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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ See Giarracca 1992 for an assessment of this period.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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NORMA GIARRACCA & TOMÁS PALMISANO¹

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

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

The peasant logic of production

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

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³ In Spanish

⁴ *Translator’s note: Argentina*

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

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

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

nutrients;

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

Finally, it is argued and to sum up,

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

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

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

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

The agribusiness logic of production

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹ See Perelmuter (2013).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some reflections as concluding remarks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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