (Political Science, Geography and Anthropology). But it has been Geography in particular the one that has made of it a great interest (Reboratti, 2008). The concept is indeed one of the central in the sub-discipline of Political Geography and has always been related to the analysis of the Nation-state, its territorial organization, government and its sovereignty or control over a bounded space.

In general terms territory has been defined as the result or a consequence of spatial relations of power (Gottman, 1973; Sack, 1983; Raffestin, 1980; Lopes de Souza, 1995). Gottman (1973, quoted in Taylor, 1994 [1985]) traced the origins of the concept and affirms that it has been linked to an area under the control of an agent (state) and that it supposes certain political divisions. Gottman states that the term comes from Latin and described the area around a city-state in the Classic world and later in the medieval Italian cities.

A general definition is provided by Johnston *et al.* (2000: 824) who state that broadly, “territory refers to the bounded social space occupied and used by different social groups as a consequence of following strategies of territoriality”. However, territory can also be used as a category, whose content may change according to the theoretical context in which it is applied.

Certainly, Cox (1991: 5) sustains that during the 1980s there was concern among social theorists about some of the concepts used by human geographers. Within this theoretical turn, the concept of territory had been appropriated, bringing the possibility of the term being “redefined and redeployed”.<sup>51</sup> According to the author, two aspects that characterise the concept are renewed and reincorporated in the new use of territory: the notions of power and of bounded spaces.

Firstly, the idea of power is no longer connected to the state, “rather it is a matter of its chronic implication in social relations” (ibid) as in relationships of class, gender or ethnicity. Secondly, the idea of bounds no longer refers to the

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<sup>51</sup> This is also the case for the Spanish/Portuguese speaking academia, see Santos (1994).

geographical limits in a political-jurisdictional sense, but in a broader aspect since social relations are always localised. The author also states that the idea of conflict among different actors characterised territory, using the notion of arena to explain so:

“...To pose the issue of territorial bounds in this way is also to pose the question of what is being bounded: this is not mere territorial extent but some set of social relations which are, for some reason or another, localized. Combining this with the earlier-broader-definition of the political, territory emerges as an arena for conflicts: conflict between business and labour, for example, between different age groups, or between the genders” (ibid: 5-6).

Cox (1991: 6) asserts that the concept of territory, as it is being used by contemporary social theorists, relates to the idea of “bounded areas or arenas within which conflict occurs”.

In the present study, territory is defined as the spacialization of power relations. It is a space disputed by actors: it is an absolute space (physical space with its own environmental features) and a relational space (social, political) contested by different powers.

In line with these ideas, Sack (1983) defines territory when proposing a theory on human territoriality. The author affirms that territory is an area delimited by an individual or group to influence, affect, or control objects, people, and relationships. He mentions that the influence of groups or individuals is wielded by following strategies of territoriality, which is defined as “...the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things, and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area” (ibid: 55). He elaborates that those who control territory do “not have to be in the territory to assert control over it” (ibid).

Since territoriality is defined as a relationship between people mediated by space and not an object, “territorial relationships are defined within a social context, albeit an extremely general one, of differential access to things and people”. In this case, “this definition cuts across perspectives and levels of analysis. It involves the perspectives of those controlled and those doing the controlling” (ibid: 57). Sack (1983) mentions that the use of territoriality is neither negative nor positive and it can be described in a neutral way. He maintains that, “this prevents territoriality from becoming the captive of any particular ethical theory or theory of power... It needs to be combined with or informed by descriptions of contexts or theories about power and influence” (ibid: 58).

The notion of territoriality is linked to the different ways of understanding and using resources and the organization of societies in the physical space where they are localised. Consequently, territoriality implies the creation, destruction and (re)creation of territories (Lobato Correa, 1994; Correia de Andrade, 1994).

This notion has been analysed by some scholars interested in the territorial organization of societies from a Marxist perspective (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Sanchez, 1979 and 1988; Swyngedouw, 1992; Santos, 1996), when trying to understand how the modes of production of different societies shapes territories and at the same time how spatial organizations could work as productive forces in themselves.

The concept of territory is related then to the appropriation of a given space through power, control or territoriality. Control may be real and effective although not necessary legitimized (for instance, the territory of a municipality, a parish -legitimized-, or a gang -illegitimated-). However this appropriation can also be the affective result of spatial strategies of certain social groups, and bear more relationship to their feelings or the symbolism they attribute to certain spaces (for instance, the territory of landless or homeless or prostitutes in the rural and urban areas).

This is so because every society produces itself, and in the dialectic of doing so, it produces territory: “Every society when constituting itself, constructs its space and produces in this way, its territory” (Porto-Gonçalves, 2003: 265).<sup>52</sup> This explanation accounts both for the *concrete* and *symbolic* processes of space production (Raffestin, 1993 [1980]; Lobato Correa, 1994). In the same line of thought, Haesbaert (2005: 6775) points out that:

“the territory, embedded in relations of domination and/or appropriation of society-space, unfolded itself along a continuum that starts with the most ‘concrete’ and ‘functional’ political and economical domination and ends with the most subjective and/or ‘cultural-symbolic’ appropriation”.<sup>53</sup>

The importance of power is omnipresent in the notion of territory. Haesbaert (2006: 40) synthesised the diverse versions of territory according to different conceptualizations:

- “Political (...) or political-jurisdictional (relative to all institutionalized space-power relationships): the best known, where the territory is understood as a demarcated and controlled space, through which a given power is exercised, in most cases – but not exclusively – in relation to the political power of the State.
- Cultural (...) or symbolic-cultural: give priority to the symbolic and most subjective dimensions, in which the territory is understood, primarily, as the product of appropriation/symbolic valorisation of a social group in relation to its lived space.

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<sup>52</sup> Originally in Portuguese. Translation of the author.

<sup>53</sup> Originally in Portuguese. Translation of the author.

- Economic (...): the least known, empathizes the spatial dimension of economic relationships, the territory as a source of resources and/or incorporated in the debate of social classes and in the capital-labour relationship, as a product of the “territorial” division of labour for instance”.<sup>54</sup>

If territory is defined as a geographical area under the control of someone then it is possible to state that in any given area there are as many territories as actors. In different degrees, there are many territories overlapping due to the exercise of diverse territorialities. Starting from home, actors have the capability to exercise their will in different ways and with varying efficacy. Therefore, differences appear in the geographical scales of those territories, according to the social influences exercised by each of the collective actors present there. For example, the parents of a family exercise territorial control over their children when making areas where they can or not play, constructing fences in the garden to avoid them running outside the house’s area. A church has influence and exercises control over a parish and its followers. It is not only the municipality or any other jurisdictional organization that creates territories.

Lopes de Souza (1995:78-79) asserts that once that territory is defined as relations of power, the central issue to understand social dynamics is who and how dominates or influences this geographical space. The author maintains that people interact with a space firstly by transforming nature through work, and secondly by creating value when modifying and re-working that social space. Therefore, every space that has been object of valorisation has been territorialized by someone. As power relations are omnipresent in all social relations, territory is present in all social spatiality (Lopes de Souza, 1995: 96).

The notion of territory in the present study is defined as the social (political, economic, cultural) and physical space resulting from social relationships. It is also a space in which everyday life is played out, and a space with physical continuity. In this sense, it is not a network territory or a virtual territory: it is a concrete space which needs to be understood from the perspectives of the social actors that live, give meaning, valorise, transform, shape, appropriate and control it. In this sense, the “entry” to define territory is not through the *actors* (the territory of “a” particular actor) but through a given *geographical space* (the space with overlapping territorialities).

Territories, as spaces in permanent dynamics of social construction, can therefore be understood as processes or “in process of becoming” since it involves a set of actors, their relationships, their material conditions and a time

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<sup>54</sup> Originally in Portuguese. Translation of the author.

frame.<sup>55</sup> Some elements “crystallize” and became permanent parts of the social interaction. Territory then can be also understood as structure. Territory is thus both process and structure. The notion of *territorial dynamics*, as used here, implies on-going processes towards territorial transformations, but as they are elements of a territory still under construction they are not yet structural.

The link between social power relations and territory is central to the present analytical perspective because it provides a framework for a critical analysis of rural development. Arguably, in general terms, the concept of territory has always been linked in some way or another to the idea of power, as the concretization of one’s will.

### *Territory and development*

Svampa (2008: 77) states that since the end of the 1980s “the territory” has increasingly acquired importance in Latin America. First, due to the implementation of new social policies focused in particular beneficiaries and localized in particular geographic spaces as a way to control and contend poverty. And second, because of the “new modalities adapted by the logics of the capital in those spaces considered strategically in terms of natural resources”. Svampa refers to David Harvey’s notion of accumulation by dispossession to explain that these new modalities of capital penetration in the continent need to be understood within the new regime of capital accumulation, which has generated new displacements and appropriations.

Bebbington (2009) argues that the expansion of the extractive frontier motorized by the increase in direct forest investment in many countries of the region has not gone uncontested. Both, extractive economy and social protests, are producing new global networks of production and protest, new territorial dynamics, new geographies.

In this context, how is it possible to link the notion of territory proposed here to the idea of ‘development’? Lopes de Souza (1995) proposes the rethinking and *territorialisation* of the concept of development. The author mentions that in the same way that the concept of territory was captured by a certain kind of state-centrism that was directly or indirectly legitimating the role of the nation-state, the idea of development has been condemned from diverse schools of thoughts as an insidious way to “increase the capitalist Western civilization as a universal paradigm” (Lopes de Souza, 1995: 99-100).<sup>56</sup> With this in mind, the concept of

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<sup>55</sup> Harvey (2006: 123) affirms in reference to the relational concept of space that “[p]rocess do not occur *in* space but define their own spatial frame”.

<sup>56</sup> In Portuguese in the original. Translation of the author.



territory is relevant when thinking the generation of processes conducting to ‘welfare’:

“the use and control of the territory, in the same way that a real redistribution of power, must be put in a position of great importance, as well as the design of socio-spatial development strategies in a broad sense, not just economic capitalistic; i.e. they should contribute to more social justice and not be limited to claims for economic growth and technological modernization” (ibid: 100-101).<sup>57</sup>

According to Lopes de Souza, the initial concern about development is a political one. He affirms that this should not lead us to neglect economic issues, but rather to approach and prioritise political concerns. This is related to the exercise of power and decision-making in a society, which has been under debate in the previous section of the chapter.

This has some connection to Holmén (1991: 51-52) when he states that “development is a complex and multi-faceted matter” and “it is also a highly political phenomenon”. Holmén states that studies of development should include the analysis of power relations and the mobilization of resources by collective actors in order to gain control and achieve their goals. He agrees with Friedman (1973) on the importance of awareness of these issues for the understanding of development and social change:

“...the ability of organizational institutional actors, located in geographical space, to mobilize and allocate resources in geographical space (manpower, capital and information) and intentionally to structure the decision field of others (i.e. to constrain the decision of others by policies, rules and commands). ... Both kinds of power (governmental and private economic) ... have the capacity to influence the location decisions of firms and households, the quantity, location and application of resources and the flow of innovations” (Friedmann, 1973: 12 quoted in Holmén, 1991: 55).<sup>58</sup>

Lawson (2007: 3-5) also observed the political aspects of development and the notion of power relations embedded on it. She considers that the term *development* is complex, contradictory and powerful, and “takes on particular meanings in the context of specific intellectual, institutional and political moments”. She states:

“...geography challenges much development theory by pointing out that D/development does not exist as a thing or an end point. Rather, it is a series of historically specific relations between places, social groups, culture,

<sup>57</sup> In Portuguese in the original. Translation of the author.

<sup>58</sup> Friedmann, J. (1973) “The spatial organization of power in the development of urban systems”, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. IV, N° 3, pages 12-50.

spheres of production and consumption. D/development is viewed both as a politically powerful discourse and as relentlessly material, entailing substantial transformations of society as a result of these power relations” (ibid: 27).<sup>59</sup>

While convinced that development is a highly political process, Lopes de Souza (1995) argues that the notion of *autonomy* is the base on which development can be redefined from a critical territorial perspective. In this manner, a different conception of development can be built, where the territorial question -referring to control over space, greater levels of autonomy, and ‘admission of existences in time and space’- guides reflection on the political and spatial aspects of development.

Lopes de Souza considers that for a social transformation in line with the abovementioned, it is necessary to outline projects, “horizons of actions and thoughts”. He therefore remarks on the importance of social mobilization and social movements, since those have a great potential to alter and rupture the existing order:

“...the question about development (...) presents itself in small and huge challenges, every day and in diverse scales. In each case, actors will be confronted with the need to defend a territory, as a way to express their willingness to keep a certain way of life, vital resources for the surviving of a group, of an identity or liberty of action” (ibid: 109).<sup>60</sup>

Taking the particular case of Argentina, diverse studies point toward the need to focus on the understanding of social claims in terms of struggles for autonomy from hegemonic practices and discourses (Manzanal, 2010). This could be linked to the idea of making “autonomous geographies” (Chatterton, 2005). Seoane (2004) stresses the claim to autonomy when linking the Zapatista movement to urban movements in Argentina: a social struggle for dignity and democracy. The autonomy constructed here is from a particular political culture that is increasingly questioned in the country and in the region. Other authors, observing rural territories, claim that more autonomy of certain social and geographical sectors is needed to allow them to define their own models of sustainable rural development (Barkin, 2001), instead of being driven by intergovernmental organizations or aid cooperation from high-income countries.

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<sup>59</sup> The distinction between Development and development reflects the idea that the term has two meanings, one more general than the other, as already observed in the previous sections of this chapter: “1. Development as the expansion and extension of (generally capitalist) systems of production, exchange and regulation. 2. Development as organized interventions with explicit and implicit goals” (Bebbington, 2003: 299).

<sup>60</sup> In Portuguese in the original. Translation of the author. See also Escobar (1992) or Bebbington (2007).

The need to focus on territorial issues when thinking of alternative development strategies is also suggested by Friedman (1992: 133 quoted in Brohman, 1996: 235). The author considers notions of territory and territoriality when thinking in a more purposeful way about development. He subscribes to the notion of territory elaborated above:

“Territory is coincident with life space, and most people seek to exercise a degree of autonomous control over these spaces. Territoriality exists at all scales, from the smallest to the largest, and we are simultaneously citizens of several territorial communities at different scales”

Consequently, studies about processes of development are beneficial if concerned with analysis of actors and their everyday practices, connections and networks within the particular power structures where they are located. Within these issues it is possible to observe the mobilization, distribution and appropriation of resources, the norms and rules created in order to bring them into play, and therefore the influences on actions and behaviours and the structuration of people’s life. Olivier de Sardan (n/d: 2) adds that studies of this kind should make “investigations into the practices and conceptions of the actors concerned, the interplay of the pragmatic and cognitive relationships, and the structural and institutional contexts in which all this occurs”.

This kind of approach to reflecting on development processes may be useful to comprehend the social dynamics in rural spaces and the generation of rural poverty/exclusion/marginalization, as well as understand the beneficiaries of national and international policies and programmes of development and economic growth. Bebbigton (2007: 793) states that chronic poverty “is a condition that resists change” and that this has been explained by many authors “by social and political relationships” which “structure patterns of discrimination, distribution of assets and opportunities, and the accepted wisdom about how society should be organized”. If this is accepted then “conditions of chronic poverty are only likely to change when these relationships shift”. Therefore, for the author, “chronic poverty is a socio-political relationship rather than a condition of assetless-ness” (ibid: 813).

In rich agricultural countries in Latin America, such as Brazil or Argentina, the advance of commodity crops or the integration of industrial dynamics are proving to be a cause of enrichment for some sectors of the population. This kind of agriculture has caused poverty and exclusion/subordinated inclusion in rural populations, particularly because of the absence of public policies to distribute the benefits among different social and geographical sectors. For this

reason, there is a need to comprehend in a relational way the generation of poverty and the generation of economic growth.<sup>61</sup>

Backwell and Stefanoni (2003) highlight the importance of autonomy when reflecting about these trends in South America. They link the advance of large-scale monoculture with the dependency of farmers on technological packages for agriculture, strongly driven by transnational corporations. This model is known in the region as an agriculture model without farmers (*agricultura sin agricultores*):

“...a model of ‘agriculture without farmers’, which strongly increases the dependency of agriculture producers – users of the technological packages – and progressively limits their capacity of [taking] autonomous decisions on what and how to produce. At the same time, the economies of scale attained through the mechanization of agriculture and the methods of direct sowing resulted in a strong concentration of land, which left a great number of smallholders without land” (ibid: 31-33).

This illustrates that in some rural areas of the continent, the lack of resources, land or private and public investments are not the causes of poverty as the mainstream development policies suppose. In areas like North Argentina or South Brazil, for example, smallholders and farmers are very much integrated to the tobacco complex, incorporating the latest technology and producing some of the best tobaccos in the region, but still they live in conditions of scarcity, exclusion and deep poverty. This has currently led many different actors (scholars, organizations, civil society, farmers’ organization, etc.) to reintroduced the idea that in the continent *poverty* is not the main problem but *inequality* and *inequity*.

Of interest here, then, is to outline an approach centred on the actors and their cooperation and conflict relations in a given geographical space. Consequently, the concept of territory is promising since it allows thinking in a relational way about the localized structures and dynamics of power. Lawson (2007: 18) supports this conceptual linkage when she states that:

“A geographical analysis of poverty (...) directs our attention to the interplay of economic, political and cultural processes in places. (...) This geographical work theorizes processes (economic development, identity formation, struggles over land, and so on) as conditioned by local structures of social

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<sup>61</sup> Examples from South America can demonstrate this point: “...while the hunger reaches record levels in Argentina, vast cultivable surfaces are being transformed into “ghost hectares”, dedicated to produce commodities for export - oils and food for cattle - and incapable to guarantee the food security in the national territory. Thus, the logic of monoculture, typical of most vulnerable countries in the world, is gradually being introduced in an agro-alimentary model that day by day is more dependent on the multinationals technological packages” (Backwell and Stefanoni, 2003: 31-33).

relations and webbed connections with the workings of power in other places. The idea of place-dependence of processes analyses the uneven workings of power as they are situated in, and connected across, places”.

### *Territorial dynamics, arena and other guiding concepts of analysis*

The notion of rural *territorial dynamics*, as I define it in this study, refers to those social processes occurring in rural spaces which have direct consequences on the geographical space and on power relations. They are evidence of changes in the social and physical space as a result of changes in social power relations among actors. They differentiate themselves from *territorial transformations* because they are not comprehensive and structural. They are elements that are not yet completely manifested in structural way, but are in process of doing so.<sup>62</sup>

The focus on territorial dynamics that are occurring within a *rural development arena* is based on their ability to inform discussion on (a) development models or ideologies of welfare and growth and (b) territories under construction, and the spaces under production. Indeed, the first greatly affects the second. Development projects implemented by collective actors create new social and physical spaces, when introducing both concrete and abstract/symbolic (cultural) changes. And this may have directly implication on power relations among actors.

As proposed by Olivier de Sardan (n/d) in his actor-orientated approach, the notion of *arena* is significant in development studies. Törnquist (1981: 109) mentions that arena has been used to denote a *sphere of action*: “It can stand for a scene of conflict, a battlefield, a tournament-ground or a racecourse”. He adds that it is a concrete concept, “a concept which is palpable, graphic, tangible, actual, real, conceivable, perceptible, physical, material, extant, living, and patent” (ibid: 110). Holmén (1991: 57-58) explains that, “conflict and competition (as well as consensus and cooperation) among actors and interest are thus central themes (...) It is the combined effects of these struggles which explain the performance and impact of organizations and institutions operating in any arena”. According to Holmén, “the arena is part of a larger totality, a ‘battle field’ for endogenous and exogenous forces with consequences within and sometimes outside the arena” (ibid: 51). Following other authors that have worked with the concept of arena, Holmén remarks on the need to visualize it in

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<sup>62</sup> For example, the land struggle and the subsequent passing of a provincial law to distribute land are not territorial transformations as long as land is not yet distributed and tenure change remains unregistered. It remains a territorial dynamic: something in process and not yet a structural transformation, because squatters do not have tenure of the land, they have not control or power over land. An example of territorial transformation is Misiones would be the advance of forestry monoculture and land concentration.

a contextual way, and as “a fine-grained configuration of meeting-places” (ibid, the author refers to Hägerstrand’s description of arena). In this study, the *meeting place* would be that of rural development projects.

Holmén (ibid: 57) considers that some changes and processes “may emerge from the arena within itself, some have external causes. Some have consequences within the arena, while others also affect the world outside. The arena is not an isolated phenomenon. In various ways it is linked to the rest of the world”. Nevertheless, “external impulses” should not be considered as given, “on the contrary, they may well be treated as contingent or, at least, as unpredictable (ibid: 53). In this sense, as I employ the concept in this study, arena is part of territory.

Törnquist (1981: 114) adds to the discussion by arguing that there are some societies where “large-scale flows” predominate and global logics dominate. Here, “when an event takes place in an arena it is frequently not the outcome of local circumstances, but the result of the participants being governed from without or made to compete with conditions in other arenas with they are unable to see, influence, or control”. This is in line with the idea of Sack (1983) that actors do not need to be located *in* the territory to influence or control it, or with the notion of autonomy outlined by Lopes de Souza (1995).

Other authors in the field of development studies have proposed the use of an arena perspective. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (1997) use the notion of arena when evoking *concrete relations*: “An arena, in the sense we mean it, is a place of concrete confrontation between social actors interacting on common issues. A development project is an arena. Village power is an arena. A cooperative is an arena”.<sup>63</sup>

In this sense, the concept of arena share similarities with the concept of *field* as defined by Bourdieu. And indeed, as it will be observed along the present study, arena is used in both ways: a field or sphere of *action* and the concrete, *material space* where social relations that shape it take place. This means that along the study sometimes it is stressed the political and social dimension of the arena and sometimes its physical dimension.

Every social, economic, political relation takes place in a physical space and this somehow conditions the possibilities of such relations and the interests of actors. For instance, the interest from actors in the rural development arena to bring about agronomic practices that contemplates the use of native forest can only make sense in those areas where native forest remains. The same can be account for access to land: claims from actors over access to land or land tenure can only

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<sup>63</sup> In the same line, Crehan and Von Oppen (1988) suggest that development projects should be seen as an arena of struggle between different groups of people with diverse interests and in terms of the goals they pursue and the results they achieved.

occurred in those geographical areas where land is concentrated in few hands or where rural dwellers have not legal access to land.

Consequently, the concept of *rural development arena* is defined in this study as a sphere of action and the concrete space where all those rural development projects designed to benefit small and medium farmers take place. In this sense, the arena is made up by actors intervening in projects outlined to target particular groups of peoples in rural areas. This way, for instance, public policies that subsidize agriculture or forestry activities are not considered here as part of the rural development arena because they are general policies for the agriculture sector that have not been designed as concrete projects of interventions.

Barsky (1990, quoted in Schiavoni, 2005a) mentions that the subjects of rural development are all those farmers that due to their low level of capitalization do not have regular access to current policies directed to agricultural producers. Rural development projects and programmes have been created in Argentina and most countries in the regions to target this kind of farmers. These programmes have coordinated actions with NGOs, churches, schools and other actors in rural spaces and created sometimes new discourses and new logics of interventions.

How can the notions of arena and territory be operationalize in studies of rural development in order to inform discussions about *power* and *autonomy*? When projects and policies of development intend to make a change in local communities they have to confront systems of norms and behaviours, rules and traditions. When donors, NGOs or extensionists try to implement different strategies to promote welfare, economic growth or social justice, they exercise power by imposing their own conceptions of the world. They create new social, political and economic rules and they inflict new ways of organization when calling for participation for instance. They endorse certain kind of interventions because they adhere to a particular idea of what development is about.

In understanding and analysing development interventions it is necessary to consider whose problems and vision of the world are being put forward and who will be the beneficiaries/victims of this. In defining the social problems that need to be considered, particular groups or individuals may be actively involved in seeking social change or reforms as best fits their own interests and from their own point of view. Therefore, narratives and discourses - as statements and arguments around a given topic - and concrete practices are central objects of analysis in this study. In particular I am interested in narratives, discourses and practices accounting 'development' from local actors' perspective.

The notion of arena can be operationalize using the idea of *social networks of interactions* (*tramas o redes sociales*). When actors intervening in family agriculture, cooperate, share information and interact they create diverse

networks. These are horizontal and vertical networks; they go within and from the local level to the national or international level.<sup>64</sup> These networks have different spatial extents and temporalities, and are created with diverse objectives and purposes. They hinge on different projects and issues related to family agriculture, agriculture growth and rural welfare.

Sometimes networks may demonstrate antagonism; sometimes they cooperate with other networks. Inside the network of actors there are nodes of negotiation. The institutional differences between actors and amongst networks may function as foci for cooperation, conflict or negotiation. These differences are based on ideological, methodological or strategic positions of each *collective actor*. However, networks are not static; they dynamically arrange and rearrange in over time. Actors that are present in one network might also be present in another one, even though the objectives of the networks are different and may even seem to be in opposition over a certain point.

It is argued in Manzanal *et al.* (2009) that in the political and economic context introduced during the 1990s in Argentina, rural networks try to put forward diverse economic, political and cultural projects in order to position some actors in the global context or to stimulate economic and political inclusion. These networks may be created as way to (a) politically confront the establishment, (b) insert some of the key local economic actors into the regional or international market, and/or (c) promote the creation of new key actors with the power to mobilize an economic and political project at the local level. In each of these projects, the development model and the political / action horizon may not be completely defined by local actors.

The notion of rural development arena used in this study is therefore the conjugation of networks and collective actors intervening in family agriculture with the purpose of bringing about economic growth, social justice and equalities, natural resources conservation, etc. in particular geographical spaces and time.

The understanding of these collective actors, their ideas, strategies and practices of development is fundamental to comprehend the territories under construction. Their discourses and practices regarding the role of the state, market, society and nature show evidence of the development model and the power relations being created. The concrete forces in practice (new markets, new crops, or new social relations) are evidence of the process of creating new spaces - new territories in

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<sup>64</sup> A “vertical” network could be for instance a network of cooperation between local NGOs, national agencies and international organizations. A “horizontal” network could be a network of local farmers, cooperatives and NGOs. In this sense, it is horizontal not only because it takes place within a particular (local / provincial) level but also because actors detent more or less the same power to perform in the network.



which the state has a novel role, the market is assigned a different function and nature is embraced in a distinctive manner.

In this sense, it is important to mention that in the present study, *actor* is understood as a collective organization (a RDP, a public agency, a NGO, a church, a cooperative, a company, etc.). Even the different agencies of the national and provincial state are considered an actor, the state is considered a special “actor” and its role in development is not put in the same level of importance than the private sector or NGOs. This is because the general premises of the study consider the state the only possible actor to guarantee development, since the distribution of economic growth among different geographical and social sectors along with the enforcement of environmental care (social and environmental justice) can only be done by the state.

By defining actors as collective organizations, it is possible to focus on the organizations’ interests and how their interests enter into conflict or cooperation. This way, issues of gender, nationality and ethnicity were not contemplated here, even though they are very important. The present analysis has focused only in organizations’ social, economic and political interests.

Barreiro (2000: 1) sustains that not all actors in a given geographical space “move in the direction of local development”.<sup>65</sup> This study focuses on those actors, strategies and interactions that actively try to shape and reshape (rural) development. Development is understood here as processes towards peoples welfare, creations of more equal opportunities for the majority of the population, social justice and healthy environments. Development is as well, autonomy to decide by the majority how these processes should be conducted.

Therefore, the mutual interactions of collective actors (groups, agencies, organizations) that promote greater political participation of local actors are of particular interest. These actors look for alternative projects that seek to improve family agriculture’s position in the market and society, through more equitable access to natural resources (land, water), the production of new and better crops, the local trade of produce, the management of infrastructure projects and the claim for public service expansion into rural areas (health, justice, education) among other initiatives.

Nevertheless, the interactions and linkages of these kinds of actors with other actors that do not intervene in rural development projects are also of particular relevance for the study. Even their activities are not framed in terms of rural development they have greater impact in rural development interventions.

Territorial dynamics around family agriculture are revealing a new array of actions linked to the production sphere (access to land, crop diversification,

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<sup>65</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

increase in production and productivity, improvements in the commercialization, etc.), the political sphere (cooperatives, legal status of organizations, etc.) and the cultural sphere (reintroduction of local knowledge to increase and improve production, re-adoption of values and peasant identities as positive attributes in the context of the local and national society).

Therefore, the rural development arena and the related territorial dynamics are of great interest because of their potential to transform social relations, generate institutional change, and catalyze economic, social and political transformations towards the majority of peoples' welfare and against their marginalization.

The present study focuses the interest in agroecology and the novel territorial dynamics it generates (local food production and markets, political and social spaces of participation, agronomic techniques, etc.) as a way to inform about the construction of new territories. In this sense, other territorial dynamics can be observed such as the mobilization and struggle for land access and tenure.

Local food productions, local markets, networks of seed rescue and seed fairs, land forums, among others, are all elements of a different way of understanding 'development' and alternative paradigm of rural development under construction in many different regions in Latin America. Agroecology then allows showing how different processes in the physical space can be translated into changes in the social, economic and political space and vice versa, recreating new geographies.

Agroecology, as I define it in this study, is a kind of agriculture socially organized to fit the environmental conditions and nature cycles where it is performed and it is not dependent on industrial inputs to have high productivity and sustainability, though it may make use of them. Ecological and cultural diversity and not monoculture defines agroecology. It is also an agriculture organization that is oriented to the regional (local, national) patterns of consumption and it is not commanded by the logics of capital reproduction but family reproduction in the countryside. In this sense, agroecological systems can be found in different places of the planet. Food production is a central element of agroecology, however, agroecological systems are diversified ones and along with food, fibres and other non direct consumption products may be produced.

Local markets are defined here as the commercialization side of this kind of agriculture, spaces where rural families detain greater autonomy and participation and where the logics of profit maximisation are not the only ones that predominate but also urban-rural solidarity, farmer-consumers interactions, actors cooperation, environmental care, social justice and fair price, etc. There may be other spheres of commercialization (e.g. a central provincial market for food gathering) that even not local, they function with these similar logics.

## Chapter III – Methodology

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### Introduction

As briefly mentioned in the prologue, this study builds on previous studies conducted from the Programme of Regional Economies and Territorial Studies (PERT) at the Institute of Geography (UBA). Why is this reintroduced here? Escobar (2010: 3) states that “the questions of *where one thinks from*, with *whom*, and for *what purpose* become important elements of the investigation; this also means that the investigation is, more than ever, simultaneously theoretical and political”. He afterwards asks rhetorically whether it is enough to think “from the space of modern social science” or it is necessary to “incorporate other forms of knowledge, such as those of the activist-intellectuals that inhabits the worlds of many of today’s movements?” (ibid). In this study therefore, I have tried to build a “*diálogo de saberes*”, between scholars and local peoples’ knowledges.

In this chapter I explain the research strategy. I describe and explain the research methods in order to show how the analysis was done and how the study was conducted. The notion of *grounded theory* is central to comprehending the previous theoretical framing, the data collection and construction (Bryman, 2008). The research questions I crafted are the result of a long process of research in the province of Misiones, through which I was able to determine the significance of the study in a wider context. By being involved with local people, particularly those working for rural ‘development’ and with farmers, I was capable to partially appreciate their understanding of social change, rural inequalities and their actions to work against this. I gradually built up a hermeneutics approach and applied an ethnographic data collection method based on semi-structured interviews and observations.<sup>66</sup>

The constructive epistemological approach has permitted me to create a theoretical framework based on the notion of alternative development(s) and the concept of territory outlined in the previous chapter. The method of analysis is descriptive, procedural and analytical, and is framed in that the foregoing theoretical discussion. It consists of identifying the narratives, discourses, concrete practices and forces in cooperation and conflict around the territorial dynamics which result from rural development interventions. A particular focus was placed on the identification and analysis of how the role of the state, market,

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<sup>66</sup> Bryman (2008) would refer to this as a micro-ethnography since the total period of my stay in fieldwork was approximately four months.

society and nature are perceived by specifically located actors, and how this is revealed in the territorial dynamics.

The methodology therefore has been constructed to understand the current debate and conflicts around development in the province of Misiones and those territorial dynamics related to family agriculture (agroecology, local markets and food production). The observation, description and analysis of material expressions of discourses were focused on those concrete processes “in” the territory that I have considered to be exemplary of the changes that territorial dynamics bring about in rural areas of Misiones (for instance, introduction of new natural resources management techniques)

The selection of case studies and categories of study as well as data construction will be explained below. Some of the problems encountered during the process of data collection and construction are also touched upon.

## **Methodology and research strategy**

The research is qualitative and based on empirical data, using different data collection techniques and the analysis of selected cases based on the theoretical framework discussed previously.

To answer the research questions outlined, I selected two different geographical spaces to conduct fieldwork. These are two municipalities in Misiones, one in the northeast of the province (San Pedro) and the other in the centre (Aristóbulo del Valle). From the observations I made in both municipalities it was possible for me to learn about the general territorial transformations taking place in the province (or at least the major part of Misiones). Within this more particular context, I crafted the following operational questions:

1. What discourses about development do diverse local actors in San Pedro and Aristóbulo present?
2. Who are the actors involved in family agriculture and how has this body of actors shaped the rural development arena in these municipalities?
3. What are the rural development policies and practices in these municipalities?
4. What are the diverse narratives, discourses and practices around agroecology as novel territorial dynamics in these municipalities but also in Misiones as a whole?

When answering these questions, I considered of particular relevance to examine organizations (collective actors), their practices and their mutual interactions. Analysis of the observed linkages permitted me to understand how actors’ exercise influence and control over material and symbolic resources

within the rural development arena and the territory. These linkages and patterns of social influence are not merely local but also regional and global.

I granted great importance to qualitative analysis based on data triangulation. Data was collected through semi-structure interviews and participant and non-participant observations. These techniques have proven to be relevant and sufficient to observe and analyse local actors' development narratives and practices and their perspective on the state-market-nature relation. The use of questionnaires or surveys for instance was discarded because it would not have allowed the collection of narratives, something that opened interviews do. In the same way, the use of long ethnographical stay (e.g. living with a family, working in a public office, etc.) was not considered because it is time consuming and the in deep observation of people's behaviours was not necessary to answer the research questions.

Finally, it is relevant to state that the research partly shares its methodology with a set of parallel research projects currently under implementation in the PERT. Therefore, it has been possible to bring about more general conclusions by comparing similar studies that are focused in other areas of Argentina (a comparative study among three different cases in north Argentina can be found in Manzanal *et al.*, 2009).

### *(Multi) case study*

The research is a (multi) case study of territorial dynamics in selected geographical spaces where new, different and diverse rural development interventions are taking place. At least two identified dynamics serve as foci of study: (a) those linked to changes in the organization of agricultural production at farm level: introduction of new agronomic techniques, crop diversification, food production and (b) those linked to generate new socio-political and economic spaces: seed fairs, local farmers' markets, and farmers' new organizations and networks (cooperatives, associations, interest groups, etc.).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, other territorial dynamics can be observed in Misiones, such as those around access to land and land tenure. Even if I have touched upon this issue in the present study, the land struggle in Misiones merits a study in itself because of the complexity of the matter.

In both selected cases it is possible to identify narratives, discourses and concrete practices which foster new dynamics at the domestic and farm level and between the countryside and towns (new urban-rural linkages). In creating new production spaces, and new political and physical spaces, new geographies and territories are crafted in which farmers and other rural actors have an active

role to play. These dynamics were used to interpret the greater development discourse context that is under transformation.

The data triangulation from information gathered through interviews with around 100 different people from different institutional belongings and through personal observations (local markets, farms) permitted me to conclude that in Misiones food production, environmental care, and farmers' political participation have gained popularity and social support among rural *misioneros*.<sup>67</sup>

### *Selection and location of the sites of study*

I decided to work with municipalities in the province of Misiones in order to continue with my previous research and take advantage of the accumulated knowledge about the province and its development/territorial dynamics, as well as my network of informants and key respondents.

The background of study is very complex due to its geographical (physical, economic, political, social and cultural) characteristics, including the great extensions of international borders, the rainforest conservation activities, the 'regional' agricultural production, the ongoing land concentration, the high numbers of family farms, the communities of European descendents, the native communities, and the diverse religious institutions. These particularities have made of this province a unique territory in Argentina.<sup>68</sup>

The province of Misiones usefully represents the regional situation in Argentina, particularly regarding the family agriculture sector. Small-scale farmers and poor rural families are the great majority of rural dwellers. About 30% of the population was rural in 2001, when the national average reached 11% (INDEC, 2001).

The province has been target of most of the RDPs launched from the national state. Some crops acquire here significance due to large volumes produced or hectares under production at the national level: cassava, yerba, tea and tobacco along with timber and other forestry products. In this sense, many of the conclusions drawn from the analysis presented here may help to reflect on the current situation of other Argentinean provinces with similar characteristics

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<sup>67</sup> If a study about food production in itself is to be conducted, the use of questionnaires is central to observed changes and continuities in the sphere of production and commercialization. There is not substantial public statistical information regarding the quantity of hectares devoted to food production, the tons of food production and commercialization (horticulture, grains, small scale cattle raising, etc.) and the amount of people involved in this kind of production.

<sup>68</sup> The following chapter expands on this.

(high number of family farms and rural poor, particular insertion to the national economy, etc.).

The province of Misiones presents different agro-economic and productive regions within its small territory. The selected areas of study have been chosen because they are located in two different regions, and are the two regions where most of the family farmers are located.<sup>69</sup> These regions are the centre (where Aristóbulo del Valle is located) and the northeast (where San Pedro is located). The first represents the 44% of the total provincial farms and 22% of the area under production in Misiones, and the second represents 29% of the farms and 29% of the area.<sup>70</sup>

The municipality of San Pedro is situated in an area characterized by the continuous expansion of the agrarian frontier, bordering the rainforest and the border with Brazil. Here, the settlement was driven since the 1970s and 1980s by small-scale holders who took advantage of the possibilities to access public land. Later, during the 1990s, the expansion continued and some families occupied private land with tax irregularities or that had previously been abandoned. They integrated the dynamics of the tobacco agro-industrial complex.

In contrast, the municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle is an earlier settled area, where the provincial state, together with private companies, has promoted the settlement of immigrants' families and the organization of farms.

Each municipality presents contrasting characteristics despite being superficially similar in terms of farm profiles; the principal difference being that one municipality was created from an earlier occupation and the other from a recent settlement. In a study about rural development policies in Argentina, Manzanal *et al.* (2008) observed that in San Pedro and Aristóbulo there were a great number of NGOs and rural development programmes involved in family agriculture.

These selected municipalities are particular in the context of Misiones due to: (i) the large rural population and prevalent rural poverty, in absolute and relative terms; (ii) the existence of an organized small-scale agriculture or family agriculture sector; and (iii) the social fabric present resulting from multiple interactions and linkages between local governments, rural development

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<sup>69</sup> In a recent study, Gunther *et al.* (2008) presented a regionalization of the province consisting of five different regions according to agro-economics variables that will not be discussed here.

<sup>70</sup> The rest of the regions represent 7% of the farms and 27% of the area (south) showing a larger scale in the area of the farms, 11% and 10% (west) and 9% and 12% (northwest). The categorization is based on data from the National Census of Agriculture from 2002. It takes into account the number of agriculture farms whether family run or corporations (*explotaciones agropecuarias*, EAP).

programmes, NGOs, schools, churches, companies, chambers, grass-root organizations of interests, etc.

These municipalities are geographically very close but still they are markedly different with respect to the presence and nature of the government institutions, public services, infrastructure, land occupation and biodiversity conservation. The differences are not only explained by the previous processes of land occupation, natural resource access and social change fixed in different socio political and economic structures, but also by the current trends of (rural) development strategies that are taking place and taking new directions. A processes of frontier expansion and changing land occupation patterns can also be observed: migration (from Aristóbulo) and re-settlement (in San Pedro) and in some cases land concentration (Aristóbulo) with land distribution (in San Pedro).

The following maps show the locations of Argentina (Map 1), the province of Misiones (Map 2), and the location of the selected municipalities in the context of the political division of the province of Misiones (Map 3).

Map 1: South America. Localization of Argentina in South America



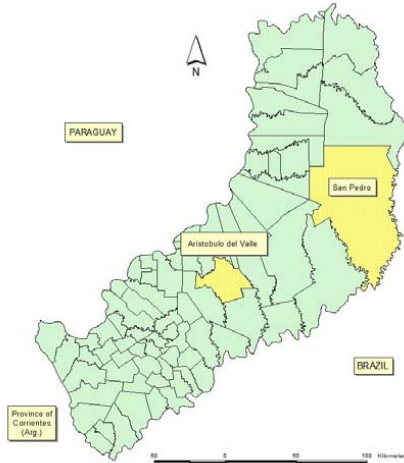
Source: Author's own elaboration with data from ESRI.



Map 2: Argentina. Localization of the province of Misiones in Argentina



Map 3: Province of Misiones (Arg.). Location of selected municipalities



Source: Author's elaboration with official cartography from the Argentinean National Geographic Institute (IGN) and from the Ministry of Agriculture, Misiones Government.

### *Time frame of the analysis*

Data collection and analysis of processes were carried out during the period 2004 - 2008. The 1990s and beginning of 2000s served as reference since in these years the process of macro-economic transformations took place, which caused changes in the previously existing institutional system (political and economical) in Misiones. In addition, it was during the 1990s that the most important national strategies of rural development were launched in the form of regional and national programmes from the national government.

This period also saw the configuration of the institutional background which gave rise to successive decentralization process from the national government to the provinces and from the provinces to the municipalities. By considering a time span of two decades, I was able to observe the territorial dynamics put forward from the rural development arena.

The understanding of *processes* or *dynamics*, in this sense, has been possible to observe not only due to previous fieldworks and studies in the province since 2001 but also because in the interviews I took into account an approach that permitted me to observe changes. The interviewees' narratives on changes and

continuities from previous periods, along with primary information and literature review, have allowed me comprehending what is novel about the territorial dynamics under observation and what is not and what constitutes the main elements of such dynamics.

### *Objects, units and categories of analysis*

The *objects of analysis* are the narratives and discourses (abstract) and practices (concrete) of public and private organizations that are involved in rural development (public agencies and offices, NGOs, farmers' organizations, schools, research institutes, churches, squatters' associations, companies, natives communities, etc.) in the selected municipalities. Rural development is defined here as interventions in the family agriculture sectors conducted as processes towards social change and welfare in rural areas. I refer here to those strategies or activities that are (a) promoting agriculture production, commercialization and consumption within family agriculture and (b) fostering the improvement of welfare in rural areas through socio-political and economic organization and participation.

Discourse is understood in this study as interviewees' statements and narratives, the way they refer to different objects, subjects and others' discourses (in this case the subjects, objects and others' ideas on development, and in particular the role they assigned to the state, market and nature). These narratives and discourses were not only spoken but also written and graphic (see illustrations 1, 2 and 6 in Appendix 4) and communicated in diverse ways (signs, pamphlets, multimedia, etc.).

On the other hand, by concrete practices or actions I refer to those material expressions that result from putting into practice those ideas and values that discourse bring about. I refer for instance to the introduction of agronomic techniques in farms, the building of cooperatives' infrastructure, the harvesting, selection and storage of seeds, the creation of infrastructure in towns to host local farmers' markets, etc. All these are tangible things.

The *units of analysis* are those actors present in both municipalities that are engaged in rural development interventions (public agencies, NGOs, farmers' organizations, social organizations, etc.) and other that even though are not discursively involved in "rural development" or conducting activities in the farming sector, are nonetheless part of the territory (native communities, environmental agencies and NGOs, and large-scale landholders) and might be activating "other" developments.

I interpreted both the objects and units of analysis within the context of (a) the different understandings of (rural) development in Misiones and (b) the selected

territorial dynamics: agroecology, seed fairs and local farmers' markets. These dynamics are connected to agriculture production and commercialization and socio-political and economic organization and participation.

The definition of the *categories of analysis* is linked with the theoretical perspective already developed in this and the previous chapter. The main categories are: (a) actors' capacities to influence on economic, social and political spaces in the territories under study; (b) actors' political and economic conceptions or understanding of development: ideas and views; (c) concrete actions performed by the actors in the rural development arena; (d) spheres of conflict and cooperation among actors in the rural development arena. The categories of analysis refer to both the wider territorial context of development and the rural development arena.

## **Multiple methods and collection of information**

### *Primary and secondary information*

The research is based on primary and secondary information. Primary information was collected with diverse techniques during fieldwork: (a) semi-structured and non structured interviews applied to key informants and other respondents and (b) participatory and non participatory observations. In the first case, the use of "narrative walks" helped to situate the interviewee and myself in an environment in which the former was comfortable. Narrative walks consisted of visiting farms and asking one of the family members, usually the head of household, to accompany me for a walk around. The purpose was to observe the different crops and to talk about the economic, political and environmental issues around them. With this technique I was able to find out for instance about the different commercialisation spaces in which the farmers engaged as well as the support, if any, they received for each crop from RDPs, NGOs or cooperatives. Understanding the logics behind each crop and farming system was important to understand the role of the state, market and natural resources for family agriculture in Misiones. It was also important in understanding the production of territories at the farm level.

Primary information collected through participatory and non participatory observations included for instance local pamphlets, posters, banners and conclusions of farmer' discussions in workshops, which were displayed in banners as a way to socialize information among the participants.

Secondary sources included, among others, literature review on the topic produced by provincial researchers. These sources were greatly beneficial in creating a picture of the local discourses, particularly in the public sphere.

Semi-structured interviews were the main source of information along with documents and texts reviews. They were used to identify, characterise and analyse the perceptions of the diverse people interviewed and their organizations.<sup>71</sup> Two interview guides were applied; one during the first and second fieldwork sessions, and the other during the second and third fieldwork sessions. In the Appendix 1 the general guide for the semi-structured interview is presented.

Secondary information consists of literature produced by local researchers, statistical information from censuses, official documents about rural policies and NGOs' reports to donors, among other similar documents. Secondary information was gathered both in the province (mainly in the capital city, Posadas) and in the capital city of Argentina (Buenos Aires). Some of the statistics are produced in the province by decentralized agencies, but most can be found in Buenos Aires.

### *Access to information and informants*

It was important to cooperate with local research teams from both national universities of Buenos Aires and Misiones in order to easily access secondary information. The close link with the first one and a long academic relation with the second one have helped me to benefit from the latest literature about development, social change and agriculture in Argentina and Misiones. To collect statistical information I have visited different agencies, mainly public, in charge of producing this kind of information.<sup>72</sup>

Access to Spanish/Portuguese literature has been also important during data collection in Buenos Aires. However the opportunity to find books and papers through the website of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) has been crucial because it permitted me to engage in the current vibrant social science debates on the continent.<sup>73</sup> The Anglo-Saxon literature review revealed relatively few scholars concerned with similar topics or theoretical perspectives.

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<sup>71</sup> From the narratives of interviewees I could characterize and analyze people's perceptions and understandings about the categories of analysis.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of agencies where to find information.

<sup>73</sup> The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) sponsors the work of the CLACSO.

Primary information collection through interviews and participatory and non-participatory observation was relatively easy. Visits to the area since 2001 have allowed me to build relationships with different people involved in public agencies, NGOs and farmers' organizations. Therefore, at the beginning of the present research project, I contacted them to explain the objectives of my study and the need for their collaboration. Access to farmers, although easy, was most often mediated by RDPs or NGOs' staff, therefore it was necessary to find alternative ways to reach them without the help of these actors (visit farmers' markets for instance).

Interviews were the most important source of primary information. Interviews were conducted with representatives from at least one of each of the collective actors present in the rural development arena from both municipalities. It is important to acknowledge that a few quotations in the present study derive from interviews held in 2004 and that some are part of interviews made by other research members of PERT. In both cases, this is aware and state.

Within each collective organization, I have tried to interview diverse staff members. In this sense, I sought to guarantee that not only the directive board but also the field staff were interviewed and have their voice. The same counts for farmers' organizations. As collective organizations, each actor may have heterogeneous understandings of rural development. Information gathered from field technicians for instance sometimes differed from coordinators or presidents because they life experience was different. This way then, I could shape a more complete picture.

The interviewees were chosen based on their trajectory in the organization. Those with more time participating or that have had a central role in the creation of the organization were prioritized (e.g. farmers that have motorized the creation of a cooperative, or programme coordinator since early implementation). I tried to avoid bias by interviewing representatives from all the RDPs, NGOs, farmers' organizations and other social organizations that I have mapped during the entire study. In this sense, I can assure I have not left any organization out.

Interviews with 'respondents' were made. These are people that are not part of the arena or the territory but are nonetheless important to consider, such as professors or researchers in universities that were familiar with the local debates and concerns or with the current theoretical discussion around rural development.

Accessing information on one rural development programme was restricted due to their refusal to cooperate with the research in the municipality of San Pedro.

There was only one person who refused to be interviewed.<sup>74</sup> In total I interviewed around 107 people including those I classed as respondents.<sup>75</sup>

Non participatory and participatory observations were conducted because key informants (such as agriculture extension officers) invited me to participate in workshops, seminars, daily technical practices in farms or office work. These have proven to be important in comprehending the different patterns of agriculture systems, collective actions and rural life (as opposed to the urban life, which characterises my background).<sup>76</sup>

Local informants have always been very open and helpful. Being Argentinean and speaking the same language might have facilitated it. Since I come from another province, they observe me as an outsider with no conflicting interests regarding their matters. After many years interchanging information and discussing my finding with many of them, they recognised that I did not “take sides”, and I did not judge them for their practices and ideologies. They considered me to be an impartial observer and thought of me as not bias towards a particular interest about development in the province. Upon sending them my partial interpretations, some of them responded, saying they were “impressed” that I could grasp so well the rural dynamics even though I am “an urban person”.

### *Fieldwork sites*

Interviews and participatory and non participatory observations were used to collect information in Buenos Aires and different sites of the province of Misiones: (a) Posadas, the capital city where the provincial government institutions sits, (b) San Pedro town and its surrounding area: small towns such as Cruce Caballero or Colonia Paraíso, (c) Aristóbulo del Valle town and its environs: Salto Encantado, Cerro Moreno, Colonia Carril, (d) small settlements in the municipality of San Pedro along the provincial road N° 17: such as Mondorí, Km. 80, Km. 90 or Pozo Azul where the squatters’ associations are located,<sup>77</sup> (e) Eldorado, where large-scale landholders and the headquarters of a

<sup>74</sup> I had interviewed him in 2004 and he knew me, but refused to be interviewed in 2008 thinking I could have been from the secret police. This person was going through personal problems. Because of this, my understanding of the functioning of this program is through information granted by other local actors (farmers’ organizations, RDPs or NGOs field officers and staff) and my previous research (Nardi, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> Information about the number of people I interviewed by type of organization can be found in Appendix 2.

<sup>76</sup> In the Appendix 2 a list of the different spaces and events I attended during fieldwork can be found.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce (1998: 8) defines *squatter* as “someone who occupies land without any legal authority”. The same notion is used here because it best describes these actors in North of San Pedro.

national rural development programme (PSA-PROINDER) are located, (e) Bernardo de Irigoyen town where some of the national agencies with influence in the north of the municipality of San Pedro are located and (f) Montecarlo where the president of the Regional Council of the National Institute of Agriculture Technology (INTA) lives.

I visited the fieldwork sites thrice, in 2007, 2008 and 2009 for a total period of four months. I spent time in Buenos Aires to visit public servants from the national Secretariat of Agriculture (from 2009 converted into a Ministry), scholars and a former NGO's agriculture extension officers in Misiones now living there. The rest of the places I visited were mentioned in the above paragraph.

I recorded interviews with the consent of the informants. I later got them transcribed in Argentina by students of anthropology who were familiar with ethnographic research. All interview transcripts are in Spanish; I translated only the parts used in the present dissertation.

I also made field notes, took pictures and collected printed material (e.g. flyers, workshops' reports, agronomical practices for training purposes etc.). All these permitted me to build up a picture of the rural development arena, the actors and their networks, their ideas and practices about development and the resulting territorial dynamics.

## **Data construction**

Even the use of quantitative information is almost absent in this study; it is worth a comment with regards to the information presented in chapter IV. Since in Argentina statistics are collected at the department level it was necessary to make a general estimation about statistical information for the case of the municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle. The municipality of San Pedro, on the other hand, is itself a department, so the information collected and presented could be used for the municipality. The department of Cainguás, where Aristóbulo is located, comprises three municipalities in total. Therefore, estimations were based on the assumption, gained from local informants, that around one third of the population of Cainguás lives in Aristóbulo.

From the literature review, the theoretical discussion and the first round of interviews made, I created a typology of actors. Such a typology was important in order to interpret the map of actors in the territory and in particular those in the rural development arena, the ideas they had, the conflicts of interest, the cooperative relationships they enter into and in particular, how these are put into play in the territorial dynamics under study.

### *Typology of actors*

In order to map the actors intervening in the rural development arena and in particular in the territorial dynamics under study, I have crafted the following typology of actors. In previous research conducted in the province (Nardi, 2002 and 2008), I have observed that there are some set of actors in rural territories that have a central role in terms of social, economic, and political transformations in the countryside. However, they are not actively participating or intervening in rural development or in the family agriculture sector. Even it seems they are not part of the rural development arena, I have been interested in observing their relation towards those actors that make up this rural arena in Misiones and in particular in the municipalities under study.

1. Public agencies and NGOs
  - 1.1. National, provincial and local agencies/authorities
  - 1.2. Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)
  - 1.3. Rural Development Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)
2. Farmers' organizations
  - 2.1. Economic organizations (cooperatives, markets, etc.)
  - 2.2. Socio-political (squatters', agroecological, tobacco chambers, etc.)
3. Other Social Organizations (SOs) (e.g. churches or schools)
4. Other actors in rural territories
  - 4.1. Agro-industrial companies (logging, yerba mate mills, tea, timber, tobacco and forestry companies)
  - 4.2. Native communities
  - 4.3. Environmental public agencies and NGOs

As can be noticed from the previous outline, I have done the first level of classification of actors according to their relation to the farming sector. This choice is based on the previous theoretical discussion, where I explain that family agriculture together with interventions and practices around it are the centre of the analysis. The category "public agencies and NGOs" includes public agencies from the local, provincial or national government, RDPs and NGOs. All these structures of intervention were formally created with the purpose of assisting poor farmers.

Public agencies involved in agriculture are institutions of the national, provincial or local state, which are involved in the farming sector. Their mandate is to implement legislation concerning this sector. Therefore they work not only with farmers but with other agrarian actors (large-scale landowners, forestry corporations, tobacco companies, etc.).



Some public provincial agencies, mainly local agencies belonging to local municipal governments, are not implementing RDPs. They give financial support to farmers, transfer technology and provide training courses, through policies that renew every year and therefore cannot be considered state policies.

The NGOs are groups of local people that got registered in the national or provincial system that regulates such organizations. They are *asociaciones sin fines de lucro* (non-profit associations). They are also known in Argentina as civil society organizations. Though the term may refer to different kind of actors and there has been some discussion regarding the role of NGOs this will not be discussed here. In this study, NGO refers to a particular kind of organization in civil society that emerged recently (mainly during the 1980s with the return of democracy, but earlier examples in Argentina can be found) and that is granted funds from the national state or international agencies. Early NGOs working for democracy dealt primarily with human rights issues, while more recently, NGOs have filled the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the state from social security provision. They now deal with issues ranging from human rights to agriculture and literacy.

In Misiones, most NGOs rely on international financing, although recently, some have received national financial and technical support. The objectives of these NGOs are the promotion of rural development, the sustainability of natural resource management and social participation in the political sphere. Their activities consist of technical support to grass-roots groups of farmers, training courses, and logistical support for commercialization and markets development. In general terms, their members are not the beneficiaries of their activities.

“Social organizations” (SOs) on the other hand are also civil society organizations who implement rural development strategies with farmers, but they do not rely on international, national or public funding. Such is the case of agro-technical schools (private-public), churches, technology extension organizations (private). Some of their activities are devoted to family agriculture in the province.

“Farmers’ organizations” were categorized according to their members’ interests: economic or socio-political, even though in practice many “economic” organizations have also political interests and claims and some “political” ones develop economic activities as well.

Among economic farmers’ organizations can be found cooperatives, local markets (*ferias francas*), or small grass-root associations locally commercializing their produce or created added value (e.g. group of women producing vinegar). Among those political organizations that seek to represent the interest of farmers there are: yerba mate and tea farmers’ organizations, squatters’ associations, and food production organizations linked to alternative

practices of agriculture (e.g. agroecology). These organizations seek to represent farmers' interests in issues related to the price of yerba, access to land and the introduction of new food crops in the province. The first ones (related to yerba mate or tea production) are middle income farmers while the second ones (land access and food production) are in general low income farmers.

There are other kinds of farmers' political organizations. They exist because of state regulation in order to represent the interest of farmers. This is the case for instance, of tobacco chambers, which are necessary to represent tobacco growers in the yearly price negotiations. In general these organizations do not have active policies of intervention, or if they do, these are localized in some areas (south of the province) and not in the selected municipalities.

In general cooperatives have been locally oriented to a diverse range of produce and, even though there are not men organizations *per se*, cooperatives and tobacco chambers have always been spaces where mainly men participate. Different is the case of those organizations centred in promoting agroecology, food production and sustainable agriculture, where women motorize them.

In the Appendix 5 there is a description of each of the public agencies, RDPs, NGOs, SOs and farmers' organizations present in the municipalities under study.

Other actors in the territory that great influence rural life and the economic, socio-political and also ecological dynamics generated are (a) agro-industrial companies such as logging companies, yerba mate mills, tea, timber and tobacco companies, (b) native communities, and (c) environmental public agencies and NGOs.

These actors are not subjects and beneficiaries of rural development policies; they do not focus on agriculture production or the claim to public services extension to rural areas (health, education, roads, justice, etc.).

The case of native communities is particular. Most of the activities developed with native communities are centred on housing assistance, access to public funding, and access to information about native people's rights. Agencies and organizations assisting them have not developed key links with actors in the rural development arena, though this is gradually changing. NGOs and public agencies dealing with agriculture and farmers are now involving native communities in some of their projects. This is so because native communities have decided to increase the scale of agriculture in their territories (they are not farmers or peasants, but hunter and gatherers and make use of the native forest).

On the other side, environmental agencies and NGOs do not focus their interventions on people or communities, but on "nature conservation". In many cases, there is tendency from these organizations to centre their work on the preservation of animal or plant species. Very recently, they have started to

interact with farmers in order to spread information about the use of forest, particularly in areas close to native forests reserves.

The case of corporations or companies, such tobacco, forestry, loggings or yerba mills is interesting because it may seem they are not promoting alternative agriculture(s), “sustainable” development or farmers’ organizations. They represent the “business as usual”, the “conventional rural development”. However, since there is a gradual approach from some of these companies to those actors working for an alternative rural development practices (such as agroecology), it is important to observe these relations.

It is important to understand and take into consideration these actors to fully comprehend the current debate on development in the province and the territorial dynamics under study. They have therefore been included as units of analysis because they are key actors promoting particular land use strategies, for example.

There are other kinds of actors in the territory (sport clubs, health care centres, etc.). However, they were not taken into consideration in the present study, since from previous studies and literature review their actions have been proven not to be centred in the political or economical organization of the farming sector, in agriculture, forestry, natural resources preservation, land struggle, etc.

For each of this type of actor, I prepared some specific questions, based on similar topics. The interviews presented the following themes: (i) general aspects of the territory under study, (ii) the organization itself (as a collective actor), (iii) the interactions of the organization with other actors and finally, (iv) a personal reflection on the power relations in the territory.

As an individual locally engaged, each person was able to give a personal interpretation of the rural development arena and the territory. This last section was intended to obtain a personal reflection to clarify the interviewee’s opinions and also observe any tensions between the individual and the organization of which they were a part. In the Appendix 1, the general interview guides used are presented.

## **Data analysis and interpretation**

In order to construct an interesting and relevant interpretation of the material generated from interviews, observations, narrative walks and secondary information, I went through the transcript interviews and field notes to identify the topics (a) most referred to by the informants and (b) related to the construction of new practices and discourses in rural development. I later tried to interpret them in the light of the issues and theoretical framework I was concerned with. Issues about economic growth, welfare, the role of the state in

promoting them, the function assigned to the market and to society in the developmental discussion, and finally perceptions of nature have guided the analysis. Therefore, the information collected in the first (and to some extent in the second) fieldwork sessions permitted me to shape my understanding and craft more accurate research questions.

Respondent validation has proven valuable in the processes of analysis. Some of the draft chapters or main arguments were presented to local scholars and agriculture extension officers to receive feed-back. This added a level of analysis, as under their guidance, I was able to re-interpret my previous understandings.

The study is based on the following analytical components: (i) mapping and diagnosis of collective actors involved in rural development projects and other actors in the territory in the selected geographical areas; (ii) identification and characterisation of their regular practices, their participation in institutional spaces and inter-institutional linkages; (iii) the interpretation of the articulated networks; (iv) the understanding of the claimed role of the state, market, society and nature in the territorial dynamics; and (v) the interpretation of these in terms of the construction of territories in the province of Misiones.

The following analytical steps were taken in order to carry out the present study. These activities express not a chronological order but an analytical process; it is very much dialectical and some items occurred simultaneously.

1. Elaboration and discussion of the theoretical framework: definition of main concepts and objects, units and categories of analysis. I worked with bibliographical material. I made a review of the contemporary discussion on territory and (rural) development in Latin America; along with the identification of key categories in the definition of each concept according to different authors, analytical schools and perspectives that gave rise to them.
2. Selection of geographical spaces and period of study, choice of different units of analysis. The selection was made from primary and secondary information gathered during previous fieldworks and after the first fieldwork visit.
3. Selection of tools to collect information during fieldwork in diverse geographical areas in order to:
  - a) Identify the different actors involved in rural development and other local actors important to understand development in rural areas;
  - b) Identify the ideas and projects that different units of observation have and put forward with the intention of promoting rural development;
  - c) Identify and systematise different kinds of cooperation and conflict among different units of analysis; and

- d) Identify those new and alternative discourses and activities and their resulting territorial dynamics.
4. Identification of actors, ideas, practices, methods, instruments and projects of rural development using primary and secondary information. Identification of ideas and development practices of other actors in rural areas that are not involved in rural development projects (e.g. native communities, forestry companies).
5. Reconstruction of roles of each actor in the rural development arena.
6. Identification of relationships between public and private organizations, whether in conflict or cooperation.
7. Systematization of the coordination / negotiation strategies among the actors involved and the intended outcomes.

This primary analysis allowed me to:

8. Understand the rural development arena and the dynamics generated from a historical perspective through process analysis.
9. Observe the territorial dynamics fostered by those actors constitutive part of the rural development arena: agronomic practices, crop diversification, food production, local markets, seed fairs and networks, etc.
10. Describe the resulting territorial dynamics, identify and distinguish the role of public agencies, NGOs, the market, civil society and natural resources in developmental strategy.

In the second phase of analysis I was able to:

11. Identify different development strategies; observe the “alternative” discourses and practices.

The final revision of the theoretical analysis permitted me to:

12. Reflect critically about alternative rural development and the construction of new territories in Misiones.
13. Contribute to development studies and policy making from a critical territorial perspective
14. Propose topics for further research.

## Chapter IV – Geographical and historical context of analysis

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### Introduction

In this chapter I present the geographical and historical setting of the province of Misiones, focusing on both selected municipalities. I put the attention on those issues and factors necessary to understand the current rural development arena as well as the ongoing territorial dynamics. In order to fully comprehend the current situation in the agriculture sector, farmers' concerns and claims, and the institutional setting, I apply an historical perspective. This facilitates as well the observation of the roles played by the state (in all its levels) as guarantor of 'development' (economic growth, income distribution, environmental care, etc.) in different periods.

The province of Misiones is particular in the context of Argentina due to its family agriculture. The reasons for this can be found in the processes of land occupation and the creation of settlements (*colonias*) by immigrants', which took place in this remote province during the consolidation of the Argentinean state. The pattern of small and medium-scale farming and the highly populated countryside are, however, gradually changing.

Prior to the 1990s, farmers' incomes in Misiones were declining due to low prices of traditional crops (yerba mate, tea and tobacco).<sup>78</sup> This process, together with land degradation, low yields and productivity declines, was slowly forcing people off their land (Schiavoni, 1998).

In addition, diminishing intervention of the state in the small-scale farming sector together with liberalization of the economy created discontent and different kinds of social mobilization. The opening of the economy resulted in the de-regulation of the production of yerba mate. The dollarization of the national currency (peso peg to U.S. dollar) made it difficult to place products (tea, tung oil, manioc and tobacco to some extent)<sup>79</sup> in international markets.<sup>80</sup> With domestic markets under recession, it was hard for family farmers to sustain their incomes. Correspondingly, the decentralization of public services (such as

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<sup>78</sup> Yerba mate (*ilex paraguayensis*) is a shrub or small tree growing up to 15 meters tall with evergreen leaves.

<sup>79</sup> Tung: *vernica fordii*; mandioca or cassava: *manihot esculenta*.

<sup>80</sup> Even this change with the devaluation of the Argentinean peso in 2002, the sectors were so concentrated that the weight of the farming sector in price formation was much reduced. This will be explained later in the following sections.

health or education) from the national to the provincial state resulted in fewer resources being available for provincial demand.<sup>81</sup>

During the 1990s, the province began to shift its production profile from family farming of industrial crops to forestry, tourism and nature conservation. In certain areas of the province, land concentration by large-scale forestry corporations has been taking place.<sup>82</sup> The agriculture frontier under expansion by small-scale farmers has moved towards large properties where native forest has been logged and land later abandoned.

As part of the government strategy, nature conservation advanced. Important laws of native forest preservation were enacted and large territories were put aside for forest conservation, as in the case of San Pedro, where more than 250.000 hectares of private property were declared not suitable for agricultural expansion in 1992.<sup>83</sup>

Within this context, farmers found it difficult to maintain themselves in the sector by reorienting or introducing new crops because of: (a) the perennial characteristic of yerba mate and tea, (b) the lack of technical assistance provided by the public sector, (c) the absence of credit systems tailored to their needs, and (d) the uncertainty and lack of information about new markets. They were gradually marginalized from the new model of development that the government had planned for the province.

In fact, in line with the national neoliberal project, the provincial state changed many laws in order to attract foreign and national capital for the new target sectors: forestry, tourism, and nature conservation.

## Geographical context of analysis

The territory of the province of Misiones is relatively small in comparison with the rest of the Argentinean provinces.<sup>84</sup> In 2001, almost 3% of the national

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<sup>81</sup> It was an administrative decentralization without fiscal distribution.

<sup>82</sup> The clearest example is the case of a Chilean forestry company, Alto Paraná S.A., which, through a process of land acquisition, now owns 8% of the territory of the province (233,700 hectares). This company is part of the Arauco holding, the biggest forestry corporation in Latin America (<http://www.altoparana.com/> access: 18/05/10).

<sup>83</sup> See Ferrero (2006) to an analysis of this trend in Misiones.

<sup>84</sup> The total area of the province's territory is 29,801 km<sup>2</sup> (2.980.1000 hectares) which represents 0.8% of the national territory (Ministry of Economy, 2002). The Republic of Argentina is a federal country consisting of a national state, 23 sub-national states (*provinces*) and an autonomous city (Buenos Aires, the capital of the country). Each province has its own constitution, which is adapted from the national one, and manages its own political, economic, social and cultural affairs. In addition, each province is divided into *municipalities*, which are the smallest units of state administration. However, the legal status of municipalities varies from province to province. In Misiones, the provincial constitution declares that both urban and rural territories are municipalities. The sum of the area of its

population (965.522 inhabitants) were living here, making this province one of the most densely populated in the country.<sup>85</sup>

It is situated in the north-eastern extreme of Argentina, sharing 90% of its borders with Paraguay to the west and Brazil to the east (see map 1, chapter III). The greater part of the territory of Misiones is hilly, broken and uneven, with a highland area in the centre and *campos* (fields) in the south. The highest point can be found in the northeast at 800 metres above the sea level in a range of hills that cross the territory in the direction northeast - southwest.

The topography is diverse and results from dissecting rivers and streams on a basaltic platform. The soils therefore have very different productive capabilities. In many parts of central Misiones the hilly geography makes it difficult for agriculture both because of the pendants and stones and the quality of the soils. Deep red soils are best suited to perennial crops. Water erosion is very common in overexploited soils in areas where the native forest has been completely removed to introduce annual crops and used for a considerable period without any agronomic management.

Due to its climate and vegetation it is home to one of the most diverse subtropical ecosystems. Most of the current territory of the province (87%) was once covered by the Atlantic rainforest (Rolón and Chebez, 1998) which stretched to the south along the Paraná and Uruguay rivers.

The province is characterized by a majority urban population residing in intermediate cities and rural populations living in small towns and scattered throughout the countryside. Tourism, agribusiness and its associated services are the main sources of income, mainly oriented to forestry and the production of industrial crops (tobacco, yerba mate, tea) with some level of local industrialization. The forestry sector is controlled by large companies, some holding large quantities of land, while the agricultural sector is characterized by many small and medium-scale family farms.<sup>86</sup>

From 1991, when the national economy was deregulated, the agriculture sector in Misiones faced difficulties.<sup>87</sup> According to Amable *et al.* (2008: 278) these

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75 municipalities equals the total provincial area. This is different in other provinces where the only urban areas are municipalities, and the rural areas are under the control of the provincial government. A different matter is the *departments*, the units of data collection by agencies dealing with public census and statistics. Departments might have other purposes which will not be discussed in this thesis (such as public services delivery).

<sup>85</sup> While the national average density is 13 inhab./Km<sup>2</sup>, Misiones ranks third with 32,4 hab./Km<sup>2</sup>, excluding the city of Buenos Aires.

<sup>86</sup> According to Ministry of Economy (2002) the economy of Misiones is structured around forestry production, developed not only on the bases of implanted forest but also native forest (logging).

<sup>87</sup> With the national decree of Economic Deregulation of 1991, the Regulation Board of Yerba Mate (*Comisión Reguladora de la Yerba Mate*, CRYM) was abolished.



were: (a) a fall in real wages combined with a contraction in the domestic market that decreased both demand and supply; (b) the rising cost of credit due to high interest rates with low profitability in productive activities, which indebted farmers who had taken credits; (c) almost zero intervention by the state in market imbalances in some products; (d) a delay in the exchange rate which affected the revenue generated by farmers linked to external markets; and (e) the saturation of the national market by almost every crop in the province (yerba mate, tea, tobacco, timber) many of them with problems in international markets.

Amable *et al.* mention that 80% of agricultural production - yerba mate, tea, tobacco - and 60% of cattle production in Misiones are done by small-medium farmers (with less than 25 hectares of land). In this context, the abovementioned problems soon were translated into an increase in rural poverty.

Certainly, the province is one of the poorest in Argentina, with 27% of its population with 'unsatisfied basic needs', while the national total is 18%.<sup>88</sup> According to data from the last national census of population in 2001, Misiones had 965.522 inhabitants, 70% of whom were living in urban localities and 30% in rural areas.<sup>89</sup> Around 85% of the rural population was living scattered throughout the countryside or non-agglomerated areas (INDEC, 2001).

Both of the selected municipalities present similar characteristics in regards to the province. The municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle shows better conditions of life in comparison with San Pedro.

The municipality of San Pedro was the poorest municipality in the province in 2001, showing the highest indicator of poverty, mostly rural poverty. Here, 40% of its inhabitants were poor, representing 35% of the households, 76% of the population did not have access to a public or private health care system and the 60% of the inhabitants older than 15 years had no education or had not completed primary school (INDEC, 2001). In 2001, 58% of the inhabitants were living in non-agglomerated rural areas. This was also one of the poorest municipalities in the country.

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<sup>88</sup> Households with Unsatisfied Basic Needs (Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas, NBI) are the households that feature at least one of the following indicators of deprivation: (1) Overcrowding: households with more than three people per room; (2) Housing: households living with inconvenient housing (part tenancy room, poor housing or other, which excludes house, apartment and hut); (3) Health conditions: households without any type of toilet; (4) School attendance: households with school-age children (6 to 12 years) who are not attending school; and (5) Capacity of subsistence: households with four or more persons per working member and, also, whose head has not completed third grade of primary schooling (INDEC, 1984).

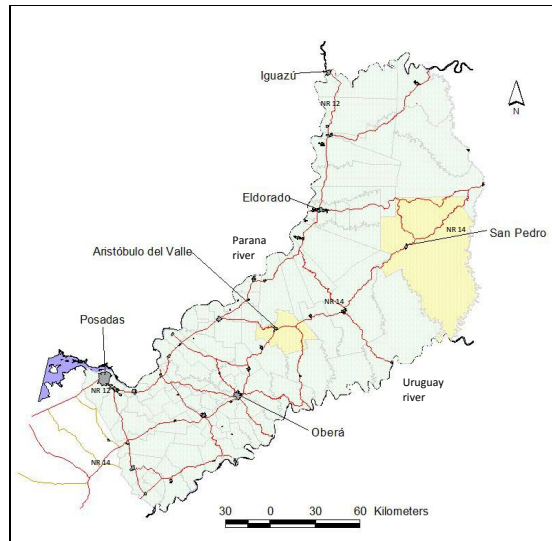
<sup>89</sup> The population increased by 22% from 1991. INDEC (2001) defines urban population as the population living in localities with more than 2.000 inhabitants; agglomerated rural population as the population living in localities with less than 2.000 inhabitants and dispersed population to those living in the countryside outside any locality.

These indicators differ in Aristóbulo, showing that poverty is not as high as in San Pedro (approximately 29% of the population, 26% of the households). Nevertheless, poverty is also mostly rural since Aristóbulo is also characterized by a large number of rural households (47% of the inhabitants were localized in non-agglomerated rural areas in 2001). Here 60 % of the population did not have a public or private health care system and the 45% of the inhabitants older than 15 years had no education or had not completed primary school (INDEC, 2001).

The municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle is more urbanized than San Pedro (53% population in urban areas while 36% in San Pedro) and has a much higher population density (35 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> and 7 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> in San Pedro). These, along with a closer location to Posadas - the capital of the province - good connections to the rest of the localities and a longer history of public institutions have permitted Aristóbulo del Valle to develop its economy to a greater extent than San Pedro.<sup>90</sup>

The following map shows the relative location of both municipalities and the main cities of the province along with main roads of communication.<sup>91</sup>

Map 4: Province of Misiones (Arg.). Municipalities of Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro. Main roads and localities



Source: Author's elaboration with Argentinean official cartography.

<sup>90</sup> Aristóbulo is 140 km. from Posadas and San Pedro is 251 km. away.

<sup>91</sup> According to INDEC (2001) the main populated centres in the province of Misiones are Posadas, Oberá, Eldorado, Puerto Iguazú, in 2001.

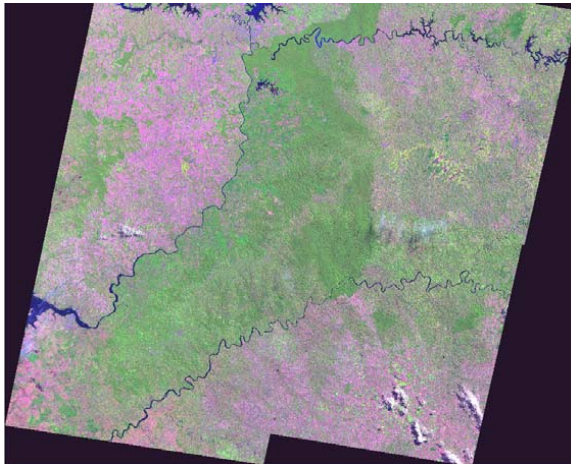
## Environmental context

The Atlantic rainforest is a subtropical forest. It presents one of the highest biodiversified ecosystems on earth (Holz, 2006). Nowadays only 7% remains of the original area cover, though it is very fragmented. Misiones is the place where the greatest connectivity of the whole Atlantic forest can be found (Izquierdo *et al.*, 2008).<sup>92</sup>

This forest used to cover the south of Brazil, west of Paraguay and north of Argentina. Due to the peripheral status of Misiones in the Argentinean economy this area was put under production only lately and with a different pattern of land occupation in comparison with the neighbouring countries and the Argentinean pampas. This has permitted its very high level of conservation today (Rolón and Chebez, 1998; Izquierdo *et al.*, 2008).

According to Holz (2006) the contraction of the area covered by the native forest from 1900 to 2000 has been caused by human activities. In many parts of Brazil and Paraguay the land was de-forested and cleared for agriculture, while in Misiones the small-scale agriculture based on perennial crops and the native forest logging (in the northeast) permitted a higher level of native forest conservation. As can be observed in the map 5, Misiones is today a sort of green island surrounded by fields of grain and other annual crops.

Map 5: Province of Misiones, Argentina. Satellite image, 2008



Source: Comisión Nacional de Actividades Espaciales, Argentina. Image taken in April 2008, Landsat 7-ETM. Courtesy of the Department of Recursos Vitales, MERNyT, Posadas.

<sup>92</sup> It means that the rainforest expands in a continuous geographical area and it is not fragmented.

In the 1980s two new (and related) influences arrived, which need to be taken into account to understand the current importance given to nature conservation in the province of Misiones: the global trend towards biodiversity preservation and the promotion of tourism as a key sector to develop the provincial economy.

When in that decade the environmental movement started to influence the agenda of intergovernmental organizations, Misiones began to be aware about the high level of native forest conservation in its territory. The environmental consciousness in the province, mainly from the urban middle class who could influence politicians, made nature conservation an important issue.<sup>93</sup>

Ferrero (2005: 191) argues that the most concrete manifestation of this trend was the creation of natural reserves. Most of the nature reserves in Misiones were produced in an accelerated process, which took place between 1987 and 1997 when there was a jump from two to twelve reserves. In those ten years, the area under conservation schemes rose from almost 3% to 7.5% (INTA, 2003 quoted in Schiavoni, 2005b).<sup>94</sup> In this context, the creation in 1993 of the Reserve of Biosphere *Yabotí* in the municipality of San Pedro and its neighbouring municipality (El Soberbio) is an important landmark since it meant the construction of a territory of 236.313 hectares not available for agriculture, family farming or forestry.<sup>95</sup> Logging is permitted here only taking into consideration 'sustainable development' strategies.

According to data from the Ministry of Ecology of the province (MERNyT, 2005) there were 774.691 hectares under different kinds of conservation legislation (private, provincial, national) in 2004. In San Pedro, around 67% of the total area of the municipality has been reserved for biodiversity preservation. There is a total of 228.539 hectares under protection as provincial parks, nature reserves and biosphere reserve. In Aristóbulo this figure is around 6.720 hectares (see map 8 and map 9 in Appendix 3).

Certainly, Izquierdo *et al.* (2008) affirm that approximately 50% of the territory of Misiones is still covered with native forest in different degrees of conservation. Rolón and Chebez (1998) assert that nature conservation and biodiversity preservation are important to develop eco-tourism, one of the main sectors in the provincial economy.

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<sup>93</sup> In fact, the province is the only one in Argentina with a Ministry of Ecology.

<sup>94</sup> INTA (2003) "Plan de tecnología regional (2001-2004)", Centro Regional Misiones, Posadas, Argentina.

<sup>95</sup> The Reserves of Biosphere are geographic areas that represent a particular ecosystem selected by the Organization of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in different countries around the world. The purpose is to conciliate the conservation and the use of natural resources.

It can be argued that the need for forest preservation is important for many different reasons: diverse actors and productive sectors gain from forest conservation. Indeed, if one considers for example the diverse Mbyá Guaraní communities using the native forest for hunting and gathering (such in the case of those communities living in the municipality of San Pedro or Aristóbulo del Valle) as well as soil and water conservation for agriculture, the need for the conservation of natural resources is high.

## Historical processes of land occupation and spatial organization

This province has a very particular landscape shaped by its society, its history, the environment, and the economic and political processes that took place. In regards to land use, Bolsi (1982) points that yerba mate exploitation, followed later by its cultivation, has been very important in the organization of space and the territorial construction of the province of Misiones.<sup>96</sup>

However, the history of territorial organization and land occupation cannot be understood without taking into consideration some key issues that have helped to put large areas of the provincial territory under production: (i) the distribution of land in the province of Corrientes when Misiones was a national territory and (ii) the arrival of migrants from Europe and from neighbouring countries.

The name of the province (Misiones) is linked to the Missions that once organized the local communities. In this part of South America, the Spanish Crown allowed the Jesuits in 1571 to intervene for the evangelization of native peoples and the construction of a societal system more friendly to the Spaniards.

The administration of the territory of Misiones has recognized different periods, which will not be described here, but just mentioned.

Prior to the Spanish colonization (during the 1500), the province was occupied by Guaraní communities and other native groups. These communities practiced very limited subsistence agriculture (corn, sweet potato) but mainly survived by using the native forest for hunting and collecting.

During the period of colonization (1575 - 1768), the Jesuit missionaries were the main actors re-organizing local societies and putting under occupation land for agriculture and creating small towns. This was an important period for this region because it permitted the consolidation of an urban system almost autonomous from the Spanish crown due to the production and commerce the

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<sup>96</sup> Yerba mate plant is native to subtropical South America and cultivated in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil. When the yerba is harvested, the branches are dried sometimes with a wood fire, imparting a smoky flavour. Then the leaves and sometimes the twigs are broken up. The infusion called mate is prepared by steeping the dry leaves and twigs in hot water and is a cultural characteristic of the Southern Cone's societies (particularly Argentina and Uruguay).

villagers entered into with other main urban areas (such as Buenos Aires). The Jesuits had been able to create villages on the base of native labour, agriculture and its derived products (tobacco, cotton for clothing) and yerba mate production. At the beginning yerba mate was collected from the native forest, but later, techniques for cultivating the tree were developed, allowing them to be planted in small areas close to the villages (Amable *et al.*, 1996).

After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, the territory of Misiones was virtually uninhabited and the few remaining people nucleated around the ruins of the old Jesuits Indian settlements (*reducciones*). In the period between 1832 and 1880 the territory of Misiones was under control of the province of Corrientes. In that period few people lived there; the land was used mainly for cattle production in open pastures and yerba mate exploitation from the native forest.

In 1881 Misiones was taken away from the administration of Corrientes and was declared a national territory. Before this could take place, large portions of public land (around two million hectares) were sold by the government of Corrientes to thirty-eight purchasers each of who got land plots of around 153.800 hectares (Abínzano, 1985). The new owners were friends and family of the Corrientes elite, who refused to cede the territory of Misiones to the national administration.

The province was divided into three zones: the large properties (*latifundios*), a strip for colonization and a sector not considered due to an incorrect measurement, which was later reinstated for colonization. This sector was “recovered” in 1918 and was distributed to the private sector (70%) and back to the state (30%) for the settlement process.

In the early days of the Independence and the Argentinean federation (1810-1920) the territory was populated by small towns and native communities carrying out small-scale agriculture and living off the forest. Between 1810 and 1880 an extractive economy was organized and developed in the region based on logging and the exploitation of native yerba and the connected mills. Logging of native forest by large-scale companies started in the period between 1865 and 1870.

It was not until the early twentieth century, and especially between the two World Wars, that large numbers of immigrants arrived to the province from Central and Eastern Europe (mainly Germany, Poland and Ukraine). In 1876 the national government enacted the Immigration and Colonization Law which encouraged immigration and settlement of foreigners. According to Abínzano (n/d) the promotion of settlement in border areas, such as Misiones, was a way to control and fix the frontiers because they were far away from Buenos Aires, the national capital, where most of the population lived.

In the case of the national territory of Misiones two main settlement trends can be identified: one was the result of official or government incentives and the other was the result of private companies or individuals.

The official settlement (1883-1927) took place mainly on the coast area of the Paraná River and in the South of the province. It had strong support from the government and took place on public land. It was developed around old Jesuit villages. The first immigrants who participated in this kind of settlement were Poles and Ukrainians. The plots of land sold were around 25 hectares size.

The private settlement (1920-1945) was conducted through colonization companies created for that purpose, which had acquired land to sell in plots of around 50 hectares. These companies were very much linked to German interests (after the First World War, Germany supported the migration of its inhabitants to South America). Private companies settled and greatly developed the area of the upper Parana River, a forest area accessible only by river, due to the absence of roads and bridges.

Spontaneous or secondary private settlements, carried out by relatives of settlers already settled, also sprung up. The towns and urban centres in the area of the central highlands of the province are the result of this process. The state got in charge of regularizing land ownership once the process was finished (Schiavoni, 1998).

The province was administrated by the national government until 1954. This means that it was only relatively recently, compared to the rest of the country, that the local population got the right to elect their authorities (governors and legislators).

### *Occupation and use of land*

Regarding the processes of territorial construction and land use in the consolidation of the provincial economy and production organization, Abínzano (1985) describes different “fronts” in order to understand the complex dynamics. The following is based on the author’s work.

During the extractive front (1870-1881) the demographic front moved forward fuelled by natural resource exploitation, particularly logging in the native forest. There were very few settlements in the area around the abandoned Jesuit villages. The population was highly itinerant, coming from the province of Corrientes and from Paraguay and Brazil. The productive system was based on the exploitation of yerba mate trees and hardwood. It was characterized by almost no investment, high dependency on extra-regional capital markets and the exploitation of labour, mainly of native peoples. The infrastructure constructed was exclusively for the extraction and exportation of raw material.

Logging companies did business with representatives of large-scale landowners, who in most of the cases were residents in cities far away from Misiones.

During the first agriculture front (1897-1937) there were different periods during the settlement of immigrants:

- First settlement (1897-1914). It was characterized by subsistence agriculture by Poles and Ukrainians located in the south of the province. The production was organized according to traditional peasant ways.
- Second settlement (1916-1921). The main feature was the cultivation and expansion of the production of yerba by Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Swedes, Swiss, German-Brazilians, and Paraguayans in the central region of the province. Coming from Brazil, there was a wave of European immigrants who had acquired experience in subtropical agriculture.
- Private settlement (1920-1935). Agriculture gradually became oriented towards industrial crops, mainly by North European and English, in the northeast of the province. It was private companies who arranged the settlement.

In the period between 1950 and 1970 the agricultural frontier advanced to a late extractive front. Public land was granted to private companies in parcels of 100 hectares for the exploitation of *araucaria* and other native species. There was almost no settlement, instead there was only a migrant population linked to extractive activities (timber) and no agriculture activity (only subsistence agriculture in timber yards).

During the decades from 1960 to 1980 a large number of families migrated from the south of the province and from Brazil, leaving overexploited and thus unproductive land, and headed for the northeast. At the beginning the state was absent but in the decade of 1970 a regulation was made to distribute parcels of land between 25 and 100 hectares.

These permitted a process of capitalization of these farmers' families. Previously considered to be squatters, these farmers became settlers (*colono*) not only because they could possess a good amount of capital but also because they had access to land under "official" conditions. The dynamics in this area of the province is described and analyzed by Schiavoni (1998). The first extractive front was followed by an agricultural one, made possible by capitalization due to timber logging.

At the end of the 1980s, the agrarian front came to a close. There was migration of farmers' children to peri-urban locations in the province and to private land in properties where an extractive economy (native forest logging) was no longer profitable. Agriculture in the south and east was no longer lucrative due to low productivity and soil deterioration. Farmers moved to this area, and combined



subsistence agriculture with cash crop growing (tobacco) and nonfarm activities. However there were diverse cases. The land was also used for residential purposes (living off nonfarm activities and small food production in vegetable gardens).

Schiavoni (1998: 84-85) notes that here land occupation for agriculture and settlement were first associated with the migration and entry of Brazilians and the logging activities (more linked to Paraguayans). In fact, the author states that from 1960 this region of the province started to be the centre of attention from the public sector. In the context of the National Law 18.575 of development and integration of border areas, those municipalities located in the north and east of Misiones are defined as such.<sup>97</sup> This area is officially designated as “undeveloped”, with no infrastructure, a population “vacuum” and a lack of physical and “spiritual” integration to the rest of the nation. It was also treated as an area of infiltration by people from the neighbouring countries. Because of this, the area came to be considered as potential for forestry.<sup>98</sup>

In the following years, the public sector was alarmed by the arrival of people from Brazil and Paraguay: “the frontier area remains a sector with a big population vacuum and (...) you can say that it continues to be a depopulated Argentinean area tending to become a Brazilian settlement” (Misiones, 1975; quoted in Schiavoni, 1998: 85).<sup>99</sup>

In 1977 the “Guidelines for the Design of a Development Plan for the Area of Bernardo de Irigoyen” aimed to regulate the border settlement. This concern coincides with the increase of population and agricultural employment in the area, as commented above.

“In addition to the Brazilian immigration, these movements involve farmers from the oldest rural settlements of the province, due to an acute agricultural crisis triggered by the falling prices of their main products. The movement towards the border was in part a response to this crisis (...) The advance of the agricultural frontier took place in the west-central public

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<sup>97</sup> General Belgrano, San Pedro, Guaraní, 25 de Mayo and part of Iguazú.

<sup>98</sup> Schiavoni (1998: 86, footnote 8) points out that in 1976, a socioeconomic diagnosis of the area concludes recommending the development of forestry in the area, “due to its competitive advantages over the rest of the country, exploiting and industrializing the native forest (...) and re-foresting to supply with long fibre material the existing industries and those to be installed in the provinces” (Misiones, 1976). Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author. Misiones (1976) “Diagnóstico socioeconómico del Area de Frontera”, unplished. Secretariat of Planning and Control. Posadas, Argentina.

<sup>99</sup> Misiones, Government of the Province of (1975) “Informe Preliminar”, unpublished. Technical team of the Commission of Development and Border Areas, Posadas, Misiones. Argentina. Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

land belt of the province; the land located along the Uruguay river is made up of large private properties that remain unpopulated” (ibid: 86-87).<sup>100</sup>

The promotion of forestry was seen as a way to control and limit the spread of farming (permanent settlement of families) since forestry was not supposed to create roots or permanent settlement. The state-sponsored settlement in the area was aimed at large holders with a higher level of capitalization (ibid: 86).

It is in this context that the municipalities of Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro result from different processes of land occupation.

The territory of Aristóbulo del Valle is an example of the second private settlement carried out by already settled farmers in the south of the province, but also European families coming from Brazil (though there was no single prominent ethnic group). Farmers here oriented their agriculture production to the market and obtained a certain level of capitalization and management skills. Cooperation (and cooperatives) was important for regional development, for example, for the construction of infrastructure. In 1921 the settlement of Aristóbulo del Valle was founded. *Picadas* (roads through the forest) were opened and land was parcelled and distributed.<sup>101</sup> The cultivation of perennial crops (yerba mate and tea) was introduced in this area of the province.

This is a different process to the one that can be observed in San Pedro. This municipality is localized in the northeast, an area characterized by the logging front and by the latest expansion of the agrarian frontier. Although the main town, also named San Pedro, is one of the oldest localities (founded in 1876), the territory was recently and spontaneous occupied.

The agricultural expansion in San Pedro is directly linked to tobacco production. In fact, in the period between the agricultural censuses of 1988 and 2002, the crops that show most growth in this municipality are the industrial ones (180%), with tobacco first among them with an increase of 427% (INDEC, 2002).

The organization of the territory is framed within a particular context, characterized by the absence of public planning and gradual occupation by family smallholders with few resources, described before. According to Schiavoni (2001: 7):

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<sup>100</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>101</sup> Baranger (1992: 50) provides an accurate definition of *picada*. It is a pathway, which is sometimes difficult to use, that leads to a road or often to another pathway (...) Frequently, they have been constructed in the native forest in order to permit deforestation. They are designed in order to allow the mobilization of trucks to take out the timber, “once the felling is over, they [the *picadas*] serve to organize the space supporting social networks” (quoted in Schiavoni, 1998: 22). Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author. Baranger, D. (1992) “Rapports d’entraide technique chez des petits producteurs agricoles de Colonia Caá-Guazú (Misiones, Argentine)”, in *Cahiers de la recherche Développement* 31: 49-59.

“...the unplanned settlement of the north-eastern part of the province [Misiones] took place between 1970 and 1990, driven by smallholders without capital that took advantage of the easy access to public land, and who were able to link into the dynamics of the tobacco agroindustrial complex from the middle 1980s (Burley’s boom)”.<sup>102</sup>

This situation stands in contrast to the territorial configuration of the rest of the province, where planned settlements, locally known as *colonias*, dominate. This in turn determines the different socio-productive, economic and political dynamics in San Pedro. Schiavoni (2001: 7-8) affirms that:

“...the agrarian production systems of the spontaneous settlement, although to some degree maintain their diversification (tobacco, cattle, forestry, yerba mate) they [also] respond to the new model of family farming that has been developed in the province in the last decades and that is based on the stabilization of the smallholders through tobacco specialization, in opposition to the classical pattern of capitalization through implantation of perennial crops (yerba mate, tea, tung)”.<sup>103</sup>

More recently, the provincial state has had an active presence in the occupation of the territory of San Pedro, by regulating land use through the creation of the Yabotí reserve. Despite this strategic step, the gradual arrival of settlers (*colonos*, farmers) from the rest of the province could not be completely prevented. Schiavoni (2003: 2) the importance of this process:

“The expansion of the provincial agricultural frontier is a result of the dynamics of the family farm: ‘to get land in order to install the children’ (...) For those less-capitalized farmers, the occupation of public land turned to be a advantageous way to access land, with the aim of setting up agriculture production for their children. Since the last decade, and once the reserve of public land in the province was finished, the social reproduction of family farming rests increasingly upon the spontaneous settlement in private properties with tax problems (...) which increases the possibilities to negotiate the land tenure”.<sup>104</sup>

In recent years therefore, land tenure regulation has been considered a problem in some municipalities, particularly those in the northeast of the province. Here, illegal land occupation led to an important squatters’ (*ocupantes*) movement at the beginning of the 2000s demanding solutions to their problems. The provincial state passed a law to expropriate the land (approximately 19.000

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<sup>102</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>103</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>104</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

hectares in San Pedro) which to date has not been fully implanted. The families are still waiting for the settlement process to begin.

In Misiones, provincial law 3.141 regulates the intervention of the provincial state in solving the case of rural land tenure. The squatters must provide evidence of effective occupation of the land for no less than eight years. However, the law only applies with the express consent of the owner (UNaM *et al.*, 2004).

### *Recent territorial transformations and dynamics in the countryside*

The processes of public disinvestment in rural areas along with farmers' income deterioration worsen the living conditions of rural dwellers. In Misiones, social discontent manifested not only in public demonstrations, marches, petitions and roadblocks, but also in the gradual establishment of alternative strategies conducting to 'rural development', different strategies from the previous one based on the production of industrial crops connected to agro-industries and heavily supported by the state through price regulation.

At the same time, since the late 1980s, the construction of natural parks defined, controlled and subject to certain types of use, constrained agricultural expansion and the possibilities for development based on agriculture growth in new areas. The effect of this was particularly marked, because this process occurred when public land available for settlement was totally occupied (is that what you mean?). Schiavoni (2005b) mentions that while the quantity of land for nature conservation grew around 151%, the quantity of public land available for agriculture and settlement decreased from 12% to 1% in the last fifteen years.

Despite this, Izquierdo *et al.* (2008: 5) note that "[t]he matrix of land-use changes between 1989 and 2006 shows that the largest change at the provincial level was the conversion of natural forest cover to mixed use [120.400 hectares], plantation [108.600 hectares] and agriculture [100.800 hectares]" (ibid, 2008: 9).<sup>105</sup> In their study about land-use change, the authors indicate that during the period 1973-2006 there was a total of 468.900 hectares of natural forest converted to other uses, "representing a decrease from 65 to 49% forest cover for the whole province".

From the 1960s reforestation started competing with agriculture for available land (Reboratti, 1979). In this sense, plantation forestry has been of increasing

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<sup>105</sup> Izquierdo *et al.* (2008: 9) define areas of mixed use as those "[a]reas of subsistence agriculture often mixed with small pastures and shrubland"; plantation as "[m]onoespecific stands of *Pinus*, *Eucalyptus*, and *Araucaria* that are used for lumber and pulp production" and agriculture as "[a]reas dominated by perennial crops of tea and *yerba mate*".

importance. At present, this can be observed in the amount of land used for forestry and the amount of labour employed both in primary production and secondary processing/manufacturing. While agribusinesses are most prevalent in the northwest of the province,<sup>106</sup> the high price of timber has piqued the interest of farmers who wish to diversify their farm incomes with reforestation in other areas of the province. In the first case (large-scale forestry business oriented), the introduction of pine monoculture has been fostered by local or extra-provincial large landholders; this is mainly the case in San Pedro. In the second case (small-scale, income diversification oriented) farmers count on the support of a national law that promotes tree plantation through subsidies and public technical assistance. Schiavoni (2005a: 441) mentions that:

“In recent years the agrarian question in Misiones is inseparable from forestry sector. This activity has an increasingly important role in the organization of space and it is dominated by transnational companies and corporations, which has initiated a process of land concentration and land valorisation”.<sup>107</sup>

Izquierdo *et al.* (2008:13) states that forestry plantation had increased from approximately 1% to 10% of the province during the last 33 years partly due to the subsidies given by the government to develop the sector. They add that “in terms of land-use change, the greatest effect of this policy was the loss of natural forest”, since between 1973 and 2006, forestry expanded in areas of native forests, in those classified as mixed use (subsistence agriculture with small pastures and shrubland, locally known as *capueras*) and in agricultural areas.

In short, some of the recent structural territorial processes, according to evidence collected from interviews as well as secondary sources (census, literature produced by local researchers) are the following:

- Expansion of the agricultural frontier towards remaining public land and private properties, driven by families of small-scale farmers participating in the tobacco production chain;
- Growth in the quantity of land for forestry production commanded by local and international companies and fields (*pasturas*) for cattle ranching;
- Increasing areas under conservation through provincial and national legislation;
- Abandonment of land and migration to small towns and cities;
- Expansion of urban areas through natural population growth and rural-urban migration; and

<sup>106</sup> The municipalities under study are not located here.

<sup>107</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

- A reduction in the amount of land available to put under agricultural production, increasing areas suffering from land degradation, water pollution and decrease of water availability.

## The relevance of the agriculture sector

As a result of the processes of land occupation and economic organization based on agriculture, the rural space in Misiones has a high number of small-scale family farms. Bartolomé (1975) indicates that the agrarian structure is the result of a series of economic cycles associated to a particular crop or production. These crops present cycles characterized by periods of “booms” and others of stagnation and decline, which sometimes feature an agrarian crisis. When yerba mate was regulated it helped farmers to keep *yerbales* as a main source of income because price was secured. However, tung and tea prices depend on the fluctuations of the international market.

If the agriculture sector is considered in general terms, Reboratti (1979) states that the overproduction of yerba mate lead cyclically to crises that the farmers could manage by introducing new crops such as tung (1935-55), tea (1960) or citrus and soya.<sup>108</sup> Bartolomé (1975) mentions that the perennial nature of the most of the industrial crops (yerba mate, tung, tea, citrus, and tree plantation) involved in these cycles somehow structured farmers’ production. The *colono* (farmer) tended to add new crops instead of replacing them. Therefore they “experiment” with diversification but always around a major perennial crop (nowadays mainly yerba mate or forestry). New alternative crops to yerba mate in Misiones have always been perennial (tung, tea, citrus and pine) which further diminished the capacity for farmers to diversify, change crops and assume risks. More recently, though, annual crops (tobacco, essences, or horticulture) and cattle have been fostered.

Pine (*taeda* and *elliotis*) and long fibre species production increased at the end of the 1990s due to the pressure from the local timber industry to increase sawmilling and pulp production. In this new industrial complex foreign capital

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<sup>108</sup> Amable *et al.* (1996) mention that the following cycles can be observed in the agriculture front in Misiones. A first cycle was dominated by subsistence agriculture (rice, grapes, corn, manioc and sugar cane) where the main cash crop was tobacco. Later, from 1914 to 1930 yerba mate and rice were produced in an intensive manner. Yerba mate cultivation and industrialization made the provincial economy dynamic and linked it to the national market. It entered a crisis period in 1930. From this year there was a new cycle with subtropical crops (tung, tea, soya, banana, pineapple and citrus) and yerba mate. In 1936 yerba mate began to be regulated and in the period 1940-1960 the tea plantation and its industrialization expanded. From 1960 forestry has been increasing due to state support through subsidies and fiscal facilities. Something similar occurred with citrus production.

has started to have a key role, along with medium-scale farmers. The agro-industries are becoming more dominant in the provincial economic structure.

Industrial crops play an important role in the provincial economy. 31% of the implanted area was dedicated to this kind of crop in 2002. Misiones is the largest national producer of yerba mate (92% of the total national area implanted), tea (95% of the total national area implanted), manioc (97% of the total national area implanted) and the second largest national producer of tobacco (40% of the total national area implanted) in terms of tons produced (INDEC, 2002).<sup>109</sup>

The industrialization of these products is done by modern agribusiness and organized entirely in a capitalistic fashion integrating the smallholder sector (Schiavoni, 1998: 63). Industrial activity has its greatest expression in agro-industries associated with primary production, including yerba mate mills, tea and tobacco dryers, manufacturing plants of paper and pulp and other activities of wood processing.

It should be mentioned finally that the production of both yerba mate and tobacco are regulated at present by the national and provincial governments. Both crops are central to the economy of Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro. However, San Pedro is one of the higher department producers of yerba due to its higher yields.

The yerba mate activity was regulated again with the national law 25.564 which created the National Institute of Yerba Mate (*Instituto Nacional de la Yerba Mate*, INYM). It was sanctioned in 2001 with the aim of promoting, facilitating and strengthening the development of production, processing, industrialization, commercialization and consumption of yerba mate and its derivatives.

Ramirez (2006: 61) notes that the most significant inequalities in the yerba sector are linked to the actor's different participation in each stage of the production process: "thus, the millers, who have yerba mate processing plants and packaging and buy *hoja verde* [green leaves] or *canchada* [toasted leaves] from the farmers, [were the one who most] benefited from the deregulation of the 1990s and price deterioration".<sup>110</sup>

When the Regulation Board of the Yerba Mate (*Comisión Reguladora de la Yerba Mate*, CRYM) was eliminated in 1991 and the support price of yerba

<sup>109</sup> A new census was made in 2008 but final data is not yet available. Even though 8 years passed since the census in 2002, this general structure has not changed.

<sup>110</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author. According to Ferrero (2005: 189-190) there was a "process of capitalist concentration of production, processing and commercialization of the traditional crops in the hands of traders and millers (...) who control the prices of raw material and produce a greater dependency of small and medium holders, who have de-capitalized and impoverished". Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

mate was abolished, farmers were unprotected and at the mercy of middle men and mills. Even though attempts were made to revert back to the past with the creation of the INYM, there have not been large improvements in regards to incomes received by farmers, particularly those small-scale ones located far away from the industrialized centres.

The fragmentation of the demand of toasted and processed yerba mate left family farmers with little room for negotiation during the deregulation of the activity, a circumstance that favoured the concentration of capital in the industrial sector. Even with the new regulation and the creation of the INYM, the disparities in the value chain in terms of economic power and price formation have left farmers with few possibilities to earn higher revenues. The evidence from fieldwork shows that probable causes of this include the fact that small and medium-scale farmers are not organized and they do not have strong cooperatives, and secondly that some mills acquired land during the deregulation, planted their own mate-plantations, and integrated the whole value chain. The current regulation has not forbidden the extension of new plantations, so this latter tendency may continue.

Unlike what happened with the organization of mate production, the tobacco industry was not deregulated. In 1972 the Tobacco Special Fund (*Fondo Especial del Tabaco*, FET) was established. It is financed by a tax on cigarettes and determines the final income received by tobacco growers. The price of tobacco is determined each year by a board where farmers (through their representative associations), tobacco companies and the government participate.

This Fund is the centre of many disputes, since it controls a large amount of money that can be distributed by the provincial government to support tobacco re-conversion and/or crop diversification, or be used for other purposes that the government may consider important.

In Misiones, tobacco growing is done under contract. In the system of technology transfer implemented by tobacco companies, farmers receive technical assistance (calendars of plantation and harvest times, leaf classification, use of chemicals, etc.) and production inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) which are afterwards deducted from the income received when the tobacco is delivered. Tobacco companies monopolize the market for inputs and standard setting (each class of tobacco has a different price). All these subordinate the farmers in the tobacco value chain, regardless of their participation in price negotiation boards.

The companies, by means of a team of instructors (*instructores*) also have control of the quantity of seeds delivered, and therefore the type and quantity of tobacco to be given to each farmer. Furthermore, since prices are determined by



class of leaf, the companies end up deciding the prices, because they have the expert knowledge to finally settle the sort of leaf they are getting from farmers.

There are currently two large international corporations which purchase tobacco and produce cigarettes mainly for the international market. They hold around 80% of the local tobacco market: Nobleza-Piccardo and Massalin Particulares (Garcia, 2008).<sup>111</sup> Other companies present include the American Phillip Morris (*Tabacos Norte S.A.*), the German Contraf Nicotex Tobacco (Bonpland Leaf S.A. known locally as BLASA) and the local Tobacco Cooperative of Misiones (*Cooperativa Tabacalera de Misiones*, CTM Ltda.). These are dealers who buy tobacco from growers and sell to third parties. Even though CTM Ltda. claims to be a cooperative and be at the service of its members, it works as a corporation, with a hierarchical structure, top-down decision making and no members' participation in its management or its revenues.

According INDES (2002: 8) due to the lack of competitiveness in markets, tobacco companies in Argentina have to reduce by 25% the local production of tobacco during the 1990s. Nowadays, with the devaluation of the Argentine currency, the situation has improved for Argentina in terms of international trade, but this has not improved the prices received by the farmers. The effects of the national currency devaluation are uncertain for the tobacco growers, because prices are not defined by the market. The companies benefited a great deal since they export almost all the tobacco produced in the province. The farmers absorb all the production costs (wages, seeds, chemicals, soil deterioration, water pollution, etc.).

Primary production of tobacco is highly labour intensive, which undermines subsistence production at farm level and simultaneously encourages labour from all family members, including children. Even though provincial regulation has made progress in tobacco production in regards to environmental care, living conditions of the tobacco growers are highly problematic: low income, declining health conditions (due to exposure to chemicals) and child labour.

### *Family agriculture in Misiones and selected municipalities*

The predominance of family farms is a feature of the agrarian structure in Misiones. Indeed, 53% of the units of agricultural production (*explotaciones agropecuarias*, EAP) were on parcels of land between 0.1 and 25 hectares, and 66% were holding land between 10 and 50 hectares. There were only 3% of EAP with more than 200 hectares. However, this 3% owns 37% of the land (INDEC, 2002).

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<sup>111</sup> Nobleza-Piccardo S.A. is part of the British American Tobacco (BAT) holding. Massalin Particulares S.A. operates as a subsidiary of Philip Morris International Inc.

Most of the cultivation of provincial crops (tobacco, yerba mate and tea) is carried out by these small-scale family farms. The majority of labour is provided by family members. In the context of Misiones, these farms are generally small and poor since this area of land for a family today does not provide a level of income that could foster a process of capitalization or prevent des-capitalization and further impoverishment.<sup>112</sup>

Obschatko *et al.* (2007) characterize family agriculture in Misiones as those EAP where (a) the farmer works directly on the farm, (b) there are no employed workers with permanent salaries, (c) the legal tenure is not “corporation” or “limited by shares”, (d) it does not have more than 500 hectares and (e) there are up to 200 hectares under cultivation.<sup>113</sup>

The industrial crops (yerba, tea, tobacco) and forestry are the crops in which family agriculture has the largest participation in value production (35% and 28% respectively) (ibid: 74). The number of EAP in Misiones represented 8% of the total number of EAP in Argentina, and 49% of the total EAP in the country between 10 and 50 hectares (INDEC, 2002).<sup>114</sup>

The total number of EAP in Misiones decreased in 2% in the period between 1998 and 2002. However, there are some municipalities that present a positive tendency and others a negative one. Those located in the northeast have experienced an increase in the quantity of EAP.<sup>115</sup> Obschatko *et al.* (2007: 54) considered that some of the causes of the internal differences in the geographical distribution of EAP in Misiones, very much linked with the previous process of land occupation commented in the previous sections:

“In the departments with larger presence of small-scale farmers -those in the centre and on the coasts of the Uruguay river, where tobacco is mainly produced- the number of small-scale farmers seems to have increased as well as the number of farms in general; the area dedicated to agriculture is the same or increased very little so these might indicate that there is a process of ‘resistance’ in the countryside from the small-scale farmers. Meanwhile, in

<sup>112</sup> This is even more evident if considered that many agriculture units of production (EAP) are located in areas where agriculture is not feasible due to high pendant, native forest, rocky or eroded soil, or very bad access to roads.

<sup>113</sup> The family characteristic of the units of agriculture production can also be observed through data provided by INDEC (2001) in its census of population and households. Here one can observe the number of “employees” present in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro. In both municipalities 36% of people inserted in the labour market were “independent”. This means that they manage their own unit of production; they own the means of production but have no employees. This could be the case of farmers. At the same time, 20% of workers in Aristóbulo and 28% of those in San Pedro were workers employed in family business. This could also be the case of family members inserted in the labour market through relatives’ farms.

<sup>114</sup> In the context of Argentina this size of farm can be considered “small”.

<sup>115</sup> These departments are General Manuel Belgrano, Guaraní, 25 de Mayo and San Pedro.

those departments where small-scale farmers does not have a greater presence -in the South and west on the Paraná river, traditional area for yerba mate and forestry- it might be possible a process of concentration because there is a decrease in the number of small-scale farmers and EAPs in general, but not in the area which in some departments seems to have increased”.<sup>116</sup>

Regarding the municipalities of Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro there are differences in the processes of land distribution and number of farms observed between censuses.

In Aristóbulo del Valle approximately around 65% of the EAP were holding less than 25 hectares and 89% less than 50 hectares.<sup>117</sup> The largest number of EAP was between 10 and 50 hectares (76%). Land distribution here shows that most of the land in EAP in Aristóbulo del Valle are controlled by small-scale farmers (INDEC, 2002).<sup>118</sup>

According to Obschatko *et al.* (2007) 95% of the EAP in the department of Cainguás were small-scale farmers with an average size of 27 hectares in 2002. Of this, 79% were poor.<sup>119</sup> Around 19% were farms with a certain level of capitalization and only 2% were considered well capitalized.<sup>120</sup>

This is very different to the case of San Pedro where around 63% of the total number of EAP had less than 50 hectares, and 55% were holding between 10 to 50 hectares in 2002. The extent of informal land tenure can be observed from the fact that 21% of the total amount of EAP in San Pedro had undefined boundaries.<sup>121</sup> Land distribution here is highly inequitable since 73% of land is concentrated in only 1% of the EAP and the abovementioned 63% of EAP (less than 50 hectares) has only 10% of the land. In fact, San Pedro as a municipality has a high number of large EAP (more than 2.500 hectares) in the province, something that can easily be observed in map 7 below.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>117</sup> See chapter III for methodological considerations about agricultural estimations in the case of the municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle using data corresponding to the department of Cainguás from the National Census of Agriculture (INDEC, 2002).

<sup>118</sup> Around 56% of the land is held by this kind of EAP, while EAP with more than 500 hectares have only 14% of the land.

<sup>119</sup> The authors characterize poor EAP as subsistence agriculture farmers that need non-farm incomes in order to continue living from agriculture in the countryside.

<sup>120</sup> The authors characterize semi-capitalized EAP as those that could live mainly from farm incomes, but could not develop further.

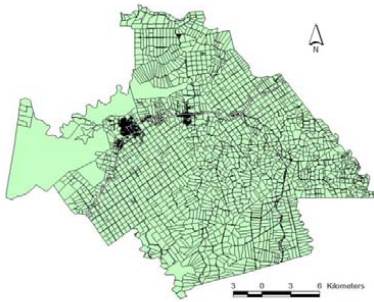
<sup>121</sup> This kind of EAP is very precarious because farmers do not have control over the land. These units of agriculture production might be “squatter” farmers who are illegally occupying public or private land.

<sup>122</sup> At the same time, 43% of the provincial total number of EAP without borders can be found here.

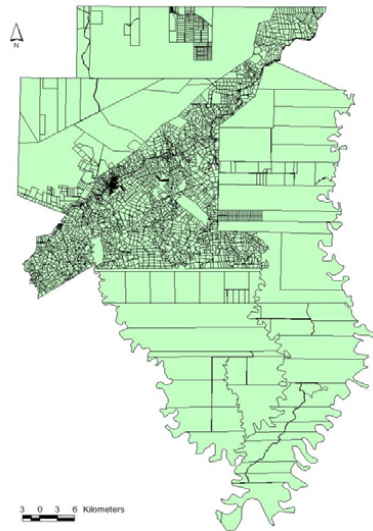
According to Obschatko *et al.* (2007) in this municipality 93% of the EAP were small-scale farms with an average size of 27 hectares in 2002. Of this, 88% were poor, around 10% had a certain level of capitalization and only 2% were considered well capitalized.

The current land parcelling can be observed in the following maps of the municipalities. Even though from here it is not possible to see who owns what, it is a good example of how land has been distributed in the past and still reflects in general terms the current situation.

Map 6: Municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle, Misiones (Argentina). Land parcelling. 2007



Map 7: Municipality of San Pedro, Misiones (Argentina). Land parcelling. 2007



Source: Author's own elaboration with official data. Ministry of Agriculture and Production, government of the province of Misiones. Posadas. Courtesy of the Department of Cadastre of Aristóbulo del Valle.

### *Production structure and systems*

The municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle houses a large number of agro-industries, such as tea and mate factories. In 2010 there were three yerba mills located here and around nine more in the neighbouring municipalities. At the same time, there were ten *secaderos* (yerba mate factories to toast or dry leaves)

here and 19 in the neighbouring municipalities (INYM, 2010).<sup>123</sup> Moreover, most of the yerba mate and tea factories are located in the municipalities which are closer and well connected to Aristóbulo del Valle. There are also a significant number of saw mills and very easy access to tobacco factories, sugar processors, and citrus juice producers in the central south of the province.

The case of the municipality of San Pedro is different because here, timber exploitation is the main economic activity, based on logging and reforestation. Very little raw material is processed locally. Native forest logging and large-scale forestry is controlled by major timber companies, both international and national, such as *Alto Paraná S.A.*, a Chilean company, or *Forestal Belga*, an Argentinean one. Each of them holds around 25.000 hectares which are used both for pine forestry and logging. Forestry can also be found on the small and medium-scale. Timber exploitation is particularly important for the municipality's economy because of the employment it generates in the processing sector (around 30 local small and medium sawmills).

In 2010 there were two yerba mills located here and around two more in the neighbouring municipalities. At the same time, there were 14 *secaderos* (though not all of them were functioning) and middle-men here and 13 in the neighbouring municipalities (INYM, 2010).<sup>124</sup>

Gunther *et al.* (2008) using data from the agriculture census in 1988 and 2002 present different systems of production. In Aristóbulo del Valle four types of systems of production can be distinguished based on the production orientation at the farm level (according to number of EAP and land use). If one focuses on the predominance of an activity in particular, in order of importance these are: (i) yerba mate and tea (ii) cattle raising (iii) forestry and yerba mate and (iv) diversified agriculture with tobacco as a dominant crop. In the case of San Pedro, there are also four such systems of production: (i) diversified cattle-based agriculture, (ii) diversified agriculture with tobacco as a dominant crop, (iii) forestry, yerba mate cultivation and cattle raising and (iv) yerba mate cultivation.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, for instance, even though there are tobacco growers in both municipalities, there are differences in their level of capitalization according to the role that this crop has in their farm diversification scheme. The importance attributed by farmers to tobacco seems to be higher in San Pedro, where it can

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<sup>123</sup> The neighbouring municipalities are: Dos de Mayo, Campo Grande, 25 de Mayo, El Alcázar, Ruiz de Montoya and Garupé.

<sup>124</sup> The neighbouring municipalities are: Bernardo de Irigoyen and San Vicente. The others are not considered because of the almost nonexistent access to them.

<sup>125</sup> The order of importance refers to the number of EAPs and not the quantity of land present under these systems.

be estimated that 65% of the EAP plant tobacco, while in Aristóbulo it is 54%.<sup>126</sup>

There are a lower percentage of tobacco growers delivering tobacco to companies in San Pedro in 2009. According to evidence from fieldwork, this could be explained because in this area of the province it is easier to sell tobacco to Brazil, to third parties or to “cheat” the companies by breaking the contracts and not paying back. Since San Pedro has the largest number of poor small-scale farmers, tobacco plantation can be the first (or second) step in a process of capitalization.<sup>127</sup>

## Poverty in rural areas

During the 1990s, poverty increased in Misiones.<sup>128</sup> There was a concatenation of different processes that caused this. While both the national and provincial states ceased to regulate the economy and social welfare, Bolsi (1987) points out that due to the physical conditions of the environment and the unsustainable use of the natural resources (soil, but forest and water as well) there has been a decline in agriculture yields. This, along with land subdivision for inheritance that made parcels ever smaller, has caused deteriorating farm incomes in the countryside. Once that the agricultural frontier reached its limit and occupation of new land became difficult, rural poverty increased.

The *tareferos*, collectors of yerba mate leaves, may be considered the poorest social group in rural Misiones. They are not farmers, they have no access to land and they live in small localities or in the peripheries of cities, subsisting with public assistance and seasonal incomes in the harvest period. Their living conditions are in general deplorable. This is very well depicted in the following statement from a local leader in 2004:

“Workers in the black economy with very little social security, in general they live in shanty town around the big cities, where they are picked up by the owner of cuadrillas [working parties], the owners of the yerbales [mate-plantation] or the truck owners. They [the workers] are taken by truck to [the place] where they have to stay for fifteen days *encarpados*, i.e. in tents made of black plastic bags in the yerba fields. Here [often] a big familiar drama takes place because most of the times the children have to go with their

<sup>126</sup> According to data provided by the Direction of Tobacco, MAyP, Posadas. 2009.

<sup>127</sup> It would be a second step in the case of the family having previously made use of timber when occupying the land.

<sup>128</sup> At the national level, the province ranked seventh with respect of the percentage of people showing one of the NBI variables commented above (INDEC, 2001).

parents to work, child labour, or there will be separation of the family. This brings a lot of problems” (quoted in Ramirez, 2006: 62).<sup>129</sup>

Different recent evaluations<sup>130</sup> indicate that during the 1990s land concentration has notably augmented as result of farm abandonments. Land abandonment by farmers and its replacement by tree plantation is not a tendency that can be observed all over the province, but is concentrated mainly in the central and north-west regions, as already mentioned.

### *Illegal land occupation or ‘land squatting’*

As mentioned earlier, the northeast of Misiones is a region with large properties where squatter farmers have been settling for the last twenty years. According to Baranger and Schiavoni (2003) there were around 5.797 people living in four large properties in 2003.<sup>131</sup> From a total of 66.616 hectares there are 59% under irregular occupation (39.480 hectares).

A large number of them are entitled legal tenure since they have been living there for more than eight years. This is a constitutional right, supported by the state of Misiones. In total, there were 1.267 households,<sup>132</sup> small-scale farms, in the four largest properties. Since this is a very dynamic process, new families have been moving to the area from 2004.

Even though farmers squatting land can be found in many areas of the province, the case of this area is very particular because of the important social mobilizations and protest involved. From 2001, there have been interesting mobilizations which - through road blocking, public protests in the capital, and other manifestations - ended up in the creation of a provincial law for settlement and colonization (*Ley 4.093 de Arraigo y Colonización*) in 2004. The social networks created were important, though little remains of them now.

There are two large properties being squatted in the municipality of San Pedro (Colonizadora Misionera S.A. and Schmidt) which are subject to land distribution by the law.<sup>133</sup> Farmers’ families squatting are waiting to receive the land titles, a process that is finished in the case of Schmidt, but not yet in the

<sup>129</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>130</sup> Qualified informants, journal articles, statistics from the farming sector, among others.

<sup>131</sup> These properties are Colonizadora Misionera S.A. (27,000 hectares), Puente Alto S.A. more known as Intercontinental (35,156 hectares), Agroforestal (3,800 hectares), Schmidt (660 hectares).

<sup>132</sup> The census understands “household” as a family that puts the land under production but does not necessary live on it. “Parcel” is understood as an extension of land in continuum of which possession is claimed by a person (Baranger and Schiavoni, 2003: 7, footnote 7).

<sup>133</sup> There are eight settlements (*asentamientos*) in Colonizadora Misionera (Piray Guazú, Portón Viejo, Pozo Azul, El Progreso, Km. 80, Polvorín, Km. 90 and Paraje Juanita) and one in Schmidt (Santa Rosa).

case of Colonizadora Misionera. However, there is a third property (Los Cencerros S.A.) also under illegal occupation that has not been taken into account by the law and where the irregularities therefore still persist. Indeed, the living conditions here are very precarious, although there are differences among farmers based on the capitalization level achieved through timber and tobacco exploitation.

The land problems and the associated social discontent show different characteristics in Aristóbulo del Valle. Although most of the rural land in the municipality has been distributed by the state with informal documentation (official permission), it has never been an impediment to access public credit or sell/transfer land. The provincial state is gradually delivering proper papers and formalizing property and legal access to land.

Here, however, the demands for land tenure involve the mobilization of six native communities who claim the territory they occupy in a property belonging to the University of La Plata (Argentina). The area has been converted into a park for nature conservation and experimentation. Even though the communities have access to the natural resources (they use the native forest for hunting and collecting), the university denies the transfer of tenure. These native communities have support from the Catholic Church<sup>134</sup> and other organizations that are assisting with the purpose of developing agriculture (some projects from RDPs) or improve subsistence agriculture (vegetable gardens).

### *Main concerns in the family agriculture sector*

There are a great number of concerns that family agriculture currently faces in Misiones. Some of them have already been mentioned previously. It is around some of these issues that different actors position themselves and relate to each other, performing actions to support, contend, defend and/or include rural households, particularly small-scale farmers.

As a result of fieldwork and literature review, it can be concluded that farmers in both municipalities experience the following common issues: (i) poor infrastructure, lack of roads and bad maintenance of *picadas*,<sup>135</sup> (ii) no credit channels tailored for small-scale farming, (iii) lack of support for creation of new channels of commercialization and new markets (iv) subordinated insertion of tobacco growers into the tobacco value chain.

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<sup>134</sup> This is done through a programme that aims to assist native communities in Argentina (*Pastorial Social Aborígen*).

<sup>135</sup> In San Pedro it is very bad since the network of roads is larger than many other municipalities (around 4.000 km. according to local references) and there are a great number of *picadas* in squatted areas where the municipality does not access.



In addition, in the particular case of Aristóbulo del Valle there is a reference to the following problems: (i) plagues, loss of biodiversity, (ii) soil degradation and crop mismanagement, (iii) no enforcement of regulated yerba price and payments schedule, (iv) no public support for management improvement of traditional crops (yerba, tea, tobacco) (v) water shortages in critical periods, (vi) inferior quality of cattle stock.<sup>136</sup>

According to local interviewees, agriculture production in this municipality has decreased due to declining crop productivity and low prices of traditional crops (yerba, tea). Local actors here observe a process of rural migration towards other areas of the province, particularly the northeast. They describe as well how processes of land concentration here are gradually taking place. Causes of this include (a) the abandonment of land by farmers' families and the opportunity for this land to be acquired by other actors, (b) the poor quality of the over exploited soil which make them suitable for large-scale forestry or cattle production (both need long term investments) and (c) the subsidies from the national state for forestry and the provincial state for cattle production, which encourage many urban actors to see forestry and cattle as an investment opportunity.<sup>137</sup>

The determinants of the higher levels of poverty in San Pedro are not only related to the scarcity of economical and productive resources accessible by the rural household (monetary incomes, land and inputs access, etc.). It is also linked to the significant lack of public investment (in education, housing, water, roads, and social security) and the absence of social and economical policies that permit the generation of local employment and consumption, the increase in the volume of production, the improvement in the quality of crops, the creation of new channels of commercialization and the access to markets. These are very much characteristics of new relatively recent 'colonized' areas. Rural families here perceive themselves as living "far away" (from markets, health systems and "everything"). The municipality is the largest in the province and the local government does not count with the instruments to assist all its territory.

Some of the socio-productive situations that characterize the instability and fragility in which the rural households exist are: (i) weak and unsteady food security, (ii) informal and insecure land tenure, (iii) absence of a technical

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<sup>136</sup> These conclusions were reached mostly with information from local interviewees (farmer organizations, NGOs staff and public agencies' staff interviewing in rural development), but they are also informed by a participatory workshop organized by the local agency of INTA in 2007 where non participatory observations were conducted. See Appendix 2.

<sup>137</sup> The abandonment of farms is not only a consequence of income decrease, but also of the urge of young people to leave the farm and move to the cities or towns nearby, according to local interviewees.

extension system - in particular in those settlements in Colonizadora Misionera - and (iv) lower relative prices of mate green leaves obtained by local farmers.<sup>138</sup>

Even though this municipality is one of the most important in terms of the number of mate producers (*yerbateros*) and despite of the regulation of the market of production of mate, the local producers continue to receive prices lower than the fixed ones.<sup>139</sup> This may be explained not only by the lack of control from the INYM but also by the absence of effective cooperatives aiming at processing and storing yerba.<sup>140</sup> The commercialization of green leaves as well as *canchada* produced in San Pedro is mainly done in mills located outside the municipality. The local *secaderos* do not count with enough production capacity to process the entire amount produced here.

## Family agriculture sector and its institutionality

### *Public agencies and nongovernmental organizations*

In the 1990s, rural development programmes (RDPs) were launched by the national government together with some provincial governments. Some of them have framed agriculture policies as RDPs. They have been characterized by: (a) focalization of the beneficiaries in some pre-defined sectors of the population; (b) jointly delivered financial, technical and social assistance; (c) social participation in the distribution of the public resources and in the management of the programmes (Manzanal *et al.*, 2008).

In some cases RDP are decentralized units of government working as independent agencies, in other cases they are executed as policies from

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<sup>138</sup> The information provided by a workshop organized by the local INTA office in 2007 has been supplemented by interviews with relevant members of farmers' organizations, NGOs' and public agencies' staff. See Appendix 2.

<sup>139</sup> In the previous harvest, a provincial survey and the registration of middle-men and producers of yerba mate in 2001 showed that the average price paid for green leaf in the dryer mill in San Pedro was less than those observed in the rest of the province (0.055 \$/kg. in San Pedro, 0.060 \$/kg. in other departments) (Misiones, 2002). This scheme still remains in place.

<sup>140</sup> Referring to this, leaders from the yerba sector say: "...the smallholders are the poorest... from San Pedro, Andresito, which is not organized into cooperatives and sell to the [best] bidder. There comes a person, they need money to pay the electricity or to take their child to the hospital; they sell the product and it is the negative effect on the commercial chain of yerba mate. I call this, the small 'anarchic' producer, the one that is not organized" (leader of FEDECOP and ARYA, 2004, cited in Ramirez, 2006: 60), and that "... on the route 14 are not being complied with the prices and I think that is due to the absence of well-organized cooperatives to enforce these prices" (leader of APAM, 2004, cited in Ramirez, 2006: 60).

decentralized agencies located in the provinces or municipalities. They focus in family agriculture.

Most public agencies have outlined RDPs which present their own structure of functioning. All these agencies are working with the family agriculture sector, and frame their activities as “rural development”. As one local public servant stated, “the other sectors just work alone” which mean that the other non-farmer productive sectors (forestry, agro-industrialization of mate, tea and tobacco) are able to simply follow state agricultural policies, very much commanded by the market signs and can afford to pay for their own technical assistance.

It is worth stressing here that one of the main points in the rhetoric of the RDPs was to increase social participation in its implementation, and transparency in the allocation of public aid. Some of the RDPs moved beyond the discourse to achieve real changes with the local societies by engaging them in the design and distribution of resources when participating in their coordination units (Nardi, 2002).

The province of Misiones is characterized by a relatively large number of civil organizations in the context of Argentina (Thompson, 1995). In the field of rural development, at the beginning of the 1990s there were only a few and most of them were connected directly or indirectly with the Catholic Church. However, currently, the picture is very different, and there are rural grass-roots organizations in almost every municipality; many more NGOs have appeared. Schiavoni (2005a: 441) notes that the most important NGOs - those in the northeast of the province - are performing not only a service delivery role but also a political one in regards to family agriculture in the province:

“...in the context of the ‘corporative poverty’ that characterizes the state of the provincial agrarian organizations in the past decade, the NGO of rural development assumes the role of representing the interest of smallholders, performing both a technical and a political role. The political character of their activities is demonstrated in the designation of new subjects of development and in the use of mediation with the purpose to achieve legitimatizing of a peasant culture that resists capitalism”.<sup>141</sup>

The abovementioned author states that these NGOs have a particular geographical location in the province, because the northeast of the province is the *locus* of reproduction of small-scale agriculture. Here, rural development policies promoting social participation and organization have stimulated the growth of new grass-roots organizations in the small-scale agriculture sector. In this sense, and in reference to the northeast of Misiones, where San Pedro is located, Schiavoni *et al.* (2006: 253-254) mention that “since the end of the

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<sup>141</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

1970s, the NGO INDES have carried out activities orientated towards family agriculture, focused on strengthening family food consumption and promoting rural women, in opposition to the state model of conventional modernization".<sup>142</sup>

In Misiones, there are at least two kinds of NGOs: (a) those "traditional" ones, created in the 1970s or 1980s linked to international financiering and working in spaces and issues that the state had been historically marginalizing and (b) those born in the decade of 1990 as a result of the withdrawal of the state from the social sphere and the public management restructuring that introduced outsourcing and civil society partnership.<sup>143</sup> While the first ones might have got through the *de facto* government due to international cooperation, the second ones are highly dependent on state cooperation.

In general, the first kind may be characterized as in confrontation with the state. They are formed by non local urban middle class; professionals that seek to organize the bases and promote civic and political mobilization. The second ones are rural and urban local professionals that work as suppliers of the state. They are "employees" of the public sector and deliver public aid in a top-down fashion to the unorganized poor sector. Working in an NGO means for the staff the possibility to stay in the rural areas and to receive a salary. They may be elements of a new rural middle class in Misiones' countryside.

Regarding social organizations (SOs) the most important and well-known in the countryside are agronomic schools and some churches intervening with project in the farmer sector. The Family Farmers' Schools (*Escuelas de la Familia Agrícola*, EFA) are probably the most important social organizations in Misiones. They are a particular kind of school because they function as a non-profit association of farmers and are managed by a committee of parents. Even though they are private schools, they have public support since the salaries of teachers are paid by the provincial state, as a subsidy to the school. Though they are not considered as religious schools, they teach Catholic guidelines and values to the students. The modality of education is known as *alternancia* (pedagogy of alternance).<sup>144</sup> The EFAs have rural development projects with students' families in many municipalities. Nowadays, there are just over twenty EFAs schools in the province.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>143</sup> In Misiones, there are other kinds of NGOs that may not fit in this typology. They became involved in rural development recently and they are carriers of counter discourses and radical confrontation with the state (e.g. the Union of Rural Workers of Misiones, UTR).

<sup>144</sup> The alternation schools apply the pedagogy of alternance. Children spend 15 days in the school and then go back to the farm, where they are supposed to apply their knowledge and to continue their studies. Then again, after 15 days they return to school where they live.

<sup>145</sup> It is interesting to mention that both the EFAs in Aristóbulo and San Pedro were among the four first to be created in Misiones, since it was started in 1986.

The Catholic Church conducted a rural development project in the northeast of the province from 1990 until recently, when the bishop was removed and the project stopped.

In the Appendix 5, there is a short description of each of public agencies, RDPs, NGOs and SOs that can be found in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.

### *Farmers' organizations*

Since the introduction of agriculture in Misiones farmers organized themselves in order to put land into production and set up agriculture organizations. The immigrants brought from Europe the ideas of cooperatives (*cooperativismo*) as a way to organize the agriculture production. Cooperatives used to deal with collecting, buying and selling primary production but also as a channel of financing for the members. The agrarian society has always been very active both economically and politically.

At the end of the 1970s many of the strong organizations in northeast Argentina felt the force of the military government and many local leaders disappeared, accused of communist activities and disrupting peace, because they publicly demanded state support and expressed their discontent with the introduction of a liberal economic model.<sup>146</sup>

This has been the case for example of the Misiones Agrarian Movement (*Movimiento Agrario Misionero*, MAM). With the restoration of democracy during the second half of the 1980s, the MAM re-organized itself. Currently, it is the only one from that period with activities in rural development, though its strategies and political claims are now very different (Montiel, 2001).

This has left the rural space with a negative experience and speaking of organization was difficult when in the 1990s RDPs were launched promoting “social participation” and the formation of small groups for micro-credit activities.

Several authors (Schiavoni, 2001; Montiel, 2000 and 2001, Fabio, 2005; Neiman *et al.* 2006, among others) have analyzed the current diverse modes of organization in the family agriculture sector, taking into consideration the main problems, claims and mobilizations. In general it can be affirmed that farmers' concerns refer to the decrease in prices of traditional crops (yerba mate, tea and tobacco) and the precarious tenure of land, especially in the northeast.

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<sup>146</sup> A local interviewee refers to the set of laws passed by the facto government during the end of the 1970s to restructure the financing system and allow only banks to administrate credits and loans. Cooperatives lost their chances to administrate their own financial resources.

Since early 2000, the main agrarian demonstrations have taken place around demands for yerba mate price improvements and land regularization. The decade of 1990s has been marked by protests by farmers in Misiones. Schiavoni (2001: 9) notes that “the most important agrarian organizations in the province and major mobilizations carried out in recent years (1991, 1999, 2001) are linked to [those farmers who grow] perennial crops and the *colonos clásicos* [capitalized farmers]”.<sup>147</sup>

Ferreira (2003) shows an interesting synthesis of what has happened in Misiones around the socio-productive concerns and the organization of small and medium-scale farmers. Her study is an historical evaluation of the agrarian protest in Misiones from the beginning of 1990 to 2002. This author mentions that:

“In 2002 (...) the deepening of the crisis caused by the unrestrained application in the country of a neoliberal economic model, pushed many other sectors to the streets to demand a change of political direction (...) The focus of the protest consisted in claiming a better price - or “fair price”- for the yerba mate. They also demanded payments of the forestry subsidies established by the law 25.080, a halt to the process of privatization of the provincial tax collection (...) the elimination of the tax on gross incomes from industrial production and the suspension of the tax deductions” (ibid: n/d).

However, it can also be argued that squatters’ protests and mobilization in the northeast of Misiones have deeply impacted the province and should also count as an important agrarian mobilization.

With the creation of the INYM the mobilization for a better yerba price and the regulation of the production was diluted. In addition, with the creation of the law of settlement and colonization the land issue remains on ‘stand by’ and no new mobilizations or protests have occurred since. Other “mobilizations” however are still taking place, but more quietly and subtle, only observed in the everyday practice of producing and commercializing agriculture.

In the Appendix 5, there is a short description of those farmers’ organizations that are located in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.

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<sup>147</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

## **Chapter V – Understandings of development in Misiones**

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“There is no manual, so to speak, which states: “this is the province that we want and we have to work in this line” (public servant, Posadas, 2008)

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I present an examination of the different discourses and practices around development in Misiones taking into consideration the actors' perspective in both selected municipalities. This consists of scrutinizing the general ideas and arguments that different sectors of the population have (and try to put into action) concerning issues related to development (improvement of quality of life, environmental preservation, economic growth, public investment, attaining people's rights). The analysis focuses as well on the role different provincial actors assigned to the state to motorize those economic and social changes necessary to accomplish it. The market has also been identified as an important element to foster economic growth and agriculture development. The understanding of what kinds of markets are necessary differs among the actors interviewed. It is important to remark that this is not just the debate within the rural development arena, but the general context. In this sense, there is a reference to all the actors in the territory. Those actors constitutive part of the rural development arena, their discourses and practices in regards to the territorial dynamics under study will be treated in the coming chapters.

There are different productions and economic sectors in Misiones that are confronting and cooperating with each other to put forward their interests and projects: (a) native forest conservation, (b) implanted forest with exotic species, (c) industrial agriculture (tobacco, yerba mate, tea) and (d) food production (horticulture, small-scale poultry and cattle, grain). There a diverse set of actors involved (conservationists, native communities, forestry companies, logging companies, small-scale farmers, NGOs, social organizations, etc.) in motorizing the processes of production/conservation and organizing their institutional setup.

When supporting a particular use of land or promoting a particular crop by means of concrete activities, actors activate diverse territorial dynamics and changes. Behind these dynamics there are always conflicts, since political and economical changes bring about changes in the control over resources, in its uses and management. It might seem that some visions and policies about development are contradictory and cannot exist or be realized simultaneously in space and time.

The society in Misiones is currently facing the dilemma of how to produce agricultural goods and timber and at the same time preserve biodiversity (soils,

native forest and fauna). This could also be put as the following question: should it be family agriculture or large-scale forestry the motor of the provincial economy? The concomitant models and policies that could sustain them are founded on diverse conceptions of natural resources, and the role of the state and the market. All in all, there is evidence that the social organization of production and growth that Misiones has developed during different periods of time should change and unite around common development and welfare goals that could benefit the whole society.<sup>148</sup>

Graphics 1 and 2 below show the main actors and their central concerns around production and natural resources (land and trees) in the selected municipalities. It illustrates the actors, their linkages - either conflict or cooperation - in each municipality and territories under study. Note that here the focus is on: (a) land use, (b) land tenancy, (c) interests in conflict and cooperation.<sup>149</sup>

In the following parts of the chapter I explain how actors understand development, their ideas and practices about agriculture production, the use of land, the role of the state and market and the conflicts and cooperation all these entail. The first section examines the discussion around the centrality of agriculture, forestry and native forest conservation for the organization of the productive sectors in the municipalities. In the second section and in order to show the relations of cooperation and confrontation in promoting development, a deeper analysis on actors is undertaken. Here it is exposed their different understandings of natural resources (land and forest in particular) and the role actors assign to them in the discussion about development. The third section presents the importance the actors attribute to the state in the process of putting under production and preserving natural resources and resolving conflicts between actors and the role of the market in development and economic growth. In the final section, by way of a conclusion, some of the implications about development, natural resources access and state intervention are discussed in terms of territorial dynamics.

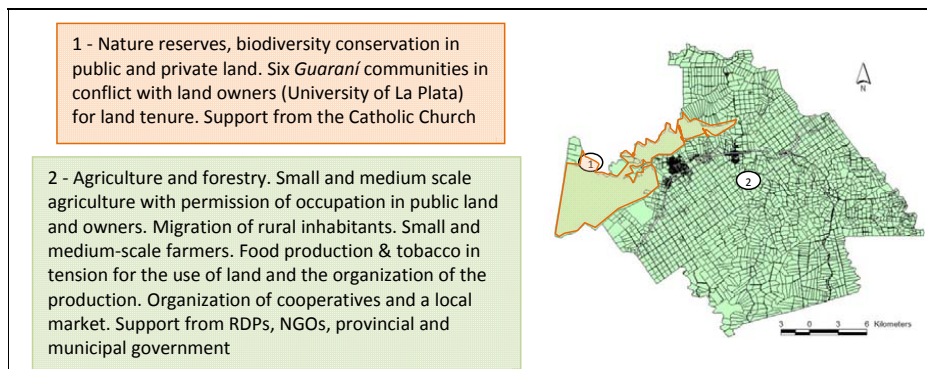
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<sup>148</sup> In this regard the governor of Misiones mentions that “to produce food, to develop our traditional agriculture, to strengthen our forestry profile and to develop tourism require a perfect harmony with the environment. That is why land use [*ordenamiento territorial*] policies are central in our administration, to identify -through productive and environmental criteria- the use of our soils, the areas that should be preserved and above all the urban development of cities are essential for the quality of life of the *misioneros* [provincial inhabitants]” (Governor of Misiones, 2009: 10).

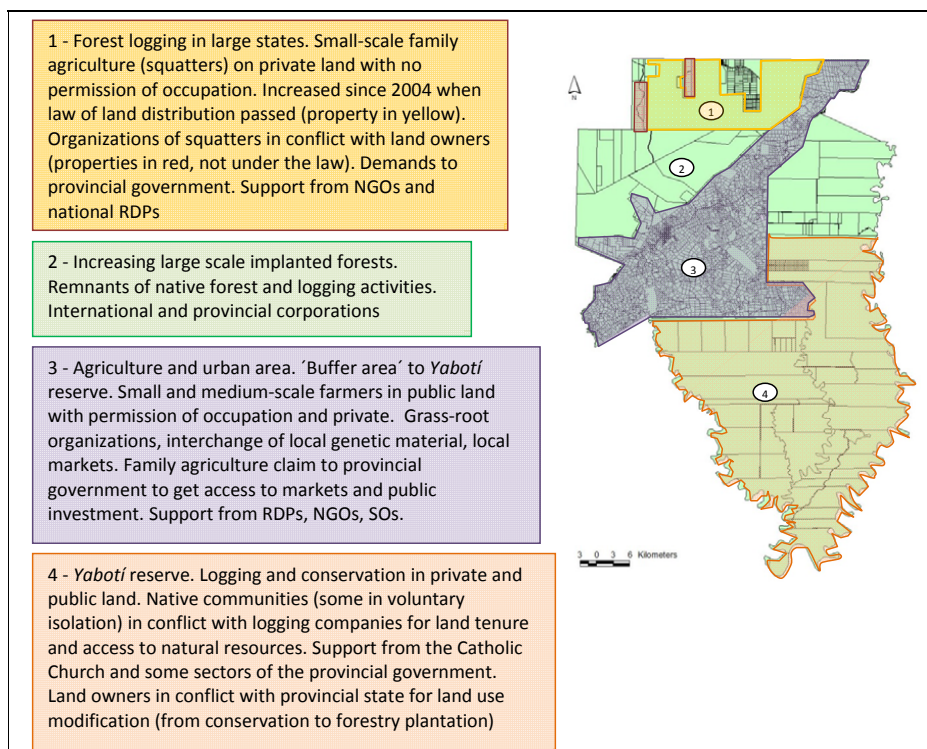
<sup>149</sup> Since in Misiones agriculture is highly diversified and it is mainly performed by families, the term ‘agriculture’ also implies small-scale forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries.



Graphic 1: Municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle, Misiones (Argentina): conflict and cooperation in rural development strategies



Graphic 2: Municipality of San Pedro, Misiones (Argentina): conflict and cooperation in rural development strategies



## Agriculture, forestry or native forest conservation?

In Aristóbulo del Valle, land has already been distributed, and many parcels have been abandoned and re-sold to new actors (in most cases, urban dwellers investing in cattle production or forestry). Here, in rural areas, there is no pressure due to land scarcity. Native forest preservation is mainly restricted to natural parks. The main concerns in the farming sector are how to increase productivity, improve soil quality and crop management and resuscitate the family agriculture sector so that farmers can get good prices for their crops and improve their food security. Markets and the presence of a local industrial sector seem not to be an issue of concern for those preoccupied with rural development and the farmers' sector.

However, issues related to improving agriculture also involve channels of commercialization or access to markets. With a more dense economic structure and land occupation, farmers in this municipalities understand that they need to explore the advantages of "being close" to the main cities.<sup>150</sup> Hence, the provincial and national state here are promoting a change in agriculture organization of the production (introduction of new crops and natural resource management: soil and water conservation, crop rotation, intercropping, forest integration, among others) as it is believed that this will improve farmers' incomes. Farmers' organizations though, seem to be more concerned with crop prices, illustrated in comments such as, "if the state would guarantee the already agreed price of yerba, there would be no need for the public sector to launch that many rural development programmes".<sup>151</sup>

In the northeast of Misiones, large fragments of native forest remain in large-scale properties but also on small farmers' parcels of land. Here the symbiosis between a new kind of agriculture and natural resource preservation (preservation of native forest, soil, water, etc.) seems to be more obvious. However, infrastructure (in roads, telecommunications, and education and health system) is very precarious and squatting land is a major problem for people without access to public services.

The concerns in San Pedro - very much a territory under construction - are not centred on bad performance of production *per se*, but on markets and access to public services. They are "far away from everywhere" or "in the middle of nowhere" and "there *la ley the la selva* (the law of the jungle) reigns". This is

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<sup>150</sup> Additional and equally important is the political support from the provincial government to the municipality one. Since the current governor (2008-2011) is from the municipality of Aristóbulo public investment is expected; also because both -provincial and local governments- share the same party platform.

<sup>151</sup> Farmer, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008.

how San Pedro is depicted or imagined by other *misioneros* (provincial inhabitants).

A local interviewee commented upon the development of the private industrial sector here and the generation of local revenue. He believes that this can explain local poverty. In general, he blames the lack of development models or strategies designed by local governments.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, the processes of decentralization gave municipalities a central role in fostering welfare. However, the territory of San Pedro has always been considered an area of exploitation and not a place for productive investment. Logging activities in the native forest have brought little settlement, and mainly in the town of San Pedro. There are a few saw mills here; they are not specialized in making added value wood products, but only function to make it ready to leave the municipality.

The expansion of agriculture into this area has meant the settlement of people and the introduction of another kind of relation between the population and the land. Recent transformations in land use (from logging to agriculture) are reflected in other aspects such as the change “from an extractivist culture to a productive one”.<sup>153</sup>

The dispute over natural resources is more evident in this part of the province, where there is a clash between agricultural expansion, selective logging, forest conservation and the native community’s claim to their territories. The main sources of conflict are those related to land and forest use. The debate in San Pedro can be framed in the following questions: land for agriculture, for forestry or for native forest conservation? Should those areas “suitable” for settlement be reconverted? Who will benefit from agriculture (farmers), large-scale implanted forests (companies) or native forest conservation (native communities/future generations/“the world”)?

In San Pedro, where poverty is very high, native forest conservation is considered by some actors to be in conflict with the economic growth and wellbeing. It is understood as taking land available for agriculture or forestry and rendering it valueless in the short and medium term. Those actors that question conservation are mainly owners of properties in Yabotí reserve and part of the local urban middle-class: professionals, teachers, businessmen. The

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<sup>152</sup> He mentions that “the development of the private sector here in San Pedro is very precarious. It does not generate employment or incomes, and this affects the quality of life of people. I think it is also linked to the role of... the municipal governments, which never had a model of development” (local public servant, San Pedro, 2004).

<sup>153</sup> This can be clearly observed in the following statement by a local interviewee: “Most of the revenue generated here in the town goes out. The main problem of San Pedro is a cultural one. I believe that San Pedro is built up on an extractive culture; it was always thought to extract things from San Pedro and send them outwards. That conditioned the growth of San Pedro, and we are paying for that today” (local public servant, San Pedro, 2004).

comments below from local interviewees are good examples of the broad coherence of this opinion, because they come from very dissimilar actors' perspectives and interests:

"It is weird that it's precisely the town which is most dilapidated in terms of extraction of resources, a town with the highest level of poverty in the country I believe, suffering under huge misery, is the one that provides the world with a biosphere reserve... Then sometimes one does not understand" (school teacher, San Pedro, 2008).

"If they want conservation, there should be some kind of subsidy. Otherwise, this is promoting poverty in a department like San Pedro [which is already very poor]. I'm talking to you in the name of the society as a whole. Maybe in 20 years this will bring about welfare, but today this brings poverty" (land owner in Yabotí reserve, San Pedro, 2008).<sup>154</sup>

The conservation policies, indeed, are basically fostered from the Ministry of Ecology in Posadas, the capital city. They are observed by the abovementioned local actors as representing the interests of the provincial, national and even the international urban inhabitants, and disregarding the locals' wellbeing. Consequently, according to many local actors, the Yabotí reserve limits the possibilities for "development":

"These are issues that limit the development of the municipality of San Pedro, which other towns in the province of Misiones did not have... Our development will not be based on the expansion of the agriculture frontier but on other alternatives; probably it will be tourism, probably the production of native or implanted wood" (school teacher, San Pedro, 2008).

### *Who promotes what, where and why? Conflicts about "development"*

I present here the different understandings that each of the local actors has about development and how they seek to promote processes towards people's wellbeing. Is forest an impediment for everybody? Who promotes agriculture, who forestry and who promotes forest conservation? Where they seek to do so and why? A synopsis table about each kind of actor and what, where and why they promote as conducting towards 'development' can be found in table 1.

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<sup>154</sup> Also: "San Pedro, in particular with the biosphere reserve, has a huge surface [under preservation]. However the benefit of all this does not reach the people. It remains in the framework of laws and public servants, and there it ends. People remain as poor as before, with more restrictions for the use of resources" (director, DDR, San Pedro, 2004).

Table 1: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Actors and the activities they promote for rural development, where and the arguments to support them. 2003-2009

Promotes Who	What	Where	Why
Provincial government	Forestry	farming areas, soil deteriorated abandon mix use land	competitive advantages: high rate of growth and high profitability, to put deteriorated soil under production
	Tobacco (not actively promoted)		public funding: tax resources through the FET
	Cattle raising	farming areas	"food sovereignty", need to supply the provincial market, put under production deteriorated agriculture land
	Food production	farming areas	"food sovereignty": supply the provincial market with meat, grain, horticulture
	Native conservation	remaining of native forest	landscape resource, biodiversity, future source of local income through international agreements (carbon sequestration)
Local government: municipalities	Farmers' organization Technology transfer	farming areas	to receive assistance from the provincial programmes (cattle, honey and fish production)
National government	Forestry	farming areas, abandon mix use lands	competitive advantages: high profitability due to high rate of growth
	Food security	farming areas, peri-urban areas in the countryside	to supply the provincial market and secure food intake in rural areas
	Technology transfer	farming areas	to change agronomic practices, find new organizational structures, access markets, create new channels of commercialization
	Farmers' organization	farming areas	To access micro-credits, organize family agriculture, promote their participation in policy making
Rural development NGOs	Food production		To secure food, food intake diversification, reproduction of local genetic material
	Farmers' organization	farming areas, rural towns	To access land, markets and micro-credits (public sources)
	Technology transfer		To extent adapted technologies, crop diversification & specialization, access new markets
Social organizations	Rural dwellers access to land and tenure, food security	farming areas, native's communities territories	social care, welfare, social justice, family nutrition
Farmers' organizations	Food production	in new settlements	Income diversification, access new markets (local consumption of local produce)
	Alternatives to tobacco or yerba	farming areas, deteriorated soils	Increase and sustain incomes, put under production available land
	Genetic material interchange and soil conservation	farming areas, deteriorated soils	to cut down on inputs (seeds, chemicals), preserve soil to increase productivity
	Land access and tenure	large properties without productive use	To guarantee access to public services and resources. Land for production family reproduction

Continues from previous page

Promotes Who	What	Where	Why
<i>Madereros</i> (logging companies)	Continue logging native forest	in San Pedro and areas with native forest	Individual profits and local in a lesser extent
	Convert native forest into implanted forest		forestry is good for the local economies because they create new jobs and diversify local incomes
Tobacco and yerba mate companies	Industrial crops	farming areas	business in international and domestic markets
Environmental NGOs, public agencies	Forest conservation	Areas with native forest where natives live	To preserve biodiversity <i>per se</i>
	Natives' rights to land tenure		To comply with national constitution and international agreements on natives' rights to their territories
Native communities	Natives' rights to land tenure	natives' territories	to have total control of the territories they occupy

Source: author's elaboration.

The economic policies created during the 1990s by the provincial government sought to change the province's economical and productive profile from agriculture to forestry (for timber and pulp production) and services (tourism, energy). Within the context of the national agriculture crisis in 2008, the new provincial government has tried to outline policies more in line with food production and food sovereignty.

Misiones' traditional agriculture is industrial (non food crops produced with technological packages that resembles the industrial process of production). However, very recently the discourse from the national government about food sovereignty was embraced. This was expressed by the governor's "dream to achieve food sovereignty for the people of Misiones"<sup>155</sup> and in his comments about outlining strategies towards the creation of a food sector to supply the provincial market:

"I want to define as strategic lines and priorities for our administration the development of policies to transform Misiones into a real pole of food production. Simply remembering that most of the meat, fruits, vegetables, dairy products and other foods consumed by us *misioneros* are produced in other provinces, is enough to remind us that we are facing a great challenge and opportunity" (Governor of Misiones, 2008: 4).<sup>156</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Governor of Misiones (2009: 2). Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>156</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author. This is also observed by a public servant interviewed: "[We have the following] political slogan... 'Misiones: tourism and forestry'. But now there is a new government that wants to foster the production of food. Forestry... pine cannot be eaten. Tourism may generate economic resources, but even with all the gold in the world if you do not have food here... The idea is that we start to produce food, so that if there is a blockage in the national road

Nevertheless and concurrently, the provincial state is supporting the expansion of the forestry sector (primary and secondary production) and native forest conservation. The aim of getting one million hectares under preservation (Closs, 2009) and one million heads of cattle (Rovira, 2006) within a total territory of about 3 million hectares has met with surprise and scepticism from many. Indeed, local interviewees in Misiones consider that a “three-storey province is needed in order to succeed” or that “it will be necessary to invade Brazil for that to be feasible”. The desire to foster agricultural diversification is illustrated well in the following comments by the governor of Misiones when he calls for producing food without leaving behind the traditional industrial crops of the province:

“We understood that we should produce in each centimetre squared of the farm in Misiones; we comprehended that besides tea, yerba mate and tobacco, we can produce fruits, vegetables, marmalades, meats; in sum that we should transform this reality of Misiones’ small farms and families living and wishing to continue living in the farms into an opportunity” (governor of Misiones, 2009: 3).

The provincial state claims are based on their understanding that forestry and cattle can be produced simultaneously (same space and time) and are a perfect component in the family farm scheme: “the development of agro-forestry systems continues to be of strategic interest for the provincial production chain, since it is in these schemes that the coexistence of forestry and cattle development is showing highly satisfactory results” (Governor of Misiones, 2009: 10).

However, the rhetoric about food production from the provincial government should be contrasted with its concrete activities. Indeed, public resources designated to achieve such a goal are scarce. Even though there are some provincial plans to subsidise credits to cattle or food production, technical assistance or access to information are not included. According to local interviewees this kind of production/investment is more suitable for wealthy farmers or urban dwellers looking for alternative investments in rural areas.

Certainly, some sectors of the provincial state with expertise in natural resource management question the new governments’ agro-forestry policy. They maintain that it may work only for few farmers. Small-scale farmers do not have the means to invest in long term forestry or cattle production while large-scale forest plantations commanded by corporations are not interested in cattle production. In reference to the latter, a public servant mentions that:

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14 due to an agriculture strike, we can continue being supplied” (public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).

“They are large *latifundios* [huge parcels of land]. If you plant pine, you produce pine. And nobody lives underneath. The option would be to have an agro-forestry system, but these companies need to produce. They will not make an agro-forestry system, not even if they were crazy! They are not interested in cows” (public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).

The idea of promoting implanted forest (mainly pine) by the provincial and national state met with resistance from different actors involved in the family agriculture sector (RDPs from the national state, local NGOs, social organizations and some farmers’ organizations). This will be treated in the following chapters, particularly in chapter VI on the discourses and practices around agroecology. Nevertheless, some general aspects about the discourse and practices are given here.

Some of those actors intervening with small landholders and poor rural families are trying to generate new activities and strategies in terms of food production and agroecological practices. A school teacher mentions that there are tensions generated around their visions of agriculture and development and those of the large-scale forestry sector:

“We have another issue against us. This group of large-scale producers, whether it is pine or eucalyptus production, generates large extensions of this kind of crops. Since they use genetic modification, they have a really fast growing in time. These people [small-holders] compare: “If I use agro toxics and plant genetically modified crops, I obtain a greater productivity than using the methods that the school is requesting”. They compare, and we realize that this debate is good, but there are many actors that have ideas development that are different to the one we have. And there is the conflict and there is the tension” (school teacher, San Pedro, 2008).

Tensions between food production and traditional industrial agriculture seem to be more evident in Aristóbulo del Valle than in San Pedro. Even though problems linked to tobacco growing are known by most of small-scale farmers in both municipalities, it is in Aristóbulo where soil degradation and pollution have triggered rising interest in alternatives to this crop. Alternatives are also important due to the low prices in yerba mate and the diminishing incomes in farms. Since yerba is a perennial crop, tobacco is easier to replace.

Those actors that are promoting agriculture with an environmental component do so with the idea that soils in subtropical environments and particularly red soils are very fragile and therefore need particular techniques in order to sustain agriculture, for example, rotating crops, using perennial crops, crop covers, terracing, and intercropping, among others.

In general, they do not promote tobacco. Not only because it is polluting and time consuming but also because farmers are subordinated in the tobacco value



chain. Moreover, they understand that industrial agriculture in the province is not as profitable as it used to be. The need to secure food (both for rural and urban populations) and the highly deteriorated environmental conditions could also explain their stance.

The promotion of implanted trees (exotic species) though seems to be more controversial. Among those concern with the environment and family agriculture there is one point of discord. This is related to the use of chemicals and the introduction of pine (or other exotic tree) in farmers' farms. Those actors, mainly NGOs, consider that pine plantation is highly polluting due to its demand of chemicals and the acidification of soils. They claim that once pine trees are planted everything dies underneath and once the pines are gone, nothing grows back because the needles are so acidic.

The tension between agriculture and large-scale forestry is observed however by many local actors.<sup>157</sup> A farmer who is concerned about agricultural sustainability and natural resource management mentions that large-scale forestry of pine is counterproductive for agriculture and other natural processes:

“The large [companies]... *Alto Paraná* is owner of almost a third of the province and it is only pine. It is only pine. And that is the end - due to the damage on the soil - that is the end of human beings. That is the end of animals, the end of fishes, bees, everything ends... Here a bee cannot take pollen from flowers to make honey. Nobody goes to the monoculture plantation because of that. No animal can eat there. Nobody eats that thing, only the ants. Once this is implanted here, everything ends” (farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

On the other hand, despite the intentions of the provincial government to foster food production, it is difficult for food crops to compete with tobacco. For many, the promotion of food crops works properly as a way to diversify farm incomes and reduce risks but not as a way to convert their farms into food production. Currently, farmers growing tobacco are part of an important production chain which provides them with a secure market (*mercado asegurado*) in which they are certain they can trade their primary produce. Therefore, facing the challenges of commercializing new crops, in particular in areas far from cities and towns, farmers affirm their wishes to phase out tobacco but only with market crops that can be sold.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>157</sup> In illustration 6, Appendix 4, can be observed how agriculture and forestry is depicted by some RDPs, NGOs and SOs in Misiones in the welfare/development debate.

<sup>158</sup> A farmer from north San Pedro states that it would be good “to change the [crop] but there should be the same profitability as tobacco. [We should] not grow something that afterwards we can't sell; because tobacco one can sell to anybody” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

At the time of this study, there was no provincial strategy to successfully convert family farms to food production. The subsidies to encourage farmers to reorient their production are not enough to enable them to access new markets or create new value chains. Besides, food crops compete for land and public resources with plantations. There is inadequate and insufficient “space” in the farms to simultaneously produce timber, tobacco, yerba, horticulture and cattle.

In addition, tobacco production brings a great deal of revenue to the province. A special tax on cigarettes collected by the national government is sent to Misiones every year and is an important source of public resources for the provincial budget. Some of the public servants interviewed have stated that as part of their budget, they cannot “go against” tobacco production: “part of our budget comes from the FET [Tobacco Special Fund], but nobody can destroy that; we cannot destroy that,” (public servant, Ministry of Ecology (Department of Land), Posadas, 2009).<sup>159</sup>

In this context, the question posed by actors involved in family agriculture is how to create the conditions to stabilize family agriculture, to preserve soil conditions in order to make agriculture more sustainable, to incorporate native forest in livelihood strategies and not to burn it, and to encourage people in the region to stay instead of migrate, to “root them” to land, by creating job opportunities also in the rural areas? On the other side, farmers claim they “right to rural space” and the support of the state not to abandon the land they occupy.<sup>160</sup>

Diverse economic actors and productive sectors propose and support different models of development in San Pedro, area of agricultural expansion, native forest conservation and selective logging. The high value of land here is fuelling conflict among actors for different reasons: (a) the higher productivity of soil compared to other areas of the province, (b) the presence of valuable timber in native forest, and (c) the last remains of unoccupied land in Misiones.

In this municipality, pressures over land and native forest are triggered by different actors. The tension over the use of land for conservation or forestry is observed in the territory of the Yabotí reserve. Recently, some of the land owners in this reserve declared their wish to convert their land into large-scale

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<sup>159</sup> A land owner whose land is occupied by families states the following: “I believe that tobacco is a very large source of income for the state, but it is necessary to stop, to teach them, educate them to plant pine, to plant... something else,” (land owner in San Pedro with squatted land, Eldorado, 2008). This is related to the idea of many farmers about the need to plant other crops than tobacco, but the problems when facing markets and/or commercialization.

<sup>160</sup> This issue will be discussed with greater detail in the following chapters.

pine plantation. The price of timber and state's support for forestry motivated this demand.<sup>161</sup>

Their claim met resistance from a recently created department in the provincial Ministry of Ecology (AMIRBY).<sup>162</sup> This department began to have stronger control over the area and created a set of different strategies for native forest management to be followed by the *madereros* (logging companies).<sup>163</sup> Land owners exploiting the forest and other sectors of the local population were not sympathetic to this. In order to reconcile the interests of different actors on the forest, a board was created to jointly handle the reserve's management.

Deforestation not only clashes with the concerns of environmental NGOs and the Ministry of Ecology of the province. It also collides with the interests of native communities which live in and depend on the forest.<sup>164</sup> In this sense, there is an important cooperation between these two kinds of actors (NGOs and Ministry of Ecology) for the preservation of native forest. Guaraní communities are considered to make use of the forest in a sustainable way because "they know how to regulate their hunting and gathering since they have been doing so for hundreds years without altering the forest".<sup>165</sup>

Gradually, with increasing pressure for timber exploitation and appreciating land value, a territorial conflict between *madereros* and native communities sprung up. The companies that hold land tenure in the territories of the Guaraní do not wish to pass the property rights to them.<sup>166</sup> However, this is not the only main concern for the native communities. The activities *madereros* perform alter their environment and modify their life styles. Large-scale forestry close to their

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<sup>161</sup> The owners had not been influenced until recently by the restrictions the reserve is subject to in terms of land use. Since 1993 when the reserve was created, they have continued their logging activities "as usual", with tax reductions and little control from the Ministry of Ecology. They were selectively taking timber, looking for the most precious woods. They were not intending to convert their farms.

<sup>162</sup> The Department of Integrated Management of the Reserve of Biosphere Yabotí (*Área de Manejo Integrado de la Reserva de Biósfera Yabotí*, AMIRBY).

<sup>163</sup> In Misiones, the term *madereros* refers to those companies (anonymous societies or family run) that by means of concessions from the land owners and permission from the provincial state, exploit the forested land. Some *madereros* are owners of the land whose forest cover they exploit.

<sup>164</sup> Some of the native communities in the Yabotí reserve live in private land that does not belong to them.

<sup>165</sup> A provincial interviewee mentioned that "the first ones bringing attention to this were the aborigines because [big forestry companies] went all the way to their backyards ... with the machines. This started a struggle by different environmental and human rights institutions to demand an end to deforestation" (volunteer, EMIIPA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

<sup>166</sup> Something that the national and provincial state will have to solve sooner or later, since native communities are considered by the National Constitution as pre-existing the national state and therefore with the right to communal tenure of the lands they occupy.

territories is also depleting and polluting their water sources.<sup>167</sup> According to some social organizations the state always favours the companies, the land holders and almost never the native communities:

“The issue is that land comes into the picture here in Misiones. The native forest, more than the land itself, has a high economic value and [native communities] compete with the logging companies and regrettably the government favours the logging companies or whatever kind of company” (volunteer, EMiPA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).<sup>168</sup>

In Aristóbulo this conflict does not occur. However, here conflicts are present among the six native communities that live and make use of the forest and a national academic institution (the University of La Plata) which holds the land tenure.

Even if it might seem paradoxical, re-forestation is understood by some local actors in San Pedro necessary to preserve native forest. The actors interested in logging activities consider that plantations of fast growing species is highly important in order not to over exploit and push forward logging into the last remnants of native forest. These actors propose restructuring logging activities and changing preservation policies by increasing tree plantation by means of forest clearing.

Some of the logging companies argue that conservation is not good for development since it does not bring about economic growth. According to some of them, implanted forests on the other hand could do so by creating new jobs opportunities in the municipality. It would also be positive because it would allow *madereros* not to overexploit the native forest in search of higher profitability. This is expressed in the following comment by a land owner in Yabotí reserve doing logging activities: “it’s through reforestation that we can generate jobs and welfare and combat indigence; and also stop overexploiting the native forest” (land owner in the Yabotí reserve, San Pedro, 2008).<sup>169</sup>

The development model that supports this claim is based on an understanding that large-scale plantation creates new jobs opportunities and an expansion in the labour market in which rural families and urban dwellers could be inserted, if the timber would be locally processed.

It is not only forestry but also agriculture which is set against this model of preservation promoted by conservationist NGOs and the Ministry of Ecology in

<sup>167</sup> The main source of water in the territory of the Guavirá Poty community in the municipality of San Pedro is diminishing due to large-scale pine forestry next to it. An analysis by the University of Misiones has further shown that water is polluted by the agro-chemicals used in the plantation.

<sup>168</sup> The *Misiones Group of Natives’ Pastoral* (*Equipo Misiones de Pastoral Aborigen*, EMiPA).

<sup>169</sup> It is interesting to observe that the interviewee is aware of the overexploitation he is doing of the native forest.

this area of the province. The expansion of agriculture has been greatly encouraged by the opportunities which tobacco growing provides. In the last thirty years, the ‘boom’ of Burley tobacco commanded by international corporations linked under contract with small agriculture holders, fuelled the expansion of the agricultural frontier over areas of native forest in public and private land.<sup>170</sup>

Tobacco companies, however, state that it is not only due to this crop that farmers *desmontan* (deforest and clear the land) and move to new areas. They do so to grow other crops and to perform subsistence agriculture:

“There is a lot of deforestation inside the province due to other activities than tobacco cultivation. Always they blame it on tobacco, but here [there is also] yerba, tea and cattle; they clear the forest to ranch cattle. Then no, it is not only the tobacco. I would say that currently, tobacco is forty percent, the rest is used to plant other things, yerba, tea and cattle” (tobacco extensionist, Tabacos Norte S.A., Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

The problem of rural families squatting on private properties in San Pedro is related to the growing demand for land for subsistence and market agriculture. This is also an argument used by local land owners in Yabotí to put under production areas within the reserve. They sustain that if they are not allowed to make forest plantation, their lands will soon or later be squatted by farmers. A local *maderero* states that land illegal occupation for agriculture in the reserve will be a greater problem and conflict to solve, and therefore it might be useful not to follow the laws and regulations:

“If I have to follow the law, this native forest is finished. They [farmers] will occupy it. Then, I will do it the other way around. I will induce a settlement and not allow them to come and illegally occupy it. Else, I will have to be with the police, as I saw how this already happened here” (land owner in Yabotí reserve, San Pedro, 2008).

The comment refers to the tense situation in northern San Pedro due to the occupation of private land during periods of no logging activities. Since these lands were not actively being used by the owners, they were gradually squatted by rural families.<sup>171</sup> The comment therefore may be referring to two things. On the one hand, the belief that some of the land owners in Yabotí should sell their parcels of land to rural families or on the other hand that - through land

<sup>170</sup> In San Pedro, this can be observed in (a) the occupation since early 1980 by farmers from different areas of the province in private properties such as the case of the state Colonizadora Misionera and (b) the intention in 2007 to occupy private land in the Yabotí reserve by farmers from a neighbouring settlement Colonia Primavera. See also Schiavoni (1998).

<sup>171</sup> In Spanish, to occupy (*ocupar*) may also mean to use (*usar*). E.g. “they were not occupying the land, they were not using it” (*ellos no estaban ocupando la tierra, no la estaban usando*).

squatting - owners are expecting to get their properties expropriated and thus make business at the expense of the state.

The dynamics of illegal land occupation bring about social and environmental degradation which is gradually increasing in areas of native forest. Land squatting is a characteristic of the north of the municipality and is a major source of conflict between the state, land owners, rural families, rural development NGOs, social organizations, and tobacco companies. These areas remain “underdeveloped” because their status is not recognized and there is therefore precarious access to schools, hospitals, electricity, etc.<sup>172</sup>

The need to access land and incomes pushes farmers to look for new lands or put more land under production by clearing it. In their *rozados* (areas of cleared land) families grow market and subsistence crops. In many cases, the removed timber that is not burnt is sold to *madereros* and serves as a first step in a process of capitalization. Thus environmental degradation in this particular area of the province needs to be understood in the context of social inequality and rural poverty.<sup>173</sup>

This makes the conflict over access to land and forest by farmers and *madereros* a complex and difficult situation to solve. In additions, there is a sort of middlemen that are benefiting from rural families’ need for land: those in the business of *mejoras* (land improvements) on private properties.<sup>174</sup>

The disputes over natural resources are however not only due to the access to and tenure of land and native forest. Compounding the issue is increasing water scarcity. Large companies in the forestry sector acquired land in San Pedro for large-scale forest plantations (*macizos*). The clearest example is the Chilean company, Alto Paraná, which holds around 30,000 hectares in this municipality. This has produced conflict over water, both for its pollution and the decrease in its availability to neighbouring farmers and native communities.

## Actors’ perceptions on natural resources (land and native forest)

Conflicts or tensions are not only evident among those social or economic sectors that benefit from certain land use (large-scale forestry or small-scale

<sup>172</sup> In the Yaboti reserve and surrounding areas this “underdevelopment” (e.g. lack of roads) is positive for some conservationist actors (like AMIRBY) because it means that the forest will be protected.

<sup>173</sup> A provincial public servant refers to this as follows: “Among those conflictive processes of land occupation it is necessary to clearly distinguish those processes that are historical... intrusion to get timber, to plant tobacco and, a short time later, explore new areas. This ends up in a process, not only of social degradation but also obviously a process of environmental degradation. I believe that environmental degradation is the result of social degradation” (public servant, Land department, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2009).

<sup>174</sup> This is discussed in Appendix 6.

family agriculture) or the incorporation of specific agronomical technologies. The conflicts and contradictions are also manifest in the very understanding and conceptualization that these sectors have about nature/environment/natural resources.

Behind these “sets of ideas” there are different conceptualizations about development, nature and resources. Such ideas reveal the actors’ aspirations or aims for a distinctive organization of the production/conservation of those resources and the process of development itself.

As brief way to introduce this section, the following table presents a synopsis on each actor and their understanding of land and forest.

Table 2: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Actors’ perceptions on land and forest

Natural resources Actors	Land	Forest
Provincial government	farmers’ means of production, a value of change	picturesque resource for contemplation and tourism, impediment for agriculture, natural resource, available for exploitation
Local government (municipalities)	farmers’ means of production	picturesque resource for contemplation and tourism, allows sustainable agriculture, natural resource, available for exploitation
National government (mainly RDPs)	farmers’ means of production	part of the ecological system which allows sustainable agriculture
Rural development NGOs	farmers’ means of production, a collective (state) asset, value of use and not change	source of biodiversity, part of the ecological system which allows sustainable agriculture
Farmers’ organizations	means of production, site of native forest, access to public resources and space for the reproduction of the family and socialization	impediment for agriculture, first step in a process of capitalization, allows sustainable agriculture
Social organizations (particularly Catholic Church)	people’s right, a good from God, not a value of change, a collective (state) asset	source of biodiversity
<i>Madereros</i> (logging companies)	source of timber, the possibility of implanted forest, warranty to access private financing, an individual asset	natural resource, available for exploitation
Environmental NGOs and public agencies	-	source of biodiversity
Native communities	belongs to everybody, not private and individual, it is not a space to settle	space of community (re)production and identity

Source: Author’s elaboration with data collected in the province 2007-2009 and Schiavoni (2008).

## Land

The evidence shows that in Misiones each actor has a very different understanding about the function of land in the process of creating welfare or wellbeing in rural areas. Distinctions can be seen between geographical areas where there are environmental restrictions (close to Yabotí reserve), land squatted (north San Pedro) or public land occupied by farmers with official permission (many areas in San Pedro and Aristóbulo where there is not private property).

The provincial government currently considers land as an important asset to maintain a balance in the distribution of the population between the urban and rural areas. In this sense, from the new government there is a change in the discourse towards an inclusion of rural families in the provincial economy and in the creation of welfare. Nevertheless, it is difficult to clearly identify the provincial state position towards land, and different departments and ministries have diverse range of understandings about it.<sup>175</sup>

For those rural development NGOs and social organizations such as churches and schools, land is people's rights and their space of (re)production. When considering the processes of land concentration by economic corporations, they claim the need to allow families access land and the need to create policies to sustain their living in the countryside.

For rural families land means different things: (a) it is a means of production; (b) it is the container of native forest, an asset in itself for those poor families with no capital; (c) its tenure brings access to public resources such as micro-credits, farm infrastructure grants, so forth and (d) it is a space for the reproduction of the family and socialization and recreation.

For some of the *madereros* - those who owns the land they exploit - it is a source of income (timber) and particularly now income diversification by means of forest plantation. However, it is important collateral to access private financing as well.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Sometimes this seems to be contradictory. For example, some departments of the Ministry of Ecology may consider land scarcity as a problem due to demographic pressure and the loss of biodiversity that agriculture causes. For some sectors of the Ministry of Agriculture land offers the possibility of agricultural development. The introduction of genetically modified seeds has been promoted by the provincial state and at the same time they have encouraged the growth of local seeds in order to create a more independent farmer sector, less polluting and more in tune with biodiversity conservation. The latter activity is promoted by other departments of the same Ministry of Agriculture.

<sup>176</sup> This last issue - access to bank credit - has not come out in the interviews, however it has been observed by Schiavoni (2008: 155) who explains that "[t]he relation between *madereros* and farmers shows another important function of land in the Northeast of the province, which is its use as collateral to get credit (mortgage banking). In this way, one of the squatted properties in the area of study...



The native communities of Misiones, the Guaraní, have a completely different notion of land in comparison to farmers. They do not “privatize” land, for them, land is collective and not subject to appropriation.

The paragraphs below are the reflections from actors with different ways of understanding the function of land for ‘development’:

“We adhere to the principle that land belongs to those who work it. We do not accept the inviolability of private property. We believe that land is not just another economic resource, but is also - as is water, forest and so on - part of nature and it is humankind’s heritage that should benefit human beings and the world as a whole. Therefore, we do not adhere that it were subject of market laws and private property” (staff member, NGO, Posadas, 2008).

The above quotation, by a member of a provincial NGO, shows the view of local actors for whom “the land belongs to those that work it”, or put it under production.<sup>177</sup> For the sake of farmers’ wellbeing, these actors consider that in a process of expropriation and redistribution, land should be held by the state and given away to people with permission of occupation. Some actors believe that with very limited support from the state to encourage rural welfare or support agriculture; small farmers will end up selling the land to third parties. This would ultimately lead to a process of land concentration in few hands and again to a problem of access to land.

The second reference, below, expresses the defence of private property (land in this case) which in the medium and long term would favour the inflow of capital and generate greater economic dynamism in the forestry sector. Therefore, for these actors, land and its tenure are necessary to secure development, via the entrance of corporations and their investments:

“Let’s be honest, regardless of whether they are or are not poor, if it is private property it is private property... in Misiones the right to private property is lost. If private property is respected by the Constitution... how can it be that intruders are taking over my land and nobody does anything? Who will come to invest here, if nobody does anything for the land issue?” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

This is the claim, for instance, of large landholders in the municipality of San Pedro. According to these actors, enforcing land tenure would encourage productive investment and economic growth. This can be interpreted as an ‘urban’ vision of development because it does not contemplate farmers’ identity

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successively belonged to different societies and was mortgaged in many opportunities”. Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

<sup>177</sup> “*La tierra es de quien la trabaja*” (in Spanish). The phrase “the land belongs to those who work it” belongs to Maximiliano Zapata (1879-1919) a Mexican peasant who fought for communal tenure of land for indigenous people in Mexico.

(very much link to land), linking development with creating jobs and new identities in rural areas (employees) and not with agricultural growth, and because it promotes large-scale plantation forest and indirectly and “agriculture without farmers”.

According to some local interviewees, large forestry corporations, such as *Alto Paraná*, would not only bring economic growth but also environmental protection, since some of them have left land for native forest conservation (at least that is claimed for the moment). The following statement, by a provincial deputy, is illustrative of the idea that some sectors of the government have about state control on native forest exploitation, international corporations and local *madereros*:

“They have 220.000 intangible hectares of native forest. If that company were not there today that place would be degraded by many of those *madereros* [logging companies] that think they are big businessmen and have sawmills and so on... some of them own these squatted lands. In reality they are pirates, they could not care less about ecology and people. Therefore, I prefer a multinational [company] that makes it untouchable, within a treaty of social responsibility, control and observation, than the pandemonium that could mean the destruction and the lack of control of the state” (provincial deputy, Posadas, 2009).<sup>178</sup>

The economic and social implications of large-scale forestry, for many interviewees, could be negative in terms of wellbeing in rural areas. For a provincial interviewee at the Ministry of Ecology, the policy of territorial expansion of the above mentioned company has to be understood in the context of a market strategy: their own wood production for self-sufficiency and market power.

In addition, farmers consider that if they grow trees they have no “space” to do agriculture, to have a yearly income and to grow their own food. Farmers squatting land do not engage in this since planted trees on private land are considered as belonging to land owners. Besides, they claim it is difficult to do agriculture in large-scale pine plantations:

“We realized that they wanted to throw us out in order to plant pines all over. Also the company sent some people in charge to make some proposal to the peasants, that they should plant pine all over their farm and they would pay for the plantation. And there we realized that if they would plant pine all over we would kill ourselves, because where pine grows we should leave. What can we plant and harvest under pine? Nothing. Therefore we realised that no! Here pine should not be planted, we are producing our crops. They

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<sup>178</sup> Interview made by research members of PERT.

can plant pine wherever they want, but not here” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2008).<sup>179</sup>

The Catholic Church is an active actor supporting farmers and rural families squatting land (known in the province as occupants - *ocupantes* - but pejoratively called intruders -*intrusos*) particularly in San Pedro.<sup>180</sup> Also for the Church the land has a particular characteristic, since -it is claimed- it is an asset given by God to the people:

“They are occupying here because there is no other solution! Because people need to live somewhere! After all, land belongs to God, and God has given it. The Bible says so and God gave it to all his children, for all the inhabitants. Thus, if it’s well distributed it’s enough for everybody. What happens is that - of course - if there is one that grabs it all, it is not enough” (catholic priest, Posadas, 2009).

For the farmers, and farmers’ organizations, legal tenure of land is a means to access public services and markets, through public investment in those areas under illegal occupation. Indeed, the state cannot invest in services in private property even if there are settlements and rural families living there. The reflections below, from rural families in the north of San Pedro, living both on private properties to be and not be expropriated, illustrate the urge these families have to access education (public investment in schools and rural electricity) and micro-credits (public investment in forestry, food production, etc.) among other issues:

“What is missing is support from the government. There is no support at all. We cannot access [land]... thousands of neighbours here cannot access anything, because we do not have the papers of the land. The important thing is the papers of the land so we can have a better development” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

“The best would be to have the titles of the land first... if one has the title then one receives many projects that are good to change the working system in the farm. To stop planting tobacco, to plant something else... reforest, for instance. Because with the title, come projects for forestry, for reforestation...” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).<sup>181</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Interview made by research members of PERT.

<sup>180</sup> The notion of intruders may be referring in Misiones not only to that people that trespass private property but also to foreigners that arrive to the country and settle. Delegitimizing discourses portraits squatters as non-citizen, such as Brazilians crossing to Argentina, and therefore no subjects of civil rights.

<sup>181</sup> In the case of electricity a farmer claims: “For us it would be better to have the papers of the land so we can access many of those social plans. We are isolated from that. Here we have electricity only on the border of the asphalt [of the road]. Above all, it is our right. [Electricity] is now to our benefit. We know that everybody has rights. We have it because we are here, because electricity is only in the land

The farmers in this area assure that if the state supports them through land tenure and they could access markets then a process of reinvestment from local families will take place and they would be able as well to pay taxes and pay back the land. They also consider that private property is important, not for extra-local investment but for poor rural families to have access to public services.<sup>182</sup>

In Aristóbulo del Valle or in other parts of San Pedro where land squatting is not a concern, land is perceived in a different manner than in those areas where private land is squatted. Land is also a means of production and therefore an asset for agricultural development, both for industrial crops (tobacco, yerba, tea) and food (horticulture, cattle, grain). Land brings the possibility to live in the countryside, and therefore the importance given to the need to increase agriculture and farm incomes in order to have a balanced distribution of population. Land, however, is theirs and does not need to be “conquered”.

In this sense, both here and in areas with illegal occupation, land is perceived as a space of socialization, a *locus* for the reproduction of the family for their daily life. The parcels of land are not only considered the space for living but also where farmers collect their food from, where they have their vegetable gardens, their animals, their water and their access to nature as recreation. All these have rooted families to the place, settled people and helped in the construction of their identity as *rural families* or *farmers*. Therefore they react negatively to the prospect of leaving the land they occupied or are settled on.<sup>183</sup> From the land they get what they need to sustain their family:

“If one doesn’t have flour we take manioc and cook it, we kill a chicken and our children eat and are quiet. That is the reason that the place settles (*asujeta*) you here. I don’t have a degree, I am not a person that will go to the town and work in a desk, in an office. The place holds us; it gives us security (*asegura*) here. Here you cultivate, and when you cannot buy something in the market, you have the farm, or you swap a product from your farm with another thing from the market. You survive. But if you leave the land, you

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belonging to the Vialidad [Highways Department]. Inside [the private property squatted] we are responsible; we take it [electricity]. We pay for this anyway; we pay the invoice every month” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

<sup>182</sup> For instance: “Many say: “but how are you going to pay for this?” But if the government buys, and wants us to have our farm, it will look for a way, a form, it will give... I will pay with my products; I will give a certain quantity of bags of corn, a certain thousand of kilos of corn a year, or beans, something. And in this way, we can pay. Through this, we can plant half a hectare of pine; we will know that is ours and we are going to enjoy it. But otherwise we are always living in uncertainty” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

<sup>183</sup> A farmer in the area states: “We have been here since we were kids, and we are always working, and we are doing something on [the land] therefore we want to leave it to our children... And you get used to the place since you were a kid... and my parents and siblings are working [too], all the family is here” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

cannot. There [in a pine plantation in another province] if you want an onion you have to buy it, if you don't have land... we depend on the farm," (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

It is interesting to juxtapose these ideas and notions about land and settlement with the understanding that native communities have about land. According to different local interviewees that are assisting these communities, land is conceived by Guaraníes as "belonging not only to the community, but to all aborigines". This idea is different from the modern understanding of property in which land (among many other assets) is subject to appropriation:

"The concept of land or property is different. For them [natives] there is no such thing as the concept of property. For us, to have a property means four border stones and to try to improve it, to build a house... For them it is not important... [if] they have a conflict, the house is the last thing they care about. They leave to another community, they change" (national public servant, National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, Posadas, 2008).

According to some local interviewees, "land is not the problem in Misiones but timber". Farmers squatting land in North of San Pedro refer to this when they state that if it wasn't for the possibility to (re)forest (with state subsidies), large-scale land owners would not be interested in their land.

### *Native forest and timber*

The exploitation of native forest has been important in Misiones for a long time. However, the economic sectors behind this activity are considered to be non productive, since "they take too much and they invest too little". This stands in contrast to the farming sector that has always been considered to bring economic growth and improved welfare to a province mainly formed by rural families. According to some interviewees, the *madereros* exploit and over exploit the forest; they use it as a source of capitalization without producing or reinvesting.<sup>184</sup>

Farmers' organizations, NGOs and social organizations consider that the provincial state has always been "on the side of the *madereros*" or "in alliance

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<sup>184</sup> The following comments are illustrative of the perception of logging companies in Misiones: "Because the only thing these owners did was merely to extract. The forest activity transformed itself into an extractive mining activity. It was merely to extract richness and not give anything back," (public servant, Land department, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2009). Or: "For the state, *maderero* is a bad word. I'm not going to defend any *maderero*... technically I'm *maderero*, but I don't consider myself one," (land owner in San Pedro with squatted land, Eldorado, 2008).

with the rich ones". They believe that the state has historically allowed logging companies over exploit natural resources.<sup>185</sup>

Those large-scale owners that live outside the province are not fully aware of conflicts around land. In San Pedro, many have given concessions to companies to exploit timber from the native forest. According to some, only a few actors are benefiting from this use of the land and forest, while there are a great number of rural families that has no access to land or land tenure:

"Let's suppose that there is a small family of four, five members and they are thinking to get half a hectare to make manioc or corn for subsistence; they will be told: "No, it not possible". And then you see that five trunks with timber pass through here, 20 every day in this crossroad. Then you say: "Damn! What are they playing at?" Those that need to feed the family cannot, but the other can take as much as he wants" (school teacher, San Pedro, 2009).<sup>186</sup>

Native forest is considered by local actors as: (a) a natural resource, available for exploitation, (b) an impediment to agriculture, (c) a picturesque resource for contemplation and tourism, (d) a first step in a process of capitalization, (e) a source of biodiversity, (f) part of the ecological system which allows sustainable agriculture, (g) a space for community and families reproduction and identity.

During the last ten years, there has been almost a radical change towards the perception of the native forest.<sup>187</sup> For rural families engaged in agriculture, the forest has always being something to "conquer" or "overcome". Nowadays, international and national agreements, and actions by the provincial state such as the creation nature reserves show that the forest remnants and its biodiversity are highly valued by some actors. In this sense, the comment below, by a provincial public servant, is illustrative because it situates forest degradation in a cultural sphere:

"They steal timber and [see] it is as... [normal] [They say]: "Hey! Such a problem for taking out some little sticks?" And that is the mentality. Thus, the issue is cultural, in which the tree seemed to be the obstacle that had to be defeated. Our province was colonized based on the axe, cutting, putting down the forest and going ahead. Therefore, the forest was always something that you had to overcome. Today we have to understand that the forest is our great ally. If we don't have forest, we are in trouble. And the forest is worth more

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<sup>185</sup> "The government is with the large companies. The government is not with the poor, it is always with the rich ones" (catholic priest, Posadas, 2009).

<sup>186</sup> In a same line of arguments a farmer adds "he came and deforested everything because he has political support" (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

<sup>187</sup> See also Ferrero (2006).

than a tree on a truck” (provincial public servant, Land department, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2009).

In Misiones, the discourse about biodiversity conservation and environmental care emanates from the Ministry of Ecology and national and provincial NGOs. It is also taken and complemented by those actors intervening in rural development and agriculture. However it is also “used” by large landholders and *madereros* in order to defend their interests: their land and what it represents. They opposed their activity (selective logging) with agriculture, which is considered by them more destructive because farmers have to clear the land in order to do agriculture:

“If the *maderero*, as I always say, stole timber during 100 years, this [squatting for agriculture production] is one hundred times worse that what *madereros* did. This is the total destruction of the forest” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

Furthermore, for some actors forest is a picturesque resource that needs to be preserved for tourists. Though native forest preservation is promoted from the Ministry of Ecology, tourism is very much a general development policy in Misiones:

“We have to plan what province we want. Because basically our province was, or is, a tourist destination, important resources are generated due to tourism. Tourism depends on our natural resources. If I don’t preserve the native forest... the attractiveness [of Misiones] will be very different, without the waterfalls, the forest, these green surroundings that we have in the province... It should not be only the waterfalls that are the touristic attraction but our entire province... But if we don’t make a proper administration of this landscape resource, so to speak, we are going to lose it. And we are going to lose tourism as well” (provincial public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).

In this case, again, this is used as an argument for some of the logging companies, who claim that they could diversify incomes with tourism, if they only had control of the land. The following statement by a *maderero* is revealing, because it places forest exploitation and agriculture in opposition. In other words, it states that tourism and implanted forestry should be prioritized in a development model for the province:

“If the *maderero* comes into this parcel, for instance, here there is one tree, two, three, four, five, six... and puts them down in the same way it was done until now forest remains. That timber will not be there, but you can show the tourist... [trees]. When the intruder comes into the parcel of land, this is left [nothing]. It is better this [forest with some trees] than this [nothing]... Of course, here come some tourists. Because for me, Misiones will be based on

tourism and forestry” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

In this development model, forest represents the “future of Misiones” due to the importance of tourism in the provincial economy. The statement below is interesting because it attempts to justify the illegal overexploitation (to take more timber than what the provincial state permits) to oppose agriculture and environmental degradation:

“I always say that the *maderero* steals, but why does the *maderero* steal? Because they let us steal, they do not control us... here nobody controls anything. Then, the *maderero* steals, and steals one stick, two, three. This guy steals, but steals the future of Misiones. Why? Because the *maderero* does not steal this stick because it is too thin and in five years he will exploit it. The intruder takes it down. Not even the seed is left” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

By putting agriculture in opposition to native forest overexploitation, this *maderero* forgets that ‘development’ is also about following the laws of regulation of forest exploitation and not about grabbing extra profits at the expense of the whole society.

The exploitation of timber from the native forest by small-scale farmers serves as a first step in a process of capitalization.<sup>188</sup> They not only make good use of quality timber (which is sold to *madereros*) but also of other kind of wood that could provide infrastructure to their farm. In the remark below, by a farmer squatting land in the north of San Pedro, one can observe the value of use they give to timber and how they perceive its exploitation and use by *madereros*:

“The timber that is good quality, the important ones, they remove. They remove some timber that they did not take and it is getting rotten... they leave it at the side of the road, down there getting rotten. A timber that maybe we could have made use of to make a table, a stall, to build a pig house, a chicken house” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

Forest is also perceived by some local actors as a source of biodiversity, and an important part of the ecological system. In terms of agriculture, it is necessary for the ecosystem functions it provides: regulating water, soil erosion, providing weed and pest control and honey production among others. Examples of the irreplaceable functions of forest abound in Misiones particularly in areas where there is no native forest left and soil is overexploited. Such is the case of the municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle where farmers observed the decrease of

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<sup>188</sup> An in deep study about the process of capitalization in new settlement can be found in Schiavoni (1998).



water due, its rapid drainage into the streams and rivers, soil deterioration and hard to combat pest attacks.

Finally, forest is perceived as the space for the creation of identity by the Guaraní communities. Some of these communities live in the forest in voluntary isolation. They use the forest to get their food: they hunt animals, collect seeds, plants and honey, fish in the waters. Their medicine depends on the forest and its biodiversity.

“For them knowledge and wisdom are in nature. And nature does not have a limit. They don’t only gather food from there but also knowledge. The children go there with them, they go with their parents and they transmit them what their parents pass on to them, the utility of nature, its value” (national public servant, National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, Posadas, 2008).

Therefore, when *madereros* or forestry companies *desmontan* the native communities experience this as a terrible disruption to their style of life, as can be concluded from the following remark:

“The problem with these communities is that the *madereros* cut down their forest. The noise, and the lack of trees means that they have no animals, no honey, no fishes... all the ecosystems they rely on become unstable. They have a very holistic conception of health, and all these troubles provoke a general psychological distress which provokes illnesses. The main problem of those communities is the deforestation” (volunteer, EMiPA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

## The role of state and market in development

The state is brought into the discourse of development by local actors in the selected municipalities in relation to: (a) public investment in infrastructure (housing, roads, communications, education, health, justice) (b) “stabilization” of agriculture family, and facilitation to access land and new markets and (c) resolution and regulation of conflicts among actors (for instance land owners and squatters; *madereros* and native communities).<sup>189</sup>

The role of the state attributed by most of those interviewed is that of a structuring “actor” that could either change the rules of the game or help the local actors to cope with those rules imposed by non provincial actors (e.g. international markets, national governments).

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<sup>189</sup> The idea of “stabilizing” (*estabilizar*) family agriculture means to achieve a certain level of productivity through rotation, intercropping, etc. so that the farmers do not need to clear part of their plots with native forest to put under production or to abandon the land in search of better quality soils.

Actors in conflict with others demand of the provincial state its function as regulator of social conflicts between parties. There are also cases of actors that, in cooperation, are challenging the state (e.g. Catholic Church, NGOs and squatters' organizations). There are some cases, however, in which some actors collaborate with the state to pursue certain goals (e.g. native communities and AMIRBY, or farmers' organizations and rural development programmes). Therefore, the (provincial) state is not a homogeneous entity and is far from being coherent in the policies created and the activities proposed to sustain them.

The following comments, also from diverse actors that may have antagonistic interests with regards to family agriculture, are illustrative because they show the importance given to the intervention of the provincial state in order to bring about alternative policies for family agriculture:

"The farmer has to stabilize and the state has to help. They must see what kind of advice to give so that the farmer is able to live on the farm" (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

"I believe that the government should try to subsidise the farmer with more tools; they should give tools and inputs. If they are not involved with INTA or tobacco companies, the farmer [does not receive any help]. I believe that the government should dedicate more to soil conservation, to take better care of the soil in the province because it is very rich and this [soil deterioration] decreases the economic productivity of the province a little. Besides, currently the yerba and tea are not doing so well. Cattle raising is contributing a little, but is just starting. It is necessary to make the farmer conscious that this is possible. But this is dependent on what the government does and how the farmer faces it" (tobacco extensionist, Tabacos Norte S.A., Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

In San Pedro in particular, the need for state presence is even more evident than in Aristóbulo. In the former municipality, access to land and land tenure, native forest conservation, timber exploitation and agriculture and forestry activities generate conflicts that need to be urgently solved. The role of the state in bringing public investment is seen as highly important, since San Pedro is a relatively new settlement area.

In the case of squatted land the intervention of the state seems very necessary. A range of actors demand that the provincial state resolve the conflict. The state is that "actor" that could: (a) exercise more control over timber exploitation, (b) give land tenure to native communities and farmers, and (c) create policies for alternative crops and organization of agricultural production.

With regard to concerns about environmental deterioration, the *madereros* and the farmers are blamed both for forest deterioration and clearing land. Logging

companies, paradoxically, are aware of this. One of them, with activities in north San Pedro, believes that if the state would exert more control, there would be timber for a long time. According to this person, the state should regulate both logging companies and farmers more closely:

“I always say, there is wood in Misiones - whatever people say - for many years, if us [logging companies] together with [the Ministry of] Ecology organize ourselves a little better. Because, let’s be honest, we are not kids, there is a law. Sometimes it is said that it is only allowed to cut a tree with a certain diameter but they are cut anyway. The law is there” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

Nevertheless, the demand for state intervention relates not only to the cessation of environmental degradation but also to the resolution of land distribution. Land distribution in both municipalities under study is contested not only by squatter farmers but also by native communities.

The statements below, both from actors related to the Catholic Church, are examples about the role of the state that some actors in Misiones wish to observe in order to solve the issues concerning to land access and tenure.

“We don’t want illegality... what we say is that these people have the right to occupy land and the government has to find the way to make this possible. In general the formula is the following: the government gets in charge of this, expropriates... pays an amount, later makes a contract with the people to deliver them the land and they pay back in instalments or generally with products, because these people don’t handle money. Poor people don’t have money” (catholic priest, Posadas, 2009).

In the case of the distribution of land to the native communities the solution seems to be more complex because there should not be expropriation from the state to the owners, but “devolution” from the state to the communities:

“[We should talk about] devolution because expropriation would recognize that the owners are the companies. But in reality the owners are the aborigines, although through the state, the companies took the land. The state can compensate or make other arrangements with the company later... What it is argued is the devolution, the recognition of the pre-existence of the communities to the Argentinean Nation and the province of Misiones. And therefore they are the owners of the land” (volunteer, EMiPA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

The resolution of these conflicts is considered to be central for rural development in the province as processes conducting to economic growth, wellbeing and social justice. Not only because of the need to attract extra-local investment but because it is believed that securing access for thousands of families to land will bring about agricultural development, food security and

welfare. However, it is also recognized that new policies or laws are not enough if there are no public resources available to implement them.

Indeed, despite the creation of a law to distribute land in the northeast of Misiones, the problem is far from resolved.<sup>190</sup> Provincial actors express their opinions about the enactment of laws, showing that new sets of laws do not solve conflicts and that people must continue to confront the state if problems want to be solved:

“We were very happy about this. People celebrated it because the law says that the government has to solve the problem. But what happened? What happens usually with our laws? If a law is approved but not normalized and not applied, nothing happens. Thus, now it is roughly three years since the law was approved” (catholic priest, Posadas, 2009).

“It [the law] also helped to demobilize people. It helped to think that everything was solved. And laws do not resolve anything; in any case they just homologate a fact. It is people who solve things” (provincial deputy, Posadas, 2009).

Why is the conflict around land squatting and distribution not resolved even though there has been a law to regulate this since 2004? A provincial deputy describes three reasons for the state’s non-intervention in land squatting and the subsequent conflicts. The most important probably has to do with the use of public resources and the ‘political revenues’ the government can gain from them.<sup>191</sup>

In addition, also the idea that the state is in alliance with the “powerful” economic sector is used as an argument by some provincial actors (part of the Catholic Church, squatters’ organizations and some NGOs). A squatter farmer from the north of San Pedro refers to the barriers they face when they go to the capital city and request land. The members of the organization observe that politicians favour companies because they have “structure”, they have access to international markets and they have money to pay. In this sense, they claim that “the state does not work to help those that most need it and if the authorities try to do so they will not be long in their positions”.<sup>192</sup> The following statement,

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<sup>190</sup> See Arzeno and Ponce (2010).

<sup>191</sup> This person states that: “the state never planned. I believe that this was on the one hand due to indolence on the other because it was not of interest to those who governed. A third reason was because they did not want to use part of the provincial budget for things that did not give any immediate [political] revenue” (provincial deputy, Posadas, 2009).

<sup>192</sup> His statement is illustrative: “we have a terrible battle. I go there [to the capital city] and [I say] ‘I need this piece of land to maintain my family,’ and the government says ‘Well, we’ll see what we’ll do about that’. Then [forestry representatives] arrive, saying, ‘No, I need that piece of land for a forestry plantation, we have a market investment and many other things,’ and the government says, ‘You have more strength, more power, because you have another mentality, another plan. You have

among many others, is enlightening. It shows the arguments some have to understand the lack of commitment from the provincial state in resolving family agriculture problems:

“We have two extremes. At one extreme, there is the small-scale holder of 25 hectares, whose capacity to respond is very limited; his capacity to invest is very limited. At the other extreme, there is the large-scale land holder, whose capacity of investment is terrific, multinational. Then, the administrator of the state sees this and says, “What do I do? Should I help the smallholders and put money here or should I say to the others come on and invest? Again, for the administrator of the state is easier to encourage large investment than to start putting money in the smallholders for them to start up. I think that the crux of the matter” (public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).<sup>193</sup>

The state is observed to govern on behalf of large corporations, to the benefit of international markets and politicians. Thus, “the poor” and all those who accompany them cooperate to “confront the state” (or actually the government). The state becomes this way a field of dispute, an arena for struggles among diverse actors with different power to mobilize forces and concretize their interests.

However, this brings the issue of the role of the market in development, in particular in the case of agriculture and forestry. The different actors interviewed in the province refer to the market as a central point for family agriculture. While the role of the state is to regulate the interests of the different actors, and to create a propitious environment for economic growth and its distribution among the whole society, the role of the market would be to motorize and sustain that growth and welfare.

There are two different kinds of markets implied in actors’ comprehension of development, namely (a) the local/provincial market and (b) the international market. In both cases, they refer to the markets for agricultural products. Indeed, the labour market is not highly prioritized in the discourse about rural

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contacts far away. You are the chief of a company. You have structure”. Politicians are like that! I don’t have ten pesos to put in their pockets! You have! ... We fight against the state to get the title [of the land], for them to sell us the land, to give the land to us and not to those large producers. And the large producers fight against us because they want to plant pine. And the government goes where there is more structure, more power. Because, the corn is for the province, it is for here. The timber goes from here to the United States. The market is huge... and they have power, they have influence” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

<sup>193</sup> The following comment is also illustrative because it depicts a state that is not at the service of the people: “There is a lack of political will from the government, for many reasons. For one, I believe they are together with the companies, and the companies are influencing them with money. And other reason is that [the governor] is involved in something else... They have other priorities, they are thinking of the elections, then they don’t care about this problem of the poor people” (catholic priest, Posadas, 2009).

development. Very few actors are taking it into consideration, leaving aside the discussion about formal employment, labour conditions, etc.<sup>194</sup>

Some of the actors involved in rural development with family farmers set the local/provincial market and the international market in opposition. The comment above by a farmer squatting land and the access to international markets by forestry corporations is highly significant. Even though in the following chapters this issue will be discussed in depth, it is important to present the general aspect of this issue here.

The idea that farmers could produce food instead of industrial crops is not only a discussion about what *crop* to plant but what *market* to access and *how* to do so. Tobacco and tea are crops sold in the international market and although tobacco prices are negotiated between parties locally, the “rules of the game” are to a large extent determined by distant actors. This situation is seen to be suboptimal by many, who believe that farmers are at the mercy of market forces which they cannot confront to secure better prices and conditions. In contrast, food production - surplus of subsistence agriculture - is sold in the local market, there are no middlemen and farmers are better able to settle and receive the “right” or “fair price”. The notion of the market’s power for price formation is best illustrated in this statement by a provincial public servant:

“The company Alto Paraná, whose business is to plant pine, doesn’t want to depend on local producers because the company doesn’t want them to regulate the market; they want to regulate the market themselves. Today I believe they have 60% of the pine they need to run their industries and with that they regulate the price” (provincial public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).

However, the construction of a market to allocate food production demands a great deal of investment by the state (in the form of credit, technology, infrastructure, information, etc.) that currently the provincial state is not fully fostering. Timber, tobacco, tea or yerba are industrial crops for which demand-supply schemes are already created. In the case of timber, when local actors state that “it goes alone”, they mean that the market decides its functions and there is not much state intervention to access markets:

“The policy of our province is oriented mainly towards forestry. Yerba mate and tea, and also tobacco have a history and tradition of cultivation. The forestry issue runs by itself. Then the government comes and sees the

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<sup>194</sup> In the case of Aristóbulo, a local public servant in the area of agriculture production mentions that: “The markets are already generated, I believe. Misiones doesn’t produce today all the meat that consume, does not produce all the fruits and vegetables that consumes. Thus, there is market. What is failing somehow are the channels of commercialization; the way to get to that market. We need to support the channels of commercialization” (local public servant, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

numbers and says, “The forestry sector provides this much revenue, tourism provides this much, tobacco this and yerba that. But it happens to be that tobacco and yerba need support while the forestry sector can survive alone, so we shouldn’t hamper it” (provincial public servant, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2008).

Even though some provincial interviewees consider that the forestry sector does not receive state support and “goes alone”, the evidence shows otherwise. In fact, the great expansion of implanted forests is the consequence of its promotion by the state since the end of the 1990s (with subsidies, tax cuts and land properties rights changes).<sup>195</sup> The state has been very actively promoting and supporting new production schemes to meet the demands of international markets, favouring in general, only a few actors.

### Some reflections

In Aristóbulo del Valle, almost all farmers’ organizations interviewed expressed the need to stop migration from farms, to increase productivity, to create new jobs in rural areas and to invest in education and health. According to them, in terms of agriculture, preventing soil erosion and water scarcity in order to increase productivity is only a part of the concern: better management of crops and new crops must be introduced in addition to the construction of channels of commercialization.

The dilemma about economic growth, social justice and welfare seems to be more problematic in the municipality of San Pedro. There are here different constraints to the expansion of agriculture and forestry associated with the preservation of native forest or with the presence of large-scale properties. Unlike Aristóbulo, the main concern is not what kind of crop to promote but which social and economic sector should benefit most from public resources and access and use of land and forest. Should biodiversity conservation or reconversion to large-scale forestry be prioritized? Should it be large landholders doing forestry or small and medium landholders doing agriculture? Should agriculture be based on food production or industrial crops such as tobacco? Should the state intervene and construct roads and schools or should it let the area remain “underdeveloped” to preserve biodiversity and native communities’ lifestyle?

These processes expose the lack of state presence in the northeast of the province, where San Pedro is located. This places a variety of actors in constant

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<sup>195</sup> The national constitution stated that land in bordering provinces cannot be sold to foreigners. This was changed during the decade of 1990 and allowed land acquisition by multinational companies in Misiones.

struggle to put further their ideas and visions about development. The expectation about development is manifest, both in legally and illegally occupied areas. Local actors involved in agriculture believe that with public investment in infrastructure and education, agriculture could expand and access new markets because here productivity is high and timber abundant. However, they are also aware that land distribution is not in itself enough to bring about development; public investment is central.<sup>196</sup>

Solving land disputes is urgent because social exclusion has generated other social problems. The social mobilizations which occurred during the beginning of decade in the area prove that families squatting land perceived their treatment and situation unfair and inequitable, since they do not have the same rights as other citizens. Indeed, state intervention is crucial for the generation of territorial dynamics towards development (in this case as economic growth and social justice):

“[Not solving the problem] will lead to more difficult situations. Not only in terms of roads blockages or violence – that is just the tip of the iceberg - but also in terms of the quality of life, the displacement of social and cultural capital and so forth will lead to total social exclusion. These people need not only the land tenure but also the infrastructure around it. [The state] needs to give these people some tools so they can live. If they are left there without roads, without bridges, without a health centre, without a school and so forth, is like throwing them away... sweeping the problems under the carpet” (provincial deputy, Posadas, 2009).

Finally, to conclude this chapter, it is important to state that the discussion about development among the diverse actors involved in family agriculture and intervening in rural areas in Misiones is almost absent. There is a lack of discussion about population distribution, revenues generation, land use, public investment, social justice, among many other central topics to reflect on ‘development’. The comment below is poignant: it is an observation of a farmer squatting land who is demanding land tenure. This may serve as a good example of what happens when rural inequality and enequity becomes urban poverty:

“He called us intruders. How are we intruders if we are children of the country!? We are Argentineans! And what do we depend on? We depend on the land. I am not going to take my family and go to a big city, to those quarters, to live under a tent. I have many acquaintances that left here because they did not work. They went to live to Bernardo de Irigoyen, and of course, it’s a border town, it’s a place without jobs. In the morning, the kids went up

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<sup>196</sup> As a provincial deputy states that “to settle does not mean to expropriate, but means also to create infrastructure, roads, schools, hospitals. It means to do everything that is need for the community to have access to services and goods” (provincial deputy, Posadas, 2009).



and had no food, then they had to go out to the streets and ask for a piece of bread” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

In the following chapters, the analysis of discourses, practices, conflicts and cooperation among those actors intervening in family agriculture is undertaken.

## **Chapter VI – The rural development arena in the selected municipalities**

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### **Introduction**

In this chapter I present the analysis of the rural development arena in the municipalities of San Pedro and Aristóbulo del Valle. I focus on the diverse actors involved, their strategies and discourses, the mutual interactions, the cooperation and conflicts. I explore the comprehension these actors have about rural development, how they frame their activities and their own understanding about the role of the state, market and nature in promoting welfare.

I put the attention on the discussion about those actors that centre their intervention in the farming sector, promoting activities with rural families and shaping a rural development arena. These actors foster a kind of rural development that is locally labelled as “alternative”. My interest is to observe the relation between the actors that are constitutive part of the arena and those others that do not participate. They greatly influence the farming sector, the organization of agriculture and the use of natural resources.

In the first part of the chapter I present the general ideas of intervention of the main actors in each municipality. Subsequently, I focus on the heterogeneity of actors and discourses in the rural development arena in Misiones by, among other things, describing their relation to the state and analysing their role in promoting “development”. This has been central to understanding their ability to put forward diverse strategies in the family agriculture sector, their alliances and conflicts. Thereafter, I pay attention more closely to the particular rural development arena in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro, and show how the discourse is locally implemented and put into practice in these different geographical spaces. The last part of the chapter is my reflection on the analysis presented in the chapter. In the Appendix 5 it can be found a short description of each of the actors (areas of intervention, history, beneficiaries, etc.).

### **Actors involved: their strategies and ideas of rural development**

In this section I make a general characterization of those local actors who are involved and implement activities in the family agriculture sector by presenting their ideas about development and their kind of intervention in the territory. In particular, I tried to distinguish those who work to construct a different model of rural development in the selected municipalities. These actors represent diverse institutional objectives, but in some way or another all of them aim to include

family agriculture in the economic and political system as well as manage natural resources in a more sustainable way. At the end of each sub-section there is a synopsis table that presents the main characteristics of each actor.

### *Public agencies and rural development programmes*

The National Institute of Agriculture Technology (INTA) is probably the most important public agency in the agriculture sector in Misiones together with the Agricultural Social Program (PSA) and the Project of Development for Small Agriculture Holders (PROINDER) also from the national state.

The ideas of rural development that the INTA presents are concerned with the growth of agricultural production in rural areas. The institute's policies show the members' belief that this would be possible if local actors gather around particular development projects and coordinate their actions. Issues such as local development, technological transfer, increased production and productivity, the construction of new markets and channels of commercialization are part of the discourse. The political and social organization of farmers does not seem to be a priority for the INTA, as observed in the impact of the RDPs implemented in Aristóbulo.<sup>197</sup>

The rural development that the PROHUERTA and PSA-PROINDER (both RDPs) try to put forward is centred on the organization of farmers, food security and sustainable agriculture. Their intervention in Misiones revolves around issues such as (a) increment of food crops production (such as vegetable gardens and small animals husbandry), (b) agroecological practices, (c) increase of productivity at the farm level and not only of a particular crop, and (d) diversification of crops and income. These three RDPs strongly promote and work for the organization of grass-roots associations of rural families.

In the particular case of Aristóbulo del Valle, from 2004 onwards, the local government's Department of Agriculture and Production (DAyP) has been supporting the creation of cooperatives for the production and commercialisation of livestock, fruits, honey and fish. In order to achieve this, the staff, together with some of INTA's staff, conducted training courses to introduce farmers from different areas of the municipality to the possibilities offered by these new productions and the value of diversifying their farms. These courses have served as platforms for social interchange of information

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<sup>197</sup> See for instance Manzanal *et al.* (2008) for an assessment of RDPs in Misiones, taking into consideration Aristóbulo del Valle as one focus municipality.

and communication, where ideas of creating new cooperatives have come to light.<sup>198</sup>

The ideas about rural development that provincial and local public agencies in Aristóbulo present are concerned with the conversion of non-profitable crops to profitable ones (e.g. jatropha, cover crops, manioc, etc.) and the creation of cooperatives and new regional markets. In the case of the DAYP the agency has outlined its goals and strategies, something that the *Colono* House (delegation of the provincial ministry of agriculture) or any other provincial public agency has not done so far. Members of the DAYP state that its goal is to work towards a sustainable local development and in order to achieve this, the department intends to reinforce the communication between the settlements (*colonias*) and the city, to maintain the rural population and to create political awareness about the productive feasibility of the environment. One of the main goals is to improve and foster food production and consumption at the local level and to diversify crops and farm incomes by means of introducing new technologies and new products.<sup>199</sup>

San Pedro differs from Aristóbulo in terms of the kind of organizations present. The INTA, together with the local extensionist team of PSA-PROINDER and PROHUERTA, promotes strategies focused on families' food production, the introduction of new crops (particularly horticulture) and the linkages between farmers' organizations and local markets.

Even though national government institutions are almost absent in San Pedro, most of the national RDPs are present here through extensionists of other agencies and NGOs. This is important to mention because even though the NGOs have a long history of intervention, it is still the national government that has granted the most resources to rural development in this municipality (Nardi, 2008). The ideas about rural development intervention that RDPs (PSA-PROINDER, PROHUERTA) have are basically the same than in Aristóbulo del Valle.

The ideas of rural development that the provincial agencies (the *Colono* House or the Institute of Agriculture and Industrial Promotion, IFAI) contemplate here have to do with crop diversification for the market and with the linkage of farmers with dynamic markets. They are embedded in provincial politics and with scarce resources, so there are no impacts or results in terms of

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<sup>198</sup> The resources administered by the DAYP are from the local government. The department does not receive other public or private funding. The budget for this department is approved every year in the local legislation chamber. It was not possible to access the budget information because according to the director of the DAYP they officially may count with some budget but once they have to execute it, they might not have it. He estimates expenditure at around US\$ 1000 per month.

<sup>199</sup> For example, the introduction of new disease- and pest-resistant genetically modified grapes, together with the help of INTA that has developed these materials.

diversification, farmers' organization or creation of new channels of commercialization to dynamic markets.

The ideas about rural development from the local government's Department of Rural Development (DDR) are in tune with the provincial government's priorities: the increase of productivity, the search for new crops and food production and the construction of new channels of commercialization. The organization of farmers in cooperatives is also important from their point of view, but there are no resources available to encourage this. Given the huge area of the municipality and the quantity of farmers, the impacts of the activities are not easy to observe. Still, it is an interesting actor in the rural development arena because of the political influence it exercises in the countryside (*colonias*), linked to electoral politics.<sup>200</sup>

The table 3 presents a synopsis of this section, considering the main characteristic of each actor in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.

Table 3: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Selected municipalities. Public agencies and rural development programmes. Selected characteristics

ARISTÓBULO DEL VALLE	
PROHUERTA	RDP (INTA). From 1995. Delivery of seeds and training assistance. Vegetable gardens. Small-scale poultry. Food security. Farmers' grass-root organization for staff intervention. Adapted technologies.
PSA-PROINDER	RDP (National Secretary of Agriculture). From 1993 and 2001. Micro-credits, training assistance. Food production and sustainable agriculture. Food security, diversification, productivity, new channels of commercialization. Political participation.
<i>Colono House</i> + PRODERNEA	Provincial agency + RDP. Very small intervention in the farming sector back from 1991. Small medium-scale farmers. Few resources.
DAyP	Local agency. From 2004. Nexus provincial government – local farmers' organization. Promotion of cooperatives. Assistance with information about new projects and programmes. Interest in new crops and markets.
SAN PEDRO	
PROHUERTA	RDP (INTA). From 1997. Delivery of seeds and training assistance. Vegetable gardens. Small-scale poultry. Food security. Farmers' grass-root organization for staff intervention. Adapted technologies. Important number of grass-root organizations. Organization of a Women Festivity every year. Support to a women local organization.

<sup>200</sup> In relation to this, the following statement is illustrative: "I believe there are important changes taking place. At least some [socio-economic] sectors are getting relevant [in the political and economic sphere], [sectors] of the production are being organized and are working towards a shared vision. And the local government is taking a new role. It not only concerned with public infrastructure or assistance in the execution of provincial or national programmes. The municipality has started to develop its own things. And that is positive" (director, DDR, San Pedro, 2004).

PSA-PROINDER	RDP (National Secretary of Agriculture). From 1993 and 2001. Micro-credits, training assistance. Food production and sustainable agriculture. Food security, diversification, productivity, new channels of commercialization. Political participation. Strong cooperation with local NGOs for farmers' participation in RDPs and grass-root organization.
Colono House + IFAI + PRODERNEA	Provincial agency + RDP (1998, date back to 1991). Very small intervention in farming sector. Small medium-scale farmers. Few resources. IFAI, provincial agency promotes grain production. Sought to introduce genetic modified seeds. Prevented by actors in rural development arena. Agriculture as industrial production, increase short term productivity and access new dynamic markets. Do not promote farmers' organization nor participation.
DDR	Local agency. From 2004. Horticulture, cattle raising, fish production. Assists rural families in agriculture production and access to information. Promotes cooperatives in different areas of the municipality.

Source: author's elaboration.

### *Nongovernmental organizations and social organizations*

Regarding nongovernmental organizations, it can be observed that Aristóbulo is not a territory of NGOs. The two NGOs acting in the municipality do not have an important number of beneficiaries and therefore do not have a visible impact among other local actors.<sup>201</sup>

The ideas about rural development that the Organization for Human, Environmental and Technological Development (ODHAT) has are very much in tune with the ones from INTA; although some of the members share PSA-PROINDER's ideas about the importance of grass-roots organization and food security.

The understanding of rural development that the Union of the Family Farmers' School (UNEFAM) presents, partly to the EFAs but also very influenced by the international NGOs that support their work in the field is based on issues of local development and non-agricultural income diversification.

The notions of rural development that EFAs promote are related to agroecological practices, sustainable and local development and farmers' organization. The education imparted is concerned with life in the countryside: not only the organization of production but also small infrastructure construction and health education for instance. In order to graduate the students have to apply their own project in their farms: diversification, crop management, infrastructure, etc. The idea is to perform something that may lead to increase farm monetary incomes at the long run. In general terms, it has to do with the agriculture management of resources and not the commercial part. As one of the

<sup>201</sup> These are the Organization for Human, Environmental and Technological Development (*Organización para el Desarrollo Humano, Ambiental y Tecnológico*, ODHAT) and the Union of Schools of the Family Farm (*Unión de Escuelas de la Familia Agrícola*, UNEFAM). In fact, the ODHAT does not currently have any projects in the municipality.

teacher mention “it is hard for students to calculate cost of production, since we don’t have a course about that”.

It is interesting to contrast this with San Pedro, where NGOs and other social organizations (Catholic Church, agro-technical schools) are numerous and have a long history of involvement. This is a particularity in this area of the province where the state’s presence is weak. The lack of support for development from the state has been partly ameliorated by NGOs and SOs (Nardi, 2008).

The NGOs are the main actors intervening in San Pedro in organizing farmers and the extension of new technologies and ideas. The Institute for Human Development and Social Promotion (INDES) is nowadays a reference point in the province on issues such as: (a) agroecology, (b) women participation, (c) local seed rescue, (d) local seed commercialization and (e) alternative health care. It is an active actor in the rural development arena. In the province it is known for its strong promotion of agroecology and organic production, and particularly for the methodological approach they developed: integrated management of farms (*enfoque integral de chacras*).<sup>202</sup>

There is another important NGO in this municipality, the Association for Human Promotion and Local Agroecological Development (APHyDAL). The kind of organization and participation that it promotes seems highly top-down and some of the farmers’ organizations they have previously supported have ceased to support them and accused them of misuse of resources. Currently, the staff is fostering grass-roots organization among farmers in other areas where they were previously involved.

These two NGOs are the main organizations fostering grass-roots organizations. However INDES has also succeeded in creating and extending adapted technologies in the family agriculture sector in San Pedro. The main ideas of rural development are framed within the agroecological discourse. They advocate food production, local consumption, crop diversification, local markets, use of organic inputs, sustainable management of natural resources, integrated farm management, political organization of families, commercial alternatives to agroindustries so farmers can de-link from markets in which they cannot control or participate in a fair way, and preservation of local genetic material as a way to break free from seed and agro-chemical corporations.

In order to develop their activities with farmers, both NGOs have strategically counted with resources from RDPs and the international cooperation. These resources benefited not only the rural poor (with credit, subsidies, technological assistance, training courses, etc.) but also indirectly the members of the NGOs (with an income for providing the assistance and training courses).

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<sup>202</sup> Their view of development also has a Christian component.

The INDES and the APHyDAL have explicitly accepted to work in different areas of San Pedro and with different families so as not to overlap their work. They have created different territories where they could intervene without the presence of each other. However, in 2001 MISEREOR demanded both of them to coordinate actions in the north of the municipality in the recently created settlements on private land. It was idea of this German NGO that both NGOs support the legal access to land and conduct interventions for farmers' organizations in this area. Therefore, they had to articulate activities for improving food security and strengthen local squatters' organization.

The ideas about rural development of these NGOs are contrary to those held by public agencies (except some RDPs), which are based on the increase of monetary income at the farm level with the promotion of one or two cash crops, linked to dynamic markets (e.g. tobacco companies), relying on industrial crops instead of promoting food production, incorporating extra-local genetic and agrochemical packages instead of organic production with local materials and focusing on the productivity of a few crops instead of the farm as a whole.

The Union of Rural Technicians Workers of Misiones (UTTERMI) is probably the most important NGO currently working in the area in terms of the number of farmers assisted. One of its objectives is to contribute to sustainable rural development in Misiones. They do so by conducting activities to support agroecology, local markets and commercialization of farmers' produce, preservation of genetic material, organic production, soil conservation, and organizational and legal support for farmers to acquire legal tenure.<sup>203</sup> This NGO also works as a kind of "union" of extensionists and other social workers in the province of Misiones. Among their activities is the defence of the rights of many technicians that worked with the state or NGOs under informal conditions.<sup>204</sup> They also coordinate the provincial Seed Fair every year in Misiones, together with other local actors.<sup>205</sup>

The role of SOs here in San Pedro has been important to understanding local ideas about rural development and the activities and interventions occurring in the farmer sector. There are two agro-technical schools: the local EFA and the Institute of Agriculture Education (IEA). These schools not only educate and

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<sup>203</sup> From 2003 to 2005 they prepared and conducted workshops on diverse issues such as: technical assistance in Misiones' rural development, recovery and improvement of local seeds, cooperativism and agro-ecology, farmers' organization and environment, etc.

<sup>204</sup> ODHAT has recently joined UTTERMI, however in Aristóbulo del Valle there are no extensionists intervening as members of UTTERMI.

<sup>205</sup> In 2005 the NGO got international funds (*Fondos para las Américas*, an agreement between the Argentinean government and the USA) to develop the project "Sustainable development for North Misiones" for a period of three years.



train children from rural areas, but also develop projects with some farmers and extend adapted technologies.

The EFA focuses on tertiary level education and coordinates with INDES, APHyDAL and UTTERMI to improve sanitary control of farmers' small husbandry and dairy products, food production and commercialization, and promote agroecological agriculture and the sound management of natural resources.<sup>206</sup>

The Catholic Church has also been an important actor in San Pedro, particularly in the north of the municipality on squatted land in private properties. From the beginning of the 1990's a project has been implemented with farmers in order to increase their food security and to assist with legal information in order to start the process of securing land tenure. With the replacement of a left-wing bishop in 2007 for a more conservative one, the activities in the area stopped.

The table 4 presents a very short synopsis of this section, considering the main characteristic of each actor in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.

Table 4: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Selected municipalities. NGOs and other social organizations. Selected characteristics

ARISTÓBULO DEL VALLE	
ODHAT	NGO. 1999. Some members are extensionist from INTA. Serves as a channel of micro-credits from national state. Promotes indirectly grass-roots organization and food security.
UNEFAM	NGO. 2004. Support construction and strengthening of agro-tourist circuits with few farms. International cooperation (Italian NGO). Local development and non-agricultural income diversification.
EFA	Social organization (school). 1988. Promotes agroecology, sustainable and local development and farmers' organization. Small infrastructure construction and health education.
SAN PEDRO	
INDES	NGO. 1985. International cooperation (German catholic church). Promotes agroecology, support women organization, seed rescue and interchange, alternative health care, grass-root organization and farmers' participation in political spaces. Developed the <i>enfoque integral de chacras</i> approach. Cooperation with RDPs.
APHyDAL	NGO. 2001 (dates back from 1991). International cooperation (German catholic church). They participate in MOCAMI. Has lost support from grass-root organizations and accused of misuse of resources. Cooperation with RDPs.
UNEFAM	NGO. Support construction and strengthening of agro-tourist circuits with few farms. International cooperation (Italian NGO). Local development and non-agricultural income diversification.

<sup>206</sup> This was confirmed during fieldwork, but is also stated in Diaz Espeche (2006: 7) when he mentions that "the EFA with its educational offers... promotes an organic agriculture that is able to secure both the biota in the soil and its fertility, to guarantee biodiversity, to secure healthy food production and independence from industrial inputs, and promote as well the farmers' autonomy and the non usage of agro-toxics". Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

UTTERMI	2003. Members from diverse provincial agencies, NGO and social organizations. Promotes sustainable rural development: agroecology, local seeds varieties production and interchange, alternative health care, legal support to members, political participation. Organize the provincial seed fairs every two years.
EFA + IEA	Social organizations (schools). 1988 and 1991. Coordinates with local NGO and UTTERMI. Agroecology and farm diversification. Seen as related to farmers, IEA to urban middle class. Conflicts of interest do not cooperate with each other.
Catholic Church	Social organization. 1991. Rural development project in north San Pedro. Support social mobilization for land struggle. From 2007 stop intervening.

Source: authors' elaboration.

### *Farmers' organizations*

In this part, I concentrate on those farmers' organizations that are actively working in the rural development arena. These organizations are subjects of rural development interventions (projects, programmes, strategies from the public sector and from NGOs and SOs).<sup>207</sup>

In Aristóbulo del Valle there are cooperatives and associations linked to agriculture production and commercialization, but there are not socio-political organizations focusing specifically on "food production", "agroecology" or "access to land".

There is here an interesting history of cooperative formation. When in 2004 the new local department of agriculture and production opened, fostering local cooperatives was one of the lines of intervention. *Cooperativizar* (to put into cooperatives) the local production was the idea in mind of local politicians.

All the cooperatives opened during the decade of 2000s were created in order to promote diversification in the municipality after facing the falling price of traditional crops (yerba mate, tea and tobacco). They were supported by the local government and received technical assistance from the DAYP and INTA. According to information collected in fieldwork, the members have met each other in training courses carried out by the municipality together with the provincial government. Some of them had met previously, sometimes because they were neighbours. It is important here to state that the setting up of the cooperative was very much the result of a crisis situation. According to some of the interviewees, the agricultural situation was so bad that farmers "hooked up to anything they were offered from the state even though they did not know whether it would work or not".

It is worth mentioning that many farmers are affiliated to more than one cooperative, because they have many crops in their farms. This has a negative

<sup>207</sup> For the description and analysis I have followed the typology outlined in chapter III.

impact in the cooperative participation because they say they have no time to participate in many meetings every month.

At the same time there are political issues behind the cooperatives that need to be commented on. These cooperatives have political connections with the municipality and therefore they work as supporters of the local government. All those organizations that do not support the government may not choose to work with these cooperatives because they are politically opposed. This is the case of the Electric Cooperative Caingúas (*Cooperativa Eléctrica Caingúas Ltda.*) which does not support the local government. The cooperative has accessed financial resources to help its affiliates with fish diversification, constructing infrastructure to handle fish production and storage; but do not collaborate with the fish cooperative *Cerro Moreno* supported by the local government.

In San Pedro, there are more diverse types of farmers' organizations. Here it is possible to find organizations that are actively representing some of the socio-political interests of the family agriculture sector. In this sense, there are not only cooperatives, but also squatters' associations, food production and agroecological associations, and some local social and political grass-roots organizations that are not formally registered but are nevertheless very well known in the province.

Farmers' organizations promoting food production and agroecology, particularly those run by women are very relevant in the context of Misiones. These are some of the few, perhaps the only ones, in the province. In this municipality can be found two organizations, in which mainly women participate, coordinate activities and manage their organizations: Union and Progress and United Rural Women (MRU).

After twenty years of collective activities, women from Union and Progress consider that the objectives of their organization have been well achieved. Among the main achievements they point out (a) increases in self-esteem, (b) friendship, social networks, (c) training in nutrition, (d) improvement in food intake, (e) enlargement of vegetable gardens.

The association has strong links with the Cooperative of Paraíso because many of its members are also members of the local cooperative. However, women state that "husbands and brothers participate there in the cooperative".<sup>208</sup>

The MRU has different projects carried out by women. Some participate in one of the local farmers' markets, others carry out a project to produce vinegar, and some others administrate funding from a national project for unemployed

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<sup>208</sup> Since the association is not registered as such in the provincial legislation for NGOs, when applying for founding they need to use another association legal status. In this case, they use the cooperative's one.

people.<sup>209</sup> They are locally well-known by organizing the annual Fest of Rural Women in San Pedro, an even that gathers rural women and their families from all over the municipality.

The Central Commission of Land (CCT) is an organization that gathers delegates of families that are occupying land in a private property in the north area of the municipality of San Pedro. The families that arrived here created new spaces, localities (*asentamientos*) that have radically changed the geographical space with the introduction of agriculture, human activities and houses.<sup>210</sup> In this area, there are almost no perennial crops. These kinds of crops are significant investment that farmers did not want to make, given the uncertainty of their land tenure. They claim the legal tenure of the land they are occupying, and state they are entitled to it by the provincial Constitution.

In 2004 and after two years of confrontation, the provincial government passed a law to expropriate those areas of the property under occupation and to award them to the families.<sup>211</sup> Since then the grass-roots organization of the families has changed.

Currently, the objectives of the CCT and its sister organization, the Peasant Communities for Agrarian Work (CCTA) are to (i) follow the implementation of the law in order to get legal access of their lands (titles); (ii) channel public and private funding to improve farm infrastructures; (iii) improve agricultural production and yields, (iv) foster crop diversification; (v) search for new markets; (vi) promote organic agriculture; (vii) increase food consumption; (viii) demand provision of public education and the building of schools in the area; (ix) obtain state public services such as electricity, water, roads.

The CCTA has been working with the provincial government supplying grain and seeds of soil cover crops in line with their policy to increase food security. This public project entails the distribution of seeds in diverse municipalities to improve vegetable gardens among rural families. This has helped the members of the organization to move forward and to improve their incomes.

The objectives of the cooperative of Paraíso are to promote alternative products (to yerba mate) with the use of public funding, and to set up a local market hub

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<sup>209</sup> This last project is actually called *Banco de la Buena Fe* and it consists of public founding granted to unemployed people to start up any development project. It was inspired by the micro credit concept of Muhammad Yunus and is managed by an NGO. In the case of San Pedro, APHyDAL is responsible for the administration.

<sup>210</sup> The name of *asentamiento* refers to these new *colonias* that have been constructed spontaneously and gradually with the arrival of families from Misiones and to a lesser extent from Brazil. In these new places there are no public services (electricity, health centres, police stations, schools, etc.). These different *asentamientos* are Pozo Azul, Mondorí, Km. 80, Juanita, Km. 90, Puente Alto, Piray Guazú, Santa Cruz, Picada Unión, Ruta 20.

<sup>211</sup> The law of Settlement and Colonization (*Ley de Arraigo y Colonización*).

of organic food production.<sup>212</sup> They have a special commission dealing with the production and commercialization of grain and local seeds. Their experience in managing seeds for soil cover crops made the cooperative able to trade with tobacco companies, to spread this new practice of soil management among tobacco growers. They also sell seeds to the provincial food security project abovementioned.<sup>213</sup>

The case of the Agroecological Smallholders Producers Local Organization (OPFAL) is exemplary. In 2001 many different local grass-root groups from the municipality that have received support from RDPs and NGOs gave themselves a name and began working on issues regarding family food consumption and production, preservation of local seeds, organic agriculture, artisan agro-industries and commercialization. They are a non-profit association and not a cooperative.

Another case is that of the Peasant Movement of Misiones (MOCAMI). It is actually an organization very much created by the NGO APHyDAL, which gathered farmers' groups from different areas of San Pedro and neighbouring municipalities without any clear purpose or activities. By using this movement, APHyDAL sustain itself in the rural development arena, since it becomes an active actor that can mobilize social bases. However, the NGO is no longer collaborating with any of the local actors in the rural development arena, because they do not consider the NGO to be really working for the farmers' interests.

Finally, the local farmers' markets in Aristóbulo and San Pedro will be described and analysed in the following chapter when describing the agroecological discourse and the construction of seed fairs and local markets.

The table 5 presents a very short synopsis of this section, considering the main characteristic of each actor in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.

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<sup>212</sup> Their "dream" is to have their own brand of organic produce. Since most of the members are tobacco planters this could be an important alternative to reconvert the farms. The members have decided not to collect yerba mate, since they do not have infrastructure to store green leaves or to toast them and sell them with added value.

<sup>213</sup> Nowadays it has 376 registered members, though not all of them participate actively in the meetings and assemblies or in the collective commercialization. They are mainly from Paraíso, but members from other *colonias* also participate. The members are involved in different projects, for instance fifteen of them received financial support from the IFAI to construct fish pools, about seventy six are trying to increase milk production with the help of technical assistance from the provincial government and having in mind the creation of a milk production area (*cuenca lechera*).

Table 5: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Selected municipalities. Farmers' organizations. Selected characteristics

ARISTÓBULO DEL VALLE	
CAFICLA	Cooperative. 2003 (1946). Agriculture and forestry production. Support from municipality (access to information) and provincial state.
CAFRUSEL	Cooperative. 2006. Fruit diversification, Assistance from municipality and INTA to access information. Individual commercialization and production of grape. Do not work yet as cooperative.
'Flor del Parque'	Cooperative. 2006. Honey production. Assistance from municipality to access information. Collective processing, individual commercialization and production.
Cerro Moreno	Cooperative. 2005. Fish diversification. Individual production and commercialization. No market: family consumption and local consumption in Easter. Collective access to information, individual raising and commercialization. Assistance from local government and INTA.
Agriculture and Forestry Association	Association (non-profit). 2006. Cattle raising diversification. Mandatory to receive support from provincial programme. Collective access to information, individual raising and commercialization. Credits from provincial state. Medium-scale farmers and urban dwellers.
Local market	1998. Food commercialisation. Discussed in chapter VII.
SAN PEDRO	
Union and Progress	Agroecological women-run association. 1989. Support from catholic church, local NGOs and RDPs. Promote food production, alternative health care, vegetable gardens and organic production.
United Rural Women	Agroecological women-run association. 2007. Support from PROHUERTA. Together organize the Rural Women's Fest every year in San Pedro. Promote food production and new channels of commercialization. They do not work yet as an autonomous organization.
CCT	Squatters' association. 2001/2008. Support of catholic church and local NGOs. Social mobilization for land tenure. Strong in 2004 (road blockages, marches, protest in capital city). Since 2008: cooperative. Seeks projects to promote market-oriented agriculture in the area. Follows implementation of law 4093
CCTA	Squatters' association. 2004. Follow implementation of law 4093. Channel of public funding for members' projects. Promotes food production, organic agriculture. Demands extension of public services to the area. Cooperation with INDES, supplying seeds to a provincial programme.
Cooperative of Paraiso	1987/2004. Local cooperative for agriculture and forestry. Distributes funding from national and provincial state to improve diversification in members' farms. Seeks new channels of food commercialization. Cooperation with INDES, supplying seeds to provincial programme and tobacco companies.
Cooperative of San Lorenzo	2007. Very much lead and pushed by the local government the members aim to collectively gather yerba and get better prices. Currently intending to get infrastructure to produce toasted yerba mate (value added)
Cattle Association	2006. Compulsory to access provincial funding. It is not working as such. Members (middle-scale farmers) gather to receive credit and access information. Supported by EFA.
OPFAL	Association of farmers. 2001. Promotion of organic agriculture, diversification, food production and artisan industrialization. Used to be supported by APHyDAL.
Local market	1998. Food commercialisation. Discussed in chapter VII.

Source: authors' elaboration.

### *Other actors in the territory*

Agro-industrial companies linked to yerba mate, tea, timber, and tobacco production play an important role in the local economies. Basically, they considered their activities in Misiones highly relevant to bring about development since they are promoting economic growth. However, they do not have new projects to promote “alternatives” to traditional crops and do not participate in the networks that shape up the rural development arena. These companies have no corporate social responsibility programmes or any other similar policies to incorporate the farming sector in their economic activities.

The case of some tobacco companies is particular. The tobacco cooperative (CTM Ltda.) has been cooperating with some NGOs in order to introduce new agronomic techniques in tobacco growers’ farms. The decrease in productivity have made them incorporate new ideas brought from the agroecological discourse about intercrop and soil cover in order to increase productivity of soil, particularly in those farms where tobacco has been grown for many years.

It has been difficult to obtain information that could permit me analysing the understanding of development that native communities have.<sup>214</sup> From information collected through actors assisting some of these communities it can be inferred that their understanding of society and nature is completely different from the rest of the society. Native people live in different communities located in different areas of the province and in Paraguay and Brazil and rotate among them. For them, their territories are those where they can use the native forest. They have no private property and therefore their idea of “development” is not about “improving their space of life, their house, their education, their salaries by accumulating”.<sup>215</sup> If a problem occurs between families, for instance, one of them will leave the community to live in another. They take from the forest “what they need and do not accumulate more than what they can consume”.

Environmental public agencies in Misiones do not have projects or programmes related to the family agriculture sector and rural development (as social justice, environmental care, equality, economic growth, etc.). They intervene with projects for environmental preservation, particularly the native forest. In this sense they deal with natural resources conservation enforcing the provincial laws of land use. Very recently, from the Department of Integrated Management of the Yabotí Reserve of Biosphere (AMIRBY) there have been visits to farmers’ settlements near Yabotí reserve in order to communicate about the importance of the reserve in terms of natural resources’ preservation.

<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, it has been observed that they are not part of the rural development arena.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with project coordinator, National Institute of Native Communities Affairs (INAI), Posadas, 2008.

Environmental NGOs are few but they have been conducting an important promotion of environmental care. In the case of Aristóbulo del Valle, their work is focus on urban areas while in San Pedro on the remnants of the native forest. In general, it can be affirmed that their ideas about development have to do with the use of nature in a harmonious way. They do not work with farmers though.

In the table 6 below, there is a list of different actors that are part of the territory in the selected municipalities. These actors are not actively participating in the rural development arena, they have not projects of intervention in the farming sector.

Table 6: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Selected municipalities. Companies, native communities and environmental public agencies and NGOs. Selected characteristics

ARISTÓBULO DEL VALLE	
Agro-industrial companies	Large-scale yerba mate and tea companies (e.g. El Vasco), middle scale planted and native timber sawmills, small forestry companies. Tobacco companies (Tabaco Norte, BLASA, CTM Ltda., CIMA)
Native communities	Seven native communities in natural parks (Kapi'i Poty, Ka'aguy Poty, Yvy Pytá, Ka'a Kupe, Guaraní, Virgen María, Ita Kuruchu)
Environmental public agencies	Delegation of the Provincial Ministry of Ecology
Environmental NGOs	Cuña Pirú Association
SAN PEDRO	
Agro-industrial companies	Middle scale sawmills, few middle scale yerba mate companies, large-scale forestry companies (Alto Paraná, Forestal Belga, among others.) and logging (Puente Alto, Colonizadora Misionera, Los Cencerros, Larraghe, etc.). Tobacco companies (Tabaco Norte, CTM Ltda.)
Native communities	Around ten in Yabotí Reserve (Pindó Poty, Caramelito, Jeji, Kuri, Takuaruchu, Aracha Poty, Tekoa Yma, Itachí, Kapi'i Yvaté) and two outside (Guvirá Poty and Pozo Azul)
Environmental public agencies	Delegation of the Provincial Ministry of Ecology and Department of Integrated Management of the Yabotí Reserve of (AMIRBY)
Environmental NGOs	Many non local (Fundación Temaikén, Fundación de Historia Natural Felix de Azara, etc.)

Source: authors' elaboration.

## Family agriculture and the state: actors in cooperation / confrontation

Taking into consideration the kind of actors in these municipalities and their history of intervention in rural development, some interesting elements can be discerned, which help to comprehend the territorial dynamics they are currently



fostering. In this section, an analysis of the actors' relations is undertaken; focusing on the participation the state has had in facilitating the emergence of new actors and new networks in rural areas.

The roles of RDPs and NGOs are essential to comprehend the introduction of new discourses and practices of development in the province of Misiones. Public state agencies, both at the provincial and national level, do not have the same relevance as NGOs or RDPs. This is in relation to the promotion of social and political aspects of development such as grass-roots organization, social and political participation and articulations of demands to the state. Nevertheless, not all RDPs and NGOs are similar regarding their objectives and discourses.

Rural Development Programmes present different structures of functioning, different methods of financing and different target beneficiaries. All RDPs have been designed and implemented during the same period (1990s) and they share some similarities. Their institutional organization determines much of what can be done with respect to the promotion of grass-roots organization, social participation and cooperation with other local actors (Nardi, 2002). Those RDPs that are intervening by promoting social dimensions of development such as social participation or organization and showing strongest local networking are PSA-PROINDER and PROHUERTA from the national state.

In the case of NGOs, differences can be observed with respect of their relations with the state and with the kind of development they promote. This can be partly explicated by their different organizational structures, but is mainly explained by the various objectives they have given for themselves and the different periods in which they were created. In the municipalities under study, it is feasible to find examples of these two kinds of NGOs described in chapter IV: "traditional" and "new" NGOs. In San Pedro, for instance, INDES is a clear illustration of the first kind and ODHAT in Aristóbulo of the second kind. Their relations with the state is different: while INDES has historically confronted the state and demanded its intervention for poverty reduction and social equity, ODHAT depends on public funding and is uncritically executing social and development policies designed by the state.

The differences between similar NGOs are revealed when comparing their methodology in the field, in concrete practices of intervention. The clearest example is in connection with the land issue, in San Pedro. In this highly political issue, the methods employed are important to understand the networks and possibilities for negotiation. APHyDAL has been much more confrontational in their protest against the provincial government than INDES, at least in the discourse, and encouraged the public mobilization of squatters. This has limited at some point the number of APHyDAL's political allies, as can be observed in the following comment:

“For instance, if we talk only about getting money for small development projects, our network and relationships are solid, because everybody is committed. But if we talk about a direct action for the land issue, which for us is much more important than small projects, it is not the same. The alliance is reduced by 30%. Then, we were always very curious about those changes in support between one issue and the other, considering that it is always the same people, that we all say we are going to support each other” (member, APHyDAL, San Pedro, 2004).

There are some disagreements and an explicit lack of positioning of the local public agencies on the methodology to follow on with respect to the land issue. Example of this is the ‘more combative’ way that the APHyDAL used to have in order to mobilize the squatters’ organizations (protests, riots and block routes) which was not supported by other local NGOs and RDPs.

Turning now to the farmers’ organizations, it is also possible to distinguish different kinds according to the historical period and actors behind their creation. Those traditional organizations of farmers, such as tobacco associations or yerba mate cooperatives, characterize the usual interests of the sector (to improve farmers’ position in the market in face of the concentrated demand of products by the agro-industries).

However there are other farmers’ organizations, born more autonomously and from the interests of their members. They are in many cases the result of a persistent process of organization supported by RDPs and/or NGOs. They represent another type of interests, focused on the rural family, diversification, biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, small farms’ integrated management, the increase and improvement of family food production, nutrition and health care, the importance of the woman’s role in the family and the community, and the search of new channels of commercialization in which the farmers could have greater decision-making power. They promote a new different model of rural development (centred on food production) to the conventional one (based on industrial crops, the link with agro-industries, and a strong male presence in the organization of the agriculture production and the domestic economy). This new model is locally categorized as “alternative”. This is the case for example of agroecological or food production organizations, land struggle organizations or organization where women have an important presence such as those in San Pedro, or the local farmers’ markets in both municipalities.

The decade beginning in 2000 has seen the creation of many different farmers’ associations in the province, including in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro. The context of state outsourcing should not be overlooked. Many of the organizations studied in both municipalities have pointed to the provincial and national state as one of the reasons behind their creation: (a) “the state needed a formal association to talk to”, (b) “the state gives credits to formal associations”

(c) “there is a provincial programme that intervene with associations”, (d) “in order to be beneficiaries we have to create an organization”, (e) “only when you are organized the state hears your claims” (f) “they [politicians] told us to create a cooperative”.

Indeed, in Aristóbulo del Valle, farmers are very critical of the incentives they got to create cooperatives. They recognize that “an illusion was created in the people” (“*se creó una ilusión a la gente*”). They believe this because some farmers reached an important level of production, however they do not have a place/method to store it or sell it. The cooperatives do not have the necessary infrastructure and do not have the technicians who can find markets and help them with the logistics, leading to claims by members that “there is no benefit yet”. One of the members of the farmers’ local market and the CAFLICA refers to those cooperatives as “inventions”, meaning that somebody invented them; they were not born out of a real process of grass-roots participation and organization.

In the case of the fruit, honey and fish cooperatives in Aristóbulo, some farmers claim that the volume of production and the difficulty to produce constantly all year round, along with organizational problems have meant that the cooperatives are not actually functioning as such, but more as an interest group. The members are expecting to attract national funds to start up “a more serious production”. The farmers formed cooperatives in order to benefit from economies of scale. Among their motives, they mention that “it is difficult for an extensionist to visit us if we are not united”, and that “we can use it to buy jointly the inputs and therefore to get discount and save some money”. The cooperatives seem to work as a social space for diffusion of information, training courses and distribution of subsidies and sporadic benefits from the state.

As long as these new crops and products are part of a diversified farm where yerba mate and/or tea are still “occupying space and time” for the farmers, it will be difficult for farmers to specialize or to try to put forward new crops. It is also true that the state even though is promoting diversification, has not yet considered the commercial part: how to link the new crops and products with the market? There are no resources designated for marketing, logistics, and other activities necessary for the project’s sustainability. Therefore all these new productions are traded individually and/or used for family consumption. As one of the interviewees mentioned: “now the provincial programme for fish farming finished in 2007 and we are just there as usual”.

The importance of the local cooperatives in San Pedro should not be underestimated in terms of territorial dynamics generated at “micro” scale. They contribute to the creation of new social spaces in the *colonias*. Since they are geographically and not product oriented as in the case of Aristóbulo, they are

helping in the construction of new territories through location-specific community identity building.<sup>216</sup>

The objectives of the cooperatives are broad and not only involve production but also services. As with the local schools and churches, these new cooperatives are involved in the formation of new local identities, rooting people to their place of belonging. In Aristóbulo, since cooperatives are product oriented and members belong to many different *colonias*, this dynamic cannot be observed.

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Some of the actors that participate in the rural development arena claim for agriculture “modernization”. They refer to the standardization and specialization of crops reliant on agro-chemicals for greater productivity (natural resources and labour) which would eventually permit insertion into dynamic markets. In Misiones, the linkage to the tobacco agro-industry is framed within this conception. Some actors promote the incorporation of new genetically modified high-yielding crops such as soya, corn or pine, or the usage of industrial non organic agro-chemicals sold by international corporations.

This model focuses on one or two agricultural products and considers the farm as an economic unit of production that can work efficiently and sustainably manage natural resources. Even they are intervening with farmers; their “alternatives” have to do more with improving existing crops and value chains than creating new ones or constructing new economic and political spaces. They are part of the rural development arena because they promote family agriculture and not *agriculture without farmers*.

There are other actors in the rural development arena that show other concerns when reflecting about agriculture and development. They draw attention to the social and political aspects of it. It seeks to promote the active involvement of farmers in diverse socio-economic and political spaces. Their aim is to reorganize the family agriculture sector and, by means of mechanisms of representation, create a political actor with power to position their interest in the state while at the same time conquering new markets.

Food and nutrition security, sustainable use of natural resources, organic agriculture, farmers’ autonomy from large-scale agro-industries, and political mobilization of farmers through grass-roots organization (associations or cooperatives) are elements of this “paradigm”. These elements are mainly supported by local NGOs and some of the RDPs from the national state (such as those more open for social participation PSA-PROINDER, PROHUERTA).

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<sup>216</sup> Members of local cooperatives say that they “belong” to San Lorenzo or Paraíso Cooperative because “they are” from *colonia* San Lorenzo or *colonia* Paraíso, and therefore they are members in that particular cooperative.

In fact, some local agencies and organizations that take part in rural development in the municipalities under study do not completely commune with this kind of conceiving development. Their ideologies are different and set priorities in a different way. This might be the case of some public agencies (*Colono* House, IFAI and partly INTA) because their proposal of rural development intervention is centred on modernizing agriculture from a technical point of view. The social aspects are not so relevant, they observe, and there is no need to organize the family agriculture sector for political purposes. These agencies seek to implement actions centred on the incorporation of technological packages, produce specialization and standardization, consumption of agro-chemical and genetically modified seeds.

Actors adhering to the construction of a rural development model political and socially-oriented shape most of the networks and build the most collective strategies. In general terms, RDPs and NGOs working on this kind of rural development find their motivation in a notion of food security and sovereignty that highlight “the right of the people to decide what should be produced and how, and who to commercialize it with and how”. In Misiones, this is very much connected to the idea of land security, the legal and real access to land. Some of the local NGOs promote access to land and its real appropriation, not only tenure. To be able to appropriate land, farmers need to put it under production and find a decent life out of it:

“Our conception of land security is not only access, property rights and the papers to prove it, we need effective occupation: the sustainable link between the family and the land, which necessitates the creation of a secure system of production that ensures the sustainability of our land” (member NGO, San Pedro, 2004).

Since in Aristóbulo del Valle there are not important problems of land tenure in the farmer sector, the land struggle is limited to native communities backed by some other local and national NGOs and SOs. Actors involved in the arena of native communities’ development do not cooperate with those in the rural development arena and they do not compete for resources.<sup>217</sup>

The abovementioned is relevant, since it can be observed that discourses and practices that emanate from the rural development arena tend to relegate native communities, who are also actors in rural spaces. Presumably, this is because the activities fostered by rural development actors primarily revolve around agriculture. Many native communities in Misiones are dependent on hunting, gathering, small-scale subsistence agriculture, part time salaries or social

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<sup>217</sup> However, since 2008 there has been an incursion in Aristóbulo del Valle of some RDPs (PRODERNEA) into some of the native communities to give them support for the introduction of new crops and commercialization of handicrafts.

assistance for their reproduction. In addition, they do not perform market-oriented agriculture nor consider themselves farmers.

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There are some actors in the rural development arena whose discourse is more focused on environmental dimensions of agriculture sustainability. There are some others who put more attention on socio-political aspects of the sustainability of the family agriculture sector. Although most actors in the rural development arena greatly consider the sustainable use of natural resources, there are some actors that have a particularly strong ecological concern. Those actors are considered by some locals as “ecologists”. They centre their discourses on natural resource sustainability and they oppose the introduction of non organic inputs, the usage of pesticides or herbicides, the slash and burn technique and other forms of technical management that farmers are currently using that, according to them, have proven to be environmentally unsustainable in the long term.

Some local actors believe that this “ecologist” approach is somewhat extreme and that such a kind of intervention with farmers should be reconsidered since some farmers have limited abilities and capacities to take advantage of certain positive contexts (for example diversify incomes, use available technology) and could benefit from introducing chemicals or pine for instance. The following statements are very illustrative:

“Ecologists have a tendency not only to conserve native forest but not to work with chemicals. That is not our method of intervention. To give you an example, we make forestry portfolios with the Secretary of Agriculture of the Nation. It is a way for the farmer to capitalize, that’s the way we understand it. Misiones has a natural potential for forestry. But these people don’t agree that pine or eucalyptus is planted. So when they have meetings with the farmers we have these differences... if a guy comes here because he wants to make 10 hectares of pine we help him. I believe that at the end, this is a way for farmers to have better incomes, to get capitalized. They say the same: “If I had started 20 years ago, I would have now some capital in my farm” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

“That’s a very ecologist vision. The farmers do not agree on that. And I understand because they are very practical. We discuss sometime the use of *Roundup*. The farmer says: “I cannot keep it clean if it wasn’t for the herbicide” The cleaning of the farm, with the hoe or hoeing, or with a tractor here is more harmful than to use an herbicide for instance” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Roundup is an herbicide based on *glifosato* produced and sold in Argentina by Monsanto.

On the other hand, there are other actors that centre their discourses on radical aspects of social and political participation of farmers. In general, they confront the state and/or the current governments because these are considered to actively work on behalf of large-scale corporations, supporting the introduction of large capitals in the agriculture sector, the spread of agribusiness in detriment of family agriculture, and the unsustainable use of natural resources. These actors consider that this macro model of development can be reversed, but only through active political mobilization. They confront the neoliberal model of economic growth introduced in the 1990s:

“They [the extensionist team of a local NGO] come with some theories taken from *Montoneros* in the 1970’s, the theory of the government under dispute.<sup>219</sup> Kirchner’s government is a government to be challenged... where there is a possibility of transformation, and the government has to be disputed. The staff started gradually raising the flag of food sovereignty... So, their main activity is the confrontation... the main contradiction they want to show is between agribusiness and food sovereignty” (member, NGO, Posadas, 2008).

### **The rural development arena in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro**

Even though it is possible to talk about one provincial rural development arena in Misiones that focuses on interventions with small-scale farmers through the coordination of activities, interchange of information, search for financial resources etc. there are some particularities at local level regarding the way that discourses about family agriculture, food production, food security and sovereignty and environmental care are implemented.

Findings from both areas of study (Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro) confirm that policies and strategies of rural development in each municipality are different. This may be due to territorial constraints present in each municipality as well as the farmers’ level of capitalization.<sup>220</sup>

These territorial limitations are easy to observe in San Pedro. The limitations for the expansion of agriculture restrict also the kind of projects that can be implemented. Such restrictions include (a) the presence of natural parks reserved as conservation areas, (b) the large properties owned by a few logging/forestry companies, (c) the lack of communication infrastructure, (d) the long distance to

<sup>219</sup> *Montoneros* was a left-wing guerrilla group associated to the *Peronist* party. It was active between 1960s and 1970s and dismantled during the dictatorship that ruled Argentina between 1976 and 1983.

<sup>220</sup> In Chapter IV I have explained that farmers in these municipalities have different levels of capitalization.

the local and provincial markets, and (e) the irregular conditions of access to land (land squatted).<sup>221</sup>

San Pedro can be conceptualized as a ‘territory under construction’, since it is the agrarian frontier in the province. Historically, the provincial state was not active here, even though the area fell under its jurisdiction from 1954. It was the territory of forestry companies dedicated to exploiting the native forest. Agriculture was not developed and the processes of settlement, much a characteristic of the rest of the province, could not be observed here until relatively recent. Consequently, when the frontier slowly started moving toward San Pedro with the advance of agriculture, it was not longer forestry companies but tobacco corporations, diverse churches and, later, NGOs who took over the role of accompanying the new settlements.

The lack of public services, the past experience of farmers coming from other areas and the proliferation of tobacco plantations led local actors intervening in rural development to focus on social aspects of agriculture and on environmental and political ones as well. The fact that many abandoned their farms because of soil deterioration is important to understanding the demand for a new method of natural resources management.

Therefore in San Pedro, rural development is based on the idea of securing livelihoods and natural resource sustainability, not only to stop migration and slash and burn but also to increase productivity and incomes. These activities seek to create dynamics to toward people’s welfare and environment care. In this sense, there is a rejection of (a) large-scale monoculture (*el desierto verde*, the “green desert”), (b) contract farming (tobacco), (c) abuse of agro-chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) and (d) natural resources overexploitation, among others.

In San Pedro, is more easily to observe the implementation of new activities, locally categorized as “alternative”. The centre of the alternative rural development discourse is family agriculture, agroecology and food security. Many local actors gather around these issues, and coordinate activities around food production. Very much linked with this are the following topics: health improvement and alternative medicine, new channels of commercialization, political mobilization, and grass-roots organization. However, for instance, there are not links with native communities, other important actors in rural areas. Native communities in San Pedro have such a complete different understanding of society and nature that it makes it difficult for many actors in the rural development arena to interact with them.

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<sup>221</sup> Many local actors involved in the rural development arena sustain that the creation of nature conservation areas in the municipality is an important part of the ongoing territorial dynamics because actors are clashing over the use of the forest. This was discussed in the previous chapter.



The circumstances are different in Aristóbulo. Here, the territorial limitations present in San Pedro cannot be observed. The areas of nature conservation do not present a social problem for family agriculture, since there is no pressure over access to land by the farming sector. Most of the farmers have access to land with permits from the provincial state, or hold tenure. Since most of the land is put under production, there are not squatters occupying private land.

Aristóbulo is a municipality that has been expelling inhabitants towards those areas in the agrarian frontier. Connections to other towns and to markets are much better here due to the development of infrastructure (communication and transport). There are not currently environmental problems connected to large-scale forestry, because tree plantation is carried out on a small-scale.<sup>222</sup> However, soil is showing higher levels of deterioration in comparison to San Pedro. A local farmer from Aristóbulo refers to the differences between municipalities and the concerns in family agriculture, explaining that the main problem in the municipality where he lives are markets and state support while in San Pedro the complication are others:

“What the *colono* [farmer] needs are markets, to have access to markets; and subsidies for machinery. But here [in Aristóbulo] the *chacras* [farms] are more organized than in San Pedro. Here there is better access to shops. San Pedro is remote. We have more chances to get better prices. There they are cheated by the purchases of yerba mate or timber that take out [buy] and do not pay back. They received lower prices. There are ghost companies that stole yerba with false checks” (*feriante*, local market, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

In Aristóbulo, actors in the rural development arena aim also to secure livelihoods and natural resource sustainability. However, there activities are not discursively framed in opposition to monoculture or contract farming (tobacco growing). The higher level of capitalization of local farmers in this municipality and the almost lack of NGOs do not permit “radical” discourses of agriculture transformation. Even though some actors focus their interventions on food security and political participation and organization (PROHUERTA, PSA-PROINDER, DAYP and to a lesser extent ODHAT), rural development actors centre their actions and discourses on issues such as: increasing crop productivity, quantity and stability (for the market); access to new provincial and regional markets; crop diversification with specialization.

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<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, most of the farmers’ organizations interviewed in both municipalities have complained that the gradual increase in areas for forestry is generating a shortage of water for agriculture. Therefore, this must be a common characteristic where family agriculture and forestry plantation coexist.

Gradually here a local team of extensionists has been formed. The members of this team simultaneously belong to different organizations and gather to collaborate on the construction and coordination of new projects of intervention. This close collaboration is based on personal relations and not institutional demands. They share some common understanding about rural development and have learnt to put aside institutional or political conflict in order to work together.

Consequently, there is in Aristóbulo a space where different people (and the organizations they represent) congregate. Here, ideas of rural development are discussed and conceptualized though not without conflict. Public servants from the municipality do not participate in this collective space. Indeed, the provincial and the local government do not even collaborate with each other. In general terms, the provincial agencies are less able to collaborate with and relate to other local actors. This might be because the public agencies from the provincial government are more easily controlled by politicians from the capital or the local mayor. National agencies do not have such political pressure and can collaborate with whoever they want or consider necessary to reach more beneficiaries or have a greater impact. The fact that in this municipality the *Colono* House is part of the local extensionist team is very peculiar and it was up to the technician himself, not part of the institutional strategy.<sup>223</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned local extensionist team, actors in the rural development arena in Aristóbulo do not collaborate. In fact, each public organization (mainly public agencies since they are the most active actors) try to catch a “client” and “capture” beneficiaries for their own status as a “local actor in the rural development arena” or a “rural development organization”. The following comment is therefore remarkable, since it shows the importance the extension officers put on farmers: “If you work with a farmer, you have a secure job. If you lose the farmer, you lose your job” (extensionist, INTA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

This means that some of the families that have been beneficiaries of rural development strategies obtain resources (technical assistance, seeds, subsidies, training courses, etc.) from more than one actor. This is aware by extensionists most of the time. In some cases then they try to make it formal and coordinate scarce public resources:

“[The programme] *Minifundio* only had resources for mobility, training, and support for the organization, all those things, and some for seeds. But we did

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<sup>223</sup> As he states: “I am a part of this team because I want, I need to work with other people. I was going through bad times emotionally and I seek to work with others to get out of my depression. From the provincial government they don’t expect that I collaborate with other local actors. I do it because I want to. If suddenly I wanted to stop, I could do it” (public extensionist from the provincial government, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

not have money and financing for the [farmers'] groups. So, at some point, when PSA was launched, what we did was to coordinate [activities together]. Because we were working around a project and we needed people to, for instance, construct a chicken coop" (extensionist, PSA-PROINDER, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

In Aristóbulo del Valle, there are no collectively coordinated activities that can foster the same construction of new territorial dynamics as observed in San Pedro (such as the creation of new local markets, political mobilization and organization, agroecological associations). The current organizations with political weight are still the traditional ones: cooperatives and "unions" (yerba mate and tobacco). Since there is already easier access to markets and closer processing agroindustries as compared to San Pedro, the actors in the rural development arena are more concerned with introduction of new crops and increasing productivity to supply the growing regional market. The discourses here are not so much framed in political terms. Nevertheless, the creation of many new cooperatives orientated towards the specialization of crops or the introduction of new crops may be interesting in terms of the changing agricultural profile: the eradication of yerba mate to introduce pastures and breed livestock could signal an important change in the territory, if farmers could gain more autonomy from the yerba mate or tobacco agro-industries. As in the case of San Pedro, actors in the rural development arena do not fully integrate the native communities into their discourses and practices.

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San Pedro's rural development arena can be characterized by the diversity of actors, in particular those actors that represent new emerging elements in Misiones countryside: food production and agroecology associations and land squatters' organizations. This emergence needs to be understood within the work done by NGOs and national RDPs that support a different vision of rural development.

Since the strategies promoted are focus on food production, the role of women in agriculture, seems to be acquiring a different relevance in the public sphere. They are now in charge not only of producing food at home but also of its commercialization in towns. Women's agriculture (family-oriented) generally differ the agriculture based on traditional industrial crops in the province (yerba mate, tea, tobacco) for which male family members are in charge of dealing with prices, markets, commercialization, unions and agro-industries.

The establishment of squatters' grass-roots organizations, which are still claiming land expropriation and tenure in San Pedro, shows that the current provincial state strategies for land regulation are not enough to solve pressure over land. The newly created associations understand that it is not only land, but

the whole “package” that they need to have access to: credit, public and private assistance (technical and organizational), adapted technologies and markets. Newly created cooperatives in other areas of the municipality also support this cause.

## **Some reflections**

In this chapter I have seek to show how actors intervening in rural development are trying to implement strategies conducting to ameliorate the social discontent in rural areas, particularly in the family agriculture sector. They implement strategies to (a) improve families’ nutrition and food security; (b) regularize land access; (c) promote sustainable natural resource management; (d) extend adapted technologies to farmers’ organizations and rural families; (e) reach farmers’ organizations with financial support; and (f) promote the political and economic organization of farmers.

It is interesting to remark that despite the importance of tobacco production in the provincial economy and in farmers’ economy, these agencies, NGOs and social organizations do not promote activities related to tobacco production. Rather, their actions and activities are focused on creating new alternatives to the plantation of this crop. In the medium and long term, however, their strategies seek to position politically the family agriculture sector. It is for this reason that issues related to other spheres of welfare, such as access to the public health system, education or housing services (water, electricity and roads) even though are not directly addressed they are very much part of the demands and claims of the family agriculture sector and those actors accompanying them.

Finally, it is important to reflect on the role that agro-industries, native communities and environmental public agencies and NGOs have in the rural development arena. It may seem that these kinds of actors do not actively participate in the promotion of family agriculture or the construction of alternative discourses.

More recently, there has been an approach to interchange experiences between rural development NGOs and companies, particularly tobacco ones, and environmental NGOs. This was motivated by a common interest: the preservation of natural resources (soil, forest). There has been also an approach between some RDPs and native communities. The interest in this case has been the expansion of state intervention in other areas than farming and the increase of public funding in native communities territories to perform agriculture.

## **Chapter VII – Agroecology, seed fairs and local markets**

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### **Introduction**

In this chapter I seek to describe, analyse and reflect on the promotion of agroecology, food production and the construction of seed fairs and local markets as novel territorial dynamics in the province of Misiones. In the first section, I give a general idea about the agroecology perspective in the province, how the discourse was gradually built up, the ideas that support it and the social, political and economic implications of an ecological agriculture. Subsequently, in the second section, I present the actors that frame their activities within this discourse and show the diverse ways they conceptualize agroecology.

I then focus on those collective spaces (social, cultural but also political) created around agroecology. I refer in particular to the seed fairs and the Movement for the Peasants' Seeds of Misiones. This movement works as a network of actors in the province dealing with issues related to family agriculture. The dynamics it generates both locally in the selected municipalities and elsewhere in the province are very interesting, though very much underestimated in the provincial state policies. Later, in the fourth section, I analyse the local markets as collective spaces of commercialization, which are also generating innovative organization of production and rural-urban linkages. In both cases, I describe the particular kinds of actors that participate and do not participate in these collective spaces.

Finally, I take into consideration the constraints to put forward an agroecological organization of the family agriculture and the construction of an 'alternative rural development'. The conflicts and tensions between farmers' practices and public agencies and NGOs are highlighted here.

Some of the main productive and economic issues that actors involved in the rural development arena are facing, are farmers' need to reconvert from low value crops (yerba mate) or crops with negative environmental impact (tobacco) to other crops that are environmentally friendly and that could lead to improved food security and family nutrition (corn, cassava, horticulture, small animal farming, etc.) or that have high value (pine, cattle). However, the agroecological discourse finds the latter problematic, and tension between diversification and specialization has sprung up.

## The agroecology perspective in Misiones

The agroecology perspective in the province is framed not only in terms of economic and environmental concerns, but political ones. Although there are different rationales, in general all actors pursuing a new, different or “alternative” rural development practices and politics agree on the need to question the slash and burn agriculture and the value chains where farmers are engaged. As I shall show, the discourse is not only about how to do agriculture, but also the need to reflect on it in terms of food security and autonomy. The problem of how to manage natural resources is put in a wider context: the re-organization of agriculture itself. This perspective considers what to produce, how to do it, where to commercialize, who to trade with, the role of the state, and participatory interventions, among others. A provincial referent mentions that agroecology is not only concerned with the production aspects of agriculture:

“...agroecology is much more than that [soil and forest conservation for production and productivity]. There is a discussion on the social aspects of agriculture, the struggle for prices, social organization, the political question, the discussion about this model, the representativeness of farmers. All this is part of agroecology. You are discussing those things, not only the productive question” (provincial public servant, Posadas, November 2008).

The empirical evidence collected during the present research shows that in Misiones, the agroecological perspective for the re-organization of agriculture production seeks: (a) sustainable management of natural resources (soil, water, forest and genetic material), (b) an agriculture free of pesticides and other chemical inputs to eliminate pollution of soil and water and (c) more autonomy from extra-local actors (providers of seeds, soil fertilizers and pesticides, etc.), (d) an increase in farm productivity (not only crop productivity), (e) healthier production and consumption to improve family nutrition intake at the farm and local level, (f) a sustainable farm in the long term, (g) the construction of local markets, and (h) the creation of new channels of commercialization, among other items.

The discourse and practice around agroecology were reinforced during the 1990s by actors linked to new rural development programmes from the public and NGO sectors. Some local farmers’ organizations were aware of the ongoing degradation of natural resource degradation, decrease in yields, decline in farm incomes, rural-urban migration and the pressure of the agrarian frontier on the last remains of native forest and public land. These lead to the creation in 1993

of a local network for organic agriculture (Network of Organic Agriculture of Misiones, RAOM).<sup>224</sup>

In the last decade, these negative effects became more evident, due to the decreased state regulation of the agriculture sector, the increase of investment in industrial agriculture (mainly large-scale forestry, but also tobacco), the gradual abandonment of farmers from their land, the creation of vast areas for nature conservation and the incursion of international corporations in rural areas (which has increased the use of chemicals and water and soil pollution).

When the PSA launched its activities in the province in 1993, agroecological practices were fostered as a different way for farmers to appropriate land, water and forest. The understanding that land degradation caused low incomes and productivity and pushed farmers off their land led to the inclusion of environmental concerns into the developmental agenda. The staff programme in Misiones linked this impoverishment with “chemical agriculture”. In fact, PSA explains the introduction and entrenchment of the industrial agriculture model as a cause of natural resource degradation and farmers impoverishment. In this sense, the following state is very illustrative:

“The use of chemical agriculture based on the destruction of the jungle, monocultures and use of agro-chemicals brought the impoverishment of the soils, poisoning of water and people, loss of biodiversity and, in some cases, pushed families to migrate in search of virgin lands. The increasing use of inputs made many farmers effectively debt slaves. Other migrated to the city looking for a job. It was and it is urgent to return to an organic agriculture that fits nature cycles, is based on solidarity and equality, which stands for life and not death. A [kind of] agriculture that acts upon the causes and not its effects. [A kind of agriculture] that respects life in the soil, forest and peasant families” (PSA, 1999: 22).

Since PSA was a participatory RDP, the idea of creating a more sustainable agriculture, transforming tobacco plantation into food production, constructing new markets and new political and economic alliances was increasingly shared between local NGOs and farmers’ organizations.

The latent conflict between agriculture and biodiversity conservation seems to have been conciliated here with this approach. Instead of continuing encroaching on the forest, farmers would need to stabilize their agriculture by crop and income diversification, applying techniques of soil and water management (green covers, terracing, intercropping, crop rotation, application of organic fertilizer, use of locally adapted seeds and other genetic material etc.). Some of the local actors recognize that this way of doing agriculture was

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<sup>224</sup> *Red de Agricultura Orgánica de Misiones.*

“already used by the native inhabitants of our America” (PROHUERTA, 2005: 29). There is an implicit desire to “go back” to an organization of the production that, according to some, was better adapted to the environment.

It is important to frame this kind of sustainable agriculture in the context of legal access to land and the need to regularize land tenure. The notion of creating a more sustainable agriculture model is particularly relevant in San Pedro, where many families occupying private land are in the process of acquiring its tenure. Many NGOs agree that it is not only important the land formal tenure, but also crucial that farmers are truly able to put it under production and live off it. The following comment illustrates this point:

“Legal possession of land is as important as generating economic and productive strategies that could allow sustainable management of land and natural resources such as water and forest. [It is also important] to generate decent living conditions on the farms to make people stay and not sell. We believe this is the only way a secure livelihood can be achieved in the middle term. That’s the reason we believe that the intervention should complementarily [involve] those two fields: management to secure legal access to land, and generation of productive and sustainable strategies. [We must] create markets and development activities that add value to the produce... to strengthen family food consumption, the production of their own food, and sources of energy” (staff member, NGO, Posadas, 2008).

It can be observed that the discourse goes beyond the actual problem of biodiversity loss, putting the families in the centre of the concern, and pointing out their right to live in the countryside, their right to continue living from agriculture, the right to have a good quality of life in the rural space and the right to chose what kind of development should be promoted by the majority.

According to those actors in the rural development arena in Misiones, the “resistance” is not against an abstract and distant model of agriculture. It is against a model of agriculture in which families and environment have engaged since the 1970s, particularly with the Burley tobacco “boom”. International companies introduced a different way of doing agriculture completely standardized in its proceedings, with a high level of chemical use, in which expert knowledge is central but is located within the spheres of the companies and not the farmers:

“The whole technological package is managed by the cooperative through a service company: spraying, calendar of spraying, time, what to use, how to use it, the harvest, everything. The farmer contributes the land and his labour at some point, and then the rest is decided by the [tobacco] company. And afterwards they discount all these costs. Then the farmers sign, an amount from the machine, and amount from the liquid, and the farmers don’t know



what that is. If you ask, they don't know what it contains. Then it comes the harvest, they arrive to the collection place, they get their product classified, it comes the classification resume. And the classification resume always is bad. They harvest 3.000 kilos, 20 [kilos] first category, the rest [are lower categories] then the prices are according to categories, they get an amount for it. They retain the costs and finally they pay them. But always a misery [very very little]" (local extensionist, MAYP, Posadas, 2008).

In this context, most of those adhering to an agroecological strategy for family agriculture promote it as a way to improve the market and political position of farmers by increasing their autonomy from tobacco companies. These companies are observed as instruments of large-scale capital entering the provincial agriculture sector and transforming the farm economy by means of excluding farmers from or subordinating them to the agro-industrial complex. Some farmers from the municipality of San Pedro commented on the importance of taking care of soil fertility or cultivating their own seeds, because the alternative would be the use of agro-chemicals, an increasing cost of production and lack of autonomy from fertilizer corporations:

"I don't burn things. I could do it, because it is easier to clean [the land] but if I burn this I am giving space to the company, to those companies that make compost; because I will have to buy in the future if I burn all this" (farmer, CCTA, San Pedro, 2009).

"We understand that there is increasing pressure from outside, from large companies that produce seeds, [that have] monopolies of seed... if a farmer cannot get access to seed... without seed he doesn't do agriculture. And what happens if tomorrow he loses all the genetic material, how do we start? To start planting we'll have to depend on somebody else. With transgenic seed, with the 'terminator' seed, once it's harvested, it doesn't grow anymore. To bring this here [is not good idea] ... open pollination can occur; for instance corn is very easy to get crossed... So to bring that to our territory, to a certain geographical space, seeds will cross and gradually seeds will be finished, because they are not going to germinate anymore. In the future then, they can ask for any price for the seeds" (farmer and local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

In Aristóbulo del Valle, some extensionists are trying to construct an agroecological network of farms in the province to show how to manage a farm without chemicals. This of course requires the production of crops other than tobacco: "We want to show with these [systems] that it is possible to live in the farm without producing tobacco," (local extensionist, INTA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

Nevertheless, the agroecology understood by the extensionists (public agencies, RDPs and NGOs) might differ from the concept as understood by farmers. Certainly, it was technicians who have actively started the promotion of this kind of agriculture. Since the beginning of last century when agriculture was introduced in Misiones, family farmers have been doing agriculture almost in the same way (removing the native forest, diversifying the farm with market oriented crops, etc.). It has been the current situation described before which has showed the limits of this organization. Therefore it is not only tobacco but the whole agriculture organization under question.

According to some local extensionists, the concepts that sustain the agroecology discourse are very abstract for farmers to understand. They need to observe how it works on their own land; they need to see them implemented not just hear the theory. They believe that farmers can understand and incorporate agroecological practices better when they apply them in their own farms. In San Pedro for instance, there is an interesting example which brings about light into this point: the common management of water.

In order to manage water, the local cooperative had to be aware of the whole water dynamic and the factors influencing it. A local extensionist states that the families wanted to manage water successfully so they had to learn about the dynamics of the basin, the actors doing agriculture, the land owners, the kinds of chemicals used. As a result, the environmental concerns became concrete and were no longer abstract:

“The [water] cooperative will have the opportunity, at some point, to work the environmental concern from the water perspective; because if they run out of water in the sources, there will be one hundred people without water. Then the environmental issue has a meaning, else it is very abstract” (local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

## **Agroecology from the actors' perspective**

“Within the organizations that work with ecological agriculture there are also different visions” (local extensionist, MAyP, Posadas, 2008)

The agroecological discourse varies depending on the actors who reproduce it and the strategies they are able and willing to put forward in order to make it concrete. While for some local actors it is merely a proposal for sustainable natural resources management for others it is more a political and economic statement. For them, those politically engaged, agroecology means the autonomy of farmers from markets where they have no power for price formation, and versus the construction of new markets where they retain more

autonomy and the ability to participate in policy making and in setting the agenda for the agricultural sector. Here I elaborate about these diverse actors: their visions, strategies, cooperation and conflicts.

The main organization promoting agroecology and spreading its principles in other rural development strategies in the province was the PSA. When the programme started its intervention in 1993 the provincial coordinator and its staff gave it a unique characteristic in the context of Argentina: an environmental approach to rural development. The background of the provincial coordinator of the PSA explains partly this. This person has previous experience in working with rural families in a semi-arid province of Argentina, and he had been in contact with agroecological practices before moving to the province. The comment below might help to understand this:

“[He] was an engineer in agronomy and was a guy that had worked in issues related to sustainable agriculture; he had a passion for all that. He had many connections as well with some Brazilian ecologist groups. So, from the beginning the PSA in Misiones had that bias, pretty of its own, to give it a relevant importance to issues about doing, developing, a family agriculture very much taking into account natural resources degradation. Since Misiones is an area [characterized by] subtropical rain regimes, those processes of degradation are very much accelerated” (national coordinator of PSA from 1992 to 2006, Buenos Aires, 2008).

It is important to mention that in the province, in the same year that the PSA was launched, a local organization of farmers was institutionalized. The Network of Organic Agriculture of Misiones (RAOM) was an association of farmers and rural families.<sup>225</sup> The members agree that “the conventional agriculture production is characterized by the use of agro-toxic monocultures, dependent on extra-local inputs and lacks respect for nature and peoples”. This means that there was already a network of agroecologists in the province before the PSA began promoting agroecological practices and ideas to policy makers and NGOs. PSA’s staff has recognized:

“Farmers and extensionists all around the province were working quietly in an organic proposal. In May 1993 the Network of Organic Agriculture of Misiones that unites them and gives them strength was born. What the PSA did and continues doing is to rescue what the smallholders had been doing for an organic agriculture. To support through credit, training and technical assistance and to communicate the ideas to the rest of the families” (PSA, 1999: 22).

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<sup>225</sup> In fact, RAOM presents itself as being an open, plural and democratic movement from diverse social organizations that promotes organic family agriculture as a development strategy and a way of life for the province of Misiones.

The other actors seeking to implement agroecology in Misiones are the PROHUERTA, the INDES, the ODHAT, the UTTERMI, the EFAs, the APHyDAL, some of the agencies of INTA, and some farmers' organizations, particularly Union and Progress, OPFAL and United Rural Women. Local farmers' markets located in approximately forty towns around the province are also working from an agroecological perspective.

The abovementioned actors are present in both municipalities under study. There are a few other local organizations in other municipalities but these are the most known in the province. This is because they have been pioneers in promoting this methodology in areas where family agriculture is strong.

Interviewees from each of these organizations agreed that agroecology leads to an improvement in the quality of life of rural families and an opportunity to be more autonomous from middlemen and large companies. In this sense, the role of food production is central because it represents an opportunity to strengthen food security, to permit the creation of new local markets, the establishment of new relations between rural and urban dwellers and between the farmer sector and the state, and more recently, to work towards food sovereignty in the province.

In the following paragraphs I will concentrate on some actors' points of view. I have selected actors who are the most representative of the rural development arena.

### *Public agencies and rural development programmes*

The PSA-PROINDER considers the construction and promotion of an agroecological approach to rural development as its axis of intervention, appropriate to the local environment of Misiones. The principles of agroecology were mainstreamed into all their activities, when granting and dispensing subsidies and credits to farmers, extending water and soil management technology, training people in farm management, etc. By means of cooperation with other agencies and organizations, these became also aware about agroecological practices. In this way, most of the agencies and grass-roots organizations in the rural development arena in Misiones gradually undertook agroecology principles.

The national coordinator of PSA recognises that environmental care was not a concern when the programme was designed. In fact, he mentions that a decade after, when the continuation (PROINDER) was planned and launched there was an international trend to include environmental aspects into development strategies. The inclusion of environmental issues in PROINDER, therefore, is

more closely related to requirements from the World Bank than a genuine concern from the Argentinean national government:

“...we had PROINDER that was financially supported by the World Bank. In the World Bank the environmental and conservation concern were already present. So, in the first PROINDER project they insisted very much [on the inclusion of] ecological issues. Then all the projects presented through PROINDER to get granted [had to comply with this requirement]; in the application form there was a part dedicated especially to sustainable development. And the projects... they had to have at least zero degradation and in the best case if there had not been sustainable agriculture in the province, they had to have some elements that could lead us to think that it could reverse degradation and that there would be a process of recovery in the natural resources. When we began in 1993 the ecological issue was not an important concern” (first national coordinator of PSA, Buenos Aires, 2008).

PSA-PROINDER understands that just as biodiversity needs to be preserved due to the fragile environment of Misiones, farmers should construct a more bio-diverse farm. The programme’s agroecological strategies include the following: (a) production of organic vegetable gardens, (b) management of sheep in yerba plantations, (c) cattle production beneath forest (“agriculture in levels”), (d) seed production, (e) construction of native tree nurseries, (f) promotion of agro-tourism, among others strategies that are put forward more locally in some places of the province (PSA, 1999).<sup>226</sup> The PSA organized training courses and interchange of information with Brazil to observe how the neighbouring farmers were doing agriculture within an agroecological framework.

Since the programme was the only comprehensive policy for rural development and was open to social participation, all the coordination strategies made with NGOs and farmers’ organizations incorporated aspect of the agroecological approach. The PSA is still one of the main actors - together with PROHUERTA - which receives significant funding to spread the ideas of ecologically sound agriculture. The programme is an important ally of RAOM. Even if PSA presents its own model of agricultural production and organization, it is up to each organization that it cooperates with to determine how this model is implemented in the field.

The approach is gathering followers because PSA-PROINDER uses a bottom-up dynamic of intervention. Therefore, the proposal is a common and ongoing construction among farmers and extensionists. As one of the technicians

<sup>226</sup> PSA’s understanding of agro-ecology comprises the following ideas: (a) the need to return to an agricultural production that fits the natural cycles and does not release harmful chemicals into the environment, (b) the need to diversify the farms not only for as a way to sustain and increase incomes and reduce risks but also to increase productivity from an ecological perspective, (c) the need for an agriculture based on solidarity and equity (PSA, 1999).

interviewed mentioned, the agroecological perspective was improved on the basis of daily work with the families:

“I believe this methodology, which has a lot to do with listening to each other, has a lot to do with this construction. Because they [the farmers] told us, ‘It’s okay, it might be that [these methods] give lower yields, but it is more reliable’, ‘It produces smaller corn cobs, but for me without tools it is easier to take kernels off’, ‘Because this was cultivated by my grandfather, my great grandfather’, ‘Because with this I do this food, I can do this dish’... There is a lot of important cultural baggage” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

PROHUERTA is another RDP intervening, mainly working with women groups and promoting organic vegetable gardens. The programme claims it is a “natural” and “economical” way to produce “healthy” horticulture during the whole year around: “natural because it imitates the processes of nature, economical because we save money when producing our own food, healthy because we produce without chemicals” (PROHUERTA, 2005: 3).<sup>227</sup>

In order to create more fertile and productive soil and healthier crops, PROHUERTA promotes the following techniques: companion planting, crop rotation and composting. Companion planting is a way to “imitate the processes of the nature”. These techniques are part of the discourse in all the agencies and organizations mentioned above. In Aristóbulo del Valle, the program is working with PSA to create a system of reference:

“Rescue [of native seeds and plants] and agroecology are part of PROHUERTA. I work with agroecology, the rescue of native plant species, and animal raising... We are actually working in an agroecological system of reference, to have some demonstration farms where people can see how to run a farm without agro-toxics and agro-chemicals, so we don’t further destroy the already destroyed environment” (local extensionist, PROHUERTA, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

According to some of the members interviewed from the national government agencies, agroecology is a perspective that it is not easy to promote because there is no financial support to reconvert tobacco plantations and there are no markets for the trade of large volumes of food crops. The extensionists believe that this perspective is important due to its participatory methodology of intervention in the construction of food production and markets:

“The starting point of our proposal is self-sufficiency. But afterwards, in the context of working towards this through projects, in groups, related to the different productions, one moves forward in the organizational process. Even

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<sup>227</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

though the groups are isolated and separated, since they are in the same geographical space, you have an area, you have many groups, and you have a project that links them afterwards. Otherwise, it is not easy to work. The whole community has to work on the project and that is how you can build an organizational process” (local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

Regarding the provincial state, even though from 1999 there is a law that promotes “ecological production for family agriculture”, and despite the creation of new legislation and institutions, the provincial government is characterized by a lack of policies framed within the agroecological discourse. Their discourse refers instead to “agro-forestry”:

“Here our chief [the minister of agriculture of the province] likes the discourse about production in levels: pine on top, cattle and grass, as an agroecological alternative that honestly it is a totally artificial environment, and with a management of resources that in the long run it is not sustainable. The artificial pastures, cattle and forestry with exotic species are not sustainable in the future. Currently the diagnosis on soil is very serious; it has been serious for a long time” (public servant, MAyP, Posadas, 2008).

The provincial government differs from the national government in its discourse about family agriculture and rural development because it is focussed on productivity rather than self-sufficiency and autonomy. Since 2008, as discussed in chapter V, they have started to declare the need to intervene in terms of food sovereignty, security and self-sufficiency. However, this faces some critiques, as can be observed in the following comment from a provincial public servant:

“And the discourse changed. They adopted a more progressive discourse, so now we talk about food security... we have a programme of food security that upon analysis, is hugely contradictory. For 4 years we have delivered seeds to the farmers. Yet the need for autonomy is emphasised (...) these contradictions cannot be sustained. We cannot talk about food security and sufficiency if we tell the farmers what to produce and give them the seed. Food security has to be created bottom-up, it has to be created from the farmer sector, the peasants” (provincial public servant, Posadas, 2008)

### *Nongovernmental organizations and social organizations*

The more radical discourse regarding agroecology emanates from some local NGOs. They are able to adopt this approach partly because they are funded by international actors. Since they are not dependent on state funding, this permits them to confront the state in certain issues. In the practice they may face structural constraints to make the proposal become true. These NGOs tackle a more contentious political issue: that of autonomy from highly concentrated capitals and the markets in which farmers are engaged. In this sense, their claims

are in the same vein as those of the *Via Campesina*. Members of RAOM state for instance that they oppose the ongoing expansion of pine monoculture in Misiones. In order to resist what they see as an exclusionary process they adopt and promote the agroecology discourse by, for instance, making farmers conscious about the advance of monoculture, the dominance of international markets and the differing views of organic production in the north:

“We lost many cultural elements, because of the imposition of the dominant countries; we lost many traditional crops and we changed them for those crops that the most powerful countries need. Soya and pine are good examples. Agroecology has the tools close at hand to recover crops and the culture that belong to us. To take back crops is an element of freedom” (Yahdjian, 2008).

“When we started with RAOM in 1993, fifteen years ago, we had little experience. We started to put these issues on the table and held discussions between extensionists and some organizations, and a little with the state [to form] some kind of linkages. However it is a political proposal. The model incorporates the family inside the farm. Agroecology without the farmers [is not possible] or family agriculture outside agroecology is not possible for me. This is different to organic production, when you live in Michigan, you have your farm in California and you do organic agriculture. You have employees, the protocol from the certifying company tell you what to you, how much to use, the inspector comes, certifies your organic products. [That] is not an agriculture socially [organized]” (public servant, MAyP, Posadas, 2008).

As mentioned before, this more radical and politicised approach is not embraced - at least not openly - by the public sector (neither at the national nor the provincial level). Some members of RAOM have clashed with farmers in their interventions, because farmers' needs depend heavily on incomes generated in the agriculture sector. Therefore, the introduction of any new strategy in the farm should be, according to them, translated into improvements in the incomes in the middle term.

INDES, one of the most known NGO in the province, works in the municipality of San Pedro with a method of approaching the farms in an integral manner. The team is well known in Misiones for pursuing and practicing agroecology through this methodology. They have experience in incorporating new organizational and productive technologies to manage soil, water and crops (green covers, zero tilling, rotation, intercropping, machinery collective use and management, homemade industrialization, products interchange, etc.). They pursue a participatory approach, as one of the extensionists explains:

“What we are working on with these farmers' organizations is... everything related to the integral approach to farms, the integral plan of the farm, taking



into account a more agroecological framework; we incorporate the economic, social and environmental issues. How do we preserve all the natural resources we have? How do we protect them? The issues of water source conservation, soil management, crop management, to be more autonomous producing our own seeds of green covers or local varieties of corn. We say we are doing this intervention as an experiment, but it is a participatory experiment, where those who experiment are the farmers, we just accompany them” (local extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2008).

The members of INDES consider that this approach to farm management is not only an economic one but also a social and political one because it is participative and participation is a political process, which is clearly explained in the following comment:

“It is political because from the agroecological perspective, [from] the exercise of managing the farm [one can] observe the problems of the whole territory, of the community, it is not only a question of production. And these questions lead [farmers] to make petitions to the state, to request their rights. And they are not having any answer. It is also political because it allows farmers to see which those important issues for the family agriculture sector are. For example in *Pozo Azul*, by analysing their problems [they concluded] they want to have autonomy, to be able to define what they need and wish for that territory. There were some things they only wanted to do from the organization, not at the community level and they noticed that if they don’t think beyond the organization they cannot achieve it. So it is political from that logic, very basic” (local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

An interesting feature of this NGO’s intervention in San Pedro and in Misiones in general is that they have gradually built links with tobacco companies, particularly with the provincial cooperative. This makes them unique because it shows that their ideology is flexible and they realized the current market situation of tobacco growers:

“We are very open in that sense. I believe you cannot be extremist (....) you have to achieve agroecological practices via a transition, it is a process. If you want to do that, you need to have a very clear alternative, to give other alternatives to the farmers. I can talk about it because I am an extensionist, I have a salary, but the farmer lives on farming. If you do it [to change crops for instance] suddenly without having it clear, you cannot.... We understand this. And tobacco as such is not bad. It generates a certain income. When people in Misiones say it is ‘bad’, they are referring to the dependence it generates on external inputs, and the contamination of natural resources and families’ health. We understand that tobacco is one of the main crops that deplete soil fertility, it is very demanding of soil nutrition. That’s the reason for our link to the tobacco companies. They have the need and an obligation,

because they are obliged to reverse the situation. How do they do it? Well, we did tests, developed experiences in soil management with green covers... in tobacco, because farmers proposed that. And you can see the difference... at a certain point the companies asked us to give some training courses. And we talked to the tobacco company extensionist about this because they are having a programme about pest management. Nowadays the tobacco companies are diffusing the technique of soil management with green cover” (local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

In the context of the agroecological discourses, working with tobacco companies is observed with suspicion. The same interviewee mentions that tobacco value chain in which farmers are engaged is structural. Once the capacity for the local soils to grow tobacco is exhausted, tobacco companies will no longer be profitable and in the long run, farmers’ income will deteriorate even further, because currently tobacco is one of the few crops with regular incomes. The technician suggests that change would be most effective if triggered from within this existing structure. They are adopting a “fight it from inside” approach:

“Some people say ‘they [INDES] are working together with the tobacco companies, with the companies!’ We [INDES] are doing nothing of the kind. Because the tobacco companies, whether you acknowledge it or not, will still exist. All around here you find tobacco growers who have made disasters with their land in another area of the province and have to leave their farms because they could not produce tobacco anymore, they migrate towards here, looking for new soil, new parcels of land. If they continue with that methodology, in five, ten years they will be in the same conditions as before, if they don’t do any management of the soil. [If tobacco companies don’t support better soil management] tobacco production will no longer be profitable in Misiones. It will need more and more external inputs. We understand that. And we are not thinking about how to help the tobacco companies, we think about the farmers, because the first ones that will be screwed up will be the farmers. Because if the tobacco company [if it] doesn’t work here, they will go away to somewhere else, they don’t care. But if we can make that companies promote this, then we succeed in not destroying the soil in the farms” (local extensionist, San Pedro, 2008)

### *Farmer’s organizations*

From the information collected in interviews it is possible to observe that in general, farmers’ organizations are not familiar with the concept of agroecology. When this is not the case, the framing of the organizations within the ecological agriculture discourse is a result of their strategic alliances with NGOs or RDPs. When asked about it, farmers confused “agroecology” with “ecology”. They

identify the term with the Ministry of Ecology (locally known as “ecology”) and its policies of environmental regulation (for instance the prohibition of deforestation and land clearing in particular areas).<sup>228</sup>

Many farmers have been applying agronomic techniques promoted as “agroecological”, even though they were not acquainted with the term, because soil deterioration and water pollution were causing falls in their incomes. For them, food production is only an option if it means an income and, secondly, an improvement in their families nutrition.

The squatters’ associations from north San Pedro have a particular understanding about agroecology. They mostly do not know the concept, and if they do, they link it to the strategy used by the NGOs intervening in the area. NGOs portrayed family agriculture in the area as more environmentally friendly than forestry and logging companies. The use of agroecological practices to take care of natural resources was an argument used to convince the provincial government to consider land expropriation and its redistribution. These practices would include the use of green covers and organic compost, intercropping and rotation along with food production.

However, the evidence points that these NGOs (INDES, APHyDAL) were not able to work with the entirety of families settle in the area, and that these agronomic techniques were not used or known by everybody. One of the farmers interviewed commented about the disagreements between NGOs and farmers’ organizations when using agroecology to politically defend their rights on the land they are occupying:

“They [APHyDAL] forced us to lie. They said they taught us. We were pretty ignorant. They accompanied us; they took us to Posadas [provincial capital]. They lied. They lied about us using green cover [crops]. Why to lie? We have to lie. They asked me once in Posadas, and he [NGO president] wanted me to lie. And I didn’t want to lie, I don’t need to lie. Then I left the fight and didn’t go there anymore. That we are using green covers...! We never use green covers! Many have to lie in Posadas, they have to say we use green covers. They have to lie to the Ministry of Agriculture. It is okay, that lie helped us a little, because at least they [land owners] stop putting pressure on us. Because who claims to be the owner of the land made a lot of pressure because, they [we farmers] burn the forest, if you set a fire they would take a picture; they were always watching you. That was the excuse they had to take us out of the land. So that little lie helped us to get what we wanted” (farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

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<sup>228</sup> See illustration 7 in Appendix 4 to observe an advertisement in a newspaper to farmers (particularly male farmers) about the implications of the provincial law 3426 in terms of nature resources conservation.

Among local cooperatives or associations and product specialized cooperatives, two are three in San Pedro that consider working within the agroecological perspective (OPFAL and Union and Progress). The rest do not frame their activities within this discourse, even though they promote many of the practices of agroecology among their members and they foster the idea of constructing new markets and new channels of commercialization in a way where farmers hold on more power.

The illustrations 1 to 3 in the Appendix 4 give an idea of (i) the discourses in agroecology (the idea that large-scale cultivation of genetically modified soya is not good for the future, the importance of seed saving, the importance of access to land, water and forest), (ii) the discourses from the tobacco companies (the need to standardize production and farm organization, to use the technological package supplied by the companies, and the threat of being excluded from the tobacco chain if the rules and norms are not followed), and (iii) the concrete practices at the farm level for the introduction of new agronomic techniques (soil management, crop diversification, food production and weed management).

#### *Other actors in the territory*

The search for sustainable use of natural resources and new agronomical practices is not only fostered by rural development programmes from the national state, NGOs or other social organizations. Currently, tobacco companies are also trying to implement new practices for soil conservation in farmers' land. The over exploitation of soil has been noticed by these companies, which recently started to promote the introduction of techniques such as the use of cover crops, intercropping corn and tobacco and decreasing agro-chemical inputs. The only tobacco cooperative in the province (CTM Ltda.) is also encouraging small-scale forestry and taking advantage of public subsidies to extend pine plantation among its members and put under production unused areas in the farms. A tobacco *instructor* (extensionist) explains that:

“It is recommended to plant in those areas of the farm where tobacco cannot grow, to cover that soil and take advantage of it; otherwise it is not put under production. It should have a benefit for the farmer, instead of leaving it as *capuera* [first step in the regeneration of forest]. If soil is deteriorated then you should reforest it” (tobacco extensionist, Tabacos Norte S.A., Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

In general, agro-industries (tobacco, yerba mate, tea, timber) do not embrace the agroecological discourse or promote agroecological practices. However, the case of tobacco companies, in both municipalities, is paradigmatic. In the Integrated Pest and Disease Management (*Manejo Integrado de Plagas y Enfermedades*, MIPE) they are trying to put forward they have incorporated diverse agronomic

techniques towards a more sustainable tobacco plantation. Indeed, instructors are now extending information about using the importance of using associated crops in tobacco plots, companion planting, seedlings (tobacco plants grown in nurseries), etc. In 2004, tobacco growing in Misiones was declared free of methyl bromide, a highly polluting fumigant, used until then.

Despite RDPs, NGOs and SOs' claims considering tobacco not part of an agroecological proposal, tobacco instructors considered that the new techniques they are introducing when visiting farmers is an important element of agroecology since it works towards natural resources conservation.

Regarding environmental public agencies or NGOs, even though they do not intervene in farming areas and do not directly promote agroecology, they support this kind of agriculture since they consider that it works towards nature preservation and in a harmonious way. Some of the interviewees from environmental agencies claim however that it would be better not to perform any kind of agriculture to preserve the native forest and the fauna that live there in a pristine state. In this sense, they disagree with any agriculture expansion.

### **Collective spaces of agroecology: the seed fairs**

Different social spaces involving diverse actors have gradually been constructed in Misiones around the promotion of agroecology, and particularly the fostering of seed saving. The Seed Fairs (*feria de semillas*) are the main, and probably the best example of these kinds of spaces at the provincial level. These are depicted by local actors as a space to challenge industrial agriculture, which they believe has had consequences for biodiversity and agricultural production (genetic erosion, the patenting of genetic material and economic concentration in the agriculture sector among others) (Gorriti, 2001).<sup>229</sup>

The fairs are jointly organized by many different actors in the rural development arena. Their aim is to facilitate and promote the interchange of local seeds and other genetic material used by farmers that have proven to be well adapted to the local environment:

“The objective of the meeting is to freely interchange seeds that are cultivated traditionally by farmers and that are highly valued for different qualities such as productivity, resistance to pests and diseases, precocity, medicinal and culinary properties, among others. These seeds have characteristics that cannot be found in the seed sales shops (...). These seeds pass from one generation to another as a fundamental part of the farmers' heritage,

<sup>229</sup> Other spaces include the land forums (*foros de la tierra*). However, these will not be treated in this study.

circulating from hand to hand in rural communities without entering into the mercantile circuit. Under the generic term SEEDS, grains, cuttings, seedlings, rhizomes and buds are being interchanged” (Gorriti, 2001: 20).

Since the first provincial seed fair in 1997, an annual fair has been organized by RDPs and NGOs who mobilize farmers from the countryside to the town where the fair is held.<sup>230</sup> More recently, there has been one provincial fair every two years and a regional one in between. From the beginning until 2003, the fairs took place in the city of Eldorado. Later, they were decentralised to the rest of the province. In 2005, for instance, there were fairs in 14 different places, taking into consideration the provincial and the local ones.

The idea is that those farmers who have participated come back to their communities and share the experience of participating and interchanging information and genetic material with the neighbours.<sup>231</sup> During the year, they collect diverse kinds of seeds (corn, rice, peas, soya, green covers, etc.), plants and seedlings which later are shared.

In these fairs, most of the participants are representatives of groups supported by the RPDs (mainly PSA-PROINDER and PROHUERTA) and local NGOs. The national government is the main source of resources however the costs are shared among all the actors. While for some NGOs and RDPs it might be a space of contestation, for farmers it is a space of social participation and communion. It is also a space where they learn about the importance of seeds; farmers say: “the seed is a right, what can we do without seeds or land?” The organizations involved in these events, but also in the seed saving which takes place all year around, understand that community seeds should be free and that should be available for everybody and not only for those that can buy them in the market.

In these fairs not only genetic material is interchange but also workshops take place. Seminars are arranged to publicly discuss diverse topics of interest of the organizers and participants: food security and sovereignty, land access and tenure, patenting of local genetic resources, access and management of water, alternative medicine, etc.

These seed fairs have permitted the construction of a shared vision around the importance of preserving and interchanging local genetic material. The introduction of certain grain crops (such as corn) or green cover seeds in the farms have allowed farmers to engage in horticulture and soil conservation,

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<sup>230</sup> In San Pedro and Aristóbulo del Valle some regional seed fairs have been held. In San Pedro, the first one was in 2004 and the second in 2008 and in Aristóbulo in 2008.

<sup>231</sup> In 2005 for example, among the provincial fair and the regional and local ones, there were a thousand families participating and interchanging more than 500 varieties of seeds and other genetic material (Gorriti, 2001).

gradually letting them improve their incomes. The knowledge recreated around alternative medicine (based on the use of local plants for different diseases) have helped improving the wellbeing of those families engaged in promoting it.

Most importantly, it is not only a space of social participation but a political space for raising the environmental, economic and political concerns related to family agriculture and its sustainability in the face of a kind of agriculture based on industrial standards and monoculture:

“These spaces are very important, because they have always promoted the participation of farmers, a process of discussion about the political importance of seed, the importance of having one’s own seeds, technical discussions regarding the transgenic crops, the dependence on external inputs, the appropriation of people’s rights by corporations, all those issues we tried to discuss. Why should certain seeds condition our activity? It’s an interesting space for political education of farmers and technicians, to understand the process of appropriation and transfer [of resources] from one sector to another, from one country to another” (extensionist, NGO and public sector, Posadas, 2007).

With the experience accumulated, the organizers created the Movement for the Peasants’ Seeds of Misiones (*Movimiento por las Semillas Campesinas*). In 2005, this network of actors decided to give itself a name, as a way to formalise their situation.<sup>232</sup> Sánchez (2010) states that actually this is not a social movement but a collective actor or an organization that works as a network of actors. However, it seeks to conform itself as a political movement in order to be able to influence in the design of public policies for the agriculture sector in the province of Misiones.

Their slogan is “Seeds, heritage of the people at the service of humankind”.<sup>233</sup> The general aim of the movement is to make public the situation of family agriculture in Misiones. They seek to promote farmers’ political and economic organization in order to strengthen their social participation. The objectives are: (a) to rescue, conserve and multiply the biodiversity in the hands of farmers and natives in the province of Misiones, (b) to give value and defend the free interchange of local and native seeds as a guarantee to food sovereignty, (c) to strengthen family agriculture and their autonomy through agroecology, (d) to promote the construction of a solidarity network and the training of its members, and (e) to promote popular participation and contribute to environmental care.

<sup>232</sup> However, they are not a registered organization. One of the local extensionists from Aristóbulo del Valle states that it is a very important network in terms of social participation and democracy building: “it is a movement, because you don’t have always the same people. It is a democratic space we are building between lots of people who participated in various institutions, NGOs, or projects, schools, EFA” (local extensionist, NGO, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

<sup>233</sup> In 2009, they claimed to have 12 years of experience. See illustration 1 in Appendix 4.

The movement works as a network, with technicians' local teams in different areas. Currently the province is divided in seven areas of intervention where members organize their work in different modalities. In each of these areas, technicians and farmers work as a local network. They conduct experimentations in farms and arrange events, workshops and local fairs. The members are in charge of contacting other local organizations in order to accommodate the seed fairs. In this sense, for instance, the role of local governments is very important since they are the ones eventually responsible to let the fairs take place in towns.

The members or participants in the provincial network gather once a month to follow up the activities previously placed in the agenda and once every year in an assembly to outline the yearly plan and agree on those who will be participating in the monthly meetings. There are not structures of representation, but a flexible organization in the conduction of the movement.

Currently, many actors that participate in the rural development arena such as the PSA-PROINDER, INDES, INTA, the Catholic Church (Pastoral Social Eldorado), APHyDAL, MAM, UTTERMI, OPFAL, ODHAT, and other local farmers' organizations participate also here. The local agencies and NGOs from Aristóbulo and San Pedro are some of the most known in the movement. According to them:

"It is a space for gathering, interchanging, reflecting and proposing [collectively] for the defence of local seeds, family agriculture and biological and cultural diversity. It is composed of farmers, agricultural workers, rural organizations, municipalities, schools and other public and private institutions engaged in an agroecological rural development model in Misiones" (Movimiento por las Semillas Campesinas, 2006).

The development discourse emanated from the movement is based on a strong opposition to a kind of agriculture based on industrial standards of modernization. They claim the need to return to local food production. The actors understand that it is those large corporations that commercialise seeds, pesticides and agro-toxics, the ones to blame for the deterioration of local genes' pools, large-scale deforestation and monoculture:

"This great diversity has been the foundation of our nutrition, but today it is threatened. Monocultures and transnational monopolies are destroying the rich harvest of seeds that have been bequeathed to us by nature and by families of farmers through the centuries (...) And in this way our nourishment becomes poorer every day (...) In the same way that global markets replace local markets, monocultures are replacing diversity. And diversity can be preserved only by growing it, making it part of our lives" (Movimiento por las Semillas Campesinas, 2006).



The seed movement sustains that if the province continues importing seeds there will be a tremendous loss of biodiversity, the local seed pool will diminish and weaken and that families will increasingly depend on seed producer companies. They also observed that after forty years of green revolution, poverty in rural areas still remains and the only successes were the commoditisation of natural resources and the increased dependency of farmers on global markets. In this context, the preservation and non-commoditisation of seeds relates food production and local markets at the centre of the discourse:

“We want to work for the empowerment of farmers so that they are able to confront the current model of monoculture which imposed a great use of purchased inputs and lead to the dependence of the farmers on the market. Because the power to decide what to plant, how much and how to produce food is to ensure food sovereignty in the hands of communities” (Movimiento por las Semillas Campesinas, 2006).

“The Seed Movement allowed the construction of another space and is open to everybody, even though its logic is the defence; we are in a struggle. We want to preserve the autonomy of farmers through their access to genetic material. Many seek the preservation of ‘local seeds’. Instead, we seek ‘seed diversity’. Why? Because if we focus only on local seeds, maybe in one area the seeds were lost but in another they still keep them, so in this space of the Seed Fairs it is possible to get them. You can acquire genetic material that maybe once existed in your territory but was lost. Maybe it is few, but with three seeds you can reproduce them. That is important; you can get hold of that material once again. All the south of the province, the border to Brazil, there is nothing. There are no local varieties of corn. Because when the peso was 1 to 1 with the US dollar, in Brazil it was very cheap to go and buy seed” (farmer and extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

The role of technicians (public and NGO) that participate in this network of actors is highly relevant because they are the ones that outline, guide and accompany the activities with farmers and other participants (schools, churches, etc.). In his sense, they promote the local interchange of seeds and plants among farmers, they apply for funding for the organization of the fairs, they follow up experimentations in fields, they help farmers to move from their settlements and arrange the accommodation of guests in the different places where fairs take place.

Sanchez (2010) mentions among others, the following activities conducted from the movement: (a) experimentations in farms, (b) rescue and interchange of local seeds and “knowledge”, (c) training of farmers and technicians, (d) influence in policy making.

Among its achievements, the movement and the seed fairs can count the following: (a) the increased awareness in the countryside about biodiversity loss and natural resource degradation, (b) the fostering of farmers social participation in issues related to agriculture, (c) the formation of a collective space of social participation among diverse organizations, (d) the promotion of food production and crop diversification, (e) the influence in policy making at the provincial and national level, (f) the introduction in the province of the discourse about food security and sovereignty, (g) the construction of the peasant identity, (h) the structuring of social networks and (i) the creation of seed production pools in the north of the province. The following statements throw more light on the work done around seed saving:

“I believe that the fact that farmers linked to the Seed Fairs have sold their seeds to a public [state] programme is an historical landmark. They are not registered in INASE”<sup>234</sup> (farmer and extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2008)

“We dedicate a lot of work to the preservation of seeds. We extend information about the propaganda of all those seeds, about the market, the business of seeds. We basically discuss that issue. And we try to generate proposals in order to stop the entry of this into the province, we try to position ourselves to influence and say no to the entry of transgenic into the province or no to certain things. We don’t totally succeed but we could stop it at certain point” (farmer and extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2008).

“We refused to implement the Grain project in the north, which was a policy that the provincial state sets for this area. The technical and technological methods applied destroy the environment. Then I also do not know what the solution is... And farmers, everything they receive comes from the state. And if there are no spaces of discussion where organizations can gather and farmers can discuss, talk about these concerns, what the best for the region is, it is very difficult to have an opinion as a zone, as a territory” (farmer and extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2008).

Some of the members state that they have power to influence in policy making when positioning their ideas about food security and sovereignty. Probably the clearest example is the lobby made in 2004 to stop the introduction of genetically modified crops in the northeast of the province by the provincial ministry of agriculture (Nardi, 2008).

It is also important to remark that in the most recent fairs organized by the movement, members of diverse Guaraní communities have approached and participated. They bring material they collect from the forest and that is part of their livelihoods, such as flowers and plants. Native orchids, for example, are

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<sup>234</sup> The INASE is the National Institute of Seeds (*Instituto Nacional de Semillas*).

brought to the fairs by native people and are increasingly appreciated by urban dwellers. In this sense, the seed fairs are functioning as a democratic space where diverse people gather and not only the Creole. Probably this space is one of the few where Creole and native peoples commune and participate in a more equal way. Nevertheless, representatives of native communities do not participate in the organization of the movement. They do not apply for external resources or organize workshops, for instance.

Finally, it is interesting to mention that agroindustries or logging companies do not participate in the fairs or in the movement.

### **The construction of farmers' local markets (*ferias francas*)**

The commercialization of food production in local markets in diverse localities of Misiones is the result of a tenacious work by diverse actors.<sup>235</sup> From 1995 when the first market was opened in the city of Oberá these markets became a kind of icon and an example of the concrete possibilities and promises of agroecology in Misiones.<sup>236</sup>

From the very beginning these markets have been supported by the national state (in particular from PSA-PROINDER, PROHUERTA and INTA) and the local governments where they were installed. Not only have RPDs granted financial support to informal grass-roots organizations to organize the markets, they have also assisted through information and training. The local governments lent their support by creating the institutional regulations which allowed a *feria* (market) to be *franca*. This means that the markets are exempt from certain local taxes and therefore they are able to sell fresh and good quality food with lower prices.

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The context of price deterioration of the traditional crops was the setting for the idea of launching the *ferias francas*. Farmers' organizations and RDPs thought that it could be good to increase and improve food production for commercialisation, as Brazilian farmers do. Local farmers' markets had been opened in Brazil from long time, therefore, *misioneros* learnt from their experience before opening finally the first one.

These local markets are members of the Association of Farmers' Markets of Misiones (*Asociación Ferias Francas de Misiones*, AFFM) a provincial

<sup>235</sup> The social and political dynamics behind the creation of the first farmers' local market in Misiones have been analyzed in previous studies (Nardi and Pereira, 2006 and 2007).

<sup>236</sup> This was the first market in Argentina. Neighbouring provinces have also copied the idea.

<sup>237</sup> See illustrations 4 and 5 in Appendix 4 for a general idea about the local farmers' markets: who participates, where they are located, etc.

association which unites all of them and serves as a channel of information and facilitates access to resources from the provincial and national state.<sup>238</sup>

If compared with other farmers' organizations, these have been the only ones created during the 1990s. They are the outcome of a genuine process of grass-roots organization. Even though state agencies and NGOs helped and accompanied their creation, they are not just NGOs- or RDPs-driven imperatives or a formal requirement to access public funding.

In the case of Aristóbulo, there were 23 families participating at the time of the study, coming from diverse *colonias* in the municipality. The assistance from PROHUERTA through the local extensionist has been central for the farmers to start up horticulture and poultry at the farm level as well as to set up their organization.

The market in Aristóbulo was opened in 1996 and since then food and other homemade products have been commercialised here. It takes place three times a week in a place in town donated by the local government. The infrastructure, if compared to the first one opened in San Pedro, is very precarious.<sup>239</sup>

In the first market opened in San Pedro (in 1996), there are 14 families, most of them coming from a neighbouring *colonia* (Paraíso). This market is special because it is the commercial branch of the local organization Union and Progress.

Since its early stages it received support from the NGO INDES and from PSA-PROINDER. These actors trained the farmers in agroecological production and commercialisation management. The INDES cooperates with diverse local and provincial organizations for food sanitary control (SENASA) and seed acquisition (PROHUERTA). It is actually one of the few markets that declare to sell organic products in the province, even though they are not certified.<sup>240</sup>

This market is located in a building donated by the local government. In 2008 the place was refurbished and currently looks very similar to a grocery store. The display of products is not only in tables but shelves and large fridges in which meat is kept. These particularities make of this market very different from the rest of the province, which look more like a fair (*feria*) and less like a shop (*verdulería*).

There is other local farmers' market in San Pedro but it has a different kind of organization. It was organized in 2007 by United Rural Women and does not

<sup>238</sup> In 2008, the association received a subsidy from the national government. It was distributed to each market and each of them decided autonomously to use the money (for common or individual purposes at the farm level).

<sup>239</sup> See illustration 5 in Appendix 4.

<sup>240</sup> There is no certification system in Misiones for this kind of production.

participate in the AFFM. There are around twelve women from many different *colonias* of San Pedro. The members are supported by PROHUERTA through the local extensionist who has assisted different groups of women in starting up vegetable gardens in their farms. In 2009 they did not yet have any kind of infrastructure for the commercialization of their products.<sup>241</sup> Probably, their lack of networking is a contributing factor in their inability thus far to reach the public.

This market is located in a sidewalk in a non-centric area of San Pedro. This place was recognized as a good spot to supply food, therefore the idea of opening a *feria* here. The women who participate here come from *colonias* very far from the town. They find it difficult to supply weekly the market since horticulture and dairy products are not well organized in their farms. The families who participate in this market present a lower level of capitalization in their farms if compared with the market abovementioned. Here, men do not engage in the commercialisation of products, even though they are present (see illustration 4 in Appendix 4).

Historically, male members have had “the right to urban space” to deal with the commercialisation of industrial crops. With the creation of these new markets where the surplus of family consumption is sold as an extra income to the one from tobacco and yerba mate, women got access to urban space. This is highly appreciated by those women participating in these spaces of commercialisation.<sup>242</sup>

Women from both markets in San Pedro point that it is not easy to take part and involve themselves in the *ferias* since they have to work even more at the farm in order to increase farm production (vegetable volumes, homemade bakery, sausages, jams and dairy products), travel to the town to sell, all while taking care of children and husbands. Travelling between the farm and the town can be very difficult for many reasons: (a) bad conditions of infrastructure, (b) heavy rains, (c) long distances, (d) no easy access to public transport, (e) lack of automobiles on the roads, (f) many children to take care of at home. They also mention that this activity takes time away from their domestic activities at home.

Nevertheless, they highly value being *feriantes* (people that commercialise in this kind of markets) because the market is a social space for meeting and socializing with the urban population and with other rural families. They also find that this kind of project reintroduces the role of women in the urban society

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<sup>241</sup> They have permission from the municipality and a supermarket to install tables on the sidewalk once a week in order to sell their horticulture produce and bakery.

<sup>242</sup> In Aristóbulo del Valle, however, more men accompany their spouses to sell the products. This is probably because (a) of the short distances to farms which able men and women to go to the town together or (b) in general couples are older and some men are retired.

as well as in the family, since now they are providers not only of food but also a regular income. They consider that being women is an advantage over men when selling products face-to-face. In this regard, one of them mentions that: “We women know how to deal with clients that come to buy vegetables; men do not have the ability to sell” (farmers, local farmers’ market, San Pedro, 2008).

Farmers commercializing products in the local markets see these spaces as important because they allow: (a) producing and selling healthy food with no chemicals, (b) producing food crops instead of industrial ones, (c) improving family nutrition and health, (d) visiting the city and interchanging products with urban dwellers, (e) women’s participation in trading agriculture, and (f) environmental friendly crops production. The following statements capture the pride that *feriantes* take in their work:

“And I always say: being a *feriante* is not just saying you’re a *feriante* ... because here we are selling food. For anybody to sell food has to be an honour, a great responsibility. I always say, for the consumer: food is not just selling anything. Being able to sell food is a privilege, and we must do our best. You always say... food is health. And if you sell good food, you are selling health” (farmer, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007).

“Food is everything. We eat and other people eat too. I wouldn’t leave the market... I like to work in this, to make food, to bring it to the people. Here people need to buy too” (farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

In this sense, it can be affirmed that each of these *ferias francas* are arenas where not only commercialisation take place but other kind of relations between farmers and consumers in conflict and cooperation with diverse actors.

Studies conducted in Misiones by other scholars have focused in the relevance of face-to-face relations between urban and rural dwellers in their socialization, the role played by diverse nationalities and ethnicities in the functioning of the markets, the emerging construction of new identities (*feriantes*, *food producers*) and other sociological and anthropological aspects of these spaces of commercialisation that have not been touch upon in the present study, but however are valuable in terms of other social dynamics generated.

Despite these interesting dynamics created around the markets, their achievements - new farmers becoming involved, greater volumes commercialised - have shown some limits from the commercialisation point of view. This has lead different actors to search for new types of markets and/or channels of food commercialisation in Misiones.

More recently, on the other hand, some studies have pointed out that due to the gender division of domestic work, the lack of income accountability and access to new information and tools for innovation, the fairs seem to be predestine to be

marginalized in the domestic economy and therefore also in the local economy, “constituting a restricted circuit” (Schiavoni, 2010).

The limits set for the development of these markets are not only from the demand side (urban dwellers) but are also from the production side: constraints to increase production at the farm level, to maintain quality and regularity when delivering food. In this sense, Schiavoni (2010: 128) mentions that:

“*Ferías Francas*, the way they have evolved in Misiones during the last decade, are projects that require broadening through the systematic rescue of local knowledge, the diffusion of quality standards, specialization and the generation of the cost of production in order to turn them into alternatives of valorisation of the family agriculture”.<sup>243</sup>

In the construction of local markets, there has not been participation of agro-industries (tobacco, yerba mate, tea, timber). It can be observed that these actors do not take part in their promotion and do not engaged in connected activities. Neither environmental NGOs nor public agencies cooperate with the farmer’s local markets.

### **Constraints to advance an ecological agriculture in Misiones**

Some actors in the rural development arena do not agree with the most radical version of agroecology spread by some NGOs or local extensionists. However, many of those who are engaged in promoting agroecology agree that it is neither simple nor easy to apply most of the concepts of this perspective, given the structural conditions under which family agriculture operates.

The main challenges to implement agroecology are tobacco production and large-scale forestry. Is it possible to do agroecology when tobacco is dominating the agriculture sector in Misiones and tobacco companies exercise a great deal of influence in political and economic decisions concerning the sector? The fervent promotion of large-scale forestry is another of the restrictions. According to many, the state assigns resources for forestry, stimulating processes of land acquisition, water grabbing and pollution. Meanwhile there is no serious support for the family agriculture sector: there is little technology research and extension, little assistance to access new markets or create new channels of commercialization, and there is no access to bank credit or ease access to micro-credit.

Even though actors involved in the rural development arena demand state intervention, the notion that markets are pivotal for economic growth is central in their discourse. They dispute the idea that markets are easy to build and

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<sup>243</sup> Originally in Spanish. Translation of the author.

demand state support to facilitate farmers' organizations the reorientation of agriculture to access and create new local and regional markets. The key questions include: how to create new markets in which farmers are able to shift from tobacco to food production? How to create new markets in which farmers retain autonomy and decision power while meeting the supply needs? The following statements from different local actors are telling:

"To live in the farm is nice. But is it hard, because conditions on the farm are difficult. [One must] have a minimum structure, an organized productive process with a little more processing and value addition; [one must] be able to close the productive cycle. Otherwise you are just a producer of raw material, or a tobacco grower, where you are slave of the tobacco companies. Nowadays, many criticize tobacco plantations from an agroecological point of view, [they are] totally against it. But why do [farmers] do tobacco knowing the costs? They do it because it is the only crop that has an assured market. For the rest of the crops there isn't a market organized in this province" (farmer, extensionist, San Pedro, 2008).

"There is a tremendous need amongst the people. Therefore, you have to try to help them produce tobacco without agro-toxics. But you cannot say to the farmer - 'agroecology this way and tobacco that way' because they are interlinked in the farms. In the *colonia* they are like that. The regular income of farmers comes from tobacco. Tobacco companies brainwash them. They say that what you are doing is the best, the international companies do the same, and they indoctrinate them into believing that what [these companies] come to do here is to save the farmers" (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

Another concern is regarding diversification as part of the agroecological discourse. How far can diversification be developed when it is time consuming and there are no markets where produce can be sold? The attack to monoculture comes from the biodiversity point of view and from the autonomy perspective of farmers from concentrated markets. Local actors consider that a diversified farm is more stable and sustainable in the long term than one that produces only one crop. However, the issue would be how to find a balance between a diversified farm and a more specialized farm producing good quality crops for the (local or regional) market. Some local actors observe that farmers "do everything but they do not do anything":

"It is good to be involved and participate in the cooperatives where the products are made. But then, it is the problem of many: they do everything and don't do anything in particular. They do livestock husbandry and you want to help them technically, but then you notice that [they] don't care so much about it. They produce fish, they do beekeeping, and everything half way, without full dedication to a particular activity. When you are not fully



dedicated to something, when it was time to take care of the bees, for instance, in the winter they died” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

Diversification is also time-consuming in terms of farm labour and political participation. Since in general, cooperatives or associations are crop oriented, it is not easy for diversified farmers to participate in them in order to arrange prices, get information, etc. Some advocate then the construction of solidarity networks in the countryside, instead of using market mechanisms to diversify farms. These networks would allow diversification at a local level and not at farm level:

“Because the labour is totally provided by the family, smallholders cannot pay somebody else, and they are very limited in how they can diversify. And I say, now that I am a farmer myself, I can see it is not... I used to say - ‘yes, you have to diversify’. When we have to do it, then we started thinking, well, at the end, it would be great that we could build networks based on solidarity, in which not all of us produce everything, because that is impossible. That is missing, because it is hard to do. And I think we are very individualistic, we are ‘*massified*’” (local extensionist and farmer, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

Another concern that could constrain the practice and concretization of the agroecological discourse might be the conflict that sometimes occurs between farmers and extensionists (whether from NGOs or public agencies). This can be put in term of class conflict, since farmers’ income sources differ from technicians’:

“Those extensionists that they [the NGO] brought didn’t want to walk around our farm, to get their hands dirty! They just wanted money, because there was a grant from Germany. APHyDAL brought one or two extensionists, one in agroecology, and other in forestry, people from outside! They didn’t know what they were doing! People that didn’t know even how to step on the soil. And they got a salary. They distributed the money from Germany among themselves” (farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

In some places, the radicalization of the discourse or/and the promotion of very abstract concepts have made farmers stop participating in agroecology workshops or food production training courses. Farmers describe how participation is time consuming and resting time to their work in the farms could result in losing production or productivity and eventually decreasing incomes:

“I was one of the founding members of RAOM. At the beginning it was very interesting. There were people that were always behind a desk and that became fundamentalist with some issues of organic agriculture as such. These made some people stop participating instead of allowing people to increase the movement. So for me, due to this, the network started to lose importance

as an important movement. At the beginning it was a movement of farmers' organizations, and that made the difference because now if the members are those that are behind a desk they can talk as much as they want, they can rant and theorize about organic agriculture but they never work the land. So people gradually left the movement" (farmer and local extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2004).

"From a long time I was involved with RAOM and there I saw that it was a meeting where... it was always the same, there was never progress. Nothing. First meetings were huge, with people gathered from all around. And that diminished, because us on the farm we have things to do, we have to work to be able to eat. If we don't work, we don't eat. And in those meetings it seems that it was all the time the same, it was tiring. Then we gradually stopped participating, we did not have any more money to spend on things that did not go forward. We wanted a meeting to see if there was a chance for us to benefit with something. Instead our vegetable gardens became neglected and there was no progress. It was always the extensionists that participated, very few farmers (farmer, San Pedro, 2004).

A good example of the conflicts that might occur between extensionists' and farmers' interests is the inclusion of small-scale forestry on the farms for income diversification in the long term. For those actors communing with a more ecological version of agriculture, pine is "an enemy". They do not encourage farmers to invest in forestry and do not inform them about the possibilities of accessing public subsidies to do so. Farmers later regret that they have not done this, and seek to find ways to incorporate pine in their farms.

The above leads to reflect on the following: can pine or any other genetically modified crop be part of an agroecological proposal for family agriculture areas? Is it wrong to incorporate pine as part of the strategies of crop and income diversification? Is pine in small-scale as environmental negative as in large-scale? It is possible to argue that yes, it is negative since soil acidity may difficult future crops to be grown in areas where pine were planted. However, the answers should be found upon deeper reflection by those actors involved in rural development.

Other questions can also be posed. How can agroecological approaches be in balance with the current dynamics of markets? In particular, how can food production be increased and improved on small farms where perennial crops are an important investment, which are not easy to remove or replace and which occupy space? This is the tension between diversification and specialization in this particular subtropical environment. The following comments are very illustrative since they show how different actors position themselves in this matter:

“People are waiting for the prices of yerba to improve, they are still thinking of their *yerbal* [mate-plantation]. We should start considering taking away old *yerbales* [that have been going for] thirty, thirty five years and prepare pasture... to clean [the land] and improve cattle production. Start specializing more in that” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2009).

“I believe there should be other alternatives but do not take away *yerbales* because that is something perennial. In Misiones the tree is very important. It is very important. And in any case, perennials like the yerba (which is not a tree, it is a big bush) anything that has deep roots, is very important for me, because soil deterioration and other issues like that are very much connected. It is hard to make people observe erosion. Very difficult, sometimes farmers cannot see this” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

Since there is not yet a developed market for organic products in Argentina and in South America in general, the agroecological production is difficult to sustain since prices are the same than those for the conventional products. Therefore, it may not be cost effective for certain farmers to use only organic practices since these - though environmental sustainable - demand more working hours and are therefore not easy to sustain at the long run if this is translated into overexploitation of the family members.<sup>244</sup>

Finally, another issue is the existence of actors who give agroecology a political twist with the intent to confront large-scale corporations, while paying less attention to the market and to farmers’ production. Those actors find it more difficult to “change the system” because in order to do so financial and human resources are needed. These NGOs believe that structural change cannot be conducted without economic support or people’s mobilization:

“If we don’t make a stronger organization and it’s only left at the family level or at the community level, of course we’re never going to acquire political strength. The idea is to change something. We want to change this model, or at least we dream about changing something” (local extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2006).

“The fight in general is against the monopolies, the large-scale companies. Those are the ones that distort everything, the ones that generate poverty, the ones that generate everything. We, as an organization, we are not strong enough to go and confront them right now. We need to be stronger, to incorporate many more organizations. In order to confront *Alto Paraná* we

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<sup>244</sup> This statement is interesting here: “The reasons can be seen in the production chain... There is an insufficient volume of production that can be traded as agro-ecological, so it is put in the same conventional [bag], and these are the problems we have now” (local extensionist, Aristóbulo del Valle, 2008).

need to have money, we need to be a lot of people” (local extensionist, NGO, San Pedro, 2007).

Despite these structural constraints to put forward a rural development model based on agroecological principles, the great merit of the diverse competing discourses and practices around agroecology is that it allowed the possibility of bringing about contesting discourses and practices in rural development in Misiones.

The agroecological discourse placed on the centre of the developmental debate people’s welfare and the environmental concern. In this sense, its value lies on showing there are alternative views to the one promoted by technocratic developmental interventions seeking economic growth, market competitiveness, global dynamic markets, etc.

## Chapter VIII: Concluding remarks

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The analysis presented in the previous chapters has tried to respond to those questions that motivated the study: What discourses on development are currently disputing the territory in the province of Misiones? What kinds of territories are under construction as a result of “alternative development” strategies and practices implemented by different actors in the rural development arena in interaction with “conventional” development strategies? In what ways are the new territorial dynamics showing the construction of alternative development(s) and new territories and geographies?

In this concluding chapter, some final reflections are drawn questioning the “alternativeness” of the current strategies displayed by those actors in the rural development arena in Misiones, the territorial rural dynamics as processes toward greater economic and political autonomy of farmers, and the construction of territories. My intension here is to reflect on the implications of the present research in theory building and policy making. Finally, I propose some topics and research questions for further studies.

### **Alternative rural development and the construction of territories**

In Misiones, the increase of areas under large-scale forestry and native forest conservation seems to be squeezing farmers and native communities. As land becomes increasingly scarce in this small province, the territory becomes more disputed. As long as actors intend to access and control natural resources and put them under particular kinds of productions, the territory turns into a source of conflicts.

In dealing with these disputes, diverse actors intervening in the family agriculture sector create new discourses and introduce new socio political and economic practices. By doing so, they activate new dynamics. Territorial dynamics in Misiones’ rural spaces are showing that something novel is taking place. This is highly relevant not just due to its novelty. Such dynamics are signs of processes conducting to a different and particular appropriation of nature, state, and market: a kind of appropriation that focuses on benefiting the great majority of rural dwellers and not just a few.

The evidence presented indicates that development has diverse meanings according to who enunciates it. Actors proved to have different interests and understandings of how development *should be* and therefore how *the territory should be appropriated* and *by whom*. In general, actors refer to development as

economic growth, wellbeing, environmental care, public investment, jobs opportunities, education, income distribution, and social justice. However, not all of the actors share the same idea about how this should be promoted or what is the importance of each of the abovementioned notions in a process conducting to “development”. Should we think first in economic growth and later in income distribution or environmental care? Should we think first in increasing job opportunities and afterwards in labour conditions? How to conjugate all these together? Whose interests should be put forward? Clashes occur where interests over forest or land use are mutually exclusive, as shown by the example of large-scale forestry companies and squatters’ farmers in north San Pedro.

Many actors in the ‘rural development arena’ seek to put into practice agroecology, a kind of agriculture environmental and socially oriented, as a means to sustain agriculture and at the same time allow ‘rooting’ families to land. It is embraced as a way to increase and improve productivity, farm incomes, families’ nutrition and health by diminishing costs of production and the use of agro-toxics. It is a territorial dynamic that intends to “fix people in space” by giving them the chance to live on agriculture or in the countryside and appropriate their territory. By creating new projects, new “horizons of actions and thoughts” and by *being farmers* and putting land under production, the family agriculture sector sustains and reproduces itself. There is a resistance in Misiones to the current process of land abandonment and land grabbing that is taking place in Argentina’s countryside.

However, if these projects do not bring in the middle and long term wellbeing to people, rooting farmers to land will be assisting subsistence agriculture and the reproduction of cheap labour force for the agroindustrial companies with economic interests in Misiones (tobacco, forestry, yerba, and tea). Particularly, in the case of tobacco, since there seems to be currently few alternatives to this crop that could provide stable monetary incomes to families.

For those not engaged in tobacco growing, food production and sustainable natural resource management are an important way to sustain their livelihoods in the countryside as long as they can have a decent life and farmers do not need to engage in many different jobs and/or production chains to subsist.

For families to be rooted instead of moving to towns and cities or in search of new lands, or providing cheap labour to companies while eking out a living from subsistence agriculture, discourses must contribute to the creation of material possibilities and bring about in the long term structural changes: legal access to land, fair participation in markets, strong participation in policy making, decently paid jobs opportunities in rural area, etc.

The discourses and practices around agroecology, food production, local markets, seed fairs, etc. seek to set up processes towards that direction. In fact,

some of the issues presented in previous chapters seem to indicate that interventions in ecological agriculture are not just an attack on what locally has been labelled as ‘conventional’ and ‘modern’ agriculture; they are at the same time constructing new opportunities, together and despite that kind of agriculture.

What started once as a promotion and strengthening of subsistence agriculture, developed into a movement for *another* agriculture (*una otra agricultura*).<sup>245</sup> In confronting and creating alternatives, the roles of the state, the market and nature were redefined and reappropriated by people. And it is these appropriations the ones that need to be highlighted.

According to local actors interviewed, the appropriation of markets, nature and the state itself is central to influence real processes conducting development as social welfare and equity. Farmers’ organizations, for instance, indicate their desire for the state (in all its levels: national, provincial and municipal) to participate in resolving conflicts among actors and benefiting the majority and not only a minority. They observe that the state has created the economic and political conditions for forestry companies, for instance, to launch their activities in the province. And therefore they wish the state would focus more on facilitating people’s access to land or new markets rather than facilitating foreign companies’ investments in forestry or tourism.

They argued that the state could actively be involved in creating conditions to favour farmers’ participation in new markets or to integrate regional markets within Misiones and neighbouring provinces and countries. The state could benefit family agriculture to access credit by allowing cooperatives to administrate credits and loans, something currently restricted only to banks. Farmers’ organizations and actors that accompany their demands (NGOs, churches, etc.) claim back the state support of family agriculture and public investment in rural areas, as a way to reduce inequalities and inequity in rural areas.

Some of the farmers’ organizations believe that only by participating and organizing themselves can they make their claims heard by the state. In order “take over” the state farmers are creating networks and organizing to participate in those political decisions that touch upon their interests.

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<sup>245</sup> A local interviewee mentioned at one point that, “We started to promote organic vegetable gardens. And in that promotion we had to take a very strong political position due to the issue of agro-toxics. So for us there were internal problems. [We wanted] to work with the family to create ecological vegetable gardens and to strengthen family food and nutrition security... but that activity was transformed externally into a political struggle. The proposal we put on the table was to strengthen organic agriculture. That became a struggle against the whole industrial agriculture system, and the interests that it represents” (member, NGO, San Pedro, 2004).

The market, following local actors in the rural development arena, should be more equitable and benefit most of the participants. According to them, it is not fair that markets benefit only those that have power for price formation. Farmers' organizations, they claim, should actively help in creating new markets and find the political mechanisms to regulate them. Indeed, farmers affirm that many are forced to overexploit resources largely because of market failures and lack of state support to increase productivity: "We have to cut down the trees because the soil in our plot is deteriorated and we need to go into the native forest". They assert that if they could receive state support to incorporate new technologies, access to credits or information or create new channels of commercialization they would not need to overexploit natural resources or abandon land.

There is a tension then between people's demands and a state whose intervention seems to be benefiting only a few. That is the reason why local markets have been opened all around the province. They are an example of markets where farmers have greater autonomy and at the same time have a regular income.

The lack of public policy support for family agriculture has been attended by those interventions of RDPs, NGOs, and social organizations. Many of these kinds of actors embraced the agroecological discourse in Misiones and try to launch activities towards an appropriation of nature in more sustainable manner: "native forest is not longer an enemy to combat but a friend to incorporate in the organization of agriculture".

The need of crop specialization to provide higher volumes and continuous supply would seem to go against some of the ideas promoted from such discourse: the need to increase biodiversity at farm level in order to decrease risk and increase farm income. Farmers seem to find ways to critically approach other actors' interventions. They do not always prefer to follow NGOs or RDPs prescriptions but also 'market signals' and their own understanding about things.

In this sense, it is helpful to bring back here Bebbington's (1993) observation that farmers use pragmatic responses to modernized environments. In Misiones, families are introducing some of the elements of the agroecological discourse but also trying to accommodate their situation between the theory and practice of agroecology, the lack of state support and the strong power of agroindustries. Many continue to do tobacco, but with soil management, crop diversification and food production.

It is this mix of alternative, conventional and modern agricultures that is creating new social and political spaces in diverse scales and pace. Networks of organic production were strengthened, seed fairs of local genetic material were established, and a movement to rescue seeds was shaped, among others issues



that have put family agriculture in the centre of the developmental concern in Misiones.

Local farmers' markets and seed fairs, for instance, did not exist prior to the 1990s. Once the pre-existing institutional arrangements which served to regulate the provincial economy and social life in the countryside were removed, there was a need to create new ones.

However, these spaces and the ideologies that sustain them are different from the old ones since they propose a totally different way to comprehend state and market regulations and the use of natural resources, as shown in the previous chapters. They were gradually opened to the participation of urban dwellers and native communities, permitting new rural-urban linkages and opening up the possibility of a denser social fabric in urban-rural areas. At the same time they make it possible to create new physical spaces and vice versa: new crops and agronomic techniques were introduced in farms, new natural resource management techniques were applied and new places in town are created to host markets, fairs, and forums.

In the local farmers' markets, for instance, there are other aspects than the economic ones at issue. The markets are spaces of belonging and self-identification that have helped to create new identities in Misiones rural areas. In this sense, the identity of *feriantes* or *food producers* described by farmers interviewed has been emphasized by men and women participating of these spaces of commercialization as an important aspect in their lives. The *feriantes* and their families find a reason to fight for their right to the rural space. Young people can now hold on to a project which will allow them to continue living in the countryside. In the *ferias francas*, values of change are created and, equally important, values of use. These values cannot be easily commodified. This defies the idea of a kind of development based on commodity production, trade, competitiveness and economic growth putting people and environment in a second level of importance.

Similar is the case of seed fairs. The interchange of ideas, experiences and material occur outside the monetary rules of the dominant market system. These fairs work and reinforce other logics than those set and imposed by those governing the markets of genetically modified seeds and the technological packages connected to them. In addition, the discourse and practice of rescuing local seeds acquire enormous importance in this part of Argentina. Though farmers here have the practice of selling their production to their cooperatives, they do not have the tradition of collectively participating in fairs, markets in towns or food and seed interchange. This is more a feature of Andean societies where the peasantry has a strong presence.

The fact that Guaraní native communities participate in the seed fairs is something to remark as well since it is probably one of the few socio-political space where farmers and natives congregate. Mechanisms of conflict between nationalities, ethnicities and religions may be gradually changing. The actual participation of Guaraní into “spaces of whites” (European decedents and Creoles) might be a sign of new values of social interaction among people in Misiones.

Indeed, in these spaces, new social values and norms are being crafted. These values are locally constructed, and are not the imposition of actors that represent the interest of distant people (distant markets or distant NGOs). The production of healthy food represent the necessities and values of local societies and not, as in the case of tobacco, the interest of agroindustries. This brings back Törnquist’s (1981) idea about global logics in local arenas: in some arenas people is governed or compete with conditions settled by other arenas “they are not able to see, influence or control”. Actors in the rural development arena in Misiones are making a choice against these global constrains.

Probably here can be found the reason why agroindustrial companies, such of those of tobacco, forestry or yerba mate, do not participate in the abovementioned economic and political spaces. Agroindustrial corporations are not seeking to improve family agriculture’s position in the market and society through more equitable access to natural resources (land, water), the local trade of produce, the management of infrastructure projects, etc. All these are indeed central issues to reflect and propose policies of rural development in areas where family agriculture represents the great majority of rural dwellers.

How to understand the “alternativeness” of the rural development model under construction in Misiones? Most of the actors engaged in rural development interventions are promoting and constructing a kind of agriculture that is different from that dominant in the past in the ways it takes into consideration the environment, incorporates the cycles of nature, is oriented to the market but centred in local societies’ welfare and need to access healthy food. It works towards food security and, the way it is settled in Misiones, also towards food sovereignty. This, food production, could work as an alternative to tobacco, yerba and tea.

The limits of the alternativeness of the model under construction may be seen when observing the great paradox of a state that is discursively promoting food security and fostering forestry and nature conservation, all within a same space and time. The provincial state’s treasury is still highly dependent on tobacco production and domestic consumption. Large-scale forestry benefits a few industrial corporations which have access to land, technology, information, markets, international credits, etc. Rural dweller, farmers’ organizations, native communities and all those actors that accompany them, find it very difficult to

compete against these forces. Hägerstrand's (1985) comment about the "struggle[s] for power over the admission of existences in time and space" clearly helps to understand the current dynamics in Misiones' countryside.

The limitations can be seen as well in many people's own understanding about the appropriation of resources. In this sense, for instance, while claiming for the non privatization and commodification of seeds, farmers, RDPs, social organizations, and most of the NGOs, plead for land property. This claim contrasts with the Guaraní communities' demand for the devolution of their territories to the communities and not to individual people. The almost absence of these communities in the interventions made from the rural development arena corroborate that there are certain limitations to reflect about the territorial dynamics under study as 'decolonial projects' or 'alternatives to euro-modernity'.

The agroecological discourse is acting "in the borders". This discourse and practice can take place in Misiones not only due to the province's particular ecosystem, history of land occupation and farming sector but also because it is not the geographical core of commodities production.

The discourse has nevertheless emerged, reinterpreted and reinforced in many other areas of Argentina and South America, particularly Brazil. These are areas where large numbers of farmers and peasants dominate the landscape and where large-scale commodity production is not yet fully established or organized. The common element here among these territories is that other knowledges - local knowledges generated by past and present generations - but the expert's are being reinterpreted, given another meaning and used to motorize more socially oriented agricultures, and appropriating the state, markets and nature for the benefit of the majority.

In this context, I agree with Ardití (2008) that it is the cultural aspects of Latin America recent changes that need to be observed and highlighted. It is less interest whether these changes come from the 'left' or 'right'. Indeed, that seeds are everybody's and should not be appropriated and commodified or that nature-society is not a dichotomy relation are not matters of right and left but the construction of different understandings. In this sense, it is possible to think about the construction of 'alternative modernizations'.

Is it possible to talk about an "alternative" rural development? To avoid this apparent paradox, I argue here that the discussion will probably be more fruitful if instead of thinking in terms of an alternative (as something radically different) rural development we think in *another* development (*un otro desarrollo*). In this sense, it might be useful to bring back the idea of development as projects or interventions ("a partial, reformist, intervention-specific alternative") and Development as "a structural changing, radical, systematic alternative" (Mitlin

*et al.*, 2007). The territorial dynamics fostered from the active participation of actors in the rural development arena in Misiones are partial alternative projects that nevertheless seek to articulate and bring about radical and systematic alternatives in the long term.

As a result, there is in the province of Misiones a development discourse (and intervention) that is bottom-up and politically (as opposed to technically) constructed and revolves around social welfare and equality instead of discursively focusing on economic growth, capital profitability, foreign investment or international dynamic markets. These last aspects may not be completely rejected, but they are put in a second level of importance.

In this sense, and following Escobar (2010) it is possible to say that even though these projects are not decolonial projects they are indeed alternative forms of modernity because they seek to separate themselves from previous understandings of the state, market and nature - particularly the neoliberal one - to recreate new ones. In this practice, there is a 'hybrid rural development' under construction hinging on people and environment.

Indeed, even though food production, local markets and agroecological practices have not catalyzed a structural change in the agriculture sector in Misiones yet, they - along with issues of food security and sovereignty, environmental degradation, natural resources management, access to land, and political mobilization - are now part of the current discourses of rural development. These elements are thus important to consider when reflecting on *development processes conducting to reducing social and geographical inequalities, increasing food security and farmers' autonomy or promoting environmental care and how new social and physical spaces and new territories are constructed*.

This *other Development* under construction works against inequity, disputing the state and demanding it to become closer to the popular sectors and their demands, and creating the necessary structures to accommodate them. In disputing state, market and nature, local societies are constructing new territories. These are territories where the family agriculture sector acquires greater economic and political presence: in the local markets, in the seed fairs, in the land forums, in local production networks, in local councils, etc.

In the particular case of San Pedro, when observing the processes of consolidation of local organizations, it is possible to affirm that there have been some important transformations in this area. New grass-roots organizations such

as cooperatives, squatters' or agroecological organizations have emerged as new actors recreating and constructing new social and physical spaces.<sup>246</sup>

As farmers gradually increase their *autonomy* over the organization of their production and over NGOs and RDPs' interventions, new territories are constructed since new space-power relations are being built. Families become more autonomous when, while improving crop productivity and quality, they stop growing tobacco, create new cooperatives and new associations representative of their interests, participate in fairs and forums and access information, position themselves as actors with voices and a presence in the political arena, de-link from the agrochemical market and introduce locally adapted technologies that allow them to improve production and productivity.

If new cooperatives and associations are not just a mask to individually obtain resources or the caprice of NGOs or RDPs to organize farmers without a long term purpose, but the result of a genuine consensus among farmers, then *farmers may be able to autonomously conduct and control the process of putting natural resources under production*. By being able to appropriate physical spaces and natural resources in this particular way, farmers sustain and reproduce themselves in the social space of rural society. In this way, they become actors with power and create new territories.

As long as this process is sustainable and can encompass the entire family agriculture sector, new geographies in Misiones will emerge. However, the possibility for these territorial dynamics to cause widespread structural changes towards a different territory and a different model of rural development seems to depend on many factors.<sup>247</sup>

Certainly, the more general territorial transformations in which family agriculture is framed seem to be working against it. These forces are characterized by activities of large or international corporations that have market power and state support to buy land, produce large-scale forestry, hire local labour etc., and also by the failure of the provincial or national state to make a realistic agrarian policy to support family agriculture. How can food production for local and regional markets be increased when the general policy is promoting commodities for export?

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<sup>246</sup> A local interviewee mentions: "Looking back, since we are here, since we arrived up to now, in San Pedro there have been important changes thank God, although it is still not easy to observe. It seems they are not important changes, but... the first thing we did here in the rural area was to promote organic vegetable gardens in the year 1990 and 1991. This was a desert!" (member, NGO, San Pedro, 2004).

<sup>247</sup> A local interviewee puts it this way: "We cannot forget that we are a couple of sand grains in the middle of [the ocean/nowhere], do not forget that we are talking about San Pedro (...) one of the poorest towns... we can do this kind of work, but as soon as we start touching upon others' interest [large corporations] [we won't be able to continue]" (member, EFA, San Pedro, 2004).

## Contributions to theory and policy making

What can we learn from the analysis and reflections presented here for both theory building and policy making? A discussion on rural development from a critical territorial perspective has proven to be fruitful to understand processes of conflict behind development and the relevance of territory as disputed space.

The theoretical and methodological framework discussed and applied in the present study has shown the importance of mapping actors, their perceptions and understanding of development. It has proven as well the significance of taking into consideration the economic and political structures and dynamics of power where actors are located.

By observing current territorial dynamics in rural areas of Misiones, it is possible to consider new categories of analysis. By comprehending the political, economic and social structures that constrain people's actions and the ideas and motivations behind these actions, it is feasible to demand and design other kind of policies.

Probably one of the main conclusions from studying rural development from a territorial perspective is that Development is a political struggle. In the case presented here, the conflict over natural resources, how they are appropriated and put under production, is currently proving to be a good theoretical approximation to comprehend changes in Latin America's rural spaces.

The extraction and overexploitation of natural resources that characterizes the long history of the continent it is currently contested in many different places. Social movements, rural and urban grass-roots organizations, native communities, and scholars, among others, are contesting the dominant Development paradigm. However, there is increasing awareness of the need to create new ones, other Developments and cultural transformations to change the patterns of high inequality among peoples and regions in Latin America.

The notion of territory as disputed spaces and the diverse ways actors control access to them (natural resources, policy making, discourses, etc.) proved to be useful in development studies. In analysing development, scholars and policy makers will have to confront the idea whether it is possible to talk about development in societies whose territories are appropriated only by a few, where there is not social justice, income distribution, environmental care or equity. Is it developed a geographical area where economic activities have increased but most of the people do not benefit from them and remain marginalized? Is it possible to affirm that a place is developed due to an increase in large-scale forestry while at the same time people cannot access land?

The arena perspective was useful as well to describe and analyse diverse actors with common or confronting interests around a subject and to observe how these

interests are shaped and reproduced differentially. This perspective facilitated an understanding of the ways in which cooperation occurs and conflict emerges. To understand the role of each set of actors (state, NGOs, farmers' organizations, companies, social organizations, native communities, etc.) in promoting development is central to reflect on the power (political alliances, resources, capabilities) they have to motorize wellbeing.

As an explanatory category resulting from the present research, one could argue that the state in Misiones is a *self-contradictory state*. While promoting large-scale commodities for exports (forestry or tobacco) it is at the same time embracing the discourse of food security and creating small-scale projects for family agriculture and food production. All these activities are promoted at the same time and within the same space.

However, the apparent incongruity can be understood if considering that the state in the province of Misiones, and in Argentina, is in itself a space in dispute. Since *the state is disputed*, its public policies are the result of political struggles. The emergence of new public discourses on the importance of food sovereignty or the Provincial Law 4.093 to distribute land may be better comprehended if considering that they are the outcome of certain social sectors that have succeeded in putting forward their demands. At some point, and under certain political and economic circumstances, their claims were attended. The consequence then is that some policies collide with others or are conflictive.

One could argue as well that as long as the discourse of food production, security and sovereignty in Misiones does not turn into a comprehensive policy for the family agriculture sector or an agrarian policy, the state is far from being not incongruous. It intends to keep conflicts in rural areas placated with the smallest intervention possible, and leaving small-scale farmers at the periphery of the economy and society. As long as rural dwellers have access to land, food and a minimal income from tobacco or yerba growing, social discontent in rural areas will not bring significant social revolt. For tobacco or forestry companies that externalize costs of production (in people and environment), food production as subsistence agriculture is positive as long as it does not compete with their interest over land and cheap labour.

State intervention sometimes seems to follow the logics of private companies to 'maximize returns and diminish cost of production'. It invests public resources in sectors of the economy that show most returns - those linked to foreign and/or concentrated capital - and leaves in the margins some geographical and social sectors. The state is not reinvesting the high revenues from forestry or tobacco in poor areas or poor peoples of Misiones. At the same time these companies are not obliged to invest in rural areas.

If the current governments in South America are really making a shift “to the left” or embrace developmental models socially and environmentally oriented, they will have to define the models they want to pursue, remove those institutional structures that work for the benefit of a few and create new ones that could work as forces towards the welfare of the majority of people.

On the other hand, there has been a general consensus for a long time that NGOs could deliver what the state cannot (or does not want) and that this kind of organizations would help to bring about grass-root organization, people’s political participation, gender equality, environmental care, etc. NGOs are treated in the discussion about development as non conflictive and with no power interest in rural development arenas. However, as local actors involved in rural life, NGOs have their own agendas and interest and therefore political actors that try to exercise power in the territory.

Not all NGOs are committed to the poor and some of them perform in the rural development arena for their own reproduction in the rural and political space. Therefore, it is important that farmers organize themselves and create alliances with other social organizations, NGOs, political parties, etc. with certain levels of autonomy. These strategically alliances could work to contribute to placing the family agriculture sector on governments’ agendas. As states become more involved in the family agriculture sector (in the case of Argentina through the creation of the Sub-secretary of Family Agriculture) it is interesting to observe what will become of the role of NGOs.

The role of NGOs in Misiones is crucial to understand the current discourse and territorial dynamics linked to agroecology and food production. They were able to give structure and meaning to a local concern and put it in the focus of the current political agendas. The local agroecological discourse is not an imposition of the World Bank, the national state or even the provincial state. It is part of farmers’ concerns. They observe that their livelihoods from agriculture and their life in rural space are threatened.

The above leads to the conclusion that in the same way that the state or the NGOs are not good or bad *per se* for development the market is categorically good or bad neither. The question that should be posed is what kind of markets should small-scale farmers in Misiones participate or engage in? What should be the architecture of the value chain of yerba and tobacco in order for farmers to gain more autonomy and to benefit with higher profits not just remaining subordinated and exploited? The same should count for food production. How to go from subsistence agriculture to market-oriented food production? What kind of financing, training, political organization and social participation should farmers have? As long as financing for small-scale agriculture remains in micro-credits granted sporadically by RDPs or in high interest rates and impossible warranties bank-driven credits, farmers are facing problems in leaving



subsistence agriculture. Financing cooperatives, for instance, could work as an important agent to motorize agriculture growth in rural areas of Misiones.

The study intended to show that processes of development and interventions are conflictive. In this sense, the Territorial Rural Development promoted by international funding agencies may obscure the fact that some elite groups are acting on behalf of a particular geographical space. When the TRD proposes to increase the scale of intervention from the company level to territorial competitiveness, the territory is thereafter regarded as an agent itself.

The conceptualization of territories as having one identity overlooks conflicting social relations and the differences in power and ideology between groups and individuals with different identities and interests. The territorial approach treats regions and communities as undifferentiated spaces, tending to ignore possibilities for internal fragmentation, as shown in the previous chapters.

The TRD perspective offered by intergovernmental agencies of cooperation sometimes ends up reifying territories or the “local” as if geographical spaces were homogeneously constructed, ignoring the reality that territories are constructed by actors with different interests and capacities, and different abilities or powers to influence and to be part of the agendas of development.

Manzanal (2010) states that by not acknowledging that the territory is a space where multiple expressions of power come together, one follows a particular definition of ‘Development’ linked to the persistence and continuation of the existing structures of domination.

The evidence presented here indicates that the state is the only actor having the capacity to motorize transformations and at the same time regulate social conflicts. The ‘territory’ is not just a scale of intervention: it is a space in dispute. Therefore, to think that ‘actors in a territory’ will work together in common projects of development is an excessive assumption in terms of development interventions.

In the great majority of rural areas of Latin America, social participation is not enough to bring about welfare. If the general structure of subordination in which many farmers and rural dwellers produce and live is not changed the reproduction of marginalization, exclusion and poverty will remain. In any case, social organization, political participation and strategic alliances by those excluded socio-economic sectors can work as forces that can pressure governments towards changes conducting to welfare and equity.

If a path of development towards large-scale crops is to be followed then the state should create the mechanisms to assure that this is done with the consensus of the majority and that there are no negative effects on society and the environment. Institutional arrangements should be made so that there is not a displacement of rural poverty to urban areas and that the use of natural resources

from a few actors does not exclude their use by others, as is currently happening with water pollution or land grabbing. A land use policy resulting from debate and consensus among all actors is required in order to follow one or another model of rural development.

It can be concluded therefore that Latin America requires *national and regional agrarian policies* for the agriculture sector and rural spaces and not just *rural development programmes and projects*. These policies should be the result of a process of consensus among organizations of popular sectors (farmers, rural workers, native communities, peasants, etc.) and should be institutionalized as definitive state policies. They should be aiming at redistributing income among sectors and geographical areas and increasing production and productivity both for the national and international market but with the consensus of a state that governs for the people.

Regional policies that coordinate food policies among neighbouring countries could greatly benefit family agriculture. Considering that most of the family farmers are located in the north of Argentina, the role of MERCOSUR and the already opened spaces to discuss family agriculture could be promising.

## Further research

In this final section some topics of research for further studies are identified and suggested. This identification is based on the conclusions of the present study. These research questions are also very much relevant for contributing to the current debate in Argentina about family agriculture and the general socio-economic and political model of development.

1. The appropriation of nature by diverse actors in Misiones creates new spaces in dispute. A study about the formal and informal mechanisms behind this could shed light on the actors involved and the role of the state in regulating these conflicts. The case of large-scale forestry, land grabbing in north-west Misiones or conservation parks and native communities could be interesting examples to work on. These matters are not only present in this province. Other provinces of Argentina show similar elements than the ones found in Misiones. By applying a similar theoretical and methodological framework as presented here such a study could benefit the conclusions and reach of the present study.

2. There is a process of internationalization of the national and provincial economies. How is this manifested in Misiones? A closer analysis of the circuits and value chains of tobacco, forestry, tourism, and conservation from a world-system perspective may help to clarify this issue. Who benefits and who loses? The particular case of forestry is remarkable for the visible impact it has had in the geographical space. It can be observed from a satellite image the extensions

of pine plantations and/or rain forest deforestation. Who are the actors involved? What have been the institutional transformations in the national and provincial state that allowed the concentration of land by foreign capitals in this province? How is, in particular, the global architecture of forestry and agriculture production, trade and consumption?

3. Are the current ‘social movements’ in Misiones rural areas challenging the processes of globalization taking place there? If so, how are they doing that? What socio-political transformations do food production and ecological agriculture bring in terms of gender, ethnicity and religion in rural dwellers and farmers? An analysis of this could bring light to the diverse social processes at the community level (*colonias*) since the province is characterized by a high number of nationalities, ethnicities and religions with different worldviews coexisting in many different settlements. Are social movement incorporating different cosmologies? Will rural development programs, NGOs’ projects and farmers’ organizations activities open up to incorporate native peoples as beneficiaries, subjects of development as well as their logics into projects of intervention?

5. Since 2008, the concern about food security has been increasing. How do rural movements in Misiones link their claims on family agriculture and agroecology with the more recent discourse about food security and sovereignty of the Argentinean national government? How is food sovereignty being constructed from below and what can be learnt from this in terms of policy making at the national and international level? What are the contradictions and possibilities of an agriculture more socially oriented, food security/sovereignty and the high global demand of, timber, commodity crops, fibres, bio-fuels, nature conservation, etc.?

6. Women play a key role in food production and commercialization both in the domestic and public life. How is this new emerged subject (*feriantas, mujeres rurales, campesinas, jefas de hogar*, etc.) in rural Misiones contesting the way agriculture is perceived? Traditional crops in the province have a strong participation of men. Men are in charge of dealing with middle-men, unions, companies and/or politicians. What is the new role of women in social movements in rural areas? What identities are under construction? How do they dispute development models and territories? A study in diverse localities on this matter could show the continuity and changes in domestic-public gender relations.

7. It is possible to agree with Ardití (2008) when he argues that “post-liberalism is a symptom of what we are in the process of becoming, an index of our becoming-other”. A further study on the heterogeneity of the state in Argentina and its re-insertion in the economic, social and cultural life would shed light on the debate about the *left turn* and *post-liberalism* in South America. In this

sense, the present study has shown that many elements of the neoliberal economic model introduced in the 1990s in Argentina still can be observed.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview guides

In this Appendix are presented the guiding questions I used to interview the different actors which are part of the rural development arena in Misiones during fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2009.

Despite having made an interview guide for each of the different type of actors (see chapter III), I here present a general one for reasons of brevity. I have prepared a guide for (a) farmers, (b) NGOs and PDRs' staff, (c) public servants in the area of agriculture, (d) SO's staff, (e) public servants in the area of ecology and environment and (f) researchers at the university. However they differ in only a few aspects and the general structure reminds the same. The exception was for the case of logging companies and large-scale owners. The interview guide that I used for land owners whose land is (a) on the reserve of Yabotí or (b) squatted, is also included.

### INTERVIEW GUIDE GENERAL STRUCTURE

#### *INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEW*

Date: ..... Place: ..... Time:.....

#### *INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE*

Name and surname: .....

Organization s/he belongs to: .....

What kind of organization is it? : .....

Function inside the organization: .....

Address: .....

Short biography of the interviewee: .....

#### *SECTION I: ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF ANALYSIS*

##### The economic life

- What do you consider are the main social, economic problems (in general terms) in Misiones? And in [this municipality]?
- Which are the local and non local actors that affect, influence or somehow control the economic life of the population in [this municipality]? How are they doing that?
- What would you consider are the main problems that the agriculture smallholders have to face every day? As producers and as rural dwellers.

- Which are the problems that the small and non small-scale agriculture holders face when dealing with the production and commercialization of their products?
- What is the position of the agricultural smallholders within the (yerba, tobacco, tea, wood) chain? And within the provincial economy?
- How is the environment conditioning the agriculture production that smallholders can make?
- How is the use of land in [this municipality] restricting the possibilities of agricultural development? (e.g. environmental conservation areas, industrial areas, etc.)
- How are the natural characteristics of the physical environment conditioning the possibilities of rural development practices and policies? And what about those social characteristics (such as roads, Argentinean antennas for mobile phones, pavement in the internal roads, Argentinean TV, so on).
- What are the physical characteristics of the territory that are important to take into account for the development of the production and the commercialization of smallholders? (e.g. roads, proximity to big urban areas).
- And for their economic organization? (e.g. conformation of cooperatives)
- What are the different between [this municipality] and [the other municipality] for example?
- Does the proximity to Paraguay and Brazil make any difference in the agriculture development of Misiones? In what does it make a difference?

#### The politic and social life

- Which are the local and non local actors that affect, influence or somehow control the politic life of the population in the Municipality?
- How is the political situation of the agriculture sector? What are their demands and achievements? What are the main struggles? Has it always been like this? Is there any difference within the province?
- How do you consider that the physical characteristics of the territory (roads, distances, land use legislation) influenced the political organization of the smallholder sector?
- Discourses about rural poverty and development
- What do you consider are the causes of rural poverty in Misiones? And in [the municipality]? What is the difference with [the other municipality]?
- Do you know about the policies of rural development in Misiones? And in [this municipality]? What do they want and what are they doing with smallholders?
- What is the position of this organization about the economic policies that nowadays are present in Misiones and in [the municipality]?
- What is the position of this organization about the policies of rural development that nowadays are present in Misiones and in [the municipality]?
- How do you think the problems of poverty in [this municipality] can be subverted? And in Misiones?
- How do you consider that the economic policies of the current provincial government are taking into account the natural resources of Misiones?

- And what about the rural development policies? (How are they taking into account the natural resources? (water, forest, soil properties)

#### Collective actions for social change

- What kinds of actions made jointly in [this municipality] intend to bring about economic, political and social changes?
- How is the ground level organization of agriculture smallholders here? What are their possibilities and difficulties? Why do they organize? They do it by themselves or by external requirements?
- Do you consider there is a lack of agriculture smallholders' organization such as cooperatives, chambers, farmers markets, so on? Why is so?
- What is the role of smallholders' organization in general for the rural development in Misiones? And for the rural development of [this municipality]?
- Do you think there are enough interventions from NGOs and public agencies to battle rural poverty in [this municipality]?
- How do you think the environmental assets, natural resources have helped to frame the rural development policies of NGOs in Misiones and in particular in [this municipality]?
- Do you consider that the irregular land tenure is a problem for economic, political or social organization of the smallholder sector?

### SECTION II: ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS INTERACTIONS

#### Characteristics of the organization

- What is the main objective of the organization?
- Which were the reasons for the formation of this organization?
- How was the process of conformation of this organization? Does this organization have previous antecedents (in a partisan group, cooperative, school board, or other)?
- How many members does it have? What are the characteristics of the members? (Land property, kind of production, level of capitalization, so on).
- What social or productive sector represents this organization?
- Have been there a change in the number of members? Why?
- How is this organization organized? (Structure, functions).
- Where is the physical location of this organization? (Headquarter) Why is it located there?
- What is the area of influence of this organization? Where do the members come from? Why is this so?
- Where does this organization get financial resources from?
- What is the total amount of money executed in 2007? What is the average in the latest 5 years?
- What kind of material resources does the organization have with?
- What activities does it implement in order to achieve its objectives?

- Does the organization have any project with the members? What are the projects about?

#### Interactions with other organizations

- What kind of interaction with other organization does this organization have?
- What is the name of the organizations it has interaction with?
- What is the purpose of the interaction? And the frequency of meeting?
- When does the interaction begin? Why?
- Is there any norm or rule (formal or informal) for the interaction? How was it settled?
- What are the incentives and/or facilitators for the interaction?
- And what are the restrictions and/or difficulties?
- What are the results of the interaction?
- How important do you consider the interactions with each organization?
- What values do you share with each organization?
- With which of these organizations does this organization have conflict of interest? Is that an impediment to interact?
- What kind of interaction is it possible to have with an organization that does not share the same political perspective that you?
- How is the relation of this organization with the local government (municipality)? And with the provincial government?

#### Participation in networks, institutional spaces (formal or informal)

- Does this organization participate in any network? Or in any political forum, economic chamber, etc.?
- What is the purpose of that institutional space?
- And what is the objective of participating there?
- When did this participation begin?
- Who else participates there?
- Is there any project and/or activities in common?
- What is the frequency of meeting?
- Is there any norm or rule (formal or informal) for the participation? How was it settled?
- What are the incentives and/or facilitators to participate there?
- And what are the restrictions and/or difficulties?
- What are the results of participating there?
- Is it important to participate there? Why?
- What values do you share with this institutional space?

- What kind of agreements and disagreements does this organization have with this institutional space?

### SECTION III - FINAL REFLECTIONS

#### The performance of the organization in the rural development arena

- What are the main achievements of this organization?
- What are the main difficulties that this organization has to face?
- What are its challenges for the future?
- Do you consider that this organization contributes to the rural development of [this municipality]?
- How do you consider this organization has helped to change the vision about the use of natural resources in the local society? / How do you consider this organization has helped to improve the use of natural resources by smallholders?

#### The power relations in the municipality

- What is the role of this organization in [this municipality]? And what is the role of other smallholder organization?
- Do you consider that this organization has helped to make any social change in [this municipality]?
- How has been affected this organization by its interaction with
  - Other organizations of smallholders?
  - NGOs?
  - The local government?
  - RDPs and other public agencies policies?
  - Commodities dealers and companies?
- Who do you consider (collective actor) has a key role to influence the usage of natural resources?
- How do you think the provincial government is influencing the use of natural resources in Misiones and in particular in [this municipality]?
- How do you think the agro industrial companies are influencing the use of natural resources in Misiones and in particular in [this municipality]?
- In this context, is there any organization that tries to make a change, a difference?
- In which issues it is possible to bring about changes in [this municipality]?
- What needs to be done? Who is supposed to do so?

#### Comparative rural development arenas and territory in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro

- What do you consider are the differences between Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro regarding...

- ...the economic, politic and social problems and advantages?
- ...the grass-root organization of agriculture smallholders?
- ...the presence of agro industrial companies?
- ...the presence of native communities?
- ...the presence of rural development NGOs and local, provincial and national policies for rural development?
- ...the presence of development networks?
- ...the influence and control of non local actors?
- And what are the similarities?

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### LARGE-SCALE OWNERS / LOGGING COMPANIES

#### *INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEW*

Date: ..... Place: ..... Time: .....

#### *INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE*

Name and surname: .....

Name of the company/property: .....

#### Land owners in *Yabotí* reserve

- Where is your property located?
- Do you own other parcels of lands in the province? (if so, where)
- When and why did you acquire this property?
- When you acquired it, was it already part of the reserve?
- How was the process through which your property has been put under nature conservation?
- Do you make any economic activity in your property?
- What are the restrictions due to the regulations that you have on your property to make economic activities?
- Are you affiliated to any association which represents the interests of sector?
- Do you participate in the meetings of the board of Yabotí reserve management?
- How do you explain the process of land squatting in other areas of San Pedro but not in the Yabotí reserve?
- How do you believe that the agriculture frontier could be prevented in this part of Misiones?

- What kind of incentives have you received from the state in order for you to put under conservation your property?
- What are the issues that you believe are necessary to improve life conditions in San Pedro / Misiones countryside?

Land owners whose land is squatted
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- Where is the property in dispute with the provincial state because of land squatting? (name and location)
- Do you own other parcels of lands in the province? (if so, where)
- When and why did you acquire this property?
- When you acquire it, was it squatted?
- How was the process of land squatted? Why did it happen?
- What are the restrictions due to land squatting that you have on your property to make economic activities?
- How do you explain the process of land squatting into this area of San Pedro for example and not in the Yabotí reserve?
- Is this property under the provincial law 4093 (*Plan de Arraigo y Colonización*)?
- When will this parcel of land be bought from you and distributed?
- How do you believe that the agriculture frontier could be prevented in this part of Misiones?
- What do you use the property under conflict for? Which is the productive activity there if any?
- Are you affiliated to any association which represents the interests of sector? Any chamber of commerce?
- What incentives have you received from the state for productive activities?
- What are the issues that you believe are necessary to improve life conditions in San Pedro / Misiones countryside?

## Appendix 2 – Informants interviewed and observations during fieldwork

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Provincial referents interviewed or consulted in Aristóbulo del Valle

<i>Number of people interviewed</i>	<i>Type of institution / agency</i>
5	National agencies (INTA, PSA, SENASA)
1	Provincial agencies (MAyP)
3	Municipal government
1	NGO (ODHAT)
4	Social organizations (EFA, Catholic Church)
10	Farmers' organizations
2	Companies/corporations (Tobacco Companies, Electricity Cooperative)
<b>26</b>	<b>Total people interviewed in Aristóbulo del Valle</b>

Provincial referents interviewed or consulted in San Pedro

<i>Number of people interviewed</i>	<i>Type of institution / agency</i>
5	National agencies (INTA, PSA, SENASA)
2	Provincial agencies (MERNyT)
2	Municipal agency
7	NGO (INDES, APHyDAL, Asociación Moconá, Bosque Modelo)
3	Social organizations (EFA, IEA)
31	Farmers' organizations
2	Companies/corporations (logging companies, large-scale land owners)
<b>52</b>	<b>Total people interviewed in San Pedro</b>



Provincial referents interviewed or consulted in Posadas, Montecarlo, Bernardo de Irigoyen and Eldorado

<i>Number of people interviewed</i>	<i>Type of institution / agency</i>
5	National agencies (INTA, INAI, INYM)
10	Provincial agencies (MAyP, MERNyT, MDS)
1	NGO (INDES)
5	Social organizations (Catholic Church, UNaM)
1	Companies/corporations (logging company, large-scale land holder)
<b>22</b>	<b>Total people interviewed in rest of Misiones</b>

Referents interviewed or consulted in Buenos Aires

<i>Number of persons interviewed</i>	<i>Type of institution / agency</i>
3	National agencies (SAGPyA, PSA, Ministry of Labour)
1	NGO (APHyDAL)
3	Social organizations (UBA)
<b>7</b>	<b>Total people interviewed in Buenos Aires</b>

Participatory and non participatory observations conducted during fieldwork

- Observation of the stalls along the provincial road 07 where native communities sell their handicraft (Aristóbulo del Valle).
- Visits to the farmers’ local market (*feria franca*) in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro.
- Participatory observation in a farm which is introducing new agroecological techniques and diversifying incomes: sheep in tea and mate plantation. PROINDER -INTA (Aristóbulo del Valle).
- Non participatory observation in a meeting of the Local Cattle Association (Aristóbulo del Valle).

- Participatory observation in the Forum for the Land and Water (Aristóbulo del Valle).
- Visit to the production centre of the Cooperative of Honey Production Flor del Parque (Aristóbulo del Valle).
- Participatory observation in the workshop organized by the local Agency of INTA with the aim of making a participatory diagnosis about farm and territorial needs of farmers in order to outline a rural development project to Aristóbulo del Valle and a neighbouring municipality.
- Participatory observation in a women grass-root group activity, beneficiaries of PROHUERTA-PROINDER (Aristóbulo del Valle).
- Participatory observation in a workshop in Tobuna organized by the UTTERMI (San Pedro). The aim was to outline a territorial intervention in the area concerning agriculture production and the creation of a production pole (*cuenca productiva*).
- Participatory observation in the annual closing meeting of Mujeres Rurales Unidas (San Pedro).
- Visit to a tree nursery in San Juan Bosco (San Pedro)
- Visit to a horticulture farm reconverted from tobacco (INTA, DDR) (San Pedro).
- Non-participant observation at a meeting in the Ministry of Ecology with public servants from the National Ministry of Labour of the Nation, the General Director of Ecology and Environmental Quality, the Director of Vital Resources and the Sub Secretary of Ecology.
- Participant observation at the festival of the Rural Women Association in San Pedro.
- Non-participant observation at a meeting of local farmer delegates to intervene in a new area by the regional UTTERMI team (San Juan Bosco and Puerto Argentino 1 and 2).
- Participant Observation at the Araucaria festival in San Pedro.
- Non-participant observation at the meeting of PSA-PROINDER extensionist in Eldorado. Workshop on rural development policies proposals for the new National Secretariat of Rural Development and Family Agriculture. Participants were staff from the regional extensionist teams in Misiones.
- Non-participant observation in the Local Advisory Council of the INTA agency in Aristóbulo del Valle. Presentation of representatives of the major national yerba company about the conflicts the provincial law of provincial

yerba packaging (*Ley provincial de envasado en origen de yerba mate*) could mean to the municipality yerba production.

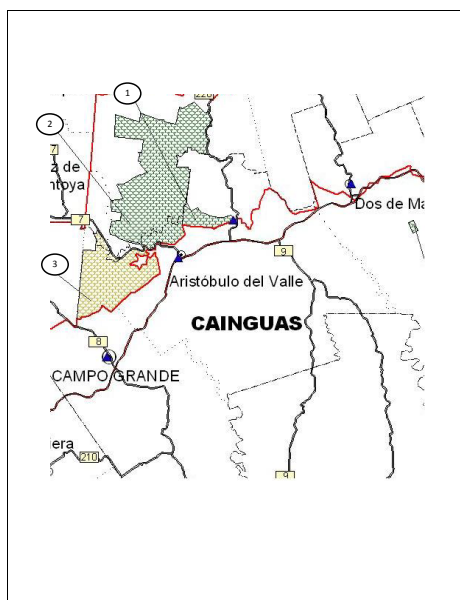
- Non participatory observation in a meeting of the Cooperative of San Lorenzo, gathered to discuss the acquisition of an agro-industry to produce yerba (San Pedro).
- Participatory observations in public offices in Aristóbulo del Valle (Ministry of Agriculture, INTA and DAYP) and San Pedro (INTA, DDR) and in tobacco chambers (APTM, CTM both in Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro).

#### Agencies visited to collect statistical information

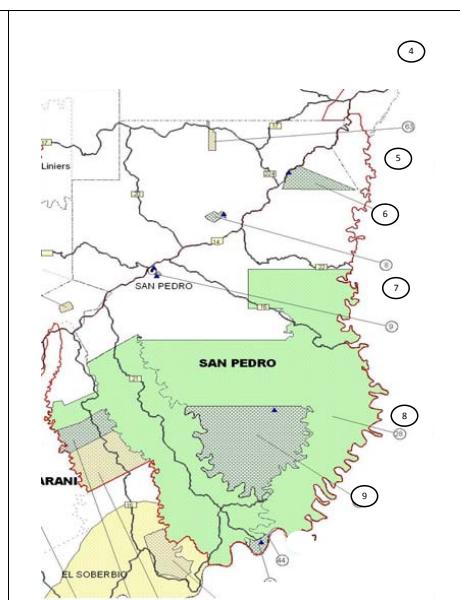
- INDEC, national institute of statistics and census
- INYM, national institute of Yerba Mate, in Posadas (Misiones)
- IPEC, provincial institute of statistics and census
- General Department of Cadastre, province of Misiones
- General Department of Tobacco and non-traditional crops, ministry of Agriculture, province of Misiones
- Department of Forestry Development Promotion
- General Department of Agriculture Economics and Systems of Information, ministry of Agriculture, province of Misiones
- Office of Cadastre of the municipalities of Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro

## Appendix 3 – Maps

Map 8: Municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle (Misiones, Argentina). Areas of nature conservation



Map 9: Municipality of San Pedro (Misiones, Argentina). Areas of nature conservation



### Areas of Nature Conservation

1: Provincial Park Salto Encantado (706 Ha.)

2: Provincial Park Valley of the Cuña Pirú (12,522 Ha.)

3: Private Reserve of the La Plata University Valley of the Cuña Pirú (5,492 Ha.)

Approximately total hectares under conservation in Aristóbulo del Valle: 6,720 Ha. (Park 2 is located mostly in a neighbouring municipality)

4: Private Reserve Julián Freaza (642 Ha.)

5: Provincial Park Piñalito (3,796 Ha.)

6: Provincial Park Cruce Caballero (522 Ha.)

7: Provincial Park Araucaria (92 Ha.)

8: Reserve of Biosphere Yabotí (236,313 Ha.)

9: Provincial Park Esmeralda (31,569 Ha.)

Approximately total hectares under conservation in San Pedro: 228,539 Ha.

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from MERNT (2005).

## Appendix 4 – Illustrations

Illustration 1: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Discourses on family agriculture and (alternative) rural development



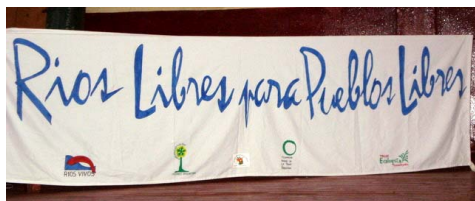
Movement for the Peasants' Seeds of Misiones - 12 years multiplying biodiversity

"Seeds, heritage of the peoples to the service of humanity"



National Campaign June - September 2007

Soy for today - Hunger for tomorrow



Free rivers for free peoples



Forum of Land, Water and Forest 2007 Yvy Yvyra Rekoa - Land. A struggle of everybody

Illustration 2: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Discourses on agro-industrial modernization in the family agriculture sector



Homemade seed - Recommendation

Mr. Producer of tobacco

The CoTTaProM informs you that it does “not recommend” the use of homemade seed.

Homemade seed is a problem that put in risk the quality of tobacco in the province of Misiones.

To avoid it, in the next harvest, the technicians of CoTTaProM will control its utilization in the growers’ farms and in the storage centers.

The member companies of CoTTaProM are informed that it will not be able to deal with (tobacco) growers that use homemade seeds



The commercialization of the Burley Tobacco from Misiones is in danger!

The main reason is the utilization of agro-chemicals not allowed for the cultivation of tobacco

During this campaign, samples of tobacco will be taken for its analysis.

The CoTTaProM warns

to the producers who were to be found residues of non authorized products

may be expelled from the production circuit

\*

Get rid of material not related to tobacco

Plastic strings, paper, carton, feathers, insects, weeds, plastic material, rubber, leather, metal, stones, wires, soil

Keep order and cleanness

Use ramie string to pack

Let’s work for a common goal, let’s take care of our market

Standard Tobacco Argentina



Illustration 3: Strategies and concrete practices in rural development in Misiones (Argentina) from an agroecological perspective



Income diversification and weed management. Sheep in tea plantation. Aristóbulo del Valle, 2007



Land with soil covered and organic compost ready to be planted. San Pedro, 2009



Crop diversification and soil management. Curves and companion planting: tobacco, yerba mate and pine. Aristóbulo del Valle, 2009



Crop diversification and soil management. Intercrop: yerba mate and tung. Aristóbulo del Valle, 2009



Crop diversification: tea, citrus and pine. Aristóbulo del Valle, 2009



Horticulture under cover is increasing in Misiones' rural areas. San Pedro, 2007



Illustration 4: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Municipality of San Pedro. Spaces of commercialization: the local farmers' markets. 2007-2009



Local Farmers' Markets of Misiones - From the farm to your table

The first market in Misiones opened in 1995 in an combined effort by rural development programmes and farmers' organizations



San Pedro. Dairy products and chicken for sell in the farmers' market opened in 1996 by Union and Progress with the support of an NGO (INDES) and a national programme (PSA)



San Pedro. Vegetable, dairy products and jams are displayed in tables to be sold in the farmers' markets



San Pedro. In 2008, farmers introduced a new way to display products in their market



San Pedro. In 2008 a new farmers' market was opened with the support of a national rural development programme (PROHUERTA). Here farmers sell their products on a sidewalk once a week



San Pedro. In general, men do not participate in selling the products in the farmers' market



Illustration 5. Province of Misiones (Argentina). Municipality of Aristóbulo del Valle. Spaces of commercialization: the farmers' local markets. 2007-2009



Aristóbulo del Valle. This market opened in 1996 with the support from the national state (INTA, PROHUERTA) and local farmers' grass-roots organizations



Aristóbulo del Valle. Food and other homemade products are commercialized in this farmers' market

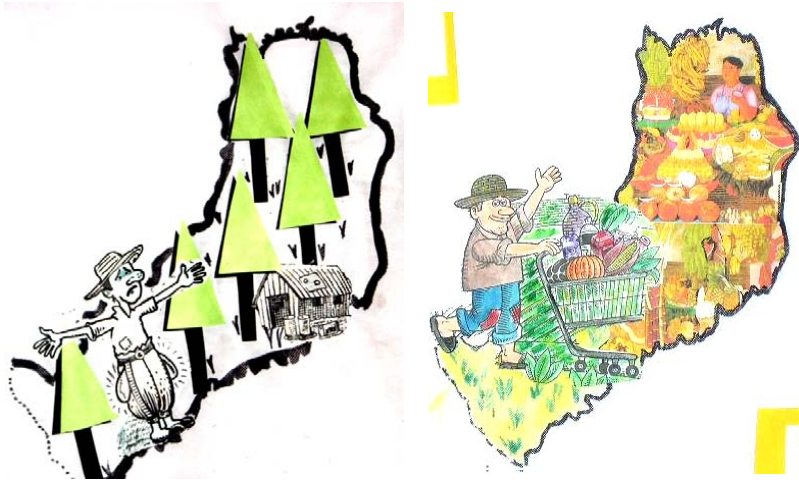


Aristóbulo del Valle. In this market, the only one in town, men have greater participation in the commercialization than in San Pedro



Aristóbulo del Valle. The market is located in a place donated by the local government. The infrastructure is more precarious than the first one opened in San Pedro

Illustration 6: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Depicting agriculture / forestry, rural development and rural poverty and wealth



Source: Movimiento por la Semilla Campesina de Misiones. Courtesy of B. Sanchez

The province of Misiones depicted as monoculture of pine and rural poverty

The province of Misiones depicted as provider of food by farmers and wealth

Illustration 7: Province of Misiones (Argentina). Public publicity from the Ministry of Ecology for natural resources management



MR. FARMER

Protective forests of streams, springs, wetlands and soils in slopes with more than 20% cannot be removed because they are protected by law 3426, in order to preserve water quality and maintain the habitat for native fauna

Among all, let's take care of our natural resources

## Appendix 5 – Actors in the rural development arena

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### Public agencies and rural development programmes

The main provincial agency in the province of Misiones intervening in agriculture is the Ministry of Agriculture and Production (MAyP). Together with the national government, it implements the Programme of Rural Development for the North-eastern provinces of Argentina, a RDP known as PRODERNEA.<sup>248</sup> It also executes some other projects and programmes which are implemented entirely with provincial resources, such as those for cattle and fish production. In the case of PRODERNEA, the beneficiaries are farmers with certain level of capitalization. Very much in tune with the World Bank policies, this programme aims to insert farmers in dynamic markets and to create financial markets in rural areas.

The specific objectives of this RDP are: (a) increase farm and non-farm incomes for both male and female farmers, diversify production and promote technical change and productivity improvement, (b) minimize the economic and social costs involved in a processes of reorientation and transformation of the production (*reconversión productiva*), (c) promote and strengthen small farmers' organizations, (d) contribute to the long-term conservation of renewable natural resources, environment management and conservation, (e) contribute to the improvement of the living conditions and the conservation of cultural values of the original peoples (aborigines), helping them to maintain and strengthen control over their territories and resources, and (f) strengthen public institutions and private rural development in the region.

The Institute for Agriculture and Industrial Development (*Instituto de Fomento Agrícola e Industrial*, IFAI) is also a provincial agency in charge of developing industrial policies for the agriculture and forestry sector. It was created in 1988 by the province and its objectives are to use public and private funding to foster agricultural income diversification, the introduction of new crops and the creation of new cooperatives and agro-industries. In order to accomplish so, it proposes the delivery of financial aid and technical assistance. The impacts of their policies are however limited in terms of geographical areas and social sectors involved.<sup>249</sup>

The Agricultural Social Program (*Programa Social Agropecuario*, PSA) began

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<sup>248</sup> *Programa de Desarrollo Rural para las Provincias del Nordeste Argentino.*

<sup>249</sup> There are basically two major interventions, one in the Northeast (for grain production) and other in the South (in San Javier, sugar production)

at the end of 1993, benefiting the less-capitalized farmers. The national government was responsible for its implementation through a Provincial Unit of Coordination (UTCP) located outside the provincial government's structure. The general objectives of the PSA are to: (a) contribute to the improvement of the production activities and income levels of smallholders, (b) generate a space for participation in order to promote farmers organization and self-management, (c) promote the organized participation of beneficiaries in political decisions of their concerns.

The programme delivers micro credits with subsidized interest rates or monetary transfers without refund (grants), as well as technical assistance and training in the areas of production and commercialization. The latter was provided by NGOs or technicians under contract until 2009. Until 2008, it worked with projects at the local level, which comprised between six and eight families.<sup>250</sup>

The Project for Small Farmers Development (*Proyecto de Desarrollo de Pequeños Productores Agropecuarios*, PROINDER) is implemented by the PSA, to support productive and commercialization activities for less capitalized farmers. It receives resources from the World Bank. The overall objectives are to improve the quality of life of poor farmers by sustainably increasing their incomes as well as their organization and participation in public affairs. It also aims to strengthen institutional capacity at national, provincial and local levels for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of rural development policies.

The National Institute of Agriculture Technology (INTA) through the Federal Program of Assistance for Sustainable Rural Development (*Programa Federal de Apoyo al Desarrollo Rural Sustentable*, PROFEDER) implements three programs in the province of Misiones focusing in the different social sectors of family agriculture: the Program *Minifundio*, the *PROHUERTA* and the Program to Strengthen Family Farmers (*Programa de Fortalecimiento para Productores Familiares*, PROFAM).

The specific objectives of PROFEDER are to: (a) promote and support the strengthening of farmers' organizations, (b) promote the formation and strengthening of local knowledge and innovation networks through consultation with local stakeholders, (c) strengthen local technical systems, (d) promote and strength training systems, (e) contribute in the construction of a local information system, and (f) provide technical support tools to achieve a good connection with systems of financing. The overall objectives of PROHUERTA are to: (a) supplement the diet of low-income social sectors through small-scale

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<sup>250</sup> In 2009, the PSA institutional framework changed with the creation at the national level of a Ministry of Agriculture and a Sub-secretariat of Rural Development and Family Agriculture. However, in the present study, I will refer to the previous institutional organization.

self-production, (b) improve family diet, increase the quality and quantity of food intake, (c) improve the use and distribution of household expenditure on food, (d) encourage community participation in solving food problems, seeking greater management and organizational capacity in the population, (e) create, validate and systematize information on appropriate technology for the production of safe food, and (f) promote small agro-productive alternatives for income and employment generation. The overall objective of the program Minifundio is to improve smallholders' income and quality of life on the basis of a self-sustaining development, which would make possible its transformation, expanding the possibilities for capitalizing.

The programmes and their institutional structures are decentralized in diverse ways. Three different ways can be described: through the provincial government (provincial management of budget, decisions and staff), through the INTA and their local offices (national management of budget, local management of decisions and staff from outside the provincial governmental structure) and through a new national agency located outside the provincial government (PSA) and its outsourcing of services delivery to NGOs and other local organizations (national management of budget, local management of decisions and staff from outside the governmental structure with social participation).<sup>251</sup> All the above mentioned programmes use national resources, except PRODERNEA and PROINDER which also receive funding from the World Bank (in particular through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD).

The public agencies mentioned above have strategies and policies focussing on family farmers in the entire province. Their policies' objectives are framed in terms of 'rural development'. There are some particularities however at the local level.

A diverse group of actors can be observed in Aristóbulo del Valle. Among them are the two main national agencies from the National Secretary of Agriculture: the National Service of Sanitary and Quality of Agriculture Food (*Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria*, SENASA) and INTA. SENASA does not have any rural development projects but controls and regulates the legislation concerning large animals' transportation and meat processing.<sup>252</sup>

The INTA, through its Agency for Rural Extension (AER) is the main national agency promoting rural development with farmers in Aristóbulo.<sup>253</sup> Established

<sup>251</sup> In general, although there have been processes of devolution of decisions to the local level not necessarily to the public institutions, the national government still holds the power to allocate financial resources in the province (through the PSA or its decentralized agencies of INTA).

<sup>252</sup> Even though the staff is not an active part of the rural development arena, it is worth mentioning here, since in San Pedro, as showed later, there is no such agency.

<sup>253</sup> The AER's territory comprehends the department of Cainguaús.

in 1972, INTA was the first public agency devoted to rural development issues. The staff consists of five professionals in charge of developing projects in the field with farmers and farmers' organizations and carrying out some public administration. They all implement different rural RDPs in the area. INTA has implemented a number of projects but the only one running at the time of this study was the PROHUERTA. It started here in 1995<sup>254</sup> and is the only project that has a structure of its own and has systematically worked with farmers.<sup>255</sup>

Among those RDPs managed directly by the National Secretary of Agriculture, only the PSA-PROINDER was working with farmers at the time of the fieldwork. The PSA was one of the first programmes implemented in rural areas of Aristóbulo in 1993. The PROINDER started in 2001.<sup>256</sup>

The PROHUERTA along with the PSA and PROINDER are the most visible RDPs in the municipality. Farmers that have been involved in these programmes now participate in the local farmers' market.

The *Colono* House is a delegation of the provincial Ministry of Agriculture in charge of implementing agricultural policies in every municipality of the province.<sup>257</sup> Since its beginnings, the *Colono* House was created to help farmers to settle and to do agriculture closely linked to the market, but it did not have development projects.<sup>258</sup> There are three departments: (a) land, (b) tobacco and (c) agriculture. The staff consists of three people in charge of each area.

From this delegation another national and provincial RDP was implemented: the PRODERNEA.<sup>259</sup> It has not been easy to observe locally the impact of this

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<sup>254</sup> In 2008, there were a total of 1,542 vegetable gardens constructed in Aristóbulo alone, and technical assistance was given to 22 groups each consisting of six to ten families. The total number of people who benefited from this program directly and indirectly was around 3,087. There are two extension agents in charge of the program. According to the database of PROHUERTA published online ([www.inta.gov.ar](http://www.inta.gov.ar)), there are a total of 502 vegetable gardens who received technical assistance in 2008 (490 run by families and the rest by communarians).

<sup>255</sup> The resources come from the national government and they do not have any other sources.

<sup>256</sup> They were implemented until 2009 with three extensionists from the NGO ODHAT. Currently there are less than 15 projects in this municipality. As of May 2007, approximately 160 families received technical assistance and 125 families received subsidies both from PROINDER. In the same period, around 80 families received credit, technical assistance and training from PSA. There were no groups of beneficiaries from other programs depending on the National Secretary of Agriculture.

<sup>257</sup> The background of this agency here can be found in the Office of Land and Forest (*Oficina de Tierras y Bosques*) established in 1950. It was meant to help the immigrants' families to settle the land and to manage the forest in order to introduce agriculture.

<sup>258</sup> It is an agency in charge of the bureaucracy concerned with access to land, land regulation and generation of information about the production of traditional crops of Misiones such as tobacco and yerba mate.

<sup>259</sup> Under this programme in May 2007 around 10 families received training mainly in cattle production and around 100 received technical assistance in Aristóbulo. No families received credit in that period.

programme since it does not promote social participation or organization of farmers. It is focused on the reconversion of old, non-profitable production systems to more profitable ones such as cattle production, or on the extension of new technology to increase productivity of a particular crop for instance through machinery for tea harvesting.

In 2004, the local government of Aristóbulo created a Department of Agriculture and Production (DAyP). This is something unique in the context of Misiones, and even Argentina, since municipalities were in general in charge of the urban services and infrastructure.<sup>260</sup> The department collaborates directly with the provincial Ministry of Agriculture to channel provincial programmes of cattle, fruit, honey production and fisheries. Interesting to note is that the link is between the DAyP and the Ministry instead of between the Ministry and *Colono* House, which was supposed to implement those programmes locally. The staff members have divided their work by product sector: (a) cattle, (b) fruits, (c) tree nursing, (d) fish farming, (e) agriculture and (f) beekeeping.

In San Pedro, there is an office of the INTA, the *Colono* House and a Department of Rural Development (DDR, local government). Here almost every RDP can be found and many NGOs and SOs have a strong presence and a long history of intervention.

It can be observed that there are no national agencies of development of the same level of importance as in Aristóbulo. In fact, the INTA office is not an agency but a small ‘office for technical information’ (OIT INTA) and it opened only recently in 2006. It means that the functioning and staff is much more limited, in fact there are two technicians.<sup>261</sup> Therefore, it needs to coordinate with extensionists of PROHUERTA and PSA-PROINDER for field activities, with farmers and farmers’ organizations.

RDPs started in San Pedro in the 1990s. Even though PRODERNEA was implemented in 1998, its intervention dates back to 1991 under the name of Programme of Credit and Technical Support for Small Agriculture producers of North Argentina (PPNEA). The number of beneficiaries has never been significant.<sup>262</sup> In general terms, this programme, despite aiming at organizing farmers, did not succeed in its implementation and therefore it does not have a recognized presence here in San Pedro (Nardi, 2008). This is in part because PRODERNEA has not succeeded in coordinating with any other local actors and has a relatively small amount of resources for implementation.

<sup>260</sup> This department has four staff members in charge of technical extension and public administration.

<sup>261</sup> One of them in charge of PROHUERTA and the other the director of the office

<sup>262</sup> In 2004 there were only 40 families who benefited from credit for cattle production and in 2007 probably the number would not have changed. There were at least no families receiving technical support in 2007. The access to information to this programme was restricted (chapter III).

The PSA started its intervention in 1993. From its beginnings it supported the work that INDES and the Catholic Church and later APHyDAL were already doing in the countryside with smallholders.<sup>263</sup> The staff of these programmes consists of around eight extensionists.

PROHUERTA has been in San Pedro since 1997 with only one technician in charge of implementing the programme.<sup>264</sup> For the supply of seed to farmers it collaborates with INDES, APHyDAL and EFA. There is another project in the north of San Pedro being implemented by the national programme *Minifundio*, from the INTA's Agency of Rural Extension from Bernardo de Irigoyen, a neighbouring municipality.<sup>265</sup>

Among the provincial agencies in San Pedro, a delegation of the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture (*Colono House*) can also be found. This agency has three areas of work: (a) land, (b) forestry and (c) agriculture. The last one involves implementing PRODERNEA.<sup>266</sup> The staff, three technicians, does most of the work in the office and attend people that visit them there; they are not able to solve their problems *in situ*. They do not have resources for proper infrastructure (buildings with offices) or mobility so they are highly limited in what they can actually do.

The *Colono House* also hosts the IFAI. In San Pedro the delegation counts with one extensionist in charge of distribute seeds of soya, black beans and other kind of grains. He works with families individually and does not promote their grass-roots organizations. Support to form cooperatives does not exist.

The Department of Rural Development (*Dirección de Desarrollo Rural*, DDR) opened in 2004. As in the case of Aristóbulo it is a novel occurrence for a local government to include an agency to intervene actively in rural areas. There is only one person that coordinates with the INTA and with a provincial NGO (the Union of Rural Workers and Technicians of Misiones, UTTERMI).<sup>267</sup> From the beginning, the DDR has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture directly,

<sup>263</sup> In 2001, PROINDER started functioning with the same structure as PSA. According to information available, in 2007 there were 375 families supported by PROINDER and 151 by PSA actively, it is, with technical support and assistance.

<sup>264</sup> In 2008 there were around 1984 vegetable gardens. It has managed to reach about 9678 people in rural and urban areas with its activities related to horticultural production and farming.

<sup>265</sup> This project, in the settlement of Santa Rosa, involves around 30 families and one extensionist in charge of promoting food production among them since the beginning of the 1990s.

<sup>266</sup> The office of land is taking care of the bureaucracy concerning land titling and grant permits of public land occupation, as in the case of Aristóbulo. The office of forestry has one technician in charge of crafting projects for forestry plantations with farmers in order to be presented in the National Ministry of Agriculture and obtain subsidies to plant. Actually there are not development activities carried out with farmers' organizations or with individual farmers.

<sup>267</sup> Notice that in Aristóbulo del Valle, the staff of the local government's agency consists of four people but here, it consists of only one.



without the intermediation of the *Colono* House, as in Aristóbulo. It presents three lines of intervention: horticulture, cattle raising and fish production. The project on horticulture promotes the construction of vegetables gardens and aims to strengthen food security among rural families (the same as in the case of PROHUERTA).<sup>268</sup> The cattle project aims to improve the health and sanitary conditions of animals in every farm. In order to carry out this, it works together with a SENASA's extension officer, who is located in another municipality.<sup>269</sup> Finally, regarding the fish project, there were about 400 pools constructed and many training courses given. However, fish production is difficult to observe in the municipality: many projects failed and some were only for family production and consumption.<sup>270</sup>

## Nongovernmental organizations and social organizations

In Aristóbulo del Valle, two NGO can be found. The ODHAT was created in 1999 in the middle of a national crisis that struck the national RDPs and that threatened to push extensionists out of their jobs. There was a tendency to outsource more and more activities and projects, so the technicians from PROHUERTA and other dependencies of INTA decided to create this NGO as a way to capture national and international resources.<sup>271</sup>

Different is the case of the UNEFAM. In 2004 this NGO started a project to support the construction and strengthening of agro-tourist circuits in four municipalities of the province. In Aristóbulo there are two technicians, and five family farms working as agro-enterprises to be visited by tourists. They support farmers with technical assistance, but not with funding. In order to carry out the diverse activities, they count with financial support from the international cooperation.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Its objectives are: (a) vulnerable families' self-production of food, (b) food intake diversification, and (c) increasing monetary incomes. Since the project is framed in the National Program of Food Security from the Ministry of Social Development, it receives material resources to help beneficiaries (mainly kits of seeds to prepare a vegetable garden).

<sup>269</sup> It also aims to improve the genetic quality of livestock in the area, to increase the heads of cattle and to introduce new genetics adapted to the subtropical conditions.

<sup>270</sup> The resources available for the DDR are very scarce and the budget is directly decided by the mayor every year.

<sup>271</sup> This would allow them the possibility to continue their activities in the field and not to lose their monetary incomes. The sources of resources of this NGO have always been national (e.g. execution of national projects from the Ministry of Social Development).

<sup>272</sup> Italian NGO linked to a union and the Catholic Church (ISCOS and COSPE). *Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo* (Trade Unions Institute for Development Co-operation, ISCOS) is an Italian NGO created in 1983 by the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions (CISL). *Cooperazione per*

As for social organizations in Aristóbulo, there is only one: the EFA. This school was opened in 1988 and educates farmers' children in secondary and tertiary level.<sup>273</sup>

In San Pedro, the first NGO to work with families was the Institute for Human Development and Social Promotion (INDES) in 1985 in rural areas close to San Pedro town. From the beginning the local staff (around five people) relied on international resources from the German Catholic Church (MISEREOR).

In 1991, the Catholic Church started up a Project for Rural Areas, targeted to poor families. The local staff gradually started to find a way to connect themselves to international resources (such as MISEREOR) and in 2001 founded the Association for Human Promotion and Local Agroecological Development (APHyDAL). Until recently, this association used to be one of the most important locally, since it managed to support a great number of grass-roots informal organizations distributed in different settlements of San Pedro. They are fostering and participating in the Peasant Movement of Misiones (MOCAMI) even though the members are not farmers.

In 2004, another NGO started to develop an agro-touristic project, the UNEFAM. As in the case of Aristóbulo, this project aimed to construct a touristic circuit including some farms and other local recreational enterprises (such as camping, cottages, eco-lodges, etc.).<sup>274</sup> The impact on the family agriculture sector in general is not important, but it is worth recognizing the local efforts to seek out new alternatives of monetary diversification and local development.

Most of the extensionists from INDES, APHyDAL, INTA and some RDPs are members of the *Unión de Trabajadores y Técnicos Rurales de Misiones* (UTTERMI). It is a space of coordination among local extensionists and other teams from the province.<sup>275</sup> This NGO started in 2002-2003 in the middle of the economic crisis that saw the withdrawal of funds from the RDPs and rural development agencies where many extensionists worked. They saw a need to gather together as a non-profit association in order to expand their funding possibilities, broaden their range of issues and topics of interest, and to be able

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*lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti* (Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries, COSPE) is an lay NGO operating in the South hemisphere created also in 1983.

<sup>273</sup> In 2007 there were 120 students from many different areas around Aristóbulo and 26 teachers. The EFA in Aristóbulo does not count with financial resources from any organization except from the contribution of the parents and the provincial state.

<sup>274</sup> There is a teacher from the local EFA that works as an extensionist, in charge of visiting the farms that require participation in the circuit, consider the possibility of joining the project and give technical assistance.

<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless, they did not receive financial support during the period under study (2007-2009).

to continue their interventions with farmers, similar to ODHAT, but with broader objectives.

There is a small new NGO in Paraíso, a *colonia* close to the town of San Pedro, called Moconá Association (*Asociación Moconá*). This NGO was created in 2004 though it got its registration later. In the beginning it had around 20 members but currently there are around 200. Despite this, it does not reach a significant number of beneficiaries. It was formed by local inhabitants to better secure resources from the national state for social development projects. One of the members stated that “all the projects were going to San Pedro and nothing here to Paraíso, so we decided to create this association in order to apply for funding for local dwellers” (technician, San Pedro, 2007). Actually, it is also a means for local professionals and political leaders to get access to funding.<sup>276</sup>

The EFA opened in 1988 and the Institute of Agriculture Education (IEA) in 1991. Since the beginning, the EFA has been linked by locals with the farmers and the IEA with the urban middle class, therefore there are conflicts of interest and they do not cooperate with each other.

## Farmers’ organizations

Probably tobacco associations are one of the most known in the province since they are the first ones to be created under democracy and to continue their activities up to day. The Association of Tobacco Growers of Misiones (*Asociación de Plantadores de Tabaco de Misiones*, APTM) was created in 1983 and the Tobacco Chamber of Misiones (*Cámara de Tabaco de Misiones*, CTM) in 1999. Both of them receive resources from the FET to support their members in production-related issues as well as in health care. The internal participation of the members in the organization and that the processes that lead to the election of the board of representatives are very weak and mistrustful. Even the CTM presents another kind of internal participation from the one in the APTM; both organizations are observed in the province as corrupt and defending the interest of the tobacco companies more than their affiliated members.

In Aristóbulo del Valle, there was only one cooperative in the middle of the 2000s, the Agriculture Cooperative of Aristóbulo del Valle (*Cooperativa Agrícola Limitada de Aristóbulo del Valle*, CAFICLA). Created in 1946, it was

<sup>276</sup> A member of the board mentions: “It was an idea of the man who currently and always has been the president. Civil societies were very fashionable at that time, and he thought it could work, to get some money from the state. So he called some friends, some acquaintances to help those in the most need in the *colonia*... But if you see the distribution of the projects, they have been made to benefit the friends and families of board members” (board member, Paraíso, 2008).

one of the old cooperatives of the province that could not continue working during the decade of 1980s. After devaluation in 2003, the CAFICLA was target of financial support from the provincial government, but also from the local municipality.

The cooperative has approximately 60 members who produce green leaves of yerba mate and collectively dry it to make yerba *canchada* (toasted leaves). This product can be sold to the milling companies to brew and package the final product. In this way, the cooperative is adding new value and gaining market power to claim a fair price to the milling companies.

Regarding the new cooperatives created after 2004, they are based on product specialization, for example the Cooperative Road of the Grape (*Cooperativa Agropecuaria Forestal Ruta de la Uva Centro Este Ltda.*, CAFRUSEL) for fruit diversification, the Cooperative 'Flor del Parque' (*Cooperativa de Provisión y Servicios a Productores Rurales Flor del Parque*) for honey production, and the Cooperative Cerro Moreno for fish diversification.

The Agriculture and Forestry Association Aristóbulo del Valle (*Asociación Agropecuaria y Forestal Aristóbulo del Valle*) for cattle diversification can be also considered as a product specialized organization. From the formal point of view, it is a non-profit association and not a cooperative. It was created to promote the introduction of cattle in the municipality as part of a provincial programme of produce diversification. Its formation was the result of a demand from the state to set up an organization in order to be beneficiary of the credit and technical assistance.<sup>277</sup>

CAFRUSEL was created in August 2006. In 2008 it had 25 members not only from Aristóbulo but also the neighbouring municipalities. Even though it is a cooperative that seeks to promote fruit production in the municipality, the members state that the objective is to "put in the market fresh grape[s], to produce grapes but also wine" (group interview, November 2008). The members met in the training course and it was the suggestion of one of the extensionists from INTA. The idea was to introduce a new agricultural process that could bring a new income to the farmers. Currently the production and the commercialization are done individually. The cooperative then works as an association as long as their projects cannot be put forward (a factory to produce juice and a fridge to store fruit so the commercialization can be done together). Since there are certain irregularities in the foundational papers, they are not

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<sup>277</sup> There is another cooperative registered in the province, the Cooperative Salto Encantado (*Cooperativa Agrícola Ganadera Salto Encantado Ltda.*, CAGSEL) that during the period of the study was going through some management and political problems that force it to stop working. As in the case of the Cattle Association, it was formed in order to put forward the provincial programme for cattle production.

collecting the membership fees yet and they do not have a bank account. The only contact with the municipality and INTA is when there are training courses.

The cooperative *Flor del Parque* received its status as such in 2006. The organization had started up in 2004 and 2005 when the provincial programme of beekeeping (apiculture) was launched in collaboration between the provincial Ministry of Agriculture and the local DAYP. Nowadays, it has around 100 members, but the number of active ones (those who participate and attend the meetings) is around 30. They have technical support from the local government and receive assistance from the provincial government to construct a collective channel of commercialization.

The cooperative *Cerro Moreno* has been created as a means to promote fish production to commercialize in the municipality and regionally.<sup>278</sup> It was also fostered by the municipality under the provincial programme of fisheries (pisciculture). In 2008 it had around 30 members. The farmers do not produce yet or commercialize collectively, they only do so individually. The construction of the pools for fish has been done without subsidies or any other financial assistance or aid from the state. Therefore it is not easy to set up this new production. Even if there is a chance to consume the fish in the family (as part of a strategy of improving food security for certain programmes), the members affirm that “nobody starts this activity thinking on family consumption; it is a lot of money”. Unfortunately, the market is not constructed yet, they have good selling in Easter (when red meat is not traditionally consumed). They have technical assistance from DAYP and from INTA.<sup>279</sup>

In the case of the Aristóbulo Agriculture and Forestry Association (cattle diversification) the members have just started with the introduction of pastures for grazing livestock in their farm and with cattle. Members have taken credit from the state and have to repay this with animals. They are about 50 members that gradually have joined the association. In order to do so they needed to have certain conditions such as a plot in the farm designated for pasture. Since not many farmers have “space” and resources to do this, not everybody can participate. From the interviews made it was observed that cattle production is being put forward mainly by medium-scale agriculture holders or urban dwellers wishing to invest in cattle stock.

There are other farmers’ organizations here in Aristóbulo, although they are not actually local organizations. These are the abovementioned tobacco associations. Here, the largest numbers of tobacco growers are registered in the APTM, with

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<sup>278</sup> They decided to use the papers of an old cooperative for agriculture created in 1989 that had stopped working and “refloated” it in 2005.

<sup>279</sup> Only when training courses are needed.

fewer in the CTM. These organizations do not conduct any projects for rural development in the municipalities under study.<sup>280</sup>

Some farmers from this municipality were participating in the Association of Agricultural Producers of Misiones (*Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios de Misiones*, APAM). This association has mobilized farmers who produce yerba mate to demand regulations of production and commercialization of the crop. APAM no longer has active strategies of intervention.

In San Pedro, the probably most visible farmers' organizations in the rural development arena are those dealing with agroecology, sustainable agriculture and food production. The first one of this kind to be created was Union and Progress in 1989 in the *colonia* of Paraíso. The more recent one, United Rural Women (MRU) was formed in 2006. The context of creation of both organizations and the actors involved are very much different.

*Unión y Progreso* unites 103 women from Paraíso and neighbouring *colonias*. They began to organize themselves in 1989, through an activity from the Catholic Church (during courses of religion instruction). From the beginning they received support from INDES to develop organic vegetable gardens, research in alternative medicine and women's health, and construct new channels of commercialization among other activities. They also got credit and subsidies from PSA-PROINDER and received seeds from PROHUERTA. They administrate their own credit fund and around 12 women participate in the farmers' local market of San Pedro to sell their horticulture, dairy and bakery products. This is one of the few organizations which resulted from a representative process of organization by women with shared interests. This means it was not pushed by any NGOs or RDPs.

MRU is an association created in 2007 by around 80 women from different *colonias* of the municipality. It is registered as an NGO and therefore they are able to apply for funding and to manage their own bank account but not to make profit as such. To understand the process of organization, it is necessary to look into the interventions that PROHUERTA has been doing in San Pedro. In fact, women meet each other in different social spaces (festivities, training courses) arranged by the extensionist of this RDP.<sup>281</sup> In 2006 they hatched the idea of formalizing their organization in order to be able to receive funding for development projects from the national government.

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<sup>280</sup> During fieldwork, it was not easy to contact the local staff because in fact the offices located in every town are open "only to assist people in accessing the health system, with items such as claims, appointments and invoices" (local staff member, Aristóbulo del Valle, November 2007).

<sup>281</sup> They are women that have been participating since the end of the 1990s in grass-roots groups to receive assistance from this national programme.

The Agroecological Smallholder Producers Local Organization (OPFAL) gathers around 180 families from different areas of the municipality. They received support from APHyDAL since the middle of 1990s. Their organization is in a constant process of structuring. Since 2005 they broke relations with this NGO and started to operate more autonomously.

According to the extensionist that is supporting this grass-roots organization, they were not really able to properly administrate the association; they did not know how to do it. It was the aim of access to resources and not a deliberative process that led them to formalize it. She states: “they create an organization and they do not know what it means to participate. When they have to go to a meeting and do not have an objective, they do not know what they go for!” (extensionist, PROHUERTA, San Pedro, 2008).

Other characteristics take the farmers’ organizations created to demand land or “squatters’ organizations”. The Central Commission of Land (CCT) was formed in 2001 by around twenty delegates from different *asentamientos* which represented around 700 hundred families. With the support of the Catholic Church and two NGOs (INDES and APHyDAL) they began a series of mobilizations (street protest in the capital city, marches, blockades in main roads linking Brazil, claims in radio broadcasts, etc.) to stop the harassment from the land owners and force the provincial government to take part in the conflict and find a solution.

The CCT, a body of delegates, registered formally in 2004 as a non-profit association Peasant Communities for Agrarian Work (*Comunidades Campesinas por el Trabajo Agrario*, CCTA). Nowadays it has around 200 families that are members. The CCT underwent an internal division and a new organization was created as a cooperative. The Cooperative Central Commission of Land (CCT) was registered in 2008 with fewer families (around forty) as a way to channel public funding to start up agricultural production in the area.<sup>282</sup> They receive technical support to improve crops and yields from INDES, but mainly to manage their farms in a more integral manner.

Cooperatives in San Pedro have been organized in those areas where land is secure. The cooperative of Paraíso was first established in 1987.<sup>283</sup> It received financial support from the new government in 2004 to build up new infrastructure, primarily a storage building, and reorganize. Their new concept is

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<sup>282</sup> Some of the members of the CCT state that they have struggled to get their cooperative working, which was a goal for a long time. But now that they achieved it, they notice it is not easy and it should not be a goal in itself, but a means to achieve something else, for example, improve production, collective commercialization, etc.

<sup>283</sup> It was registered in 1994. With the crisis in mate production it stopped functioning.

to collect farmers' production, mainly grains, horticulture and milk, to sell it collectively.

The cooperative of San Lorenzo just got formalized in 2007. The members - around sixty - took the name from one of the largest *colonias* close to the town of San Pedro where they live. They started grass-roots with the collective construction of a potable water plant in 2005 and the creation of a cooperative to manage the water service among the consumers. With this background, in 2006 they considered the creation of a cooperative of production and they collectively gathered yerba mate "that could be sold later for a better price". Now the new cooperative is starting up and considering the acquisition of new infrastructure to produce toasted yerba mate.

The local Cattle Association was also formed in the context of the provincial programme for Cattle Production. It functions only to receive funding, but there are no collective activities among the members. Some of the local interviewees consider that the organization ended up gathering family farmers with an already higher level of capitalization, and excluded small ones in San Pedro. It receives support from the local EFA.

Regarding the unions of tobacco growers, in 2004 there were almost the same quantity of affiliated to the APTM (780) than to the CTM (650) in San Pedro. As in the case of Aristóbulo, they are not involved with rural development projects in San Pedro.



## Appendix 6 – Land squatting and distribution

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There are different conflicts around access to land, land tenure and access to forest in the selected municipalities of the present study (Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro). In general, these are related to the following problems: occupation of private land by squatter farmers and rural families in the north of San Pedro, and public and private land where native communities live but with certain limited access to natural resources.

The short analysis presented in this Appendix is on the conflict between farmers and land owners (mainly those who are doing logging activities or *madereros*) in the north of San Pedro. Due to an increase in the numbers of squatting rural families since 2000, the holders of land tenure mobilized the army border patrol and police forces to remove these families.<sup>284</sup> After years of conflict, which manifested as roadblocks, sittings on the sidewalk opposite the government palace in Posadas and claims on the radio, among other methods of social mobilization, in 2004 the provincial parliament enacted a law to expropriate the land. Yet after six years, land distribution has not taken place.

In the case of land occupied by squatters, the conflict sets land tenure holders and companies against with rural families. A local farmer and NGO member recalls that before the increase in the price of timber, owners were not so interested in the land.<sup>285</sup> Nowadays, not only local owners but other companies are interested in obtaining land, especially for forestry:

“Today with the price of land... they saw the business opportunity... they are selling land to foreign countries such as Chile. Chilean companies come and buy large parcels of land for forestry... On top of this, this is all subsidized by the state. So it was a great business. That is how it the conflict between the owners and this sector started” (farmer and NGO staff, San Pedro, 2004).

However, other actors are involved and this explains in part the problem. Squatting farmers receive support in their claims for legal access to land by the Catholic Church, local NGOs with international funding and some sectors of the provincial government.<sup>286</sup> In a more indirect way these farmers are also

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<sup>284</sup> The presence of *Gendarmería nacional* (national security army) in Misiones is explained by the frontiers (90% of the borders of Misiones are with neighbouring countries).

<sup>285</sup> See Kostlin (2010) for a study about the process of land occupation and squatting in this area.

<sup>286</sup> Through a provincial program (*Programa Misiones Autoconsumo*) partly granted by the national government (National Plan of Food Security - *Plan Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria*- Ministry of Social Development) the provincial government has created a network of farmers to grow grain and supply them with seeds. The seeds are later redistributed to farmers in other areas of the province in order to improve their food security, expand food crops and get the surplus to the market.

supported by tobacco companies, which have created contracts for the farmers to grow tobacco and supply them, despite of the illegality of their land occupation.

The owners argue that their properties are too large to be able to control them. They explain also that in the past they have let some families stay and live on their properties but on small parcels of land. This happened because there were periods when logging companies left the area and some of the workers were allowed to stay, particularly when they were not paid nor had a good salary. Families of workers needed land to perform subsistence agriculture, since salaries were not sufficient.<sup>287</sup>

Gradually those families specialized in agriculture and other moved to the area, with the possibility of growing tobacco. Indeed, it is possible to argue that tobacco companies have exploited the irregular legal situation of many poor rural families. Tobacco companies are therefore also responsible for the increasing influx of families to the area.<sup>288</sup> In this sense, the following comment about the advantage taken by tobacco companies in the area is informative. It also shows how different actors give value to land and forest in the area:

“When Puente Alto was sold, I went to see a tobacco company. There I protested against them too. And I told the tobacco company: “Why don’t you buy the 35 thousand hectares? You will have space to plant tobacco. I promise that if you let me work, in 5 years I will give you back the capital and you can do forestry”. They simply replied: “Why should we buy it if this way we have [the land] for free?”” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

Land owners are aware of this. However, they also blame other actors: the Catholic Church and the provincial government. They are of the opinion that the problem could have been solved long time ago, but the Church has promoted land squatting by saying that “land is for those that put it under production”, and the government preferred not to act. Now, they believe, the amount of land is not enough for a growing population:

“This could have been solved six, seven years ago with 1.500 and 2.000 hectares. Due to mismanagement by the Social Pastoral, due to mismanagement by the tobacco companies and, finally, mismanagement by

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<sup>287</sup> This is confirmed by an interviewee: “At that time a huge property could not been controlled very closely, because it was a property of 35 thousand hectares. An intruder arrived here, and another there... Then, maybe, they did not spend money [to control]. Maybe a worker that worked for the company for twenty years [would ask]: “Would you let me stay so I can live here?” So they gave him a piece. But nowadays there are people with 500 hectares, 1000 hectares, 400 hectares” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

<sup>288</sup> A land owner whose parcel of land is squatted claims: “They enter into my property... I confront them. How can it be that a van from the tobacco companies enters into my property? No!” (land owner in San Pedro with squatted land, Eldorado, 2008).

the government, all of them... We should not blame them now. This has a long history. Today 120 thousand hectares are not enough... I don't understand how the government failed to solve the problem with a small, organized and measured gifting of a sector to the intruders 5 years ago" (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

Subsistence agriculture and family reproduction, the main drivers of land squatting and occupation, are just some of the reasons to occupy private land in this area of the province. The processes of land occupation differ according to the social and environmental conflicts behind them. In the dynamics which fuel land squatting there are different actors within the same social sectors (poor rural families). Not all small-holders are the same, in terms of their asset base (capitalization), settlement and use of land as a resource.

Indeed, the possibility to trade timber has been capitalized by those who arrived first; they settle or "make business" with the timber and created a sort of real estate market. In this area, there is a market of *mejoras*. When somebody clears the land, prepares it for agriculture, and probably builds some constructions for agriculture production, the land increases in value. Now the land is ready for a family to move in, settle and set up agriculture production. For the *chiveros* (those who steal timber, burn and clean the land) now it is time to "move on": to look for new areas with forest, exploit timber and clean the land. Local farmers are familiar with this process and so are public servants in the provincial and local governments. From the following statements can be concluded that this kind of nature appropriation is considered illegal and wrong both from some of the local squatters and the provincial state:

"If I were a *chivera* person, and I would have a *Zanello* and steal timber in huge loads, ten or fifteen loads from their properties, then I would agree that the authorities must take steps on me" (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).<sup>289</sup>

"The new one has almost a criminal attitude, because he is intruding on a parcel of land, taking out timber, deteriorating the area. What is left he transfers to another person who is in a lower social condition. Thus, we are operating in a totally perverse vicious circle" (provincial public servant, Land department, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2009).

Even though currently there is a law that will distribute the squatted land, since the state started intervening in 2004, the process of land illegal occupation has increased along with the prevalence of poverty and environmental degradation. Some actors are benefiting from this. The irregularities are pointed out by different provincial interviewees who observe the creation of a "black" market of timber, overexploitation, and a decline in the working conditions

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<sup>289</sup> *Zanello* is the common brand of tractors in the area.

(*precarización*) of the labour market in the area. The following comments, one by a timber logger and the other by a public servant from the provincial state, are illustrative because they describe how more conflicts are generated when there is no will to solve them:

“Let’s be honest... If you are owner of a property, the state... must come, measure, tell you how much they will pay... They are going to take this away from you, but there is no control, this is a mess. What would you probably do? You will try to exploit the property, if they are going to take it away from you... Then, the state makes a double damage... first by not controlling and trying to take the property (which it is not supposed to) and [second] by not controlling the exploitation of timber” (land owner in San Pedro whose land is squatted, Eldorado, 2008).

“There is a contradiction in the owners... by not accepting, this generates a situation of uncertainty... which generates in the territory a very complex situation, with protracted conflicts between squatters and owners, or between new squatters and old squatters... The idea that it is possible to pressure resources even further is present. This generates informality in the timber market, among many other things. Then, don’t blame it on the state. The state caused many problems, but the owners also have to have the will [to solve the problem]” (provincial public servant, Land department, Ministry of Ecology, Posadas, 2009).

Since there is little presence of the state, the labour market in the area (based upon timber exploitation, saw mills, transportation, etc.) tends to be precarious. This is not only denounced by workers,<sup>290</sup> employers themselves corroborate such claims. A local *maderero* and owner of a saw-mill refers to his infringement of labour regulations. He disregards these regulations because he observes the contradiction of the public sector and holds that the government does not have any authority to force him to obey the laws when they are not taking actions to solve the problems of land squatting in his property.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> A squatter farmer states: “When I worked there, I worked, and some days later, the old man paid me a pittance. One works for nothing; and that is political. He was cutting timber from the native forest” (squatter farmer, San Pedro, 2009).

<sup>291</sup> He says that “once came [people from] the Ministry and asked me about the showers, about the ecological bathroom and I kicked them out... Of course! How can they come and demand such things from me? I have a waterfall where they [workers] may shower better! I mean, who can come and prohibit me from doing anything if they are intruding [my property] and they [the state] are not doing anything” (land owner in San Pedro with squatted land, Eldorado, 2008).



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