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Dispossession and Protection in the Neoliberal Era: The Politics of Rural Development in Indigenous Communities in Chaco, Argentina

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Introduction

In recent decades, Argentina's rural areas have undergone a major transformation. The process of agriculturalization, begun in the 1970s, intensified markedly in the mid-1990s following the deregulation of the agricultural sector, the presence of high international prices for agricultural products, and the introduction of new technologies. Argentina ceased to have a widely diversified agricultural sector that satisfied both internal and external demand and, instead, specialized in a small number of export commodities (Barsky and Fernández 2005; Teubal 2008). Among these, soybeans became particularly important. The surface area planted with the crop increased from approximately six million hectares (ha) in the 1995/96 season to more than twenty million in 2012/13, approximately 54 percent of the country's cultivatable surface area (SIIA 2017). These transformations, which were accompanied by the concentration of production, ownership, and depeasantization, did not limit themselves to the core of Argentina's farming region but rapidly expanded into regions that had previously been considered marginal, causing major changes in the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics in these territories. This is certainly true of Chaco Province in the north of Argentina, where technological advances such as direct sowing and transgenic seeds have made it possible to cultivate land that had previously been outside capital's reach either because of poor soil quality or because of a climate unconducive to production. These spaces have now started to be perceived by major producers as valuable areas in which to expand the agribusiness frontier.

This trend was accentuated by the state, which authorized the sale of large swathes of state-owned land under often informal and irregular circumstances: in many cases, rural and indigenous families did not have definitive deeds to the land on which they lived, and some sales amounted to as little as \$1.14 per hectare (Zarrilli 2008). Deforestation also intensified the trend. A report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) placed Argentina among the top ten deforested countries between 1990 and 2015, when forest was cleared from 7.6 million ha, approximately 300,000 ha a year. It is important to note that 80 percent of deforestation was concentrated across four provinces in the north: Santiago del Estero, Salta, Formosa, and Chaco. According to the report, the main causes of the loss of forests were the expansion of agriculture (transgenic soybeans and intensive livestock farming) and fires. Seventeen thousand ha were cleared in 2017, of which 10,718 were situated in a protected forest area (Greenpeace 2017). The surface area planted with soybeans in Chaco increased from 130,000 ha in 1997/98 to 596,980 in 2014/15 (SIIA 2017). As we shall observe in the next few sections, the sale of state land, deforestation, and changes in production practices following the introduction of new crops also brought drastic changes to the lives of indigenous communities. Fencing and the mechanization of new facilities also meant the end of the *marisca* practice (hunter-gatherer activities) as well as a considerable reduction in the availability of wage labor.

In addition to the expansion of agribusiness¹ nationally and across the province, reforms at the state level took place. In particular, and following the 2001 economic crisis, the

Argentinean state—similar to those of many other Latin American countries—began to take a much more active role under the successive governments of Presidents Néstor and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, shifting away from the policies of the Washington Consensus but without altering the mode of accumulation of capital. The neoliberal pro-agribusiness model of rural development remained: agribusinesses received more than 80 percent of the 7,359 million pesos distributed between 2007 and 2010 as subsidies to the agricultural sector (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017:11–12).

In this new context, however, the state implemented multiple social benefits and rural development programs, initially aimed at rural workers and peasants but progressively also focused on indigenous communities (VomHau and Wilde 2010). This trend can be observed in the guidelines that governed both the *Programa de Desarrollo de Áreas Rurales* (Rural Development Program, PRODEAR) and the *Programa de Desarrollo Rural Incluyente* (Inclusive Rural Development Program, PRODERI) run by the *Unidad para el Cambio Rural* (Unit for Rural Change, UCAR), part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries under the Kirchner governments (*Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, y Pesca* 2012). Respectively, PRODEAR sought the 1) “promotion and creation of conditions that allow for the sustainable development of rural areas as part of the regional economy” 2) “the increase of income and improvement of living conditions” and 3) “the sustainable use of natural resources and special attention given to indigenous communities,” while PRODERI worked to “improve the social and production conditions of rural families with special attention paid to indigenous peoples” (UCAR 2018; PRODERI 2018).

Many of the neoliberal transformations mentioned above, which are not exclusive to Argentina, such as the increase in commodity crops, the concentration of production and ownership, depeasantization, deforestation, and the privatization of state land, have been explained by changes in the form of accumulation of capital at a global level. In more specific terms, several authors state that the rise and consolidation of the agribusiness model across the world are inextricably linked to the rise of “accumulation by dispossession” as the main mechanism for the reproduction of capital (Harvey 2003; see also Araghi 2009; Borras et al. 2012; Li 2010; McMichael 2006). To a great extent, these studies have noted the importance of accumulation by dispossession in rural areas, its negative effects on indigenous and peasant communities, and the increasing resistance exercised against it.

Less attention has been paid to the new forms of inclusion that emerged during the rise of the so-called Pink Tide governments in Latin America, which occurred simultaneously with the expansion of the agribusiness model. In general, studies that have analyzed the policies implemented by these governments have centered on the debate over the usefulness and scope of the concept of “post-neoliberalism.” While some authors believe that the first decade of the 21st century in Latin America saw a new pact between the state and society that required new concepts, others saw continuities with the neoliberal period—given the prominence of the model of extraction and exploitation of raw materials—arguing this to be more important than any political changes and that, therefore, a new category was not appropriate (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012; Torrado 2016; Wylde 2016; Yates and Bakker 2013). Within the latter group, some studies have analyzed specific social movements, emphasizing the transformative risks of fragmentation and co-optation associated with the Pink Tide, which limited some movements’ ability to resist (Lapegna 2015; Savino 2016).

The way the everyday practices of rural subaltern groups have been affected by the interaction between the new forms of inclusion that emerged under the Pink Tide governments and the mechanisms of exclusion deriving from the “neo-extractivist”² model as a central pillar of accumulation continue to be underanalyzed. In fact, although they are often theorized as distinct and independent process, inclusion and exclusion must be described in relation to one another and their interactions remain understudied.³

The purpose of this article is to shed light on new forms of rural experiences, examining the multiple dynamics that have emerged following the transformations undergone in the indigenous communities as a result of the primacy of accumulation by dispossession, the role assumed by the state during the so-called left turn, and the political (re)actions of subalterns in these contexts.

Bearing this objective in mind, I have organized this article as follows: in the first section, after briefly describing the concept of accumulation by dispossession, I argue that although these processes, as Levien (2017) writes, are profoundly political, the exclusive focus on extra-economic coercion and confrontations between the state and subalterns limits the analysis of rural dynamics. For this reason, in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the “new ruralities,” I propose to draw on the analyses of capitalism, the state, and subaltern groups presented by Sanyal (2007) and Chatterjee (2004, 2008, 2017). Following the lead of these authors I describe the unstable dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, as state sectors and subaltern groups confront one another within the current of tensions between capitalist expansion and democratic governments that base their legitimacy on broad-based popular support. In the second section, I introduce the case of the Qom communities in Pampa del Indio, Argentina, summarizing some of the major changes that have taken place following the introduction of the agribusiness model into the region as well as their implications regarding relations between indigenous communities, the state, and NGOs.⁴ The third and final section is dedicated to a brief reflection on the points raised previously.

Accumulation by Dispossession as a Political Process

In recent years, critical rural studies have been strongly influenced by the concept of “accumulation by dispossession” (AbD). This concept, developed by Harvey, is a reformulation of Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation, which refers to the separation of people from their ways of life and production, as well as the way in which preexisting social and cultural structures were co-opted, confronted, and repressed to serve the needs of capital.

According to Harvey, far from being limited to a single stage of history, this form of accumulation has been present throughout the history of capitalism and has become fundamentally important in the neoliberal era as a mechanism for overcoming the crisis of overaccumulation (Harvey 2003, 2007). Harvey has expanded the concept of primitive accumulation to include a wide range of contemporary processes: “These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labor power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade [which continues particularly in the sex industry]; and usury, the national debt and ultimately the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation. The State, with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, plays a crucial role in both backing and promoting these processes” (Harvey 2003:145). The versatility of the concept of AbD, as it encompasses a wide range of instances of contemporary dispossession and can draw a link between global and local processes, explains why it became so important to contemporary rural studies (Hart 2006; Levien 2013).

However, as Levien has noted (2011; 2013; 2017), the concept presents certain limitations deriving from Harvey’s identification of the overaccumulation of capital as the driving force of the process. In this sense, the original formulation of AbD overlooks how it is an eminently political process whose results cannot be determined solely by the imperatives of capital. These results also depend on the unstable struggles and compromises between subaltern and dominant groups in specific contexts (Levien 2017; see also Biocca 2016).

Although Levien (2017) has made an important contribution in noting that processes of AbD are political processes of redistribution mediated by the state, his analysis confines the relationship between the state and subalterns to a social relationship of forced redistribution. He states that since dispossession occurs just once for subalterns and dominant groups, class compromise and the conformity of subaltern groups are not very likely: “Whereas the reproduction of capitalist social relations requires an ongoing form of submission,

dispossession requires very short-term (though typically irreversible) acquiescence. As a singular and discrete process dispossession does not require (and may not be able to produce) sustained domination” (Levien 2013:20).

The problem with this argument is the underlying idea that during the neoliberal period, when AbD came to the fore, the role of the state and its relationship with subaltern sectors remained unchanged. Paradoxically, Levien’s analysis reproduces the perspective of the neoliberal state that has tended to hold sway in critical agrarian studies—in which it is described as a homogenous entity with certain unchanging characteristics—in opposition to a similarly uniform group of resisting subalterns. In these readings, the role of the state in processes of AbD is, on one hand, to offer concessions and benefits to attract capital and, on the other hand, to resort to violence in confronting increased resistance from displaced peoples (Baneerjee-Guha 2008).

Similarly, there is a tendency in these studies to believe that subaltern groups are always resolved to oppose the changes implemented by the state. In studies focused on the experience of indigenous communities, there is also an assumption that the ideological concerns about the “indigenous way of life” are the main driving force in rural struggles. Within this analysis, this way of life is implicitly conceived as being anticapitalist, antistate, anticolonial, and closely linked to food sovereignty (Kay 2015). These assumptions about subalterns, present in the vast majority of the literature, has been very well described by Chandra as the construction of “a Universal Resisting Subject,” which the author describes as very frequently reflecting our desire to transcend capitalism and seek alternatives rather than a real subject (Chandra 2016).

This simplification of the role of the state, as well as the homogenization of the subaltern groups, overlooks the subtle differences between different periods of neoliberalism and the different relationships the state establishes with different subaltern groups within a single period (Brent 2015). This is why rural communities where dispossession is taking place have been analyzed as areas of conflict, but these analyses have not progressed to examine the everyday politics that result from this situation. Viewing AbD as an inherently political process also means considering not only the conflict between the state and subalterns but also the many different compromises and relationships that it generates.

Relationships between the State and Subaltern Groups in the Context of AbD

While in its original formulation as primitive accumulation capitalism involved the conversion of displaced people into wage workers, contemporary processes have proved the capitalist system incapable of absorbing these populations. As Sanyal says, “They are condemned to the world of the excluded, the redundant, the dispensable, having nothing to lose, not even the chains of wage-slavery” (2007:53). This incomplete path of agrarian transition is a fundamental aspect of contemporary processes (AlShehabi and Suroor 2016; Araghi 2009; Li 2011). As Chatterjee and Sanyal have noted, even if the dispossession is a singular and discrete process, at present it is not possible to create or facilitate the necessary conditions for this hoarding and dispossession to occur if programs are not simultaneously implemented to satisfy the basic needs of displaced populations. This is partly because, in contrast to the stages prior to capitalist development, globally prevailing normative ideas prevent the state from entirely abandoning these people to their fate or meeting the demands of these groups with force. To be more precise, Chatterjee and Sanyal write that since the 1980s, there has been a generalized consensus over the main governmental function, establishing that it should focus on the well-being and protection of the population. If the state does not manage to provide these two things, its legitimacy is at risk. In other words, “Capital is economically self-subsistent. It does not need this surplus population. However, capital is not politically or ideologically self-subsistent, because it is forced to address this outside politically and ideologically” (Chatterjee and Sanyal 2016:104).

AbD thus requires violence, which is constitutive of capitalist relationships, being attenuated—not ended—by institutions, regulations, and everyday practices. Although this clearly does not mean that the demands of the displaced will be given weight equal to those of more powerful actors, Chatterjee believes the notion that the entire population is equal

under the law and the state to be nothing but a fiction. Thus arises the dual role that must be played by the state, leading to a division between what Chatterjee calls “civil” and “political” society. The former, where he places the dominant sectors and middle classes, is the domain of the capitalist economy⁵ and the citizenry. The latter contains poor rural sectors in the realm of the *need-based economy* and governmentality (Chatterjee 2008:57). In this “political society” or “wasteland of the dispossessed,” these groups, whose exclusion is permanent, are “rehabilitated” through noncapitalist activities⁶ supplied by the state or other actors, such as NGOs. The objective of these interventions is to develop instruments to meet the socially acceptable level of consumption and standards of living for excluded sectors. In other words, programs of conditional monetary transfers, the provision of subsidies, the supply of merchandise and supplies, etc., are the political responses required by contemporary processes of AbD. It is important to note that insofar as capital is always looking to expand, these need-based economies are, in turn, at constant risk of being destroyed; thus, they are highly unstable—so much so that those excluded must be continuously involved in resistance and negotiation to ensure the reproduction of their current situation. In contrast to classic, more stable welfare models, ongoing processes of creation and destruction of protective programs are currently prevalent (Chatterjee and Sanyal 2016).

It is important to make clear that neither the state nor political society is a homogenous entity. Political society contains within it multiple realities composed of diverse groups, each of which has different characteristics and thus different demands. Therefore, each group constructs different relationships and negotiates differently with the state. Chatterjee further notes that not all groups in political society manage to achieve their demands. To a large extent, their success or failure will depend on how organized they are, i.e., whether they are recognized as a single group that can and should receive the benefits of a specific governmental program, their capacity to mobilize at a local level, the existing distribution of power in society overall, the skill of their leaders or mediators, and, especially, the strategic balance of different forces in a given time and place (Chatterjee 2004:126–57).

In addition, changing political forces within a state also result in the granting of different levels and periods of greater or lesser protection to different groups. This is very important for understanding different periods within the neoliberal state and in analyzing in the case of Latin America, and not only the change that came with the Pink Tide governments but also the recent shift to the right. That said, one must highlight that placing an emphasis on the complexity of the state’s role under AbD should not lead us to think that it is the only determining factor in how these processes develop. Although the state has historically affected and redefined the experience of subaltern groups in profound ways, the agency and struggle of these groups have also redefined the policies of states. Here, it is important to note that although the demands of subaltern sectors in these contexts are often initially specific and remain within the boundaries of conventional politics, they manage to draw responses from the state and sometimes result in gradual change. In addition, on certain occasions, the demands may expand into a more comprehensive platform that questions conventional policies or even the model of accumulation itself (Chatterjee 2017).

Pampa del Indio and Rural Life under Dispossession

My case study focuses on the region of Pampa del Indio—one of the most populous indigenous enclaves in Argentina—located in the far north of the General San Martín Department, Chaco Province. Between 2007 and 2015, representatives of the Frente para la Victoria, the political group founded by Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, governed both the province and the local area of Pampa del Indio.⁷

The settlement of Pampa del Indio covers an area of 1750 square kilometers (km) and, according to the 2001 *Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas*, has a population of 11,558 inhabitants, of whom over 50 percent identify as Qom. In terms of spatial distribution, most of the nonindigenous rural criollo population lives in the urban center while the majority of Qom families live in outlying regions, mostly in what are known as

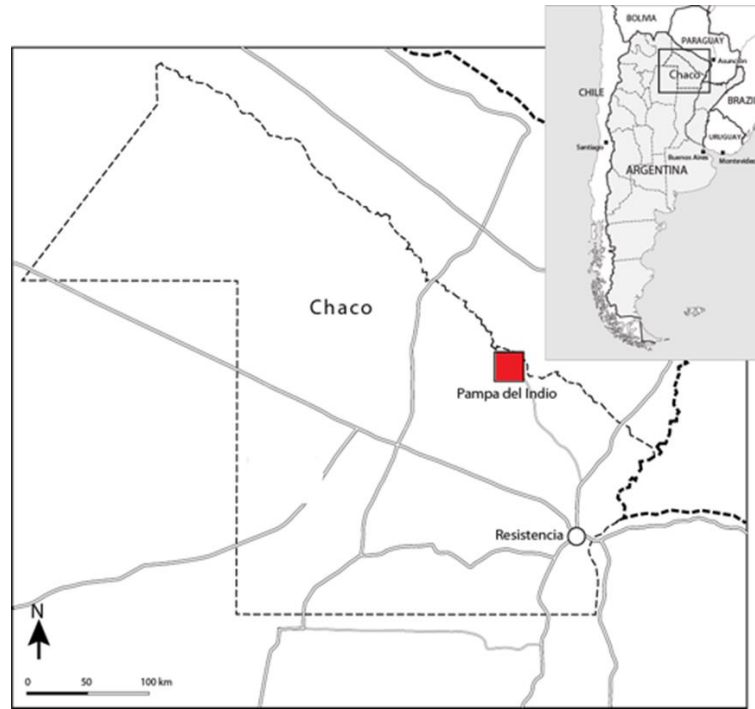


Figure 1. Map of Pampa del Indio, Chaco Province, Argentina (Map by Author).

parajes (such as Pampa Chica, Campo Medina Campo Nuevo, Lote 4, and Campo Cacique). Criollo refers to a person of mixed racial background, generally of European ancestry. The distance between the paraje settlements and the urban center ranges between 3 km and 45 km.

Historically, the Qom communities inhabiting the area were organized in groups of bilateral kindred, or *bandas*, consisting of two or more extended families.⁸ These units were nomadic hunter-gatherers within a defined territory. The different Qom groups circled through their territories that lay on both banks of the Bermejo River (Miller 1979). At certain times of the year, when forest fruits had ripened, the different bands would meet to consolidate leadership, exchange products, hold marriages, seal agreements, or carry out certain rituals (Miller 1979; Wright 2008).

When the national army occupied the right-hand shore of the Bermejo River in 1884, the Qom settled on the left-hand side and stayed there until the early decades of the 20th century when the policy of the Argentine state began to focus on the incorporation of this population into the labor force rather than on its extermination. It was then that the families led by Cacique Taigoyic may have moved south, settling in a location close to their present one (Fernández and Braunstein 2001).

These Qom families provided most of the workforce at the Las Palmas refinery and sawmills. The Irish brothers Charles and Richard Hardy founded the Las Palmas sugar mill in 1882. In those years, the Hardys requested the concession of 100,000 ha for the production of sugarcane. Given the importance of the refinery to the economy of the region and the increased need for labor, evidence exists testifying to policies encouraging permanent settlement of indigenous groups by the government of the national territory of Chaco (Cordeu and Siffredi 1971; Miller 1979). Oral testimonies collected in 2012 affirmed that President Yrigoyen granted Cacique Taigoyic, who was also known for his role as a contractor for the Las Palmas, a temporary occupation permit for what informants estimated to be forty square leagues for his tribe (interviews with Qom inhabitants of Pampa del Indio, 2012).



Figure 2. Satellite view of Pampa del Indio (Biocca 2015).

Decades later, due to the successive economic crises suffered by the refinery and the modification of the law of colonization, some of the land granted to the indigenous people was withdrawn and given to new settlers arriving in the region to promote cotton production. “When Taigoyic died, people came from all over, from I don’t know where, strange people looking for land,” remembered Mariana, a Qom assistant teacher who works at the bilingual intercultural center (described below) in a 2010 interview. A note sent by the governor of Chaco to the chief of police in 1932 also documents memory of criollo incursions into Qom territory and the problems deriving from precarious tenancy. In this note, the governor recognizes the following:

Although the lands of “Pampa del Indio” have been measured, the land office has not granted ownership as yet. Cacique Bautista García has presented a complaint to this Office stating that colonizers are continually entering the lands they occupy and are established in, fencing off land to which they thus far have had a recognized temporary right (Silva 1994).

This dispossession of the Qom was partially reversed in the mid-1940s, when the nation-state introduced certain redistribution policies, including the expropriation of large and midsize criollo landowners’ holdings. With these and other measures that benefitted small producers and rural workers, the new government of President Juan D. Perón sought to challenge the power of large landowners in an attempt to expand the basis of his administration’s legitimacy. In this context, several indigenous communities acquired rights of occupation or ownership of lands and received different kinds of benefits from the government to encourage agricultural production. It was during these years that several Qom families received provisional deeds to individual 25 or 50 ha lots.

Community histories report that Cacique Pedro Martínez negotiated with President Perón to obtain the land where the settlements of Campo Medina and Pampa Chica arose.

Access to parcels of land and supplies for production continued to be provided during the Peronist decade. These were also channeled through churches and NGOs (both religious and secular) that received funds from overseas (Bray 1989:16). Towards the end of the 1970s, the Misión Evangélica Bautista (Evangelical Baptist Mission) granted 704 ha to a legal



Figure 3. Cotton spinning plant in Pampa del Indio, 2012 (Photo by Author).

entity representing Qom families, giving rise to the current settlement of Campo Nuevo. During those years, most of the Qom families were contracted to clean and harvest the fields of criollo farms. In addition, many of them produced their own cotton, which they sold through the Cooperativa Pampa del Indio, founded in 1975. However, despite the granting of these lots, the total amount of land designated to the community did not reach the approximately 100,000 ha (the same as the 40 leagues granted by Cacique Taigoyic) previously granted in 1922 by Yrigoyen.⁹ Moreover, the progressive growth of the population meant that the lots became increasingly insufficient and reinforced the Qom's dependence on wage labor in the criollo camps and what they could still obtain from marisca.

In the late 1980s, when the cotton period was coming to an end, the rural population of Pampa del Indio plunged into a profound crisis. The fall in the price of cotton meant that many farmers were unable to make payments on their debts and thus decided to sell the land. This situation exacerbated the unemployment crisis and contributed to increased migration into town and other cities.

Simultaneously, following the return of democracy in December of 1983, after more than six years of bloody rule under military dictatorship, the state began to encourage the creation of community associations as a way of channeling indigenous peoples' demands. To be recognized as beneficiaries of specific rights, indigenous communities had to adopt the administrative structure of a civil association and choose representatives by a simple majority vote each year. Thus arose the first indigenous organizations in Pampa del Indio: the *Asociación Comunitaria Cacique Pedro Martínez*, the *Asociación Comunitaria Campo Medina*, the *Asociación Comunitaria Cacique Taigoyic* and the *Comisión Zonal de Tierras*. For a long period of time, the activities of the last two organizations focused almost exclusively on facilitating the provision of definitive titles to land and contributing to efforts to prevent the sale of aboriginal land. A decade later, during the 2001 economic crisis, a major new organization appeared, the *Unión Campesina* (UC). The UC started to place more emphasis on production issues and started to hold marches and block roads, campaigning for the immediate delivery of seeds and tools for both self-consumption and cotton production. Currently, the UC together with the *Asociación Comunitaria Cacique Taigoyic* and the *Comisión Zonal de Tierras* comprise the leading indigenous organizations in the area.¹⁰ However, their leaders are not the only representatives. The proliferation of evangelical churches, the emergence of the *Instituto del Aborigen Chaqueño* (Aborigine Institute of Chaco [IDACH]),¹¹ and the subsequent rise of higher-education courses as a route to leadership credentials have expanded the

spaces of power within communities where different types of leadership currently co-exist.

The 1990s saw a worsening of the economic crisis and an increase in unemployment linked to the disappearance of cotton production largely caused by a reduction in state subsidies.

The Conflict with Don Panos

In 1996, a profound transformation began in Pampa del Indio. In that year, a business group, Unitec Agro S.A., bought large tracts of land, some state-owned and others belonging to cotton producers in the region. According to several Qom residents, these lands were part of the original area given to Taigoyic in 1922. On these lands, the Unitec Agro S.A. group founded the Don Panos establishment, which occupies a 120,000 ha area between the provinces of Chaco and Formosa on both sides of the Bermejo River. Of this parcel, approximately 53,000 are in Chaco and border the rural settlements of Campo Medina, Pampa Chica, and Campo Nuevo.

Initially, in a context of deep recession, many inhabitants of Pampa del Indio were hopeful about the arrival of a large company. For the great majority of Qom residents, the company represented the prospect of employment: “It was good, we had work, and they were going to pay us every fifteen days,” remembered Luis, who took part in the first land clearing work. The expectation of receiving a salary that would ensure a living was temporarily satisfied as several members of the community were hired to carry out clearance work, although it was not always performed in accordance with the law. While the Forestry Department provided authorization to clear 1000 ha, the company cleared more than 1600 ha. Following this infraction, the Forestry Department fined the company. Undeterred, Unitec Agro S.A. would violate regulations once again a few months later by clearing 2500 ha without receiving official authorization (Greenpeace 2006). Some informants claim that the company did not even pay the fine for either violation.

Unitec Agro S.A. also employed temporary labor to construct a landing strip for large aircraft, a hangar, and an aqueduct connecting the company’s facilities with the Bermejo River. The latter construction’s purpose was to feed the modern irrigation system required by soybean cultivation in the area.

However, in a short period of time, numerous labor and environmental conflicts began to arise in Pampa del Indio. As the production of Don Panos was mechanized to a significant degree and the marisca practice was prevented in the area by a perimeter fence and security staff hired by the company, Qom families became far more vulnerable. As Carlos, a Qom man of approximately fifty who was until recently a member of the Unión Campesina explains,

When it wasn’t fenced off, that land was a part of the territory of the indigenous people. Our cemetery was in the middle of the land, about 15 km in. When the landowners came, they closed everything off, and we couldn’t even cross to the other side. The government does business with the landowners who buy the things (land), and we, because we’re poor, can’t do anything, the community’s territory gets smaller and smaller (2016).

In addition, many residents in Campo Medina suffered health problems and lost their crops due to the company’s crop-spraying regime. For this reason, some community members initiated a lawsuit in 2006 demanding that fumigations by the company cease. Despite the gathered evidence, the complaint was rejected, and the conflicts continued. Two years later, during what was known as “the conflict with the countryside,”¹² the confrontation between the Qom communities in Pampa del Indio and the company intensified, becoming most visible in 2010, when the story was covered in the national newspaper *Página 12*.



Figure 4. Dona Panos Establishment, 2012
(Photo by Author).



Figure 5. Dona Panos Establishment 2016
(Photo by Author).

However, hoarding and displacement were not the only processes occurring in Pampa del Indio during these years. Simultaneously, different government programs of rural development and social benefits were introduced. In addition to the rural development programs mentioned at the beginning of this text, in 2009, almost every family in the community began to receive the *Asignación Universal por Hijo para Protección Social* (Child Support for Vulnerable Families [AUH]). The AUH is a monthly sum given to children¹³ of the unemployed and those working in the informal economy with incomes equal to or less than the minimum wage. From May 2011, the benefit was extended to women pregnant for three months or longer as part of Plan Nacer. According to a report by the OIT, UNICEF, and Flacso-Argentina, “Access to the AUH by this sector of society—indigenous communities—is considered to be a notable improvement in income that leads to changes in patterns of consumption, improved nutrition, improved health and the possibility to carry out production activities and improve living conditions” (OIT, UNICEF, and Flacso 2013:7). An example of the changes that the new income brought was the proliferation of small-engine motorcycles and mobile phones, which were very important in improving and facilitating communication between remote rural settlements.

Furthermore, during these years, Pampa del Indio underwent important infrastructure improvements. On my first visit in 2010, not many of the streets in the town were paved; in 2016, almost the entire urban area had been covered. During this period of time, paving work was also performed on Ruta 3 (financed by a World Bank project) and Ruta 4 (financed by the Vialidad Nacional program).

The changes in infrastructure in the area included works related to the provision of water to the town and rural settlements. In 2013, the Unitec Agro S.A. Servicio de Agua y Mantenimiento Empresa del Estado Provincial (SAMEEP) aqueduct was opened. This work, jointly financed by the company through its corporate responsibility program and the provincial government, involved the creation of a water reservoir on company land fed by the aqueduct from the Bermejo River and the installation of 23 km of pipes that connected this reservoir to a water treatment plant in Pampa del Indio. In the following years, work on the aqueduct connecting Presidencia Roca to Pampa del Indio progressed, and feeders to supply other rural settlements between both locations were built.

All this meant major changes for the town. Between 2010 and 2016, a new building for the municipality and its council was built, the Casa de las Culturas, including a hall for cinema and theater, was opened, and the central plaza was refurbished. The bank Nuevo Banco del Chaco was expanded and now has three ATMs, two more than before. Finally, many new houses were built, most of them financed by the Provincial Institute for Urban Development and Housing (IPDUV). For the rural settlements, one of the most important installations was the Bilingual Intercultural Complex Lqataxac Nam Qompi. This educational complex, opened in August 2012, houses Agricultural Family School No. 185, free adult secondary education, a tertiary education institute, and three diploma courses in indigenous social administration. Improvements to housing and electrification works were also carried out as part of the Program of Provincial Agrarian Services (PROSAP).



Figure 6. Pampa del Indio, 2012 (Photo by Author).



Figure 7. Pampa del Indio entrance with new paved road, 2016 (Photo by Author).



Figure 8. Water infrastructure project, 2016 (Photo by Author).



Figure 9. Rural electrification project, 2016 (Photo by Author).



Figure 10. Casa de las Culturas, 2016 (Photo by Author).



Figure 11. The Bilingual Intercultural Complex Lqataxac Nam Qompi, 2016 (Photo by Author).

What was the relationship between these processes of dispossession and protection? What new dynamics emerged in this context? What kinds of rurality were the indigenous people of Pampa del Indio actually experiencing? These, as stated above, were the questions that guided my last fieldwork, which I describe below.

The Politics of Accumulation by Dispossession, or How the “Aid” Began to Change

Witnessing the major changes taking place in Pampa del Indio, one of the aspects that most attracted my attention was related to the notion of “aid.” Despite all the transformations, which could be observed by anyone visiting the town, almost all the Qom agreed that, for approximately two decades, it had been difficult to obtain “aid.” Francisco, a seventy-four-year-old resident of Campo Medina, said:

In '58, when we left Misión Laishí and came to Pampa del Indio, the Department of the Aborigine gave us aid. Fencing, plows, hammers, anvils, tongs, all the tools we needed to work. Some people even got cows. That year, the people got to work planting cotton, potatoes, there was a lot of aid. The Department of the Aborigine had sway with the government. And when there wasn't enough to eat, we could mariscar. At the time, the forests were untouched, the trees were bigger, we got honey. It wasn't like today, when there's almost no aid. In '97/'98, aid from the government ended. Then, we couldn't do any production work because there wasn't any. You can't work without aid, you can't do the work, and you have to go out and look for it. We need to get projects, now people have the legal personhood number, but there's no one to aid us (2016).

However, on many other occasions, when talking about the main changes that they had noticed in the area, the majority of the Qom interviewed said that, at present, one does not observe as much poverty as before because there was “more aid” from the government. For instance, one morning, Desiderio, a Qom of approximately forty-five years of age (and a member of the Zonal Land Commission (CZT), told his story, saying:

My story is similar to that of all poor people. Previously, the story was very sad because we didn't know what biscuits were or anything. The community was neglected. After 2000 was when they started to appear, that was when we started to receive head of household benefits. The thing is that, now, in the communities, there are benefits, and they can help the children. If you have a family, you have enough to keep them clothed and to buy a few things they didn't have before, like motorcycles. Before, it wasn't like that, we were suffering, but now, things have changed a little. They give help, and you can feed your children and buy clothes for school. Some people can buy supplies for school, some people can buy a freezer, for example, they can live, more or less (2016).

The tension surrounding the term “aid” is, I believe, a clear reflection of the change that occurred in state interventions following the predominance of processes of AbD. In contrast to the policies implemented on both large and small scales between the 1940s and 1980s, which were aimed at encouraging production as well as ensuring labor in cotton establishments, currently the objective is to ensure the survival of these families via the market. In other words, the new aid allows for the monetary purchase of resources in town but not the participation of these groups as rural producers or workers, given that they are no longer necessary for the accumulation of capital. For this reason, their exclusion, far from being temporary or fluctuating, is permanent. This is not the expansion of what Marx might call the “reserve army;” under the current form of accumulation, and from the point of view of capital, these excluded men and women fulfill no function at all.

In addition, while past programs were mostly aimed at associations, during the period analyzed here they were mainly aimed at family units. Thus, as Francisco says, although it took several years of bureaucratic procedures, currently almost every group has fulfilled the requirement of forming community associations with legal person status. But now, state resources are not necessarily channeled through them. The change in recipient also meant changes in the sums given, which has led to multiple effects, including a weakening of the

associations and growing differentiation within the community. Where before tractors could be bought for communal use, current income is only sufficient for certain nonproductive goods such as cellphones, motorbikes and basic foodstuffs. The programs that were channeled through associations and indigenous organizations were usually aimed at public lighting, housing, and the installation of windmills or water pumps.

As the state, in seeking to maintain its social and political legitimacy, has incorporated these groups into circuits of nonproductive capital, links with the market have actually grown stronger, not weaker. This partially explains why certain goods that families used to produce must now be bought in town. This growing financialization, against a backdrop of exclusion from the means of production and employment, has increased uncertainty among community members; the absence of a policy guaranteeing that the sums received will keep pace with the high inflation rates that are common in Argentina reinforces this trend. The respective words of Simón, Georgina, and Sergio, residents of Campo Medina, the first two being members of the UC and the latter a member of the Asociación Cacique Taigoyic, which I quote below, show how the “aid” has accentuated the vulnerability of these groups:

What we’re studying now is the social aid; we’re not against it, but the government also has an obligation to do something at home so we can at least plant manioc, sweet potatoes, something else. Also, it’s not enough: the electricity bill takes up at least half the social aid, that’s the reality (2016).

This year, we don’t have a project yet; if we’re lucky with one, we’ll get something for housing, that’s what I’m hearing, but nothing for production, and in Campo Medina, people need that. Because, look, people get the pension, but goods are very expensive, and a mother can’t buy clothes, shoes, food for her children because it’s not enough (2016).

I want to have a vegetable garden again, but you can’t get the seeds. I ask myself why I should have to buy squash and mandioca when we have land? I start thinking why I should have to buy squash in town for \$8 or \$10 per kilo? My neighbor went into town the other day to get me mandioca, which costs \$12, but he charged me \$20. What else can you do? You have to buy (2016).

It must also be noted that contemporary interventions are generally described as being “exceptional,” which implies a greater degree of instability compared to state policies in the past. As Chatterjee indicates, “Those in political society make their claims on government, and in turn are governed, not within the framework of stable constitutionally defined rights and laws, but rather through temporary, contextual and unstable arrangements arrived at through direct political negotiations” (Chatterjee 2008:57).

This instability can be clearly observed, for example, when there is a change in government, and subaltern groups are unsure whether the benefits obtained will be maintained or not. Desiderio, whom I interviewed after the presidential elections in 2015, said:

Now that we have benefits that support us, it seems a shame because there’s a new government that is talking about cutting the support. If we lose these benefits, we will start to suffer as we did before. We don’t have anything anymore; this is what supports us now (2016).

The period between elections and the change in government also accentuates the instability not only due to a lack of certainty over the continuity of benefits but also because it creates an interregnum period where unfinished projects and/or those that are about to be presented are left in limbo. Sergio commented on this:

The women presented a note to an institution, but now, it's a little complicated because of the renewal issue. Right now, it's impossible to present a project, not until the middle of this year at least. "Zero poverty" [a key slogan in Mauricio Macri's campaign], the new president said, there won't be any more poverty, either they'll kill all the poor or help them, I don't know, I don't know what this [the change in government] means (2016).

However, instability is not limited to electoral changes; many of those interviewed stated that the lack of information is a main reason why they do not have access to development programs and social benefits. Talking about her income, Elizabeth, a member of the group *Madres Cuidadoras de la Cultura Qom*, said:

All I get is the AUH, but it doesn't stretch very far. My husband is unemployed, but he doesn't collect anything. We hear on the television and the radio that there's help for the unemployed, but we don't know how to get it. I don't know what to do, where to go (2016).

Meanwhile, Higinio, a Qom man of approximately forty, said:

I think there's a lack of information, they're keeping information to themselves. There are things we have no idea about. We're talking about the issue of housing, help, all that. Here, they told me that they assigned a million and a half to housing and improvements in living conditions, but so far, we haven't heard anything about it. We don't know if the mayor has received the money or where it went. I think that it suits the government when you block the road and they build one house. There's no political relationship with the community (2016).

In other cases, the instability refers to how the resources are distributed and at whose discretion. On this subject, several residents of Pampa del Indio mentioned that in the majority of cases the relationships and the projects that they managed to obtain through state institutions generally depend on the personal contacts that they are able to establish. In a meeting I had with members of three organizations, Simón said that, for example, the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (National Institute of Agricultural Technology [INTA])¹⁴ had worked with the CZT, but only because one of its leaders knew the technicians.

When the time came to plant the vegetable garden, the people at the INTA suggested we come to get seeds. But they just spoke with some of the leaders. When we were in the assembly, the INTA never came to suggest that, only when they meet someone. Because they know someone. Because their paths cross, just like that, because they talk to you in the village. But there are days when we have meetings, assemblies in Campo Medina, and they never come to propose that. They come saying that people don't like the idea of planting, but the thing is, it's hard to get seeds. I think that everyone would like to have a vegetable garden, I think that would be important because you go to the cooperative, and you ask for a can of watermelon seeds, and I think it was \$500, and now, it must be more. And all the achievements are the result of struggle, there are agreements with the government, but they're never fulfilled. The government never resolves things of its own accord, it always happens through struggle. And what we always do is block the road. It's the only way to get them to listen to you (2016).

Simón's and Higinio's accounts also highlight another aspect that characterizes the new rural experiences of the dispossessed in the context of AbD: the struggle over channels through which groups can voice their demands, thus affecting how they are governed. That all of this is not settled in advance serves to alert us that the relative importance of social programs ultimately depends on shifting relations of force. In other words, social programs are not only top-down decisions by elites but also the result of persistent struggles from below as manifested in numerous road blockades. Below, I address this point in greater depth.

Channels of Dialogue between the State and the Excluded

In parallel to the expansion of the agribusiness model, marches and roadblocks have become the primary forms of protest and demand in Pampa del Indio, as in many other parts of the country. Route 3, where the Qom generally hold their demonstrations, is one of the few places in Pampa del Indio where the state, through its security and police forces, has a presence. This is perhaps the reason why it has become the main location where subalterns make their demands to the state (Bayat 2000). These activities have been strongly criticized by what Chatterjee calls "civil society groups," and many of the interviewees are aware that their actions could be considered as being contrary to what is "socially acceptable" and even illegal; however, they make it clear that their actions are the only way to campaign for their rights. Below, Carlos explains this aspect of the "politics of the excluded":

In 2002, comrade Mártires had to organize families in search of the aid they needed to produce. So, they organized, we had to hold a march to ask the government for what we needed. Then, in 2005, after a lot of struggle, we were able to receive fuel from the provincial government. In 2006, 2007, 2008, we got a national subsidy, but after the struggle, we started to work with all the communities in the area, in the countryside. From 2009 onwards, in 2010–2011, we had a mobilization to ask for more aid because the need got worse and worse because we didn't have the necessary aid to support families. In 2011, in Castelli, an agreement was signed that we're still fighting for, which was the production plan. It's a document. The production plan would be fuel and tools so that families can work. But with the politics, the change of government, now, this year we can have a conversation with the government, fighting it, so we can get back to work on our farms. The government says yes to everything, but then, it delays a lot, so we have to organize a march so that the government gives us what we ask for. It's not just the production issue, it's water, housing, healthcare. And it's always like that with petitions, and they never recognize your rights, you have to go out onto the road to get them to listen to you, and they always treat us like that (2016).

In a similar vein, Georgina and Desiderio said, respectively:

In 2002, when Mártires was here, we got a lot of aid, but these weren't gifts from the government. We got those things through struggle, always campaigning for our rights. While we fought for our rights on the issues of water, housing, health and education, justice was done. As I said, 'We always campaigned for our rights, we didn't go out looking for a fight; we were campaigning for our rights (2016).

The community, every community, because we sometimes want to campaign for the things that we have a right to and, sometimes, the authorities don't listen. That is what we're experiencing now. Sometimes, the authorities promise something, say that they'll help on such and such a day, the day comes, and they don't come through. The only way for us is to

block the road or protest at the side of the road. If we don't do that, they ignore us (2016).

Clearly, even when the claims can be framed as rights, for example, the right to housing, education, and work, the state treats these groups not as citizens but as groups of people for whom different mechanisms are implemented to see to their well-being (Chatterjee 2004:40). Rights, as Georgina and Desiderio state above, are mediated by the "help": recognition does not necessarily imply implementation. For this reason, the response is always unstable and must be continuously negotiated. Note that my case possesses a major difference from that analyzed by Auyero (2011) in his study of the relationships between poor urban sectors and the Argentine state. In the latter case analyzed by Auyero, who focused on the interactions that occurred in the main welfare of the city of Buenos Aires, access to "help" required the acquiescence of the future beneficiaries; in the case studied here, access to "help" can be gained through more confrontational acts. In this context, a roadblock is a distinctive form of resistance or negotiation. It hinders agribusiness in a specific way, as it reduces the circulation of end or intermediary products. The blocking of circulation is thus not only a means of attracting the state's attention but also a specific way of questioning the viability of the model itself.¹⁵

The unstable nature of these responses is also reflected in the arbitrary nature of the state's decisions to accept or deny this form of dialogue depending on the present political situation, the balance of power within the state, and the risk involved in acceding to the demands and making changes to the reigning model called for by subalterns. Therefore, while roadblocks led to the distribution of subsidies and tools between 2006 and 2012, they were repressed in subsequent years. By the middle of the decade, many leaders were involved in civil and penal cases begun against them for carrying out these actions in 2014.¹⁶ As Nora, currently a councilor and the widow of the former leader of the UC, says:

There's a case against me that the politicians set up, but I wasn't doing anything, I was just fighting for my rights, I'm a mother with 10 children, we always have to fight for our rights, but sometimes, they repress us (2016).

Meanwhile, the state is continuously reminding these groups that they are subordinate to the hegemonic weighing of rights. As Marx observed, "Between equal rights, force decides" (1977 [1867]:344).

Changes in Relationships within the Excluded Groups

The consolidation of these forms of negotiation between indigenous organizations and the state has also caused changes within these communities. As noted by Fisher in his analysis of indigenous peoples' circumstances in the Brazilian Amazon, neoliberalism has generated a territorial reorganization under which different enclaves of indigenous populations have been established that are highly unstable and extremely dependent on monetary transfers and social benefits from the state as well as NGO projects. According to Fisher, life in these territories "is frequently crisis-ridden and both leaders and ordinary people are often forced to make pressure-filled decisions or to travel to regional centers or cities to search for resources, expertise or the enforcement capacity to deal with breakdowns in government sponsored institutions" (Fisher 2015:225).

In this way, insofar as the results depend on the different leaders' negotiating skills as well as the organizations' ability to pressure the authorities, divisions and conflicts have proliferated in Pampa del Indio in recent years. As Esteban, a CZT member, said:

We're working independently; we're working directly with the government. You know why? We're not the same as leaders. The government sometimes doesn't agree with the Unión Campesina, and so, members of our association think that they're losing out on days of work, on doing

something at home, if we stay with the Unión Campesina. So, they stated [decided] that we have to work by our own means. We know that the politics have changed, you have to understand, to know how to work with politics (2016).

In addition, the new forms of dialogue have weakened the power of local delegates of the government-sponsored IDACH, who were very important in the 1990s compared to the leaders of indigenous organizations (UC, *Asociación Comunitaria Cacique Taigoyic* and the *Comisión Zonal de Tierras*). Alfonso, an employee from the Pampa del Indio delegation, said the following:

The organizations go straight to the government to block the road, and when they get something, it's given to the organizations; it doesn't go through the IDACH. They have legal person status, they can request aid from the province, the nation, and other institutions and nations, from anyone who can aid. On the housing issue, for example, we have the requirements, the forms, but when they take them, the folders come and go elsewhere. It didn't need to go through the IDACH offices. We were, for example, in a struggle to make water free for indigenous people, so they came here and said, well, we need a Toba certificate [i.e. proof of Toba ethnicity], that's issued here, but then, we don't have any other information. The presidents of organizations answer: 'No, you aren't the delegates here, so go away because we're not meeting people here.' And we worked to get electricity to them because we're part of them. These days, everyone takes control of their own group. That's what the IDACH is today because it has autonomy, but the money doesn't go through here anymore. If, for example, they ask the INAI [*Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* or National Institute of Indigenous Affairs] for a project, it doesn't go through here anymore. It's as though here we're the mother of the Law of the Aborigine and we turn out to be the ones who know the least about it. We're talking about housing, aid, all that. The government gave new tractors to the organizations, not the IDACH. We still have the old tractors. It's as though we don't know how our children are being raised" (2016).

The transformations that have taken place in recent years also include relationships between communities and the nongovernmental bodies that have worked in the area since the mid-1980s. In general, in conversations with the Qom, they made clear their preference to negotiate with the government directly because doing so aids them in obtaining larger projects than they generally obtain from NGOs.

The growing mistrust between the members of these organizations has its roots in the difference between the projects that the communities can obtain through the government and NGOs. Several individuals mentioned that if the NGOs encouraged some projects and not others, it was because they must have an economic interest in the land. Daniel, a resident of Campo Medina, said the following:

Our community is too mistrustful and closed to accept the INCUPO [Institute of Popular Culture, a Christian nonprofit civil association], because they say that before, when the INCUPO aided, provided advice, and got some projects, they took control of things . . . that's the information we have (2016).

During my conversations with NGO experts, they also noted that the Qom prefer to seek "help" from the government. Maria, a thirty-three-year-old woman who works for an NGO in Pampa del Indio, said that this can be explained by the greater flexibility in the assignation of state budgets:

When dealing directly with a minister or a governor, people can ask for what they need. The authorities assign part of the budget to the issue, and that's it. Working with NGOs, in contrast, comes with more restrictions. The projects come with a framework that must be followed in a certain way within a certain period (2016).



Figure 12. Meeting with NGOs Campo Nuevo, 2016 (Photo by Author).



Figure 13. Meeting Campo Nuevo, 2016 (Photo by Author).

During that same conversation, her colleague, Marta, who was approximately fifty, added that this trend had grown more common in recent years due to the personality of Governor Jorge M. Capitanich, who encouraged direct dialogue with indigenous organizations. She said:

Coqui [Capitanich's nickname] had a very personal style that the guys got used to. You went to the meeting, they'd say "wait," and take out their cellphone and talk directly to Coqui. They only want to talk to the boss, no one else (2016).

Finally, it is important to note that in recent years, the NGOs in the area experienced major institutional changes. These include institutions such as MISEROR, the German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation, deciding that it was necessary to work at the regional and provincial levels rather than in the local sphere. This

change, encouraged by financial institutions, has seen the number of experts living in the area reduced as the bonus that they received for living locally was cut off. The goal is to concentrate staff in the provincial capital of Resistencia.

Final Comments

In these pages, I have argued that although there are undoubted strengths to the concept of accumulation by dispossession, the excessive focus placed on violence has prevented past analysis from reflecting on the complexity of the transformations that have taken place in rural areas. Indigenous populations have historically suffered dispossessions and displacement; in this regard, the new aspect is not the hoarding but the dynamics that govern these rural experiences. For this reason, I suggest no longer exploring the AbD associated with the expansion of agribusiness from the perspective of what it suppresses but, rather, from that of what it creates.

Drawing on the arguments of Sanyal (2007) and Chatterjee (2004, 2008, 2017), I have examined different aspects of the new rural reality in Pampa del Indio, Chaco. We have observed how, in addition to facilitating the arrival of Don Panos and its operations through the sale of state land and granting authorization to divert the Bermejo River, as well as the failure to penalize illegal deforestation, the state has also implemented a series of programs that allowed the control and survival of excluded peoples. The simultaneous presence of these processes of dispossession and protection and their subsequent contradictions are what shape a new rural experience for these excluded peoples.

These experiences, under processes of AbD, are thus characterized by increased social insecurity associated with changes in state policies. In other words, state interventions have guaranteed in recent decades the survival of indigenous populations but have not encouraged the production or employment that might ensure the long-term sustainability of these populations. As I have tried to show, these policies are a constitutive component of the state in the era of AbD. This does not mean that we should regard these interventions as a plan that was prepared and implemented by a homogenous dominant elite; actual policies involving indigenous peoples are always the result of multiple struggles that occur between these groups and the state as well as within these entities themselves. As Chatterjee explains (2004, 2008), the strategic balance of political forces varies; therefore, we observe the degree of social protection and dispossession varying in different periods.

Rural processes are thus typified by highly unstable territorialities; they result from the proliferation of precarious, poorly paid employment and dependence on the social subsidies implemented by the government in power, the will of the experts of different institutions, and short-term NGO projects. Life in these communities thus requires continuous protest and struggle on the part of different community groups against the state, generating increasing competition for resources, greater uncertainty, and the proliferation of conflict as divisions multiply.

Finally, these new rural experiences are not unchanging political processes; their specific characteristics always depend on political struggle and vary in accordance with the power relationships between the subaltern and dominant sectors.

Disclosure Statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Notes

¹Following analyses by Teubal (2008), Giarracca and Teubal (2010), and Dominguez and Sabatino (2006), I understand the agribusiness model as being characterized by the following: 1) increased control by transnational corporations and large national companies that produce, distribute, and sell agricultural products; 2) an increase in contract-based agriculture (via seeding pools and mutual investment funds); 3) an increase in the production

of commodities for export, to the detriment of the production of foods or industrial crops for domestic consumption; and 4) a growing dependence on technological packages (transgenic seeds, agritoxins, and machinery).

²According to Gudynas (2010), neo-extractivism can be defined as a “style of development based on the appropriation of nature to feed a very undiversified productive network extremely dependent on the supply of raw materials overseas.” See also Svampa (2011).

³A recent important contribution to this issue is an analysis by Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017) of the principal national agrarian policies of the Pink Tide Latin American governments.

⁴I conducted the interviews presented in the second section over several different trips to Pampa del Indio, beginning in 2010 and running up to the present day. The large majority of voices belong to men between the ages of 25 and 75. Women were more reluctant to talk, and only those who were professionals, held a political position, or were community leaders agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews mostly took place on the patios of people’s houses, using both open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires. Although each interview was planned to be carried out alone in a domestic space, family members or acquaintances already there or passing by often joined in the conversation. The interviews with leaders of indigenous organizations took place on both a one-on-one and group basis. In the latter case, they occurred in a venue in town and involved only men.

On several occasions I also acted as an observer of meetings between NGO members and communities, which generally took place in community warehouses and/or churches located in rural settlements. At these meetings, men and women usually sat separately, with the men generally being the ones to speak in public and sign documents. The names of those interviewed have been changed.

⁵Note that both Chatterjee and Sanyal assume the existence of capitalist economies based on the principle of accumulation and noncapitalist economies based on consumption.

⁶It is worth pointing out that the economy of the excluded differs from precapitalist subsistence economies. As Sanyal explains: “The need economy is an ensemble of economic activities undertaken for the purpose of meeting needs, as distinct from activities driven by an impersonal force of systemic accumulation. It is a system of petty commodity production but not the one that precedes capital in the historicist narrative of transition. It is an effect of capital, its inescapable outcome—a non-capitalist economic space that is integral to the post-colonial capitalist formation” (Sanyal 2007, 209).

⁷The provincial governor was Jorge Milton Capitanich, who was also appointed head of the National Cabinet from 2013–15. Gustavo Karasiuk was the local mayor.

⁸Braunstein (2008) defines a *banda* as “a group of relatives without a unilinear or local focus. i.e. the members would live together in the same place be it stable or not.” They are described as being bilateral or non-unilinear because no distinction was made between maternal or paternal lines.

⁹Currently, among the different rural settlements in Pampa del Indio (Campo Medina, Campo Nuevo, Lote 4, Cuarta Legua, Pampa Chica, Lote 3, Campo Alemán, Tres Lagunas, La Herradura and 10 de Mayo) the Qom occupy between 8,000 and 9,000 hectares of land, and there is more than one family group on every lot (interviews with representatives from the *Instituto de Desarrollo Social y Promoción Humana* [Institute for Social Development and Humanitarian Support, INDES], the NGO created at the beginning of the 1970s to help strengthen community organizations and manage development projects, 2012).

¹⁰The Comisión Zonal de Tierras and the Asociación Civil Cacique Taigoyic were founded in the early 1990s. The groups were originally linked to the ENDEPA (National Team of Pastoral Aborigines) and INCUPO (Institute of Popular Culture), a Christian nonprofit civil association. The Unión Campesina was born in 2001 and is linked to the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR). Other organizations in Pampa del Indio include the indigenous organization *Lqataxac Nam Qompi* (Qompi Council) and the organization of indigenous women, *Nate’el’pi Nsoquixanaxanapi* (*Madres Cuidadoras de la Cultura Qom* or Mother Caretakers of Qom Culture).

¹¹The IDACH is an autonomous body founded in 1987 by Law 3258. Its main function is to represent the indigenous communities in Chaco Province.

¹²The conflict started in March 2008 after Resolution 125/08 was announced by the Ministry of the Economy, increasing the percentage of retentions (taxes on exports) on certain commodities. More specifically, this resolution established a structure of mobile values that changed in accordance with international prices over a four-year period. In the case of soybeans, the increase in the share increased from 35% to 44%. Representatives of the four traditional organizations in the sector (the *Sociedad Rural Argentina* (SRA), the *Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas* (CRA), the *Federación Agraria Argentina* (FAA) and the *Confederación de Asociaciones Rurales de Buenos Aires y La Pampa* (CARBAP)) immediately rejected this measure. These groups argued that the government was assessing excessive taxes and thus decided to stop selling grains until the government withdrew the resolution. They also organized marches and roadblocks, leading to a scarcity of food and a significant rise in prices. The conflict lasted until July, when, amid strong opposition, the national government sent the resolution to be approved by congress. It was the vice president, a representative of Radical Civic Union (UCR), who cast the deciding vote to veto the law (Petrás and Veltmeyer 2016).

¹³To receive the *Asignación Universal por Hijo*, families had to register their child at school and for healthcare checkups. It is given for each child up to the age of eighteen, for up to a maximum of five children.

¹⁴The *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria* (National Institute of Agricultural Technology) is a decentralized state body with operational and financial autonomy run by the Ministry of Agro-industry.

¹⁵I am grateful to one of the anonymous *Tipití* reviewers for this observation.

¹⁶See “Pampa del Indio. Siete detenidos. Continúa el corte de ruta” (Pampa del Indio. Seven arrested. Roadblock continues) at

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