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## Latin America between the dismantling of the state and the rise of social mobilization. The complexity of rural development in North East Argentina

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**Latin America between the dismantling of the state and the rise of social mobilization**

**The complexity of rural development in North East Argentina**

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**Introduction**

Rural development policies and projects that promote social and institutional transformation have to deal with the confrontation of those who oppose changing the *status quo*. If the main objective of these policies is focused on income distribution most certainly the local elites will contest them. But if development policies are designed to bring about economic growth and “modernization”, probably the resistance will come from the side of those communities that consider that their identities may be lost as a result of that transformation. Our argument is that in every process of rural development intervention there will be conflict and cooperation because intentions to bring about social change always create resistance and support from the diverse actors involved.

A critical approach to *territory* -understood as an arena where different actors try to realize their projects in conflict and cooperation- could be useful to comprehend the dynamics and processes of social change.

This paper presents some preliminary empirical reflexions about rural development in North East Argentina at the light of the recent socio-economic and political changes. The processes of decentralization that have taken place in the country during the decade of 1990 illustrate the complexity of rural development strategies at local level and the necessity to create policies to take into account the collective actions from below or to promote them in those territories where they do not exist. These kind of collective actions are considered to play an important role in processes of democratization.

My intention is to reflect about the linkages between *(development) policy making* and *collective action* from below in order to promote *territorial changes*. Therefore the general objective of my research is to analyze social relations and mechanisms of cooperation and confrontation or conflict (power relations) in local areas in order to understand the linkages of rural development strategies and collective action from below (social mobilization and participation). Rural development policies and collective actions promote certain dynamics over others and by doing so they trigger particular territorial changes.

The particular purpose of the research project is to identify and examine processes of territorial change in rural territories of the province of Misiones, Argentina. I intend to: (i) recognize and differentiate interactions between *collective actors* within the local context, observing the conformation of local networks, (ii) identify and differentiate *rural development arenas* according to the strategies promoted and their development discourse, and (iii) reflect about the processes triggered by the rural development arenas to foster territorial change.

In the map below, it can be observed the location of the province of Misiones in the context of Argentina and South America.

Map 1: Location of the province of Misiones in Argentina, South America



Source: ESRI data base.

The selected cases of study are two rural municipalities in the province of Misiones: Aristóbulo del Valle and San Pedro. These municipalities are very proximal but still they are quite different with respect to the presence of the government apparatus, 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 in the current trends of (rural) development strategies that are taking place and that are proving to have a dissimilar trajectory (e.g. migration vs. settlement; land concentration vs. land distribution).

The present paper is structure in the following way. After this introduction to my research study, I outline the territorial perspective proposed by defining the main concepts that guide the analysis. Secondly, I briefly comment on the important role of decentralization given in theories about democratization in Latin-American societies and to reduce (rural) poverty. Consequently, I centre my interest in collective action and I present some evidences from Argentina. In this country, processes of decentralization have taken place during the period of

structural adjustment and the embracement of neoliberal policies. The main issue in this part is to understand how these processes have promoted and open spaces to collective actions from below, in particular in rural areas. Afterwards, I give some preliminary reflexions about the territorial complexities (actors, conflict and cooperation over rural development interventions) in North East Argentina, taking into consideration empirical findings from the selected municipalities. In the final reflexions I formulate some questions that I wish to response in the course of my research.

### **Rural development from a territorial perspective**

I base my territorial approach to rural development on a concept of *territory* embedded of notions of social relations of power. I believe that the concept of territory developed by geographers, in particular those in the area of political geography and political ecology, might be useful. My intention is to link *territory* to the study of rural *development*. The concept of *arena* facilitates this linkage.

In general terms, *territory* has been defined as a geographical area under the control of an actor (a state, a company, a church or a social club). Sack (1983: 56) mentions that territory is an area delimited by an individual or group to influence, affect, or control objects, people, and relationships. But, I agree with Cox (1991: 5) when he states that two aspects are prominent in the use of the concept of territory: the notions of *power* and *bounded spaces*. In first place, the idea of power it is no longer connected to the state, “rather it is a matter of its chronic implication in social relations” (ibid) like in class, gender or ethnicity relationships. In second place, the idea of bounds does not refer any more to the geographical limits in a political-jurisdictional sense, but in a broader aspect since social relations are always localized.

In this theoretical context, I propose to reconceptualise the notion of *arena* introduced by Törnquist (1981: 110): a delimited area, within its bounds conflict and cooperation among actors occur and external influences take place, showing that it is part of a ‘major totality’. This totality would refer, from my perspective, to a particular territory constructed by diverse scales of power relations (eg. the territory of a state, of an international company, of a church or the territory of a school). The arena concept I present here differs from Törnquist’s definition because it may not necessary have a physical spatial continuity and therefore the boundaries are imprecise, flexible and dynamic.

From this point of view, *rural development arenas* are constitutive parts of the territories (theoretically and empirically). The arenas, as the territories, are geographical spaces (social

and physical spaces) where structures and dynamics of power relations take place in a dynamic and transforming way. In this sense, the territory can be thought of as being made up from the overlapping of different arenas; it would be the structure where they ‘fluctuate’. This way, arenas are more dynamics and contextual and only sometimes they can transform the structures that frame them and originate them. This brings up the issue between structures and processes in social change (Sewell, 1992).

In this context, how do I define *collective action*, *development* and *territorial change*? The Oxford’s Dictionary of Social Sciences mentions that *collective action* “is usually defined as an organized, self-conscious, and relatively non routine response to events and shared interests”. Here, I refer to collective action as any kind of collective behaviour with different degrees of organization, long term perspective and commitment (e.g. conformation of cooperative, squatters’ mobilization, family farm organization for social and political voice, native communities public manifestations, local farmers rescue and interchange of genetic material and non traditional health practices, etc.). I focus on the different actors and arenas that somehow promote collective actions. At the same time I am interested in observing the outcomes of those actions in the short, medium and long term.

I centre my analysis on *rural development* because I am interested in observing how different actors define development and outline strategies and policies in order to accomplish social changes in the short and long term in a given territory. This means that I do not have a previous definition of development but I propose to approach it from an ontological perspective. One of the main issues here is to understand how it is conceived the production and usage of resources (natural, social), who the actors involved in rural development are and how the processes of decentralization have influenced it.

Finally, by *territorial change*, I mean changes in the territory: in this conjunction between physical and social space, in the socio economic and political structure. This can be observed in the way social and physical spaces are put under construction and change. Collective actors (or organizations) work in cooperation and in conflict conforming social networks (collective action and behaviours). These networks at the same time have a territoriality and temporality, they make up different arenas. Each of the collective actors in a given territory has different ideologies, visions, resources and capacities to perform an action in the network and in the arena. It is here, in the arenas, where power relations take place and its outcome can be observed in the territory (in the physical and social space). In general, actors are linked to a network, probably more than one. And most likely, actors are present in more than one arena.

Some actors are ‘local’ while others are external or non-local; the formers are located within the territory under study.<sup>1</sup>

In the present research in particular, given the preponderance of agriculture in the local economies and the high presence of farmers in the cases of study, I focus on those actors and practices that are connected with agricultural smallholders and with grass-root organizations. They are also, in most cases, the target of rural development interventions. This justifies my interest in the *rural development arena* and the major role I give to it in the construction of territory.<sup>2</sup> It is in this arena where conflict and cooperation over the use and production of natural and social resources can be best observed.

The methodology of the study consists of identifying the concrete practices and forces in cooperation and conflict around the issue of rural development and access to resources (material and symbolic). It is based on three analytical components: (i) diagnosis of the institutional context of rural development in the selected geographical areas (case studies); (ii) identification and characterization of the regular practices from the local organizations and actors related to their mobilization: participation in institutional spaces and organization; and their inter institutional articulations, and (iii) resulting territorial configuration and changes.

### **Decentralization for democratization and poverty reduction**

Most of literature on decentralization point to its important role in the processes of democratization. In America Latina, many countries have gone through strategies of decentralization from the central government to the provinces or regions and from these ones to the municipalities or *comunas*.<sup>3</sup>

Following Ribbot (1999 and 2007) decentralization takes place when there is devolution of fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of the government. When these local governments representative of a constituency there is a “democratic decentralization”. If there is an administrative decentralization to lower levels of government that are not representative there is an “administrative decentralization or de concentration”. If

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction is methodological and it is up to each research to determinate which the geographical space is under analysis.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that I intend to reflect about social change from within the analysis of one particular arena. Development as social change cannot be expected to be the result of a particular networking in a particular arena. It is the conjunction of the outcomes in all the arenas (development, religion, partisan, etc.) and arenas in different spatial scales that can produce social change in the territory.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Bolivia, Colombia, Brasil or Argentina.

public service delivery is given to local organizations that are not part of the government apparatus, it is not decentralization but “privatization” or “other non market privatization”.

According to González Villar (2004) in the case of Latin America there are different interpretations about the reasons behind the embracement of decentralization in the context of structural adjustment. One idea is that the politic elites promoted it as a way to ensure governance in face of the economic and political crisis of the states. A second interpretation is that central states needed to reduce their responsibilities and functions, allowing the free mobilization of resources among the different regions of a country and allocating public resources more efficiently. A third perspective is that one that focuses on the necessity to increase social participation and the willingness of the central states to promote it, by opening spaces of public decisions at the local level. Finally, a fourth interpretation is purely economic and centres on the adjustment to the local needs and preferences of the communities of the services and resources to attend them, introducing fiscal authority to collect taxes and to allocate public resources in more competitive sectors.

The link between decentralization and rural poverty reduction has been done by many authors (among many other, Johnson, 2001; de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2000 and 2005). Johnson (2001: 521) states that democratic decentralization is often presented as a necessary condition to achieve a rural poverty reduction. He adds that it is argued that as a result of democratic decentralization the state apparatus is exposed and therefore more responsive to local needs, which in turn make more effective governance.

In fact, for example, Janvry and Sadoulet (2005) observed the processes of democratization, decentralization and the strengthening of civil society organizations as an opportunity for success rural development. They understand that through decentralization and participation rural development policies can be better adjust to local circumstances in a highly heterogeneous continent like Latin America and can help to improve the capacity of local governments to face the wellbeing of local populations.

The authors (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2000: 406) stress the following issues to encourage rural development policies and rural poverty reduction, very much in connexion with decentralization: (a) promotion of grassroots organizations often assisted by non-government organizations, (b) participation of organized beneficiaries, (c) devolution to user groups of control over common property resources and local, public goods and (d) collective action for



the management of common property resources, the delivery of local public goods and bargaining over policy making.<sup>4</sup>

However Johnson (2001: 521-22) considers that “there is little evidence that either democracy or decentralization is necessary for poverty reduction in rural or urban areas, and indeed there are some evidence that they are counter-productive”. The author comments on the challenges to “encourage decentralization in rural areas where politic agency and access to information are frequently limited by traditional and modern-bureaucratic systems of hierarchy and control”. He remarks -among other issues- that poverty and inequality may produce a wave of demands that overwhelm the real possibilities of local governments to implement long term socio economic policies and, therefore, sustain a real democracy. Poor territories face the problem to collect incomes (through taxes and revenues) and then they see the processes of democratic decentralization as counterproductive for economic development, poverty reduction and at the long term, to democratization itself. There is a dilemma about poverty and participation since to participate economic resources are needed, something that the poor do not have (they have to assume the cost of transportation, get access to information, have time to participate).

Despite these facts, Johnson (2001: 529) is more optimistic and affirms that democratic decentralization “has been shown to strengthen the livelihoods of poor people in rural areas”, and in any case it is “necessary to find the right balance between autonomy and accountability, to engage the support of external actors, and to encourage democratic deepening”. He states that the role to play by the central government is important to ensure the development and implementation of substantive pro-poor policies. The author concludes that “democratic decentralization is a process that aims to extend and improve the franchise of groups that are traditionally under-represented in market and state. By engaging, educating and empowering broader segments of society, the introduction of democratic principles can strengthen the capabilities of poor and vulnerable groups, irrespective whether his leads to material reductions in poverty”.

### **Between the dismantling of the state and the rise of social mobilization**

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<sup>4</sup> De Janvry and Sadoulet (2005: 80) propose to take into consideration an integral approach, which emphasis “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.”

Garretón (2002) argues that the huge structural and cultural transformations that have taken place in Latin America from the decade of 1980 have produced a different societal type. In this context, the author affirms that “new forms of social action and new actors have appeared, at the same time as the lines of action taken by traditional social actors have been changing” (ibidem: 8). The basic reference for collective action is the “weakening of the State’s capacity for action”.

The four new axes of the current collective action and the constitution of social actors that can be distinguished in the continent after the dictatorship period following Garratón (2002: 18) are (a) political democratization, (b) social democratization, (c) and the reconstruction of national economies and their re-entry into the world economy (d) the reformulation of modernity.

In the first case, collective actions are orientated towards “the establishment of a consolidated democracy as a precondition for any other type of demand”, “the social democratization as a precondition for actively supporting the new democratic regime” and the critic of the “inadequacy of institutional change”. The issues of democratic quality and consolidation, according to Garramón, “will give rise to a configuration of actors in which there is tension between those who are more politics -and State oriented, whose concern will be for institutional reforms and the modernization of the State, and those who link together social and citizenship demands”. It is this last one, the second case that mobilizes collective action in Latin America according to the author. The redefinition of citizenship and the overcoming of poverty and exclusion are the central issues here. Some actors operate in the field of traditional demands while others do against discrimination.

In the third case, collective actions are then framed as a result of the economy transformation which “left society entirely at the mercy of the national and, particularly, transnational economic powers”. The author considers that “the prevailing economic model tends to be intrinsically disintegrative at the national level and partially integrative, although obviously asymmetrical, at the supranational level”.

The fourth axis is the struggle over “the model of modernity, identities and cultural diversity” (ibidem: 18) and somehow it synthesizes the first three axes. It can be observed here the rise of a vision of modernity identified with an indigenous Latin America or with a single, homogeneous social base in opposition to the “modernity” promoted by the previous period of authoritarian governments and linked with the neoliberal ideology.

Within this context, Garramón (2002) states that in the near future we will face diverse kind of struggles and mobilizations “more autonomous, shorter, less politically orientated, institution-related (...) and more orientated towards sectoral inclusion, partial modernizations and gradual democratization and social integration than towards radical, comprehensive change”.

In Argentina the policies of structural adjustment and the formation of a neoliberal state, during the decade of 1990, has promoted the emergence of new and renewed social movements and collective mobilization, in particular in the countryside.

In rural areas, this trend may be explained by two factors. First, because of the processes of diminishing of the state through decentralization and the concentration of the governmental apparatus and outsourcing/privatisation was not followed by an increase of resources to the provincial/municipal levels. Second, because the liberation of the economy and the parity of the Argentinean peso to the American dollar, with the consequent privatization of public services and the deregulation of markets (products and labour) exposed many sector of the population to international competition and/or the disappear of their traditional markets.

In this new scenario, small scale agriculture families (peasants and farmers) were excluded from the economic and political life. These, together with the historical absence of the public sector in rural areas (in health, education, infrastructure, etc.) deteriorated the quality of life of rural populations. New and renew rural movements and social mobilization rose<sup>5</sup> (in some cases aligned with broader movements)<sup>6</sup> to confront the neoliberal policies applied in the country and create a new sense of solidarity among all those historically excluded.<sup>7</sup>

As a consequence of this neoliberal transformation, other new actors emerged in the rural areas: non-governmental organizations, rural families and farmer’s grass-root groups. And others began to be recognized or to have a voice: native communities, churches, schools, cooperatives, local unions. In many cases, the above mentioned movements worked in cooperation with these new actors to confront or readapt the new established order.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance the creation of the “Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero” or the “Movimiento Campesino Formoseño” and the renewal of the “Movimiento Agrario Misionero”.

<sup>6</sup> La Vía Campesina, Foro Social Mundial.

<sup>7</sup> For example, with native communities which, after the modification of the National Constitution in 1994, were legally entitle to claim and get the property rights for their territories.

Decentralization processes are important to take into account to understand this new scenario. Regarding rural development policies, the design of Rural Development Programmes (RDP) by the national government was observed by some social researchers as a counter measurement to calm the discontent in rural areas and to prevent rural migration to urban areas. These national RDP were implemented in different fashions: decentralized (through the provincial governments) and de-concentrated (through parallel national structures located in the provinces and municipalities). In most cases, the technical and social assistance was outsourced to NGOs or other local actors (school teachers, church pastors). At the same time, the RDP reinforced collective actions from below and the creation of a new way of thinking the politics and economics of development, by opening up new political spaces (Manzanal and others, 2007).

It can be argued therefore that the neoliberal policies embraced by the government of Argentina during the decade of 1990 have altered the state by transforming the public sector and its relation with the society. The liberalization of the economy has created a scenario of economic exclusion of some of those previously “included” sectors of the population and their identification with those historically excluded ones.

The reduction of the state through decentralization of the governmental apparatus, privatization and outsourcing resulted in social and economic exclusion. But at the same time it opened up the possibility for a political inclusion because it created new political spaces for collective actions and their demands to be taken into account or at least heard.

In the following part, I intend to describe the particularities of the mechanism of cooperation and conflict in the two selected municipalities in the province of Misiones, North East Argentina.

### **North East Argentina and the local complexities in a complex territory**

In this part of the paper I present some empirical analysis based on primary information collected through semi-structured and non structured interviews applied to qualified informants during fieldwork in the province of Misiones.<sup>8</sup>

This province, though it occupies a relatively small territory,<sup>9</sup> present a very “rich” society in the sense of its history, landscape, interculturality, economic and political processes. Before

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the present research project is the continuation of my undergraduate and graduate research on rural development in Misiones, and therefore most of the context commented here can be found in Nardi (2002) and Nardi (2008).

the Spanish colonization, the province was occupied by Guaraní communities. During this period, the Jesuit Missions were the main actors (re)organizing the local societies and occupying the land for agriculture and small towns. Long time after the expelled of the Jesuits, the area was used by wood companies to exploit the native forest.

In the origins of the Argentinean federation, the territory consisted of small towns and native communities living in the forest. It was not until the beginnings of the XX century, and especially between the wars, that a large amount of immigrants arrived to the province from Central and East Europe (mainly Germans, Poles, Hungarians and Ukrainians).

Misiones was a federal territory until 1954, which means that it was relatively recently, compared to the rest of the country, when the local population got the right to elect their governors. Nowadays, the province is characterized by urban population living in medium cities, and rural population living in disperse areas and small towns. Agro industry and services connected with it is the main source of incomes, mainly originated in the forestry sector and the production of industrial crops (tobacco, yerba mate, tea) with certain level of local industrialization. The forestry sector is controlled by large landowners and the agriculture sector by small and medium landholders (family farms).<sup>10</sup>

The diminishing of the state and the liberalization of the economy also created in Misiones the scenario and the political space to encourage discontent and collective actions. Here the opening of the economy resulted in the de-regulation of the production of *yerba mate* and in the difficulty to allocate other products (tea, wood, tung oil, mandioca and tobacco to some extent)<sup>11</sup> in non-domestic markets due to the dollarization of the national currency.

The farmers found it difficult to reconvert or diversify their production due to: (a) the perennial characteristic of the yerba mate, (b) the lack of technical assistance available from the public sector, (c) the absence of a credit system tailored to the farmer' sector, and (d) the uncertainty and lack of information about new markets.

The decentralization of some public services (such as health or education) from the national to the provincial level meant a decrease of resources to attain the provincial demand due to the

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<sup>9</sup> This is in comparison to the rest of Argentinean provinces. The total area of the province's territory is 29,801 km<sup>2</sup>, which means 0.8% of the National territory.

<sup>10</sup> According to data provided by the National Census of Agriculture from 2002 (INDEC, 2002), in Misiones most of the half (55%) of the total amount of agriculture enterprises were holding between 0.1 and 25 hectares of land; and only 3% were holding more than 200 hectares.

<sup>11</sup> Yerba mate: *ilex paraguayensis*; tung: *vernicia fordii*; mandioca or cassava: *manihot esculenta*.

fact that it was an administrative decentralization without fiscal distribution. Regarding rural development policies, decentralization took place in diverse ways. Three different fashions can be described: through the provincial government (provincial management of budget, decisions and staff), through the National Institute of Agriculture Technology (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 (Agriculture Social Programme - 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). It can be affirmed all in all that though there has been processes of devolution of decisions to the local level (not necessary to the governmental one) still the national government holds the power to allocate financial resources in the province (through the PSA or its decentralized agencies of INTA).

All these RDP are characterized by the following issues: (a) no pretension of universality, but focalization of the beneficiaries among some pre-defined sectors of the population; (b) financial, technical and social assistance should be delivered together; (c) social participation in the distribution of the public resources and in the management of the programmes was encouraged by introducing new institutional and organizational designs (most of them from outside the province's governmental structure) (Manzanal and others, 2007).

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

The processes of decentralization and de-concentrating power of decision to the province made new actors emerge (NGO connected to the Catholic Church, grass-root organizations, the Guaraní nation), new voices could be heard (diverse churches, schools, organic movements) and new social mobilizations came out all in the name of "social justice". This way, new interests started to be channelled through the different levels of the government. And in the centre of it, new tensions and conflicts rose. Two main inter institutional spaces were created: the 'Forums of Land and Forest' and the 'Ferias of Seeds', which continue to gather governmental and nongovernmental actors from the beginnings of 2000 for the creation of an alternative vision about rural development.

From the middle of 1990, some of the RDP and projects -directly or indirectly influenced by the Liberalization Theology- promote a specific type of agriculture with the vast majority of small and medium landholders or family farms. This contemplates food security and sovereignty of rural families (own consumption of family farm products) and the local societies, the 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 surplus in urban markets, the creation of new local markets and new patterns of consumption (Nardi, 2008). It could be argued that they foster a “decentralization” of the value chain to the farmers.

This vision about development contrasts another one focused on industrial agriculture based on large investment of (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, in particular global markets (Schiavoni and others, 2006). This kind of development is mostly promoted by the provincial government and by some sector of the national government, and by the main beneficiaries of an open and de-regularized market: the tobacco companies and the yerba mate concentration agro-industries.

Therefore it can be affirmed that in this province there are two models of rural development in tension for the organization (access, use, management) of natural resources and livelihoods. These models promote diverse territorial changes that need to be analyzed in both selected cases of study in order to comprehend the complexity of rural development, the power relations behind it and its outcome.

From preliminary reflections about the cases of study, it can be affirmed that rural development policies and strategies in Aristóbulo del Valle are facing less complex matters than San Pedro, since here there is no problems of access to land, large landholders promoting monoculture or large areas declared to be for conservation purposes. Collective actors are focusing on similar issues (improvement of productivity, access to markets, diversification). Still, the networks of these actors do not result in significant collaboration or cooperation. From a territorial point of view, the rural development arena is more “fragmented” in Aristóbulo del Valle. This is not only from a physical perspective but also because each of the collective actors (NGO, public agencies) is trying to “capture” beneficiaries for their own performance/reproduction as a development organization. Some of those beneficiaries might

be receiving benefits from more than one actor. There are no collective actions through new channels of commercialization or political mobilization: participation in unions and chambers of commerce might seem to be the current channels.

The situation is different in San Pedro, where the rural arena is very complex (as it is the territory). Here there are problems of access to land, environmental conservation endanger, communication infrastructure (roads) and access to markets. Therefore, there are many different collective actors intervening with different projects and creating networks of cooperation and a more complex rural development arena.

All these conditions need to be studied in detail to comprehend how the different actions in the rural development arenas of San Pedro and Aristóbulo del Valle are creating and recreating similar/dissimilar patterns of development in both territories and promoting territorial changes.

In the graphics below I present some current issues concerning actors, scales and power relations (conflict and -strategic- cooperation) in each territory under study. Note that here I have focused on: (a) land use regulation, (b) tenancy, (c) interests in conflict and cooperation and (d) actors involved.<sup>12</sup>

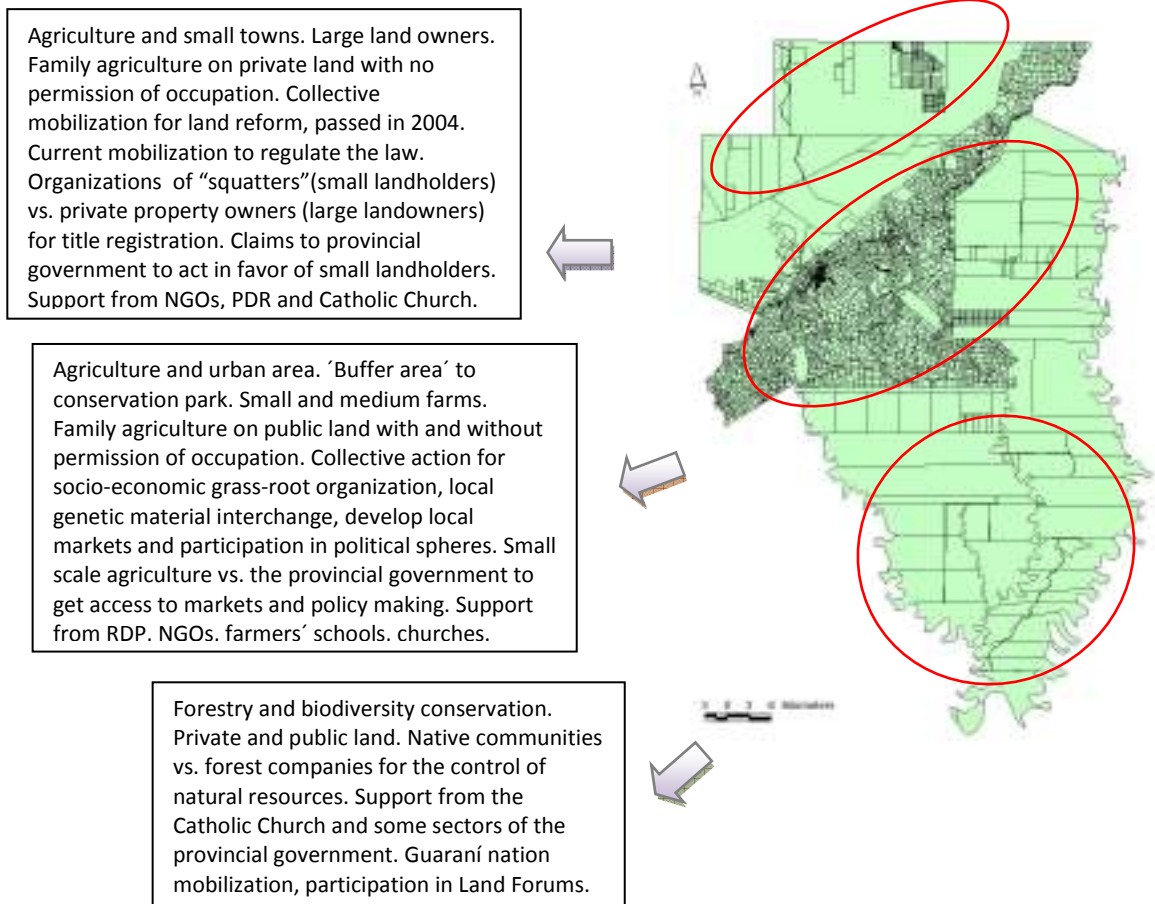
I believe that this is a first step to recognize different rural development networks and arenas and the territorial changes they promote through collective action.

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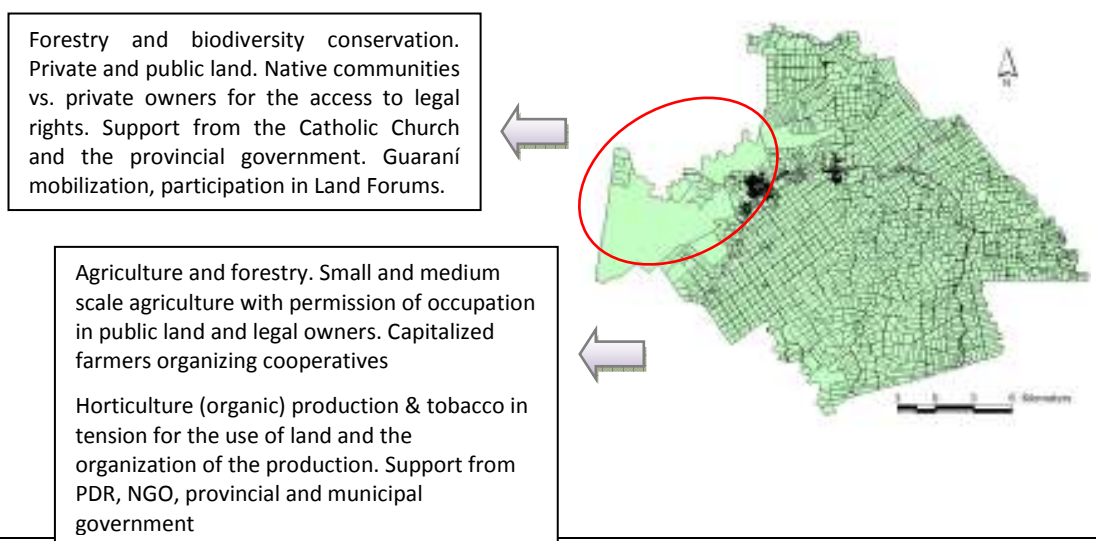
<sup>12</sup> Land use does not mean land cover, therefore when I mention agriculture, different land cover may be found (forestry, agriculture, cattle and fishery).



Graphic 1: The territory of San Pedro, Misiones (North East Argentina): conflict and cooperation in rural development strategies



Graphic 2: The territory of Aristobulo del Valle, Misiones (North East Argentina): conflict and cooperation in rural development strategies



It can be concluded from this graphic that: (a) the provincial public sector is not homogeneous but acts in contradiction regarding the support to the same population sector, and (b) different problems trigger different collective actions according to the understanding and positioning of the diverse actors involved.

The provincial public sector through its Ministry of Ecology defends the rights of the native communities when promoting certain kind of resource management in the native forest, preventing companies to overexploit it and encouraging the native communities to claim for their (ancestral) rights and to continue a sustainable management of the native forest. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Government, through the Department of Guaraní Issues, chose to work with the communities in a non transparent way, pointing representatives from them to enter into dialog and get support –via clientelistic practices- to get access to the organization of the communities, implementing programmes that are not based on real or realistic needs and at the same time creates conflict between the diverse communities.

Other example refers to the use of land, where again the Ministry of Ecology, or at least certain divisions, has to control the biodiversity conservation when at the same time deal with the policies of the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the introduction of transgenic soya and the incorporation of the technology it demands. This is detrimental to the native forest and the local communities who depend on it, and also of the rural development model that is being put forward by the (decentralized) agencies of the national government and their local counter partners in many municipalities.

Regarding the collective actions or behaviors, it is possible to state that in Aristobulo del Valle, given the preponderance of capitalized family farms and agro industries, the main issues is to diversify, increase productivity and to form cooperatives to access diverse local and non-local markets. In San Pedro, due to a lower level of organization the main collective behavior refers to grass-root organization. Access to land also triggers mobilization of those “squatters” for the property.

### **Some final reflexions**

The brief examples brought in this paper intends to show how in a small province of Argentina, diverse actors cooperate and enter into conflict for the control over the organization of the resources and the rural development strategies. It could be observed that some policies and visions about development are contradictory and cannot exist together in space and time.

Collective actions in this province are in line with the axes that Garramón (2002) considers as “social democratization” and “reconstruction of national economy” but in particular “the reformulation of modernity”. The difficulty that many actors face is how to sustain a family based agriculture model in an economic and political context that promotes commodities for export and that has weakened the role of the state. This is the main cause of mobilization and collective action in Misiones nowadays. How should family agriculture continue participating in the economic and political arena of Misiones and Argentina? Should they cease to exist? The study intends to respond these questions.

I expect that this evidence can help me to argue that rural development policies -understood from the proposed territorial perspective- should confront not only the power structures of diverse territories, but also the ongoing changes that are taking place in Latin America states and the repositioning of actors’ in the new structures of power created by the structural adjustment programmes. Here, decentralization for democratization and poverty reduction has been one of the main issues, but still remains uncertain its results.

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