
2014

Awareness, Agency, and Alternatives: Opportunities and Challenges for CONAMURI and the Paraguayan Women's Food Sovereignty Movement in an Age of Social Media

BriAnne Illich
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**Awareness, Agency, and Alternatives:
Opportunities and Challenges for
CONAMURI and the Paraguayan Women's
Food Sovereignty Movement in an Age of
Social Media**

GLOBAL STUDIES HONORS THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis examines the influence and limitations of the use of social media by the Paraguayan female food sovereignty movement. Considering the Paraguayan campesino context of censorship and marginalization, it analyzes social media's role as an alternative news source, a space for self-expression, and a vehicle for interactive engagement, outreach, and resistance. It focuses specifically on the experiences within CONAMURI, a Paraguayan women's food sovereignty network. The study sheds light on the CONAMURI female campesino context, giving voice to the personal experiences, challenges, aspirations, and activities that make up everyday organizational resistance and motivate social media mobilization. Overall, this thesis explains CONAMURI social media aims, efforts, impact and potential to facilitate change. It argues that social media tools act as a complementary social movement outlet, creating a new channel for internal interaction, linkage formation, external outreach, visibility, and expression in organized resistance. Despite the large role that social media play, excessive dependence on these efforts is dangerous in the long run. In order to promote the sustainability, inclusivity, visibility, and strength of the Paraguayan food sovereignty movement, CONAMURI recognizes the need to preserve a balanced approach, coupling social media efforts with various other tactics, especially face-to-face interaction.

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I would also like to say an enormous thank you to Professor Gustavo Setrini of NYU. Without his help, my trip to Asunción may not have been possible. He facilitated my connections in Paraguay with CONAMURI, and later with Paraguayan social media blogger and activist Gabriela Galilea. He reviewed my drafts, provided me with suggestions, and was an essential resource regarding Paraguayan politics, food sovereignty, and social reality. I would also like to thank other academics outside Colby College, including Matthew Kopka, Carrie Eisert, and Sandy Brown, whose advice helped me to concentrate my efforts.

Finally, I don't know what I would have done without my parents' and grandparents' unending love and guidance, and my roommates' patience as I've been glued to the computer for the past eight months. Next, I would like to thank my friends and contacts within in Paraguay. They selflessly welcomed me with open arms and unending resources and suggestions. I would like to say a special thank you to Perla Alvarez, Diana Viveros, Nadia López, and Miguel Cruzabie. I am incredibly fortunate to have the support of so many talented and generous individuals. Thanks, everyone!

To Negrita,

who became my friend without hesitation in a new and unfamiliar place

Preface

“Peasants and small farmers are denied access to and control over land, water, seeds and natural resources. Our response to the increasingly hostile environment is to collectively challenge these conditions and develop alternatives.” La Via Campesina, 1996

I was first drawn to the food sovereignty movement during my studies with the International Honors Program: Cities in the 21st Century. IHP Cities, a semester-long SIT study abroad program, travels to Delhi, Dakar, and Buenos Aires, and studies tactical urban development, political development, and social justice issues. Throughout the program, I became familiar with performing daily fieldwork research, as part of my comparative analysis project. My topic analyzed urbanization’s impact on the food cycle of production, access, and consumption. As a result, throughout the semester I interviewed groups such as farmers and fishermen, marketplace workers, small restaurant and fast-food chain workers and customers, and rural and urban families to survey how the food cycle is evolving due to rapid urbanization. This research led to my first encounter with the idea of food sovereignty. In a Lebou community on the outskirts of Dakar, I met with a small women’s food sovereignty cooperative that worked to produce locally and empower women.

My research later took me to a rural village in Toubacouta, Senegal. There, living with a family, I experienced the contrasts between food access and production in rural and urban areas. Generally, rural families’ access to diverse products and packaged goods is limited to resources available nearby. Thus, food staples, such as millet, and the way it is communally eaten, such as around a single bowl with one’s hands, have remained traditional. In contrast, Dakar residents frequently eat imported or, in the case of the middle and upper class, fast food. Some resist this

“dumping,” and demand the right to continued access to “culturally appropriate food.”¹

Furthermore, living in the village, I could see how corporate farming and fishing enterprises encroached on smallholder’s livelihoods. Many families facing competition from large enterprises were pushed out of work and forced into cities to seek other employment.

Despite general discontent, I witnessed relatively few street protests or widespread expressions of dissatisfaction in Dakar. Instead, advocating for change was most often demonstrated by means of organizational tactics, rather than “high risk” or confrontational methods of engagement. In Dakar, I witnessed organizational activism, such as the efforts of a food sovereignty group, or the singing of critical and political rap. But, in Buenos Aires, I was confronted with high-risk activism in the form of frequent protests. However, I soon recognized that this high risk activity was complemented by organizational efforts. I met with women who formed their own recycling cooperation to simultaneously make a living for themselves and criticize the inefficiency of government initiatives to provide waste disposal for underserved parts of the city.

Overall, comparing the nature of activism in Dakar and Buenos Aires made me begin thinking about how different social and political histories and current realities influence how people can or might actively and effectively advocate for change. Because of the need for diverse approaches within different environments, I contemplated how social media tools’ increasing prevalence and widespread use may factor into the social movement equation, especially in Latin America. This interest eventually led to my honors thesis project and my January fieldwork research in Asunción, Paraguay with the women’s food sovereignty network, CONAMURI.

¹ Via Campesina, “The Right to Produce and Access to Land” (Rome, Italy, November 11-17, 1996), accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org/library/1996%20Declaration%20of%20Food%20Sovereignty.pdf>.

Chapter One
Setting the Stage for a New Struggle

Campesino Food Sovereignty Challenges and Methods of Resistance: An Introduction

The Campesino Context: Marginalization and Protest in Paraguay

How are campesino challenges to inclusion and fair treatments manifested in Paraguay? How do campesinos respond to these struggles? Paraguayan campesinos are an extremely marginalized group that is often rendered voiceless as they struggle against barriers to accessing resources necessary to maintain their way of life. Highly unequal land access exacerbates their isolation and hardship. Paraguayan land is more unequally distributed than almost anywhere else on earth. In fact, in 1997 the Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that its land Gini coefficient was 0.93, demonstrating almost perfect inequality.²

In one way, this land inequality is a lasting legacy of the agrarian policies of General Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship from 1954 to 1989.³ During this time of conservative and oppressive Colorado Party rule, Stroessner doled out parcels of land, now referred to as *tierra malhabida*, in exchange for loyalty and favors.⁴ A report by the Paraguayan Truth and Justice Commission indicates that almost eight million hectares were forcefully taken from rural families and distributed to Colorado Party beneficiaries. Overall, 64% of wealthy Paraguayans acquired their lands by means of this form of land seizure.⁵ Disclosure of this corruption has led campesinos to believe that the land given as favors during Stroessner's regime now belongs to the state. This has resulted in many competing claims as peoples demand returned rights to their

² Gregg Hetherington, "Paraguay's Ongoing Struggle Over Land and Democracy." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 45.3 (2012): 8-10. *ProQuest*. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.

See Glossary for explanation of land gini coefficient.

³ Ibid

⁴ See Glossary for explanation of *tierra malhabida*.

⁵ Natalia Ruiz Diaz, "Paraguay: The Struggle for Land," *InterPress Services*, November 5, 2008, accessed September 14, 2013, <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/paraguay-archives-44/1557-paraguay-the-struggle-for-land>.

ancestral lands, illicitly taken from them during the dictatorship. However, campesino property rights remain vague and poorly enforced.



“No trespassing, stolen property” political cartoon found at <https://www.facebook.com/WEBGUERRILLEROSANDINISTA>

The recent expansion of agribusiness throughout Paraguay has exacerbated land inequality. From 1991 to 2008, soybean agribusiness land increased from 1.8 to 6.4 million acres. This expansion covered approximately 25% of all cultivated land in the country. Simultaneously, the number of farms smaller than 120 acres decreased by 27% without a corresponding or substantial increase in employment opportunities elsewhere.⁶ The landowning sector and transnational agricultural corporations increasingly monopolized the market, controlling disproportionately large tracts of land. Now, 85% of landholdings are controlled by

⁶ Ibid

2% of the population.⁷ Inequality of access to land has devastating effects on the Paraguayan populations, displaced from lands in the name of neoliberal agricultural practices. Despite macroeconomic growth, landless campesinos have fallen into extreme poverty. Although the causal links between agribusiness growth and increased poverty are contested, it is clear that the benefits of economic expansion are not reaching peripheral sectors of the population.

Unfortunately, few public and widespread outlets are accessible for campesinos to speak out against unfair access. Mainstream media is highly exclusionary, and campesinos are discouraged against political participation by the memory of the censorship of the Stroessner dictatorship. Nevertheless, *campesino* organizations have become one of the largest and most active social groups today in Paraguay. Campesino organizations have been strongly involved in attempting to break down the structural injustices that deny them fair access to land. As early as 2010, frustrated campesinos began invading and squatting on large tracts of *tierra malhabida*. Campesinos have faced violence as a result of this activism, demonstrating their need for additional reliance on organizational tactics to further their aims.

The Curuguaty massacre stands as a powerful example of the violence and oppression that campesinos continue to suffer, despite a relative spread and support of democratic principles. On June 15, 2012 police officers were sent to Curuguaty, Paraguay to evict a group of peasants engaging in the landless movement. These campesinos were peacefully occupying Colorado official Blas Riqueime's unproductive malhabida landholding.⁸ A clash between these

⁷ Francesca Friorentini, "The Paraguayan Coup: How Agribusiness, Landowning and Media Elite, and the U.S. Are Paving a Way for Regional Destabilization," *War Times*, July 5, 2012, accessed October 20, 2013, <http://www.war-times.org/node/463>.

⁸ Eric Stadius, "Land Reform Issues Intensify as Paraguay Enters into a Political Crisis." In *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, edited by Council on Hemispheric Affairs, June 22, 2012, accessed December 1, 2013. <http://www.coha.org/land-reform-issues-intensify-as-paraguay-enters-into-a-political-crisis/>.

two groups resulted in the killing of seventeen people, both peasants and police.⁹ This tragedy spurred the impeachment of President Fernando Lugo, a professed champion of the common people and the first non-Colorado Party president since the fall of the dictatorship. Congressmen, including members of the Colorado Party supported by large soybean franchises, justified his impeachment by arguing that Lugo had allowed campesino groups to threaten the public order with his pro-campesino policies. Unfortunately, those that toppled Lugo now use this event to “criminalize” campesino organizations, and validate the displacement of indigenous peoples by agribusiness.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to gather support for land reform and campesino rights in the government. With the exception of absence during the Lugo presidency, the conservative Colorado Party, which represents vested agribusiness and landed elite interests, has dominated government almost continuously since 1947. The Colorado Party blocks land reform measures in Congress, focuses on gaining transnational support, and promotes expansion of big business. Despite Colorado control, effective *campesino* advocacy may become more feasible in the future, due to increasing strength of Colorado Party opposition and the creation of alternative methods of resistance. Paraguay’s first non-Colorado Party president, Fernando Lugo, was elected in 2008 under a pro-campesino banner. Lugo adopted a center left agenda and promised widespread agricultural reforms. Unfortunately, he failed to address land reform due to overwhelming Colorado opposition.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he supported campesino social movements, sported a more pro-peasant view on property rights, and did not condemn occupation of unproductive land by landless groups. However, he was impeached in 2013 after being blamed

⁹ Natalia Viana, "Paraguay Seeks Truth About Curuguaty Massacre." *ABC News*, December 18, 2012, accessed September 30, 2013, http://fusion.net/abc_univision/abc_univision/story/paraguayans-truth-curuguaty-massacre-22373.

¹⁰ Gustavo Sentrini, *Estado y economia en Paraguay 1870-2010: Veinte anos de democracia electoral en Paraguay. Del clientelismo monopolico al clientelismo plural* (Tinker Foundation Incorporated, 2010).

for encouraging the tension that spurred the Curuguaty massacre by means of his sympathetic relations with campesinos. The Colorado Party returned to power under the leadership of businessman Horatio Cartes, who promotes a very conservative and economically focused agenda. Still, as the political system steadily shifts away from a single party orientation, political leaders will need to compete for voter loyalty, providing campesinos with more room to mobilize for their cause.

In this political context, an alternative framework that provides a safe and more convenient space for information sharing, expression, empowerment, and resistance is needed, especially for women. The gender emphasis within the campesino experience is especially important, because women play a fundamental role, producing approximately 70% of the world's food.¹¹ However, this role often goes unnoticed or underappreciated. Women frequently work on the margins, facing barriers to access to the four necessary inputs: land, water, seeds, and natural resources.

The Social Movement Approach: High Risk and Organizational Activism

Paraguayan methods of resistance and expression have evolved steadily in response to changes in the political and social climate. Since the 1960s, Paraguay has seen a progressive shift from an approach that emphasizes mostly "high risk" behavior to an approach that integrates additional organizational tactics.¹² "High risk" methods include public demonstrations such as street protests, roadblocks, or land seizures.¹³ Often, this activism is designed to attract support to pressure those in power for change.

¹¹ Via Campesina, "Right to Produce and Access."

¹² David Bray, "'Defiance' and the Search for Sustainable Small Farmer Organizations: A Paraguayan Case Study and a Research Agenda." *The Society for Applied Anthropology* 50, no. 2 (1991) <http://sfaa.metapress.com/content/u4774t21rt610680/fulltext.pdf> (accessed November 1, 2013).

¹³ Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted," *The New Yorker*. October 4, 2010 at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell (accessed October 20, 2013).

In contrast, organizational activism additionally engages in less confrontational and disruptive activities, such as hosting conferences, or creating a support group. These efforts aim to spread awareness, craft alternatives and seek solutions. Although organizational approaches focus on generally non-confrontational activities, this is not to say that they abandon high-risk approaches entirely. In fact, many Paraguayan organizations recognize the importance of incorporating a balanced strategy that includes various forms of activism.

Modern organizational frameworks frequently promote activism by means of an increasingly decentralized structure, and stress inclusivity and internal democracy. As a result, the structural hierarchy of leadership breaks down, and numerous members take on greater responsibility, assuming roles that were originally handled by a small group of people.¹⁴

Overall, it is important to recognize that advocacy approaches vary in effectiveness. Thus, awareness of member accountability and strategic impact is essential. This is especially important within decentralized groups where strategic objectives and actions may vary internally, and ties may be weaker.¹⁵ By means of self-recognition, groups may verify the aims and consequences of different forms of resistance. In doing so, they can determine what tools are most useful in achieving their goals, and what strategies are in need of adjustment. In this project, I will be analyzing CONAMURI social movement tactics in an effort to consider their particular impact.

Seeking an Alternative: Food Sovereignty

Before analyzing the mobilization approaches of CONAMURI, it is important to consider the dimensions of food sovereignty objectives. Via Campesina, the global food sovereignty

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Jefferey Juris, "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation." *American Ethnologist*, May 8, 2012, accessed October 19, 2013, at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2012.01362.x/asset/j.1548-1425.2012.01362.x.pdf?v=1&t=ho6dloze&s=dd40fe03c184e48129d98748eaf1309378a9c13c>.

coalition, first recognized food sovereignty as a large-scale movement in 1996. Via Campesina argues that *campesinos* and local populations are deprived of access to and democratic control over the land, water, seeds and natural resources necessary to ensure food security.¹⁶ The movement underscores the flaws within the current food system, seeks alternatives, and fights for *campesino* rights to access and control over these four “denied” agricultural necessities.¹⁷ This fight has included pushing for structural reforms that limit free trade and support peasant food production.¹⁸ Additionally, the movement opposes patriarchal values, supports women’s rights, and resists domination of the food system by corporations and large-scale exporters.

Furthermore, the food sovereignty movement critiques neoliberalism as an impediment to the rights of local populations, especially the small-scale farmer who are often pushed out of the market by large-scale agribusiness. Neoliberalism is the system of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade that the food cycle of production and consumption currently navigates. The food sovereignty movement accepts David Harvey’s definition of neoliberalism, stating that this system inequitably distributes goods in society, disproportionately benefitting large transnational corporations and the private sector, and excluding small-scale producers.¹⁹ Many *campesino* groups argue that this industrialized agricultural system that promotes agribusiness expansion undermines local agricultural practices and shuts out small-scale producers. In contrast to a food security definition focusing on agricultural production offered by the Food and Agriculture Organization, food sovereignty groups call for a democratization of decision making to promote an inclusive food system.

¹⁶ Annette Desmarais, *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* (London: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 32

See Glossary for Explanation of Food Security

¹⁷ Via Campesina, “The Right to Produce and Access.”

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

Social Media as an Advocacy Tool: Potential Advantages and Repercussions

How might social media, defined as social networking via websites and applications, positively and negatively influence the spread of information, political participation, self-expression, creation of alternatives and resistance strategies in Paraguay in response to campesino food sovereignty challenges? These tools have the potential to promote greater aggregation, increase awareness by creating a new space for alternative information sharing, attract participation across a more diverse population, build more convenient linkages for short-term efforts, and provide a space in which individuals feel comfortable expressing their concerns within the public sphere.²⁰

Beyond promoting awareness, social media can transform how organizations are run, allowing for decentralization of leadership and broader participation. This decentralization has the potential to promote movement sustainability by making the cause less dependent on particular figures. But, dispersed responsibility may also result in a lack of accountability or coherent objectives.²¹ Theorists argue that negative consequences from social media's use may also include weakened linkages and internal discord. These consequences could reduce capacity to act strategically and decisively.²² Furthermore, even though social media can be used to promote and organize "high risk" events, increasing dependence on social networking as an organizational tactic, could also lead to a reduction in direct in-person activism. While this transition from mainly high-risk tactics to an approach that also incorporates various organizational activism strategies may have positive aspects, it is important to consider the consequences of both approaches. Does a disturbance within the virtual public sphere, such as the widespread sharing of a slogan, achieve its goal as effectively as a physical disruption

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Gladwell, "Small Change."

would? In other words, it will be important to ascertain the consequences of different approaches and strategies within this particular campesino reality.

CONAMURI: Paraguayan Female Food Sovereignty in Action

This thesis specifically focuses on a particular women's food sovereignty organization, CONAMURI, as a case study of Paraguayan female food sovereignty activism. CONAMURI is the national organization of rural and indigenous women's workers' organizations, established in 1999, and part of La Vía Campesina International. Based in Asunción, CONAMURI was formed on World Rural Women's Day as a joint effort among more than one hundred women's organizations throughout Paraguay, as a response to exclusion and marginalization faced by the indigenous, campesinos, and women.²³ Beginning as a small organization, it has evolved into a large umbrella network with a variety of focuses. Its major goal within the food movement, specifically, is to spread the word that agro-business is detrimental to the local Paraguayan population. It stresses that agro-business that relies on machinery displaces rural workers, promotes environmentally degrading techniques, and increases rural unemployment.

CONAMURI strives to promote food sovereignty and integrated agrarian reform within Paraguay by uniting peasants and other individuals through inclusive and bottom-up participatory mechanisms. It pursues its objective of consciousness raising through courses and workshops, a radio program, website bulletins, and its immensely active Facebook page. This activity has allowed information to spread quickly. Discourse is fluid on the CONAMURI walls, and members post articles, comments, pictures, and videos. This activity, undertaken by a variety of individuals from different walks of life, shows that many more people are becoming aware about the food sovereignty struggle, and can consequentially become involved in more creative ways.

²³“CONAMURI Paraguay,” Accessed July 12, 2013 <https://www.facebook.com/conamuri.paraguay>.

Research Questions

What is the role and impact of social media advocacy tools, considering the context of the Paraguayan female campesino and food sovereignty experience?

- What challenges do female campesinos in Paraguay face? What are Paraguayans, specifically members of CONAMURI, doing to address these challenges?
- How does the historical, political and social context within Paraguay discourage or encourage political participation and resistance to address such challenges? How is this resistance manifested?
- What are the strengths and limitations of new social media advocacy tools within this environment of participation and resistance? Do CONAMURI members consider cyber activism sufficient or effective within Paraguay in order to spread news and visibility, act as a space for sharing, promote agency, and evoke change? What other tactics are adopted if it is not?

Table 1.1 Explanation of Research Question Terms

Term	Definition	Explanation
Campesino	Rural farmers and peoples within Paraguay refer to themselves as <i>campesinos</i> , a word that underscores their ties to their land and traditional way of life.	This thesis focuses specifically on the experience of female campesinos in Paraguay.
CONAMURI	CONAMURI (Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones de Mujeres Trabajadoras Rurales e Indígenas) is the national organization of rural and indigenous women's workers' organizations, and part of La Vía Campesina International, the world food sovereignty network.	This thesis uses my experiences performing a month of ethnographic fieldwork with CONAMURI as a case study of the female campesino food sovereignty experience in Paraguay.
Social Media Advocacy Tools	All networking sites and virtual devices that provide a space within the public sphere for social interaction, discourse and spread of information	My analysis concentrates most specifically on Facebook.
Tactics	Strategic methods selected by members	By analyzing methods adopted by CONAMURI, I intend to determine the strengths and limitations of social media within the CONAMURI-specific context

Looking Forward: A Thesis Layout

The following chapter introduces my research design, describes my ethnographic fieldwork approach, incorporates a scholarly literature review, and considers the significance of this thesis and my personal contribution to my field of research. Chapter three surveys the context of freedom of speech and the opportunities for and the reality of the use of alternative outlets for communication, information, and protest in Paraguay. Next, chapter four seeks to describe campesino injustices and collective response. Recognizing Paraguayan campesino challenges and responses, chapter five provides a specific case study of the personal organizational experiences of CONAMURI Paraguayan campesino women as they attempt to create new outlets for expression, assert agency, promote female empowerment, and advocate for change. After a thorough analysis of the CONAMURI experience, chapter six focuses specifically on the influence of social media use within the organization. Finally, chapter seven discusses the limitations of social media as an advocacy tool, additional mobilization efforts, and the need to provide a balance between different advocacy tactics. Overall, this thesis argues that, within the Paraguayan female food sovereignty movement, social media act as a complementary social movement tools, creating a new outlet for information, expression, agency, and engagement in organized resistance.

Chapter Two
A Methodology Snapshot: Research Design, Existing Literature, and My Contribution

Research Design

My research design incorporates a multidisciplinary approach that embraces techniques adopted by scholars in the fields of anthropology, social science, and history. First, my research, especially my January fieldwork, is based strongly on ethnographic methods, such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I developed this research model as part of my Colby College LA497 thesis seminar class with Professor Fallaw. In this class, we read *Essential Ethnographic Methods*, and discussed techniques as a class and with guest lecturers, Professors David Carey, Lindsay Mayka, and Winifred Tate. This approach has brought me to appreciate a variety of experiences and resources as valuable data. I collected newspaper clippings, surveyed social media posts, took photos, analyzed posters, flyers, murals and graffiti. I gathered additional information by means of participant observation in meetings, protests, and events, and by engaging in informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews.

Next, my research incorporates a social science approach while surveying CONAMURI social media activity by means of a one month systematic content analysis of Facebook activism. First, I am using the scholarly monographs of Adamoli, *Social media and social movements: A critical analysis of audience's use of Facebook to advocate food activism offline*, and Harlow, *Social media and social movements: Facebook and an online Guatemalan justice movement that moved offline* as methodological research models. These models were the initial inspirations of my methods for categorizing Facebook activity and designing an online survey. A more in depth explanation of this content analysis can be found in the following section.

Finally, because my research compares various historical, political and social realities within Paraguay, a solid understanding of the historical context of politics and society is vital.

Thus, my research analyzes primary and secondary sources, including those that describe the evolution of the political system and social movement strategies, especially those related to food sovereignty within Paraguay.

Approach in the Field

Case Explanation

My fieldwork was conducted from January 13 to February 4, 2014 as a volunteer and researcher at CONAMURI headquarters, Montevideo 1420 e/ Milano y Sicilia, Asunción, Paraguay. During this time, I spoke to various members about their experiences, attended events, and helped in whatever ways that I was useful at the organization. I also traveled with a few CONAMURI friends to Caaguazú, in order to volunteer at the CONAMURI radio station headquarters and learn more about the efforts being made in districts outside of Asunción. At the radio station, I acted as an assistant and even participated as a guest speaker on a few of the programs. My contacts include CONAMURI leaders Diana Viveros and Perla Alvarez, Radio Manager Nadia López, Paraguayan Global Voices Freelance blogger and activist, Gabriela Galilea, Peace Corps Agricultural Volunteer, Lydia Cargill, *Cigarra* Journalist Coni Oveido, and NYU Paraguayan political scientist, Gustavo Setrini.

Interviews

Based on my ethnographic method, I conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews throughout my three weeks in Paraguay. In these interviews, with the aid of a voice-recording device, I gathered oral histories of activism, surveyed the perceptions on food sovereignty and social media's influence, and learned about activism potential in Paraguay. I conducted approximately twenty interviews total, primarily at CONAMURI headquarters, both in Asunción

and Caaguazú, varying from thirty to one hundred and twenty minutes in length. However, a large part of my knowledge resulted from informal conversations or participation in events.

It is my priority to uphold the dignity of my participants. To assure my accountability, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Colby College. As part of the IRB process, I drafted a consent form. This form explains my purpose, grants participant's anonymity if they so choose, and ensures that information will be withheld from my thesis upon request. For less literate participants, or to ensure the fluidity of the conversation, I often read this form to participants and discussed my research with them before beginning the interview.

I recognize the sensitive and personal nature of these interviews, which could incur both legal and psychological risks to participants. First, mentioning interviewees by name for their involvement in anti-government mobilization may put them at legal risk or at risk of losing their jobs in particular circumstances. Additionally, recounting histories of displacement, subjection to violence and marginalization had the potential to invoke psychological pain. Because of these risks, I used pseudonyms when revealing stories of a personal or sensitive nature to protect the identities of those who consented to be interviewed. Furthermore, participants were notified of their ability to refuse to answer any question, stop the interview at any time, and request to have information withheld from the final study.

Despite these risks, the benefits from these interviews should also be acknowledged. Sharing one's experiences can be immensely cathartic, especially for members of a social movement that aims to disperse its message. CONAMURI is enthusiastic for its message to be more widely spread, and many participants expressed appreciation of the opportunity to have their stories reach an international audience.

My target interview population includes various members of CONAMURI, and

nonmembers including political figures, bloggers and journalists, peace corps volunteers, shop owners, march participants, and hostel managers. I chose to speak with CONAMURI participants, both long-standing and relatively new members. In doing so, I hoped to gauge veterans' opinions regarding the movement's strategic evolution, and also discover what attracted new members to becoming involved. In this process, I interviewed members who have adopted various advocacy roles, participate in different ways in the organization, have had very distinctive personal experiences, and possess diverging opinions about CONAMURI. Furthermore, I interviewed both men and women of diverse ages, even though CONAMURI is a primarily women's organization, because I believe it is essential to recognize and analyze this gender dynamic. Next, I interviewed members both living in the city of Asuncion, identifying as "urbanos," and those who have rural origins, identifying as campesinos and "indígenas." In this way, I sought to determine how CONAMURI activity facilitates inclusion or exclusion in an urban or rural environment.

Regarding nonmembers, I made various appointments, either over the phone, skype, or in person to interview. For example, I conducted anonymous phone interviews with political figures and educators, and even met at the offices of individuals such as freelance blogger Gabriela Galilea. Additionally, I spoke with people in the United States, such as three VOX Global employees, to gauge how firms quantify the impact and effectiveness of social media as an advocacy tool. Overall, my goal was to recognize various stakeholders and incorporate the voices of not only those directly involved in the campesino experience, but also others that may embrace different perspectives.

Interview Challenges: The interview process presented many challenges. In order to avoid leading questions, I attempted to frame my interview questions (see Appendix I) in an open-

ended way that avoids directing interviewees down a particular path. I also have worked to remain critical, and to consider other factors that may impact the impartiality of my research. On this note, I am conscious of my role as a young female investigator. My age and gender influenced the nature of my interviews and the answers that I received, whether or not I was able to pinpoint any particular consequences at the time. However, I believe that I succeeded in creating a supportive and safe space for discussion. The accessibility of certain sectors of the population presented an additional challenge. However, CONAMURI members came from various walks of life, and I was delighted by the opportunity to speak with many members of different communities and backgrounds.

Deciding which methods to use to record data in different situations also presented a challenge. Methods of recording certainly influenced the level of comfort of my interviewees and the answers that they provide. For more formal and structured interviews, I used a digital audio recording device, after receiving the consent of those I interviewed. However, I recognized that this recording often created discomfort in informal settings. However, taking notes also took away from the conversation. As a result, I often jotted down notes after a conversation ended in order to ensure the fluidity of the conversation as it occurred. This limited my capacity to directly quote individuals, but I found it important to achieve a balance to ensure that recording methods did not interfere with promoting a natural dialogue.

My interview process was also challenging due to the prevalence of the Paraguayan language of Guaraní, especially amongst indigenous peoples. In 2009, it was estimated that 95% of the Paraguayan urban population was bilingual in Guaraní and Spanish; however, Spanish is much less common in rural areas and amongst campesino and indigenous peoples, my main interview population. As a result, I sometimes had challenges communicating with individuals

who were not as comfortable speaking Spanish. In the same way, occasionally I required a translator, specifically in Caaguazú, where Spanish is less commonly spoken. This translation came at a cost, for meaning can often change or be lost in translation.

Participant Observation

An additional ethnographic research method that I adopted is participant observation. Perla Alvarez and Diana Viveros coordinated with CONAMURI to ensure that I had various opportunities to volunteer and participate as an honorary CONAMURI member throughout my fieldwork experience. As a result, I spent the majority of my days at headquarters, engaging in the organizational advocacy approaches that CONAMURI is embracing by attending meetings and other events both in Asunción and Caaguazú. As a volunteer, I was able to observe how CONAMURI functions on a daily basis, learn how events are planned and run, and gain a behind-the-scenes advocacy perspective.

Besides participating on an organizational level, I also built friendships that allowed me the incredible opportunity to learn about the CONAMURI experience on a more personal basis. I babysat members' children, ate meals with families, explored the city with friends, attended music festivals and marches, went to farmers' markets and shopping centers, and even accepted questions from callers on a radio talk show. Overall, this engagement helped me to learn about the distinct experiences of different members, including their backgrounds, roles and aspirations. It also taught me about the relationships between members, organizational linkages, and the potential hierarchy of leadership or level of decentralization.

Other than merely increasing my knowledge of CONAMURI activity, participant observation benefits the perspective and tone of my writing. By volunteering and glimpsing a snapshot of the CONAMURI cause, I write from experience. This emphasis on experiential

writing has been especially inspired by my methodological model, Annette Desmarais' book, *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. Overall, her work stressed that writing from experience gives so much more life and context to research. As a result, being an active member of the movement adds a crucial element to my study.

Participant Observation Challenges: My role and presence as a foreign researcher impacted the nature of my participant observation experience. Members were sometimes inclined to alter their behavior around me, impacting the nature of my results. Also, the bilingual culture, in which Guaraní is often preferred over Spanish amongst campesino communities, complicated the nature of my observation. There were times in which I missed out on entire conversations due to the language barrier that Guaraní presented. It was clear that members often chose to speak Spanish solely for my benefit. Before I entered a room, I could hear Guaraní echoing from inside, often as soon as I entered the room, if it was an intimate setting, the conversation would switch almost immediately to Spanish to include me. Although this shift was unavoidable in order to ensure that I understood, this is a direct example of altered behavior because of my presence. Finally, I believe that it is important to emphasize that all information gathered from my participant observation must be recognized as subjective, because it is based on my opinions and individual experiences.

Online Questionnaire

I created a Facebook questionnaire to gauge the perspective of the population that participates in the virtual CONAMURI food sovereignty movement. This population includes CONAMURI members, who are involved in both cyber and non-cyber forms of activism and those that participate solely via the web. The opinions of this sector are very important, because increasing cyber activity demonstrates an immense shift in advocacy reality. Overall, my use of

a questionnaire was inspired by Adamoli's *Social media and social movements: A critical analysis of audience's use of Facebook to advocate food activism offline*. My decision to design a questionnaire was driven by her reliance on online questionnaires to gather responses from online members of the "Right to Know" movement.

During January, the Facebook communications director posted a link on the CONAMURI Facebook wall that contained series of questions. Participants were asked to respond to these questions by emailing the CONAMURI Facebook address. I preferred response via email, because I thought it may help to prevent members from censoring their responses, as they might if they were accessible on the Facebook wall. (For a full list of questions, see Appendix I).

Online Questionnaire Challenges: As will be explained in my final chapters, this attempt to gauge participant opinions was largely unsuccessful, for it failed to adequately motivate responses. Due to the relatively few responses that this questionnaire evoked, it is highly susceptible to bias, because those who responded are those who are highly involved in the organization. I consider now that people less involved in the movement, without incentive, probably chose not to respond to the survey, because it required time and effort. To try to combat these concerns, I had limited my survey length, but the survey nevertheless failed to motivate participation adequately for reasons that I hope to analyze in my final chapter.

Systematic Content Analysis of Facebook Activity

Inspired by the methods previously undertaken in the scholarly work of Adamoli and Harlow, and the firm tactics of VOX global, a public affairs and strategic communications firm, I performed a systematic analysis of CONAMURI Facebook and Twitter content and responses from January 1 until January 31, 2014. Regarding content, I categorized each link posted,

according to the three-step method inspired by the research of Adamoli and Harlow (See below). In the same vein, I analyzed the response to these posts, including likes, shares, and comments.

My particular response analysis approach has been inspired by the tactics of the VOX Global firm, that spoke with me regarding the frames that they use to determine social media's impact and effectiveness. VOX Global uses a matrix that first defines the content and nature of the response, and second categorizes all responses into four levels of engagement (See Table 2.1). It argues that the number of Facebook likes does not properly convey the social movement reality. Instead, it believes that conversations and interactions on social media pages demonstrate impact much more heavily. As a result, it encourages their clients to measure success based on reach and visible cyber activity, rather than on raw numbers of involvement. Furthermore, it believes that social media use is most successful when it enables a movement's message to reach a new population or engage a cause outside the sphere of the interest group itself. In the same way, a social movement that cannot engage participants on all levels of social media response will not be successful.

In adopting this methodology and embracing Vox Global's social media perspective, I seek to determine the intention and impact of diverse social media behavior. Overall, my goal with this analysis is to plainly quantify and categorize the general types online activity, analyze its goals, and in some ways interpret the online response it evokes or hopes to evoke. I eventually used this data to analyze how this activity might create a bridge to non-cyber activity and influence the reality of the social movement.

In order to transform certain data into images, I adopted Geographic Information Systems (GIS) techniques, with the assistance of Professor Manny Gimond. The techniques enabled me to compile data, such as participation rates across Paraguay, and reveal corresponding distributions

on maps. This makes some statistics or distributions easier for readers to process. For an in-depth explanation of Colby GIS mapping and techniques, see <http://gisserver0.colby.edu/10/>.

Data Analysis Challenges: The nature of social media data interpretation, though systematic analysis and based on a particular social science formula, still possesses an element of subjectivity. For, the nature of particular data can be open to interpretation, especially concerning its intention and frame. As Justin Rouse argues, “Social media change and impact is a really hard thing to quantify... In an ideal world, we would have some sort of equation that determines if social media is equal to x, y, z. But it is something we all struggle about determining.”²⁴ So, this objectivity challenge was something I worked on recognizing throughout my systematic analysis.

Table 2.1: Data Analysis Method

Content Analysis Method

- A. Category: Article, Photo, Video/Song, Survey/Poll, Other
- B. Intention: Educate/Spread Awareness, Coordinate/Initiate Action/Advertise Event, Suggest Strategies, Gather Information/Spur Wall Dialogue, Other
- C. Frames: Diagnostic (identifies a problem or attributes blame), Prognostic (expresses a solution or alternative), Motivational (calls for action)

Response Analysis Method

- 1. *Nature of Response*
 - A. Positive/Negative
 - B. Topic
 - C. Who (location, sex, mutual friends, affiliated with related organization, education)
- 2. *Level of Engagement*
 - A. First degree: Like
 - B. Second Degree: Share
 - C. Third Degree: Comment/Interaction

²⁴ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Sam Fabens, Justin Rouse, and Bailey Wilkinson. Phone interview. Waterville, ME December 6, 2013.

Scholarly Literature Review: Contributions to the Field of Research

Though the food sovereignty movement has a short history, many scholarly works have been devoted to explaining its organizations, conferences, legislation, and social and political implications. *Food Movements Unite!* and *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community* provide a fundamental background on topics such as agroecology, gender in agriculture, land grabbing and landless movements, land reform, neoliberalism and the food system, and the politics of food. To do so, they analyze various case examples, such as the cultural struggle over seed sovereignty in Malawi (Kerr 2010) and the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil (Wittman 2010). I have adopted Annette Desmarais' monograph, *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* as an anthropological methodological model. Desmarais provides an in depth case analysis of the efforts of Via Campesina through the lens of a Via Campesina participant. Desmarais worked as a grain farmer during her research, and her account provides a glimpse into the experiential process of peasants and small farmers in Latin America. More food sovereignty studies that rely on the oral histories of movement leaders and members include Raj Patel's "Grassroots Voices" and Itelvina Nicholson's "Seeing Like a Peasant: Voices from La Via Campesina."

Several studies also set the stage for an analysis of the potential for food sovereignty mobilization within the social and political context of Paraguay, considering female campesino challenges. Gustavo Setrini's *Estado y economia en Paraguay 1870-2010: Veinte años de democracia electoral en Paraguay* analyzes the Paraguayan political system, delving into the impact of "clientelism." He surveys the recent shift from a primarily Colorado Party dominated system to a more pluralistic framework and argues that social groups' negotiation with the government might become more feasible as a result.

Hetherington in *Paraguay's Ongoing Struggle Over Land and Democracy* depicts the modern political climate that the landless campesino movement faces. She emphasizes the Colorado Party's dominance, describes President Lugo's impeachment scandal, and provides an analysis of the inequality of land access to display the intense barriers that the movement must overcome to achieve land reform in government. Verdecchia's *Algunas consideraciones sobre las condiciones de éxito y fracaso en asociaciones cooperativas campesinas en el Paraguay* calls our attention to how homogeneous membership constrains the campesino cause by preventing widespread cooperation with diverse peoples. He is wary of the growing power of transnationals and large-scale agricultural enterprises, and recommends bolstering relations with international grassroots organizations and obtaining outside support.

On the note of the influence of expanding agro-industries, *Changes to Agricultural Decision Making and Food Procurement Strategies in Rural Paraguay* describes the transition from traditional agriculture focused on production for local consumption to multinational and fast-paced production for export. Similarly, Turzi's *Growth in the Cone: South America's Soybean Boom* and Richards' *Soy, Cotton And the Final Atlantic Forest Frontier* analyze this transformation, focusing specifically on the biggest instigator: soy production.

Finally, significant contributions have been made previously to researching female campesino challenges, concerning the impact of gender roles and gendered spaces in Latin America. These sources are crucial to considering the factors that create complications for female exertion of agency and participation within particular spheres. Elizabeth Dore's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century* explains the historical legacy of structured gender roles in Latin America and discusses how centuries old gender norms continue to exert pressure on modern social interactions, designating spaces and

expectations for both men and women.

Moving forward, Maxine Molyneux's *Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America* discusses how the next century's gender norms conditioned political practices, state interactions, and female status. She explains that these expectations often pushed women to the sidelines and encouraged their treatment as unofficial second-class citizens. Two scholarly works have been especially important in emphasizing the need to deconstruct gender norms and gendered spaces in the modern age in Latin America. June Nash in *Gender in Place and Culture* underscores the barriers and marginalization that women face, especially regarding the spaces that they are expected to occupy and to avoid. In response to this reality, Hurtig, Montoya and Frazier's *A Desalambrar: Unfencing Gender's Place in Research on Latin America* has emphasized that individuals must strike to tear down or "desalambrar" norms that have continued to motivate society to promote gendered domination and subordination. Looking forward, considering the impact of gender norms and societal expectations is fundamental.

Regarding methods and effectiveness of social movement tactics in order to respond to campesino challenges, David Bray's *Defiance and the Search for Sustainable Small Farmer Organizations: A Paraguayan Case Study and a Research Agenda* analyzes the evolution of campesino movement since the 1960s. He argues that campesino social movements have transitioned from incorporating primarily high-risk tactics based on hierarchical leadership, to adopting more organizational methods reliant on a decentralized framework. He expresses his concern regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of this transition, but recognizes that these changes have occurred too recently to allow for adequate analysis.

Social movement theorists seek to explain why particular social movement strategies are "effective" in certain circumstances, but not others, and to analyze what motivates individuals to

participate in social movement mobilization. Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor in “Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production” emphasize the importance of low key and everyday forms of resistance, arguing that other social movement strategists and theorists focus too much on confrontational activity, often overlooking the role of operating “underneath the radar.” Similarly, Susan Eckstein in “Power and Popular Protest in Latin America,” discusses the importance of finding a balance between “explicit” and “quiet” forms of defiance. She explains that different tactics evoke various responses within different social movement contexts, and a combination of approaches enables the sustainability of resistance for certain sectors of the population, especially the “structurally disadvantaged.”

In the same vein, Lee Smithey thoroughly analyzes particular social movement strategies and tactics in “Social Movement Strategy, Tactics, and Collective Identity,” paying particular attention to explaining how a group’s history, collective identity and ideology heavily impact and shape the combination of tactics that it will employ in order to achieve particular aims. He further emphasizes that collective identities are subject to change, because they are constructed in relation to context and relationships. Marshall Ganz makes a similar argument in *“Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements,”* expressing that if identities and leadership successfully evolve to adapt to their environments, the “strategic capacity” of the organization can grow. Maureen Scully and Douglas Creed in “Subverting Our Stories of Subversion,” further underscore this power of collective identity, and warn that if an identity becomes too weak or vague, collective action becomes unlikely.

Mariano Diani and Florence Passy reveal the nature of collective identity and action in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, explaining the importance of personal ties to motivate collective engagement and activity within social

movements. They compare different social movement theories such as the rationalist and structuralist scholarly perspectives, critiquing their limitations and suggesting a balance that considers both the rational and structural factors that influence human behavior. Nevertheless, they underscore the vital connection between social relations and individual action. Similarly, Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper in “Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory,” discuss the “gaps” in social movement theory, revealing the need for an approach that acknowledges the roles of both structural and constructionist influences in social movement behavior. They discuss McAdam’s dimensions of political opportunity theory, and explain the political process model in an attempt to characterize incentives for engaging in protests and other social movement activism. Arguing that many current explanations to account for social movement activism are overly rational, Deborah Gould in “Passionate Political Processes: Bringing Emotions Back into the Study of Social Movements,” calls on theorists and strategists to recognize the important role that emotions play in decision making. She believes it is unwise to adopt a solely rationalist stance when considering social movements, due to the highly emotionally charged atmosphere. Nevertheless, she does not intend to promote an image in which protesters are perceived as “hysterical” or reckless.

Finally, the impact of social media within organizations and social movements, as a new tool for interaction and expression, is a debated issue. Amir Ali’s *The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations: New Tools for Closing the Global Divide and Beyond* is a powerful source. It considers the role of social media specifically within developing countries, surveying how these tools have the potential to either act as vehicles for self-expression, citing examples such as social media mobilization in Egypt, or to exacerbate the divide between the “haves” and “have nots.” Similarly, Donald Browne in *Ethnic Minorities, Electronic Media and the Public Sphere: A Comparative Study*, explains the

important role of social media in helping minority groups to assert agency and claim ownership over their own experiences in order to project an image of their own identity according to their personal reality. To explain why social media tools play different roles in particular contexts, David Brandon and Andrea Hollingshead discuss the Adaptive Structuration Theory on Social media in “Characterizing Online Groups.” This theory argues that although all social media share select fixed characteristic, their impact is dependent on environment, actors and approach.

Following this social media focus, Ginvera Adamoli’s dissertation, *Social Media and Social Movements: A Critical Analysis of Audience’s Use of Facebook to Advocate Food Activism Offline* analyzes Facebook’s impact on food activism in the United States. She uses the case study of social media activism within the “Right to Know Rally” food movement in the United States to survey how Facebook can influence a social movement both on and offline. Using Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, “an area where individuals freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action,” and Castell’s network analysis, she argues that Facebook, as an extension of the public sphere, motivates civic engagement, strengthens social bonds, and promotes decentralization of leadership. As a result, she defends that Facebook leads to greater participation both on and offline.

Similarly, Juris’ *Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation* uses the Occupy movement to argue that social media advocacy enables heterogenic masses to assemble under a decentralized framework. He believes these consequences will promote the sustainability of the #Occupy movements, whose efforts continue online. Furthermore, Harlow’s publication, *Social Media and Social Movements: Facebook and an Online Guatemalan Justice Movement that Moved Offline*, surveys the role of Facebook in the Guatemalan anti-violence movement that arose in response to the murder of lawyer Rodrigo

Rosenberg. Harlow uses a sociological framing approach to understand how Facebook succeeded in motivating thousands of people to participate in both virtual and direct ways within the movement. During her qualitative analysis of Facebook activity, she categorized actions into the three frames- diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational-that I will be using during my own analysis of CONAMURI Facebook and Twitter activity. She, too, recognizes the effectiveness of social media to spur action both virtually and offline.

However, Gladwell's *Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted* expresses wariness towards this praise of social media's impact. Gladwell uses examples such as the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964 and the activism of Martin Luther King Jr. to argue that social media is not necessary for large-scale protests to occur successfully. Furthermore, he argues that social media activism results in weak ties, and decentralizes the movement to the point where there is no clear line of authority. He believes consequences include the inability for movements to reach a consensus, act strategically, or set coherent goals.

Despite this generally negative outlook, he also mentions the positive results of social media activism, including increased participation of diverse individuals. Ben Brandzel responds to Gladwell's criticism of social media as an advocacy tool in *What Malcolm Gladwell Missed About Online Organizing and Creating Big Change*. He states that Gladwell misrepresents what online activism is, and underestimates the capacity of social media to spur large-scale in-person activism. He believes, that although social movements were able to function effectively without social media tools prior to their introduction, this does not constitute a strong argument against their effectiveness. On the contrary, he believes that social media tools act as a complementary resource, which that can bring a new wave of coverage to diverse social movements.

Significance of Study

This thesis gives voice to those campesinos that are struggling to exercise their democratic rights within the Paraguayan food sovereignty movement. The marginalization and often outright oppression that this sector faces as a result of attempting to gain access to the resources necessary for self- support, is a reality that should be made known. My emphasis on the analysis of the effects of social media as a tool to exercise agency is an especially important question. It is likely that campesinos will continue to use these methods to advocate for their cause in the future as these tools are made more accessible, and with greater knowledge of social media's impact on the social movement, campesino groups might learn how to use these tools more strategically and effectively. Furthermore, this study might specifically help CONAMURI to recognize obstacles, and search for additional alternatives and solutions.

Despite the importance of the Paraguayan women's food sovereignty cause, this study does not only matter in the case of campesinos. Social media is being used more prevalently throughout the world as a mobilization tool, and social media may have a great potential to help in the invocation of social change in the future. Today, peoples face myriad forms of injustice. I believe that, if we recognize the power and potential impact of different social movement strategies, these methods might be put to better use. Although my study surveys the approaches of a particular organization, with particular goals, within a particular social and political context, my research can be a resource in some ways relatable nevertheless to peoples struggling to promote various causes throughout the world.

The Paraguayan transition from protest to production is being repeated, with variations, throughout Latin America. Yet this historical transition toward small farmer organizations that strive for sustainability is only beginning to be recognized by scholars of Latin America. There is a great need for research aimed at understanding the past, present, and future of this movement.²⁵

As expressed by Bray, relatively little research, especially in English, is currently available that investigates the female Paraguayan campesino experience. Responding to Bray's call for more research

²⁵Bray, "Defiance."

on the subject, my thesis will provide a modern outlook on and an analysis of their struggles and resistance. Furthermore, my CONAMURI case study will contribute original research about a particular Latin American food sovereignty organization, and will consider the Paraguayan climate of expression and protest in general. The only other English scholarly work about CONAMURI, Viveros' *CONAMURI: Developments and Challenges in the Struggle against Agrochemicals in Paraguay*, surveys a particular agrochemical struggle. Instead, my research will study how CONAMURI functions internally on a day-to-day basis, its strategies, its members and goals, and the impact of social media on its social movement experience.

My research will also be unique as a scholarly work that examines the use of social media within the food sovereignty movement, in particular. The dynamics of the relationship between this bottom-up grassroots movement and a multi-billion dollar and potentially exclusionary corporate enterprise is an important relationship to analyze. In the same vein, my research contributes original research regarding how large-scale social media use, mainly a tool with limited accessibility in isolated areas, can nevertheless impact the lives of rural farmers, either enabling their inclusion, or resulting in their exclusion. Overall, the impact of social media on this movement is crucial to analyze, because the adoption of cyber advocacy tools has been incredibly recent. Less than ten years ago, Latin American populations were accustomed to advocating by means of very different approaches. Finally, my research will result in an original analysis of the female Paraguayan experience regarding advocacy potential and the gendered reality. The vital role of women in the food system must be emphasized, and my research will contribute new information concerning how women are underscoring their own importance and demanding their right to equitable resource access. Looking forward, the following chapter seeks to analyze the Paraguayan framework for expression and resistance, and explain alternative outlets for communication, information, and protest in Paraguay

Chapter Three *Censorship, Voices of Protest and Social Media's Role*

“International law is clear: No matter who you are, or where you live, your voice counts. On this day, let us unite to defend your right to make it heard.” Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

How do media and communications exclusivity and the Paraguayan sociopolitical context of expression and censorship impact marginalized populations in their efforts to voice their needs, make demands, and promote change? How might alternative media provide a new outlet for expression? This chapter seeks to explain the context of freedom of speech and the use of alternative outlets for communication, information, and protest in Paraguay. It describes how the legacy of the Alfredo Stroessner dictatorship has fostered an environment that discourages political participation and facilitates censorship. Next, it discusses the inaccessibility of traditional media that promotes the interests of the political and economic elites, exacerbating the structural injustices faced by campesinos and the indigenous. Finally, it explains the reaction to this inaccessibility of mainstream media. Various interest groups are creating new channels to tell the narratives of the voiceless, inform populations, and advocate for change. Consequentially, this chapter analyzes the role and influence of social media in Paraguay, considering both its benefits and its limitations as a tool that enables self-expression, participation, mobilization, and builds a space for critical discourse.

Stroessner's Legacy: Alienation, Censorship, and Repression

How does Paraguay's political history of intense control and censorship continue to impact political perceptions and participation? Although 25 years have passed since the fall of the Stroessner dictatorship, the Paraguayan population still mistrusts political participation and experiences censorship at various levels. From 1954 until 1989, Stroessner's Colorado-supported dictatorship limited freedom of speech intensely. Measures included the forced closing of

influential and potentially threatening media companies such newspapers *The Independent*, *The Country*, *Community*, and *ABC Color* and radio stations Mariscal Francisco Solano López and A‘andutí Radio.²⁶ Censorship was similarly enforced at the individual level. A young female journalist, Fachu, admits that, up until the fall of Stroessner, everyone was reminded, “don’t question, don’t talk, don’t look, shut your mouth.” In other words, self-repression became a necessary practice to protect one’s self and family from political persecution.²⁷

Because of this, she argues that Paraguayans still do not embrace a strong tradition of political participation, and are weary of censorship and corruption, despite increasing access to outlets of involvement. As an example, when I spoke to her about what she thinks about the voting process, she responded, “but, what’s the point of voting?”²⁸ In the same vein, Gustavo Setrini believes that Paraguay continues to experience an “institutional crisis,” in which political operations are heavily dependent on patron-client relationships that discourage political activity.²⁹ This political crisis is so great that a 2011 IDB report demonstrated that only 33% of the population was satisfied with democracy, 36.47% trusted the justice system, and 4% believed the government effectively fights corruption. Furthermore, on a scale of 1-7, trust in politicians fell at a low 1.7.³⁰

An anonymous political figure reaffirms this frustration with politics and participation. He explains,

To strengthen democratic participation, Paraguay must...look outward in a way that it traditionally has not done... but one of the dangers is that people below a

²⁶ Nemesio Barreto Monzón, "Paraguay. The True History of Newspaper," *Abc-Color* (May 2006). <http://www.indymedia.be/index.html%3Fq=node%252F2352.html> [accessed February 22, 2014].

²⁷ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Fachu Gonzalez Aguilar. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 18, 2014. “no preguntas, no hables, no mires, callate”

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ “De que me voy a votar?”

²⁹ Gabriela Galilea, Gustavo Setrini, Santiago Garcia, and Maxi Urbieto. "Democracia 2.0." *Hallucina* (April 20, 2013). <http://hallucina.co/democracia-2-0/> [accessed January 6, 2014].

³⁰ DataGov, Paraguay: Country at a Glance. <http://www.iadb.org/datagob/index.html>: IDB.

certain age have a very tenuous connection to the political parties; they don't expect anything good from the party and are really disengaged. [There is] nothing but contempt for politicians...[because] the government has done nothing for them except steal... I remember talking to a parent... his son had won a full ride to Columbia. I jokingly said, 'your kid will be the president of Paraguay someday.' I cannot convey the venom with which the father said 'my son, a politician... never'... I worry about the sense of alienation... It is going to take a long time to get people to trust the system to actively participate in it.³¹

He also describes that, after the impeachment of Lugo, even though the government provided an open microphone and camera outside the television station that was accessible for anyone to talk about the impeachment on live television, people were so discouraged that "nobody showed up, and nobody was ever watching."³² Disengagement in the political process has become so great, that attention must be devoted to encouraging the population to abandon their negative perceptions. Hopefully with this new mindset, people might begin to trust the system and become involved.

The Modern Manifestation of Expression and Repression

Press Censorship

Besides the legacy of the dictatorship and persisting mistrust of political activity, what challenges continue present barriers to freedom of expression today that discourage participation and inclusion in Paraguay? In addition to political disengagement aggravated by a legacy of past repression, censorship has increased recently. The 2013 Freedom House report demoted Paraguay's status from "Partly Free" to "Not Free," due to press limitations enforced after the oust of President Lugo in June 2012.³³ Since then, various journalists have lost their jobs at state-owned outlets, in what has been called an "ideological purge" of those who oppose the right-wing tendencies of the mainstream press. This purge has included the dismissal of 27 journalists

³¹ BriAnne Illich, Anonymous Interview. January 8, 2014.

³² Ibid

³³ Freedom House, "Paraguay Freedom of the Press" <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2013/paraguay>.

from TV Pública, who openly opposed Lugo's ousting. It has also resulted in the resignation of several others, including high-profile investigator Mabel Rehnfeldt, who stepped down due to threats.³⁴



Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Radio-Yvytu-Pyahu-985/1424546834449242>

Similarly, community radio networks that provide alternative information to isolated and marginalized sectors, working to inform communities of their rights and about current events, face constant harassment and persecution from commercial stations and the government. Many radio stations have been forced to close, because required documentation is becoming more complicated and costly. In other words, alternative outlets are being shut out, because privilege is becoming an operational prerequisite. Many consider this inhibition to be a violation of the

³⁴ Ibid

guaranteed right to mass communication that constitutionally cannot be “closed or suspended.”³⁵

However, community radio operators acknowledge that there is an immense discrepancy between law and practice. As a result, many struggle to exercise their democratic voices, access information, or make their needs known.

Structural Limitations

Structural limitations also inhibit groups from expressing their needs and participating. An indigenous community in el Chaco, the most rapidly deforesting region in the world, had gone without water for over a month during my fieldwork visit, because they lacked the capacity to broadcast their crisis or demand assistance, due to their isolation and marginalization.³⁶ One CONAMURI leader exclaimed, “the indigenous can’t speak castellano...[Also,] how are they going to denounce this if they don’t know how to call the press?”³⁷ Thus, despite the guaranteed rights to freedom of ideology and expression, the press, mass communication media, and access to knowledge, that are ensured in articles 24 through 32 of the Paraguayan constitution, the population nevertheless faces limited freedom of speech, whether by direct censorship or due to structural limitations.³⁸

Use of Force

Such barriers to freedom of expression are not only due to lack of press and communications access, but also to the use of force and military pressure in communities. A middle-aged member of the OLT– Organización de Lucha por la Tierra- landless movement organization argues, “the first one hundred days of the Cartes government constituted the largest police and military presence in the countryside. It was very clear that the first law, which sent

³⁵ The National Constituent Assembly. *The Paraguayan Constitution*, 20 June 1992.

³⁶ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Alicia Armarilla. Personal Interview. Asuncion, February 2, 2014.

³⁷ Ibid

“las indigenas no hablan castellano... ¿Cómo va a ser su denuncia si no saben como llamar las prensas?”

³⁸ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Nadia López and Don José. Personal Interview. Caaguazu, January 27, 2014.

military to the countryside, intended to increase countryside repression ... For this government, persecution is a tool to displace campesinos in order to develop and extend the power of agribusiness.”³⁹ Similarly, a member of the OCN –Organización Campesina del Norte- states, “we discovered that fear is one of the weapons that the capitalist system uses. They terrorize the people so that they don’t organize or demand concessions.”⁴⁰ Various campesinos have confronted and rebelled against this forceful censorship of their communities, but have faced police backlash. Between 1990 and 2006, there were 366 expulsions, 7,346 detentions, and various threats against and assassinations of social movement leaders and militants.⁴¹

Today, those who protest against injustices, such as the spraying of illegal pesticides in San Pedro, are being accused of coercion. Protestors can even be labeled as terrorists, according to the interpretation of a new antiterrorism law drafted during conservative Horacio Cartes’ first few months in office. This censorship even extends to hospitals, where doctors are prohibited from diagnosing illnesses as a side effect of pesticide spraying, making it all the more difficult to collect evidence demonstrating the cost of illicit agrochemical use.⁴²

Elite Control and the Inaccessibility of Mainstream Media

Wealthy conservative families, who gained power during the dictatorship in exchange for their strong Colorado party support, continue to benefit from longstanding political favors and

³⁹ Entrevista con Pato Liberado de OLT

See Glossary for an explanation of the OLT.

"Los primeros cien días del gobierno de Cartes se constituye con la mayor presencia policial militar y de fiscales en el campo. La primera ley que planteo al parlamento de disponer de los militares para una profundización de la represión en el campo fue clarísima....para este gobierno, la persecución es una herramienta para desplazar al campesino y así dar el desarrollo y extensión del agronegocio "

⁴⁰ CONAMURI, October 14, 2013. "Soberanía Alimentaria: Nos Seguimos Organizando," la Campaña por la Soberanía Alimentaria. Video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MDRzv9gtjI> (accessed December 30, 2013).

See Glossary for explanation of OCN

"Descubrimos que el miedo es una de las armas que utiliza el sistema capitalista. Atemoriza a la gente para que no se organice y no reclame reivindicaciones."

⁴¹ Maurice Lemoine, "El reino del latifundio." *E'a*, January 21, 2014, accessed January 24, 2014, <http://ea.com.py/el-reino-del-latifundio/>

⁴² Illich, interview with Armarilla.

clientelistic relationships. Consequentially, they still assert strong economic and political power over what is published in dominant newspapers such as *ABC Color* and *Ultimahora*, creating a press oligarchy. *ABC Color*, owned by conservative Aldo Zuccolillo, one of the wealthiest men in Paraguay, is the dominant media source, and therefore “sets the agenda,” pressuring other stations to repeat the information it delivers without investigation.⁴³

In the same vein, the wealthiest man in Paraguay, Antonio J. Vierci, owns *Ultimahora*. Vierci owns companies all over Latin America, and also controls three radio stations, two television channels, and fifteen magazines. This reflects the domination of traditional Paraguayan media by powerful political and economic figures.⁴⁴ As a result, satisfied interests use these media sources to maintain the status quo and “misinform the people.”⁴⁵ In an *ABC or Ultimahora* article, there are “things you can’t say, and things you need to say.”⁴⁶ Criticism of this bias is often repressed. For example, an online parody that mocked the political undertone of *ABC* was forcibly taken down.⁴⁷ A CONAMURI representative admits, “educating the people should be the purpose of the press, but they are bought by political interests.”

Instead, traditional media is a tool that promotes the aims of the dominant powers.⁴⁸ For example, these mediums tend to “demonize” campesinos, whose occupation of traditional lands stands in the way of the economic elite’s agribusiness interests. To create fear and mistrust of campesinos, mainstream media, backed by the support of the economic elite, has implied a

⁴³ Illich, interview with Galilea.

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Marta Garcia. Personal Interview. Caaguazu, January 27, 2014. “desinformar a la gente”

⁴⁶ Illich, interview with Galilea.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Marta Garcia and Magui Balbuena. Personal Interview. Caaguazu, January 26, 2014.

“educar la gente debe ser el propósito de la prensa pero están comprados por los intereses políticos.”

connection between rural populations and the brutal EPP guerrilla movement.⁴⁹ This has promoted the image of the “violent campesino,” justifying displacements and deforestation in their communities to make way for agribusiness. These mainstream media sources also defend the interests of the political elite. A community radio show host explains that the press was a tool for “creating fear and disorder” after the massacre at Curuguaty in order to keep the population from protesting. She believes that the control of information and the biased telling of events fostered an environment in which “everyone was locked up in their houses” out of fear. In this circumstance, by controlling information, the press succeeded in manipulating and subduing the population.⁵⁰

A young freelance blogger, Gabriela, admits that the Paraguayan media can “tell a story to lead people to an opinion,” or an action. She argues, “you need to have the money and...the protection” to speak out against anyone powerful through a mainstream media outlet, because “you are very little and you can get caught in this big stuff... [Because you’re] no one compared to *ABC* or *Ultimahora*.”⁵¹ Her personal experiences have taught her about these limitations to expression. In December, she had posted an article in her blog about Tigo, a cell phone company in competition with Personal, the company that sponsors her blog. After discovering the article, Personal called her, furious. She responded, “You cannot tell me what to cover...I have to cover reality.” Nevertheless, they threatened to end her contract.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that traditional media is not an accessible outlet for average citizens to express their voices. In counter point, the constitution guarantees the right to freedom of speech and access to information. Leftist groups have organized protests in front of *ABC Color*, demanding less skewed deliverance of the news. These groups recognize, “ We have

⁴⁹ See Glossary for an explanation of the EPP

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Illich, Interview with Galilea.

been controlled by different kinds of powers. Our own image of ourselves has been controlled, and right now we are looking at who we are...and starting our own conversations.”⁵² Protesting this obstruction, various groups are mobilizing to create alternative outlets of information and expression.

Critical Consciences: Creating Outlets for Narratives and News

How is the Paraguayan population working to foster a more inclusive and egalitarian participation environment? Various organizations that represent marginalized interests in Paraguay recognize the need to foster “critical consciences and to wake up the people.” They acknowledge that barriers to knowing their rights, accessing news about instances of their violation, or speaking about injustices, discourage populations from demanding more equitable treatment. These groups hope to promote increased awareness by creating new channels of communication that spread news disregarded by the press. In the same way, they are working to build safe spaces to share the stories of the marginalized.⁵³ A SENAVE leader declares, “The wealthy have the media, but they don’t have the truth and they don’t have the people. We have the people and the capacity to fight. We must decide to enter this struggle.”⁵⁴ In response, in the past years, outlets have cropped up that address the lack of state-sponsored vehicles to spread awareness.

Community radio stations provide information to isolated communities and act as outlets for vulnerable groups to talk about realities that are often brushed aside by mainstream news. These stations pride themselves on gathering and spreading information in a bottom-up fashion

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Illich, interview with Garcia.

“desinformar a la gente”

⁵⁴ Ibid

“Los ricos tienen los medios, pero no tienen la verdad y no tienen la gente. Tenemos la gente y la capacidad de luchar. Tenemos que tomar la decisión de pelear.”

See Glossary for explanation of SENAVE

that promotes inclusion and accessibility, defending the rights of the vulnerable and “humble Paraguayans.”⁵⁵ They offer an opportunity for marginalized groups to express their own perspectives and give voice to their experiences. Furthermore, these stations are available as both online podcasts, and as radio programs, increasing their accessibility throughout Paraguay.

New media newspapers have emerged online, such as E’a.com, and Cigarra, publishing diverse articles relevant to communities, and are free to access for those with an internet connection. In the same vein, TV Pública gives people access to community television. On this station, groups can host programs on various topics such as traditional food preparation, or local news. Cell phones are also critical to disseminating this alternative information, because the majority of the Paraguayan population owns one. Most prioritize purchasing a smart phone that accesses the Internet over most other products.

Finally, the role of the Internet in creating a space for these alternative outlets of expression cannot be underestimated, especially for people in urban areas and in certain parts of the interior. Recognizing its vital role as a tool for self-expression and protest, think tanks such as TEDIC, CADEP, DAL, and CIRD are working to promote freedom of expression on the Internet in Paraguay.⁵⁶ They attempt to do so by protecting the expansion of communal sites, and by starting initiatives that provide resources to increase accessibility in different communities. For example, TEDIC began the “Me Gusta Internet Libre” campaign that spreads awareness about rights of expression on the Internet, and the importance of its press neutrality.⁵⁷ All in all, the use of Internet tools, especially social media, is growing rapidly as a way to voice one’s needs, becoming the social mobilization vehicle of the present and future.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ See Glossary for Explanation of TEDIC, CADEP, DAL and CIRD

⁵⁷ TEDIC, “Objetivos De Tedic” <http://www.tedic.org/> (accessed January 5, 2014).

Posts for Change: the Benefits and Power of Social Media in Paraguay

How have social media tools opened doors in Paraguay for spreading awareness, forming and maintaining linkages, creating alternatives, participating, mobilizing, and speaking out to provoke change? Social media “ticks,” as they are called in Paraguay, are interactive tools that circulate information rapidly, such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Youtube. These tools are changing the face of self-expression. Paraguayans youth especially are drawn to Facebook, because “you have that space where you can say what you think and people can read it. And you couldn’t do that before. You had to call the newspaper to ask them for a space to tell your opinion. It wasn’t possible.”⁵⁸ This, in turn, is transforming the methods of communication.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter keep people updated with a steady flow of news provided by various channels and outlets. This access to a constant stream of information is beginning to change people’s perceptions of the world and of others, and is helping people to remain connected. A CONAMURI activist, Miguel, follows a Facebook podcast broadcasted in his rural hometown. This enables him to access local community news while he continues to remain active in Asunción. He says that, because of this, Facebook is providing one of the best linkages between rural communities and cities. He has also used Facebook to create new linkages across borders with activists in other countries, some of whom visited CONAMURI headquarters during my month of fieldwork. In this way, social media is also facilitating solidarity among sectors of the population that were previously isolated from one another. For example, food sovereignty interests have united with urban consumers on Facebook in order to market their produce. This gives consumers the option to purchase an agroecological alternative, and enables campesinos to create a new market that finances their food sovereignty

⁵⁸ Illich, interview with Galilea.

initiatives.⁵⁹ One such Facebook group allows urbanites to order produce from rural Curuguaty that is retrieved and delivered weekly. This is helping to ensure that food sovereignty groups' lifestyle remains sustainable, and engages people in the food sovereignty cause that would otherwise remain uninvolved.

In the same way, access to social media has made participation more feasible, especially for women. The operator of the CONAMURI Facebook page had struggled to remain involved after her daughter was born, prior to Internet access. She admits most CONAMURI women have children and can't afford a babysitter. This severely limits these members' capacity to stay active in the movement, if this involvement entails attending meetings and events outside the home. However, since the administrator got internet access and created the CONAMURI Facebook page, she has been able to make a large impact from the convenience of her own home, as the leader of CONAMURI's communication team. Other women and men facing family and work obligations also continue to mobilize by cyber methods, despite restrictions to attending events in-person. However, the impact of this activity, compared to in person participation, must continue to be analyzed.

Nevertheless, social media is becoming a vital tool for social movement mobilization. A young male university student at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción explains that Facebook has been essential for organizing university events and protests. As part of the permanent university assembly team, he finds that Facebook has helped to spread the message against rising transportation costs more quickly and has created linkages across different districts. He believes that this interconnectedness is motivating students to become more militant, compared to their previous lack of "assertiveness." He argues that students are becoming less discouraged, because

⁵⁹ Ibid

“the government can't control what we say on the Internet.”⁶⁰ These youth are now attempting to unite with the middle and urban working classes to create groups that can join to protest to make a bigger impression and impact.

In this way, access to social media is enabling non-elites to give voice to their experiences and to advocate for and bring about change. Paraguayan blogger, Gabriela, says that her participation with Global Voices social media has given her freedom to shine the spotlight on issues that traditional media would not cover. It simultaneously enables her to reach populations throughout the world and to inform the international community about ongoing events in her small and often overlooked country.⁶¹

She also mentions that tools such as Facebook have given people the confidence to speak out against impunity and to criticize powerful figures that had previously been “untouchable.” She cites the scandal of and protests against Senator Victor Bogado as the first instance in which powerful individuals “have felt that even though they can escape the law...they cannot escape social control.”⁶² In late 2013, evidence was brought forward that Bogado had been misusing government funds. When the population discovered this, they demanded his resignation. However, twenty-three senators voted to protect him as one of their own, defending the precedent of political impunity. With their support, he managed to remain in office.

In response, the population mobilized on social media sites. Paraguayans created groups, apps and twitter hashtags to let people know where Bogado and his senate supporters were at any given time. These notifications enabled the urban population to organize and engage in spontaneous shaming activities to pressure Bogado to resign. For example, after receiving a new update about Bogado or his supporters’ presence in a particular area, businesses would ask these

⁶⁰ BriAnne Illich. Interview with Miguel Cruzabie. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 14, 2014.

⁶¹ Illich. Interview with Galilea.

⁶² Ibid

men to leave their establishments, and crowds would gather to protest around them.⁶³ This rapid circulation of information helped people to mobilize to protest more quickly and effectively. And, for what many argue is the first time, people are standing against political impunity by using the resources available to them. One can hope that increased access to these particular tools will soon spread outwards from the cities to unite the urban and rural communities under a single banner.

Opportunities and Challenges: The Changing Face of Social Media

Increasing Access

Social media tools are becoming increasingly more accessible across the board in Paraguay, especially due to the high rate of smartphone penetration, the new Tigo Facebook deal, and the recent addition of Guaraní as a Facebook language. Official statistics for Paraguay list Internet access at a low 23.9%.⁶⁴ However, this severely underreports the reality of social media access. The majority of Paraguayans access pages such as Facebook and Twitter on their smartphones, a factor that is not considered in the calculation of this statistic. I had frequently been told that “anybody who has got an income in Paraguay...the first thing they are gonna buy when they get the chance is a smartphone...Paraguay is more wired than people actually realize.”⁶⁵ Additionally, families in remote areas are gaining access to Internet in ways other than through their phones. The company Claro has expanded its outreach, and its red satellite dishes can even be seen on almost every home in small communities as remote as Caaguazú.

Because of this high rate of cell phone usage and the increasing desire to connect to Facebook, the dominant service provider, Tigo, started a new Facebook campaign to boost sales

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ "Paraguay Facebook Statistics" <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/paraguay> (accessed 2/9/14).

⁶⁵ BriAnne Illich, Anonymous Interview.

and attract new customers. Now, as a prescriber to Tigo, customers receive free access to Facebook for six months without incurring additional data charges.⁶⁶ Tigo had 3.9 million Paraguayan customers out of the 6.5 million people in the country before the deal began in late December. Tigo membership has since gained an additional 20% of the market and has grown by 6.5%.⁶⁷ This Facebook promotion is therefore drastically expanding social media access throughout Paraguay.

Paraguayan social media has also been made more accessible since Guaraní was added as an official Facebook language in December of 2013. Facebook director for Latin American growth argued that providing Facebook in Guaraní will help promote “the fundamental human right to the Internet, not only to access content but also maintain personal relationships... if we are to connect all Paraguayans, we have to do so in their language.”⁶⁸ In other words, she justifies this project by claiming that its overarching aim is merely to ensure accessibility for all Paraguayans to the Internet. However, as one of the few sites accessible in Guaraní, this advantage enables Facebook to monopolize the Paraguayan social media market and control rights to access. Despite the questionable neoliberal incentives to providing this service, Facebook in Guaraní has nonetheless facilitated greater access to social media in Paraguay. A CONAMURI activist originally from el Chaco is much more comfortable with Guaraní, and switched his settings immediately after the change. He says that researchers have argued that Facebook in Guaraní might attract as many as 1.8 million more users in Paraguay, approximately 27% of the Paraguayan population.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Julian Eccles, "Exclusive! Free Facebook Launch with Tigo, Paraguay" <http://www.millicom.com/node/916>.

⁶⁷ "Facebook Statistics for Paraguay" Allin1social.com (accessed 1/19/14).

⁶⁸ Gabriela Galilea, "Facebook in Guaraní: What Is Facebook Doing in Paraguay" <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/12/09/facebook-in-guarani-what-is-facebook-doing-in-paraguay/>.

“el acceso a internet es un derecho fundamental para acceder a contenido, pero también para mantener relaciones humanas....si vamos a conectar a todos los paraguayos, lo tenemos que hacer en su idioma.”

⁶⁹ Illich, interview with Cruzabie

Constraints and Limitations

What are the constraints that limit equitable access to social media? Are there other social media weaknesses that cause unfavorable consequences in Paraguay? Despite recent efforts to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of social media, many barriers to access restrict and limit its equitable use. First, there are thirteen indigenous languages spoken in Paraguay, not including Guaraní.⁷⁰ Indigenous peoples must learn either Guaraní or Spanish in order to access forms of communication technology. As a result, social media remains exclusive for the most vulnerable and isolated sectors of the population. These excluded groups are the communities that most require access to alternative tools to vocalize their needs to the larger community.

There are additional language challenges. Paraguay continues to remain a place where many people “write little and read almost nothing.”⁷¹ Because the Paraguayan culture is so orally based, Guaraní, preferred by the majority of the population, tends to be a solely oral language. Also, during the Stroessner dictatorship, schools were only able to operate in Spanish. This legacy has continued, not out of enforcement and repression, but out of habit. As a result, those who are literate tend to read and write only in Spanish. As a result, there are many contradictions and confusion regarding how Guaraní words are written, making social media communication in Guaraní at least difficult for the educated, and at most impossible for the illiterate. Many activists try to solve this conflict by posting mostly audiovisual materials on social media sites, in an effort to provide resources relevant to their audience.

Social media can also be considered exclusive, because powerful companies currently control the rights and access to these sites. This constitutes an immense contradiction for those who wish to defend democratic expression. Since social media networks are being made

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Illich, interview with Aguilar
“Se escribe poca y se lee casi nada”

available by affluent companies such as Tigo that monopolize the market, this access could be taken away as easily as it was provided. Access to the Internet is increasingly being declared a human right, but if the rights to information technology are in the hands of the few, this control can be used to exploit the vulnerable. In other words, although technology can be a tool to foster development and democracy, it can also become an exclusive commercial item that can be used to widen the gap between the rich and the poor by exacerbating the digital divide.

Social media use has additional pitfalls, because it can motivate passivity and reduce in person-involvement in events and activities. Evgeny Morozov argues that social media participation spurs “slacktivism,” or “feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact.”⁷² He calls it the ideal activism for a “lazy generation,” and believes that it only motivates increased participation, because the requirements for involvement are much lower. The reality of this discrepancy between cyber involvement and in person activism was apparent when comparing the activity on the Facebook page for a university student protest against rising bus prices, versus the amount of individuals who actually showed up for the march. My friend, Norma, part of the team who organized the protest, had estimated that over five thousand people would be present at the march, based on how many people had clicked the “attend” on the invite page for the event. However, on January 21, less than four thousand people showed up to the march. Although university students were nevertheless ecstatic with this turnout, this level of participation did not include all those who were mobilizing from the convenience of their cell phones or computers. One university student even carried an ironic sign during the march that read “leave Facebook and the T.V and come and protest.” She told me that she thinks that social

⁷² Jonny Jones, "Social Media and Social Movements." *International Socialism*, no. 130 (2011).

media sites do play a strong role in helping people to mobilize. However, in the end, people must engage with the movement in person to make a bigger impact.



UNA student protesting rising bus prices in Asunción

Looking forward

Overall, it is extremely difficult to directly quantify the impact of social media access. However, it is clear that social media sources are transforming the reality in which Paraguay operates. Just being able to voice one's needs and opinions, especially in a community where people are still feeling the impacts of the repressive dictatorship, years afterwards, is a huge step forward. This concept of speaking out, and participating in a politics is still so new that it is important to give people this safe place to come forward. In the end, Paraguayans have recognized that, "we just need to remember to do this [speak out], and remember how to do this,

and that we *can* do this.”⁷³ Overall, this study attempts to analyze the specific impact of social media on the social movement efforts of the female food sovereignty organization, CONAMURI. The following chapter seeks to explain the local context that creates challenges for marginalized campesino communities. In doing so, it will reveal the unjust circumstances that have led groups throughout Paraguay to resist by uniting and mobilizing in an effort to demand change.

⁷³ BriAnne Illich, Interview with Lydia Caudill. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 19, 2014.

Chapter Four

Campesino Challenges and Response: An Analysis of Agribusiness, Property Rights, and Food Sovereignty Resistance

How have the expansion of agribusiness and insecure non-elite property rights in Paraguay created an unjust environment for campesinos that creates barriers against the preservation of their way of life? How have peoples responded collectively to these injustices, creating a framework of resistance? This chapter, keeping in mind the context of censorship in Paraguay, seeks to address these questions and give voice to the campesino experience. It analyzes their challenges and recounts how campesinos have worked within this context of media control and limited accessibility to make their voices heard. In doing so, it describes the goals and tactics of Paraguayan food sovereignty resistance, and gives an explanation of the reality that forms the CONAMURI context. Looking forward, it establishes a thorough introduction into the following chapter that gives voice to the female Paraguayan campesino food sovereignty movement by providing a short ethnography of the CONAMURI experience, delving into the personal stories of organization members.

The Context of Paraguay's Campesino Challenges

Agribusiness: Domination and Exclusivity

What obstacles do campesinos face due to expansion of agribusiness in Paraguay? How might market competition between the powerful, capital-intensive and high-tech corporate sector and traditional farmers foster an exclusionary environment for small-scale producers? Paraguayan campesino and indigenous way of life is increasingly threatened by neoliberal expansion of capital and technology-intensive agribusiness throughout the region. Corporate development has been so rapid that, between 2000 and 2010, soy production in the southern cone

of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay grew by 188%.⁷⁴ This has been made possible by sizeable mostly foreign companies that gain control of land, creating barriers to agricultural market access, and preventing the economic trickle-down of benefits. Agro-industries, 60% of which Brazilian, have claimed ownership over immense plots of land, often previously inhabited by campesino communities.⁷⁵

This has been facilitated by weak enforcement of campesino property rights, lack of resources to secure official and irrefutable land titles for those who have occupied land for centuries, and economic and political elite support of agribusiness expansion and foreign investment. An example of political support that has enabled this agribusiness domination is the Agrarian Statute of 1967 that broke up *latifundias*, large estates owned by the traditional landed elite, and opened Paraguayan lands to foreign investment and purchase. This enabled many foreign enterprises, especially Brazilian owned, to begin speculating in Paraguay. Arguably, the three factors listed above enable immense corruption and inequality regarding land rights and access. Out of the 3.6 million arable hectares in Paraguay, Brazilian Tranquilo Favero, the “king of soy,” owns 140,000 hectares in 8 departments, and the eight members of the powerful Central Nacional de Cooperativas have claimed ownership over more than 305,000 hectares.⁷⁶ On the disenfranchised side of the spectrum, three hundred thousand people are landless in Paraguay.⁷⁷ The country is starkly unequal: in 2008, it was reported that 2% of the population controlled 85% of Paraguayan lands, the most unequal land statistic in the world.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Mariano Turzi, "Growth in the Cone: South America's Soybean Boom." *Current History* 111, no. 742 (February 2012): 50-55.

⁷⁵ CONAMURI, October 14, 2013. "Soberania Alimentaria: Tierra," *la Campana por la Soberania Alimentaria*. Video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWwA_SFuYek (accessed January 4, 2013).

⁷⁶ Lemoine, "El reino."

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Ibid

Corporate domination of the market whose production structure is based on the vertical integration of a few powerful input suppliers, large-scale producers, and middlemen creates additional complications for campesinos.⁷⁹ Five companies control 40% of the export market, and the majority of the commercial seed and agrochemical industry is in the hands of six foreign companies.⁸⁰ Market concentration keeps prices high, making inputs and other assets for production inaccessible to a large portion of small-scale producers.⁸¹ Methods that enhance productivity such as the planting of transgenic crops and genetically modified seeds, and the use of heavy machinery and pesticides are only affordable and accessible to large-scale companies.⁸² This can potentially shut out small-scale producers, who cannot feasibly compete with these fast-paced, high technology, and large-scale “preferred suppliers.”⁸³

Politics has facilitated this unequal access to land and technologies. Internationalization of capital theorists argue that transnational corporations have been able to sway domestic policies in their favor by means of their financial influence and market power. To support this view, some Colorado Party government policies have favored corporate success and inhibited campesino competition in the agricultural market by prioritizing agribusiness efforts. For example, 70% of the state agricultural budget is allocated to subsidize large agricultural exporters, whereas small-scale and family farms only receive 5% of public funds. Among those 5% receiving support, only 15% have access to credit.⁸⁴ As a result of this competition and uneven playing field, campesinos are frequently pushed out of the market. Abandoning the agriculture sector, they often migrate to urban areas to find new employment.

⁷⁹ Turzi, “Growth in the Cone.”

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid and CONAMURI, “Soberania Alimentaria: Tierra.”

⁸² Turzi, “Growth in the Cone.”

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Raul Zibechi, “Paraguay: Women at the Center of Resistance.” *Toward Freedom* (6 January 2014). <http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/women/3485-paraguay-women-at-the-center-of-resistance> [accessed January 8, 2014].

Critics question the agribusiness model's equitability, because there is a general lack of evidence that large-scale production profits fairly trickle down to meet the needs of the population as a whole.⁸⁵ Foremost, the oligopolistic power approach of the corporate sector prevents the population from fully reaping the benefits of production in an inclusive manner.⁸⁶ The failure of trickle down is evidenced in food security data: although Paraguayan agribusinesses produce enough food to feed approximately 70 million people in a country with a population of 6.7 million, 34% of the population still suffers from malnutrition, the highest rate in South America.⁸⁷ This can arguably be attributed to the monoculture and export-based production model of large-scale Paraguayan agribusiness. This model, exporting approximately 22 million US dollars of produce in 2011, encourages agro-industries to sell as much as 60% of total crops, such as soy, to China and Europe.⁸⁸ The remaining percentage of these crops is primarily used for industrial processing, rather than human consumption.⁸⁹

Analyzing the diminishing manioc production in the region demonstrates the shift away from local staple consumption crop production towards industrial export production. Manioc, an important food staple in the campesino diet, was the second most cultivated crop in 1970, and cultivation took up 21% of agricultural lands.⁹⁰ However, prioritization of soybean and other non-consumption cash crops reduced the percent of total land allocated to manioc cultivation to 10% by 1980.⁹¹ This is increasing local dependence on the purchase of imported food products,

⁸⁵ Peter D Richards, "Soy, Cotton and the Final Atlantic Forest Frontier." *The Professional Geographer* 63, no. 3 (2011): 343-363.

⁸⁶ Lemoine, "El reino"

⁸⁷ 1 de cada 4 Paraguayos pasa hambre en Paraguay," *E'á* (October 18, 2013). <http://ea.com.py/1-de-cada-4-paraguayos-pasa-hambre-en-paraguay/> [accessed February 28, 2014].

⁸⁸ Lemoine, "El reino."

⁸⁹ Donald G Richards, "Contradictions of the 'New Green Revolution': A View from South America's Southern Cone." *Globalizations* 7, no. 4 (December 2010): 563-576

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

despite widespread desires and efforts to protect local biodiversity.⁹² The prioritization of soybean production, now constituting more than 40% of total agricultural value and taking up 80% of cultivated lands, has been detrimental to the rural working population.⁹³ Extension of machine-dependent and highly productive soybean cultivation and processing, dominated primarily by three multinational corporations, as seen in Table 3.2, has been accompanied by a reduction in the agricultural labor opportunities available in the rural sector, pushing workers to urban areas.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, economic growth enabled by agribusiness expansion has not resulted in sufficient urban job creation for displaced agricultural workers. This reflects the unfortunate reality that growth does not always lead to equitable development.

Table 3.2: The Soy Oligopoly

Cargill: Cargill began operations in Paraguay in 1978. It is currently responsible for 30% of total crop production in Paraguay, through its combination of wheat, corn, and soy production. Its focus is soy, and produces approximately 900, 000 tons of soy yearly.⁹⁵

Monsanto: In 1998, Monsanto received the permission of the Ministry of Agriculture to begin experimentation with Roundup Ready seeds and pesticides in Paraguay. Now 90% of soy seeds used for Paraguayan production are purchased from Monsanto.⁹⁶

ADM: ADM entered the Paraguayan production sphere in 1997. Since then, it has grown exponentially, and is now responsible for 30% of the country's grain and oilseed production. Aside, from production, it is now highly involved in processing. In May 2013, it opened a highly efficient and large-scale soybean processing plant that processes up to 3,500 tonnes of soy daily. This prevents linkages, and helps to concentrate various stages of market activities in the hand of one company.⁹⁷

⁹² Elizabeth Finnis, Clotilde Benítez, Estela Fatima Candia Romero, Maria José Aparicio Meza, "Changes to Agricultural Decision Making and Food Procurement Strategies in Rural Paraguay." *Latin American Research Review* 47, no. 2 (2012): 180-190.

⁹³ Richards, "Soy, Cotton and the Final Atlantic Forest Frontier."

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Cargill in Paraguay, <http://www.cargill.com/worldwide/paraguay/> (accessed March 16, 2014).

⁹⁶ Jonathan Gilbert, "In Paraguay, the Spread of Soy Strikes Fear in Hearts of Rural Farmers." *Time World* (2013). <http://world.time.com/2013/08/09/in-paraguay-rural-farmers-fear-the-spread-of-soy/> [accessed March 17, 2014].

⁹⁷ "Adm Paraguay" <http://www.adm.com/en-US/worldwide/paraguay/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed March 17, 2014).

A CONAMURI university student characterizes the related costs of the agroexport model by saying that agribusinesses do not promote “alimentation, rather imitation of alimentation...In rural areas, campesinos die from violence against campesinos, but those pushed into the city simply die of hunger. The government increases poverty and hunger by pretending to reduce it, while actually welcoming businesses.”⁹⁸ In other words, the population at large generally receives few of the benefits from these efficient, high technology, and profitable companies. In fact, in 2007, the Paraguayan rate of rural poverty was an astonishing 68%.⁹⁹ Campesinos recognize the exclusionary nature of agribusiness, and continue to emphasize the vital role of local agriculture to support the population. In Paraguay, 60% of the food consumed by Paraguayans is farmed agro-ecologically by campesinos, who own only 6.6% of the total land.¹⁰⁰ Campesinos believe agribusiness not only threatens their access to land but also the traditional and agro-ecological way of life that is a necessary element to sustaining local populations.

Although campesino voices can fail to perceive them, it is important to recognize the benefits that high technology and capital-intensive agribusinesses have brought to the region. Desire for corporate expansion has motivated and contributed to large-scale investment in infrastructure, beginning in 1955 with Stroessner’s “March to the East.” This plan was spurred by expansion of agribusiness activity in the Atlantic Forest and the need to incorporate the isolated East into the national economy.¹⁰¹ Improving access to the region required immense investment in Paraguay’s internal infrastructure. One such effort of the “March to the East” built

⁹⁸ Illich, interview with Cruzabie.

“alimentacion sino imitacion de alimentacion...gente en lugares rurales mueren de violencia contra campesinos, pero las forzadas a la ciudad simplemente mueren de hambre. El gobierno aumenta la pobreza y el hambre por fingir de reducirlo con el bienvenido a las empresas.”

⁹⁹ Richards, “Contradictions.”

¹⁰⁰ Fredy Jara, “Agricultura Familiar Produce 60 Por Ciento De Alimentos.” E’a (January 24, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/agricultura-familiar-produce-60-por-ciento-de-alimentos/> [accessed February 2, 2014].

¹⁰¹ Richards, “Soy, Cotton, and the Final Atlantic Forest Frontier”

a widespread network of roads and bridges that linked the capital of Asunción to previously remote regions.¹⁰² This radically improved transportation and enabled greater campesino access to important services such as healthcare. Since then, agribusiness interests have not only contributed to infrastructure investment, but also to the genetic development of seeds that are resistant to pests and diseases, potentially enabling a reduction of pesticide and fertilizer use in the future. Unfortunately, reduction in agrochemical use has not yet become a reality, for few can afford pest resistant seeds, and investment in infrastructure, although in many ways positive, motivates widespread deforestation in Paraguay.

Agrochemicals and Deforestation

Corporate agriculture can be damaging to the health of communities, due to the often widespread, indiscriminate and illicit spraying of harmful agrochemicals on products and throughout regions. In 2013, over 25 million liters of agrochemicals were used in the soy industry alone.¹⁰³ Although article 68 of Law 3742, regarding the Control of Sanitary Products, requires a distance of 100 meters between an area of chemical treatment and any community space, agribusinesses often violate this law. This spraying of lands inhabited by campesinos and indigenous communities can poison water supplies and cause serious and sometimes fatal illnesses.¹⁰⁴

Campesino social movements have called upon various instances, such as the tragedy of eleven-year-old Silvino Talavera, to underscore that agribusinesses have abused their privilege to use agrochemicals in a safe and reasonable manner. These tools, aside from causing dangerous

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Más De 25 Millones De Litros De Agrotóxicos Se Derramaron En Los Sojales En El 2013." *E'a* (January 30, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/mas-de-25-millones-de-litros-de-agrotoxicos-se-derramaron-en-los-sojales-en-el-2013/> [accessed March 1, 2014].

¹⁰⁴ "Campesinos Hacen Justicia Por Mano Propia Ante Abuso De Sojeros E Inacción De Autoridades." *E'a* (January 29, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/campesinos-hacen-justicia-por-mano-propia-ante-abuso-de-sojeros-e-inaccion-de-autoridades/> [accessed February 2, 2014].

side effects from exposure, have been abused as methods to threaten communities and terrorize individuals. In 2003 in Itapúa, two Brazilian soy plantation owners, Hermann Schlender and Alfred Laustenlage, sprayed Silvino forcefully with Round Up Ready, a highly toxic pesticide containing glyphosate, for trespassing on their lands as he returned home. Silvino, the son of a CONAMURI member, died soon after.

His case, “Justice for Silvino,” was one of the very few that was acknowledged in court, because campesinos have little access to the justice system regarding agrotoxin issues. Since government institutions are so linked to agribusiness interests, the system has turned a blind eye to the consequences of agrochemical use in particular cases. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it has even censored reports of their effects. However, Silvino’s particular circumstances, in which the accused pled guilty of manslaughter, could be qualified as a case of direct and intentional poisoning, and was therefore recognized. The accused were sentenced to two years imprisonment. Yet, this was soon reduced to a non-custodial sentence, demonstrating the state of impunity with which agribusinesses can operate.¹⁰⁵ The tragedy of Silvino’s murder spurred various protests and CONAMURI’s foundation of the Coordination for Victims of Agrotoxins that presents cases and reports of people who have been harmed by agrochemicals.

¹⁰⁵ Maguiorina Balbuena, "The Commitment of Women Belonging to Conamuri in the Via Campesina of Paraguay" <http://wri-irg.org/node/9242> (accessed December 31, 2013).



CONAMURI youth remembering Silvino Talavera as they protest against Monsanto¹⁰⁶

Another especially devastating consequence of agribusiness expansion has been the deforestation of indigenous and campesino lands. Within the past fifty years, Paraguay has lost more than 85% of its forests, which are known for their rich biodiversity.¹⁰⁷ Government protection of lands and resources has recently been negligently practiced, if not entirely disregarded.¹⁰⁸ The newly elected Cartes government has continued the environmental pass given to agribusiness by passing Decree No. 453 of the Environmental Impact Evaluation this January. This decree is in clear violation of the ‘Zero Deforestation Law’ that prohibits deforestation in the eastern region.¹⁰⁹ Decree 453 symbolically represents the state’s alliance with agribusinesses, because it relieves landowners of the requirement to provide environmental impact reports for parcels under 500 hectares in the eastern region, and 2,000 hectares in the

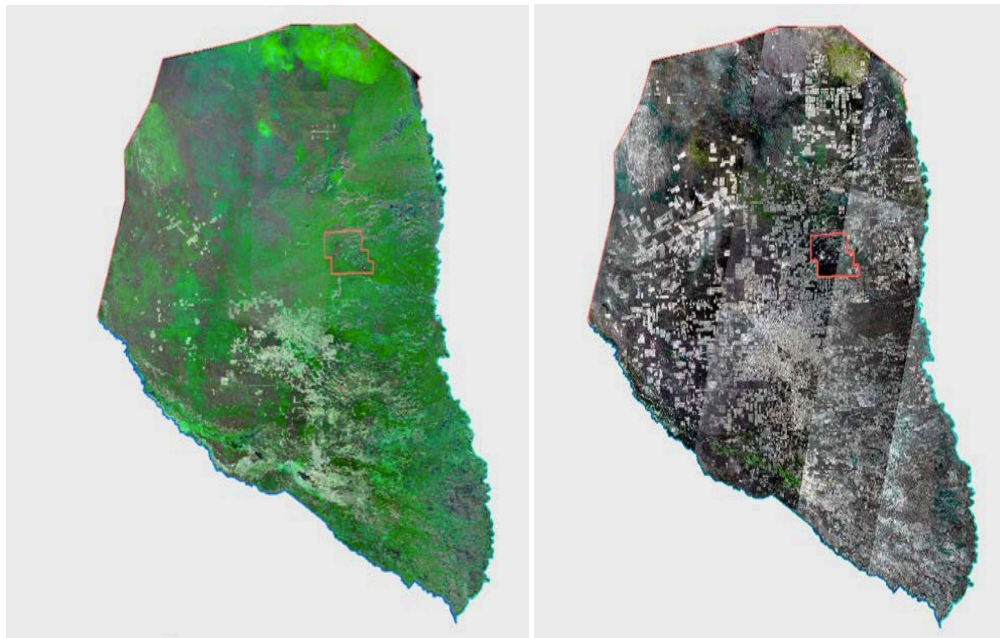
¹⁰⁶ “In favor of land and life. Get out Monsanto!”

¹⁰⁷ Richards, “Soy, Cotton and the Final Atlantic Forest Frontier”

¹⁰⁸ “Genocidio Salvaje Contra Los Bosques.” *ABC color* (January 21, 2014). <http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/editorial/genocidio-salvaje-contra-los-bosques-1207377.html> [accessed January 24, 2014].

¹⁰⁹ Claudia Pompa, “Paraguay: Can the Deforestation Be Stopped?” *Latin America Bureau* (February 12, 2014). <http://lab.org.uk/paraguay-can-the-deforestation-be-stopped> [accessed February 28, 2014].

western part of el Chaco. Environmentalists fear this will enable unregulated deforestation, thereby completely nullifying the Zero Deforestation Law.¹¹⁰ The consequences of this decree could be particularly severe, because deforestation in el Chaco is the highest rate in the world. Approximately 2000 hectares are deforested per day, and 540,000 hectares were bulldozed in 2013.¹¹¹



Deforestation in the Paraguayan Chaco: Left image taken in 1990 contrasts sharply with the image on the right, taken in 2013.¹¹²

This deforestation is especially destructive for indigenous communities that survive off the land, without official title, and lack the resources to demand government protection from indiscriminate and unregulated environmental destruction. For example, the Ayoreos hunter-gatherer community in el Chaco is currently being violently displaced by large companies that have been granted licenses by the government to clear the forest. The Ayoreo have depended on

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ "Titular De La Arp Dice Que Deforestación En El Chaco Es Un "Cuento Chino" *E'a* (January 30, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/titular-de-la-arp-dice-que-deforestacion-en-el-chaco-es-un-cuento-chino/>.

¹¹² "El Chaco Paraguayo Registra La Tasa De Deforestación Más Alta Del Planeta." *E'a* accessed March 16, 2014, <http://ea.com.py/chaco-paraguay-registra-la-tasa-de-deforestacion-mas-alta-del-planeta/>.

this land and have functioned completely autonomously from Paraguayan society for centuries. As a result, they are immensely isolated, only speak their Ayoreo language, and are often unaware of their rights and defenseless against the unimpeded expansion of large soy and cattle companies. These people experience violent displacements, despite their territory's location within a UNESCO biosphere reserve and constitutional protection of indigenous land rights.¹¹³ Constitutional protection include Article 63 that guarantees indigenous peoples "the right to preserve and develop their ethnic identity in their own habitat," and Article 64 that states,

The indigenous peoples of Paraguay have the right to ownership of land in quantity and quality sufficient for the conservation and development of their particular ways of life. The State will provide to them these lands free of cost...Transference of ownership of these lands is forbidden without the expressed consent of the indigenous populations.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, other Paraguayan legislation and recognized treaties protect indigenous property rights. Article 14 of the International Labor Organization's Convention, ratified by Paraguay in 1993, professes indigenous groups' right to ownership of lands they "traditionally occupy." Article 20 of the Statute of Indigenous Communities guarantees indigenous groups "not less than 100 hectares per family." Finally, law 43/89 of the Paraguayan Penal Code gives these groups the right to obtain court orders that prohibit intrusion on their lands without their consent.¹¹⁵

However, these laws do little to effectively protect indigenous property rights. In fact, according to the International Development Bank, Paraguayan compliance with the constitution falls at a low 14.32 on a scale of 100.¹¹⁶ As a result, indigenous communities in el Chaco legally hold titles to only a minority of the region's land, even though they make up the majority of the

¹¹³ Pompa, "Can the Deforestation Be Stopped?"

¹¹⁴ Keith Slack, "The Indigenous of the Paraguayan Chaco: Struggle for the Land." *Cultural Survival* (1995). <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csqa/article/the-indigenous-paraguayan-chaco-struggle-land> [accessed March 11, 2014].

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ DataGov, *Paraguay: Country at a Glance*.

population. A 1995 study reported that most of these land titles were made possible by international NGO donations, and only 60,000 hectares had been provided by government funds.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the land awarded to indigenous families is less than the 100 hectares guaranteed. According to the aforementioned study, in 1995 only 7% of the indigenous population had access to the amount guaranteed in the constitution.¹¹⁸ As a result of this limited land access, indigenous populations have been unable to support themselves as they had traditionally, and many are driven to urban centers in order to survive.

Insecure Property Rights and Landless Struggles

Such disregard for campesino and indigenous rights in the face of agro-industrial expansion has led to widespread campesino outcries that “[the government] represents the interests of the 2.6% landowning population with its traditional parties that defend the unjust structure that steals and wastes... laws favor the winners, the soy companies, the owners of factories, those that don’t pay taxes, and those that use our natural resources for their own profit.”¹¹⁹ Because of their lack of confidence in institutions to protect their rights, campesinos and indigenous groups are immensely fearful of losing their lands. This fear has a factual basis. Expansion of agribusiness has resulted in the displacement of large communities of indigenous peoples and campesinos, creating landless classes that are often driven to migrate to the city in search of new employment. Unfortunately, since these peoples were trained in agriculture, they often lack the skills to find adequate and secure employment in urban areas, where there has been a slow rate of growth in the service and industrial sectors. Therefore, there are insufficient

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, *ÑE’ê Roky*, edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 10, 1-20. Asunción, November 2011.

“representa los intereses de ese 2,6% de la población que es dueño de la tierra, con partidos tradicionales que defienden la estructura de despojo e injusticia que nos sustenta como país ... las leyes aprobadas favorecen a los ganaderos, los sojeros, los propietarios de fábricas, los que no pagan impuestos y los que ultrajan nuestros recursos naturales para obtener lucro.”

low-skill employment opportunities for these migrants. The movement of these groups has contributed to the concentration of extremely impoverished peoples within major urban areas such as Asunción, Concepción, and Ciudad del Este. According to La Via Campesina, since 2000, approximately nine thousand campesino families have been driven to migrate to cities every year, due pressure, if not violent expulsion.¹²⁰

However, not all landless try to make new lives in cities. Many displaced peoples have formed landless movements to reclaim their homes, frequently suffering violent repression as a result. Between 1990 and 2006, there were 366 reported occasions of campesino displacements, and 7,346 detentions of campesinos that protested these displacements by attempting repossession.¹²¹ Nevertheless, these violent repressions have not prevented communities from mobilizing. Between 1990 and 2006, there were 414 separate instances of campesino land occupations, or organized squatting, throughout the country.¹²²

Some consequences of recent “occupy and reclaim” movements have been discouraging, for they have produced little gain for campesinos. For example, on November 5, 2013, 300 campesino families in Capiibary, within the district of San Pedro, were violently displaced by the police.¹²³ They had been peacefully occupying public lands owned officially by the National Institute of Rural Development and Land (INDERT), an organization created by the government to provide campesinos land access.¹²⁴ However, a wealthy lawyer, Gustavo Gásperi,

¹²⁰ La Via Campesina. "Paraguay, More Than 50% of the Population Lives in a Situation of Misery." *La Via Campesina International Peasant's Movement*, June 2012, accessed March 26, 2014. <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/agrarian-reform-mainmenu-36/1263-paraguay-more-than-50-of-the-rural-population-lives-in-a-situation-of-misery>.

¹²¹ Lemoine, “El reino.”

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ "Ocho Campesinos Detenidos Y Heridos Deja Nueva Represión En Capiibary, Denuncian." *E'a* (January 16, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/ocho-campesinos-detenidos-y-heridos-deja-nueva-represion-en-capiibary-denuncian/> [accessed March 2, 2014].

¹²⁴ See Glossary for explanation of INDERT.

demonstrated a competing claim, debatably falsified, that showed the land belonged to him.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, verifying the legitimacy of titles is complicated, due to the corrupt history of land distribution that resulted in various competing claims. For example, during the Stroessner dictatorship, the government distributed lands illicitly to supporters while the original occupiers continued to live on the space, unaware of title alterations, unless forcibly removed.

In an effort to “reclaim” the lawyer’s property, police invaded, burning homes, leveling the school, and destroying campesino crops and possessions. However, Capiibary residents maintained that they had a right to occupy the land. They demanded recognition in court, and returned to recover their crops and rebuild their lives. However, the court did not concede to their demands. In the end, although they did possess a legitimate right to occupation, eight campesinos were detained and violently beaten in January 2014 for their continued attempts at repossession. Similarly, in the district of Canindeyu, campesinos have struggled to reclaim their lands, illicitly granted to German elite, Erich Bendlin, in 1967. The *malhabida*, or illegally distributed land, although technically and legally belonging to the state, was passed on to Bendlin’s two children, Reiner and Margarita. Reiner, the president of Perfecta SAMI, has been recently accused of involvement in 80% of Paraguayan arms trafficking.¹²⁶ Despite challenges and controversy, campesinos have continued to occupy the lands, and have returned on four separate occasions after displacement, facing beatings, the burning of 184 houses, and the destruction of resources, livestock and supplies.¹²⁷ They have not succeeded in receiving legal recognition from the government.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie, "Guns, Drugs and Money." *The National Age* (August 2009). <http://www.theage.com.au/national/guns-drugs-and-money-20090821-etwb.html> [accessed March 15, 2014].

See Glossary for Explanation of Perfecta SAMI

¹²⁷ Lemoine, “El reino.”

Nevertheless, efforts by landless campesinos have gained government recognition and the opportunity to negotiate to improve their circumstances. Some campesino groups argue that the acknowledgment given the community of Yva Poty sets an important precedent for government response to the violation of campesino rights. This community had been living on lands officially purchased by the National Indigenous Institute for Avá-Guaraní people since 1994. However, Brazilian citizen, Paulo Ferreira de Souza contested the title of the land, beginning to encroach on the space in order to plant soy. The situation of competing land titles became more serious when de Souza obtained Curuguaty Judge Carlos Goiburú Bado's signature for the indigenous community's eviction, arguably by corrupt means. On November 20, 2012, without notification, the Paraguayan national police, bribed with 60 liters of fuel each, invaded the land, leveling the health center and 170 homes, burning the school founded under the jurisdiction of the government's Ministry of Education and Culture, and beating those who resisted.¹²⁸

The community, rather than leaving defeated, almost immediately made demands to the government for recognition. The grandson of Yvy Poty's spiritual leader, Francisco, wrote an executive report to the Ministry of Education, petitioning for the reconstruction of the school and a replacement of all schools supplies. Additionally, he demanded the equivalent of 5,000 US dollars for his community and a denunciation of Judge Bado. In response the government began investigations, discovering various "legal irregularities."¹²⁹ The government encouraged the community's return to their land, quickly provided food and resources to support the community, and formed a judicial team to condemn the activity of those involved in the forceful eviction.

¹²⁸ Eric Michael Kelley, "Yva Poty Rising: From the Ashes, a Cause for Hope." *Cultural Survival*, March 2013, accessed March 11, 2014. <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/yva-poty-rising-ashes-cause-hope>.

¹²⁹ Ibid

Since this time, awaiting compensation, their case has been brought to court, and they have begun rebuilding their homes and lives, this time with government recognition and protection.

Following this pattern of government recognition of property rights, almost 600 families in Santa Lucia, who have been occupying lands for the past ten years, despite threats and violence, finally reached an agreement with the government in January of 2014 to be relocated in areas where each family would be granted ownership over ten hectares.¹³⁰ Similarly, 230 families 12 de Julio, who have spent the past nine years, with the support of the OLT and MCNOC, la Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de las Organizaciones Campesinas, attempting to reclaim lands, now live legally in the space after cooperating with the government.¹³¹

With examples of opportunities for successful recognition and negotiation to improve their circumstances, groups have become increasingly organized to voice their needs and make a change. Therefore, they are now seeking to cooperate, rather than concentrate solely on the realities of their local communities. In response, regional groups across Paraguay have united to form a national movement that promotes the rights of campesinos against the two principal threats against the campesino way of life: expanding agribusiness and insecure property rights. These groups cooperate both nationally and internationally as part of the Via Campesina food sovereignty movement. In doing so, they protest against campesino abuses and displacements, spread awareness, protect their way of production and consumption through coordinated alternative efforts, and demand changes in the government's development model by defending a food sovereignty alternative.

¹³⁰ "Campesinos De Ñacunday Dispuestos a Aceptar Reubicación." *Nanduti* (January 20, 2014). <http://www.nanduti.com.py/v1/noticias-mas.php?id=82367&cat=Nacionales> [accessed March 2, 2014].

¹³¹ Lemoine, "El reino."
See Glossary for explanation of MNOC.

The Food Sovereignty Movement: Coordinated Campesino Resistance

Food Sovereignty defends the Peoples Food Sovereignty Network's definition of food sovereignty that states,

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; [and] to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.¹³²

In this way, the national movement is comprised of peoples that oppose the advancement of the industrialized production model, forming separate organizations throughout the country to promote their particular causes. These Paraguayan food sovereignty groups- the OLT, MNOC, CONAMURI, MAP, ONAI and MCP- share common food sovereignty goals, and unite as members of La Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo, CLOC, the Latin American branch of Via Campesina.¹³³



¹³² Raj Patel, "Grassroots Voices." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36, no. 3: 663-706.

¹³³ See Glossary for explanation of organizations.

CLOC's demands include campesino access to land, right to production and consumption free of agribusiness, and an end to campesino abuse, including an elimination of illicit agrochemicals, displacements, and harassment.¹³⁴ One important element to note is CLOC's emphasis that land reform is key to the movement. It argues that *tierra malhabida*, the land illicitly distributed to Stroessner supporters during the dictatorship, is the fundamental reason for the immense inequality between classes in Paraguayan society. Dependent on agriculture, inequality in income is reproducing inequality in rural asset distribution. Thus, CLOC persistently stresses that redistributing land is crucial to reducing inequality.

The argument for redistribution is deeper than assets for production; in addition, it goes to the core of the campesino identity. CLOC declares that redistributing to the people is also vital, because Paraguayan campesinos and indigenous groups have a deep connection to the land. They argue, "by confiscating our land, they are taking away our identity."¹³⁵ In other words, the struggle of these united groups is not only a struggle for land access, freedom from violence, and independent agroecological production, but also a struggle to protect their traditions and way of life. In the past several years, this national food sovereignty movement has joined together to engage in activities such as protesting for President Lugo's impeachment, demanding transparency regarding the Curuguaty massacre, and mobilizing to promote human rights. Representatives have also attended food sovereignty conferences throughout Latin America and the world. These pan-Latin American efforts are crucial to the food sovereignty movement.

The tactics adopted by the Paraguayan food sovereignty campaign are mobilization, denunciation, diffusion, formation, conversation, and cooperation. The movement mobilizes

¹³⁴ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, *ÑE'ê Roky*, edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 9, 1-11. Asunción, July 2011.

"Hoy somos miles y miles los expulsados de nuestras tierras ante el avance del modelo de producción mecanizada."

¹³⁵ CONAMURI, "Soberanía Alimentaria: Tierra."

"Si están quitándonos nuestra tierra, están quitándonos nuestra identidad."

publicly to pressure the government into recognizing the needs of campesino populations. It denounces large-scale agribusiness, agroexportation, and the neoliberal model as barriers to campesino self-reliance, protection of the environment, and preservation of campesino and indigenous traditions. Next, it diffuses information to spread awareness, and promote intra-organization and community solidarity by means of food sovereignty conferences, radio programs, bulletins and magazines, television specials, virtual activity and social networking. The food sovereignty movement emphasizes the importance of formation and education, by hosting workshops and courses for campesino empowerment. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate constructive dialogue with the state to further the aims of the movement.

Finally, it cooperates with other social movements, universities, and NGOs to strengthen the force of the movement. This cooperation creates linkages with other related organizations such as SENAVE. These alliances are especially important, because, like within the landless campesino movement, food sovereignty leaders face threats and violence from elite interests and the government. Since the end of the Stroessner regime, there have been 116 registered cases of assassinations and forced disappearances of food sovereignty movement leaders and campesino militants.¹³⁶ Cooperation between organizations to form a greater movement has created a support system, strengthening the cause, and giving groups leverage to promote their interests in a widespread manner.

Looking Forward

This chapter has accomplished two goals. First, it has worked to explain the general and widespread Paraguayan campesino challenges spurred by the consequences of the spread of and political favoring of agribusiness, and the inequality caused by insecure property rights. Second, it has described their response of resistance, by means of the food sovereignty movement. These

¹³⁶ Ibid

two factors are crucial to introducing the CONAMURI women's food sovereignty network framework and context that shape the goals, tactics and strategies of CONAMURI. Moving forward, the following chapter presents the CONAMURI social movement in the form of a story, to humanize the food sovereignty struggle, give voices to the struggle, and present my findings as I experienced them during my January fieldwork.

Chapter Five
A Day in the CONAMURI Life: Female Voices of the Women's Social Movement Experience

Recognizing Paraguayan campesino challenges and responses, limited access to mainstream media, and the advocacy opportunities made available by alternative and social media, how can Paraguayan women mobilize to assert ownership over their experiences, and promote female empowerment and change? This chapter seeks to give voice to the female Paraguayan campesino food sovereignty movement by delving into the personal experiences of CONAMURI members from different walks of life. In doing so, it paints an image of the Paraguayan female activist life that is often silenced. The information for this section is derived from participant observation and oral histories, while simultaneously incorporating the analysis of Latin American gender theorists. It therefore incorporates various stories into the text, uncovering the voices of individuals to create a collage and examination of the CONAMURI movement.¹³⁷ It shares the efforts and strategies that these members have engaged in to claim ownership over their circumstances, express their needs, spread awareness and mobilize for change. This depiction of the CONAMURI social movement will prepare the reader for the upcoming chapter that will analyze the role of social media within CONAMURI, present a data study that surveys CONAMURI Facebook activity and participation, explain member perceptions regarding its influence and potential, and describe social media's strengths and limitations as social movement tools in Paraguay.

What We Stand For: the CONAMURI Creed

The January Paraguayan heat beats down mercilessly as the representatives of CONAMURI sit on the patio of Asunción headquarters. Here, the elected representatives of each

¹³⁷ All names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

of the eleven districts join to plan urban programs and events, such as radio and television specials, marches, conferences, and fairs and fundraisers that sell produce grown by CONAMURI *campesinos* to city consumers.¹³⁸ However, in these meetings, they also discuss the separate efforts that representatives run in their own communities. These include holding courses for women on sexual education, domestic abuse, and agroecological training, maintaining community gardens, and managing seed banks. Overall, these women, who also adopt roles such as Secretary of Finance, Youth, Education, Relations, Production, Health, Communication and Press, are the glue that links the rural and urban communities within CONAMURI together.



The CONAMURI patio

CONAMURI promotes *campesino*, indigenous, and women's rights on a grassroots level with two specific focuses. First, they defend *campesino* food sovereignty rights, demanding equitable access to land, a reduction in illicit pesticide use and deforestation, and an end to *campesino* displacements and abuse. In doing so, they hope to give voice to *campesinos*, defend their way of living, and endorse agroecological and small-scale production and consumption against the neoliberal model. Second, they promote *campesino* and indigenous women's rights

¹³⁸ BriAnne Illich, Anonymous Interview. Asuncion, January 14, 2014.

within a patriarchal society that frequently treats women as “subjects rather than protagonists,” restricts their access to opportunities, and turns a blind-eye to domestic abuse. In other words, they defend that CONAMURI is a “tool to overcome inequality between men and women, but also to fight against class oppression that has objectified [them] as the poor.”¹³⁹

What We Do: Embracing the Food Production and Gendered Reality

Food Sovereignty Objectives

In defense of their first objective, CONAMURI works to promote campesino food sovereignty rights. It has declared to the government, in the face of criticism for alleged radical behavior, that this aspect of their movement is in “defense of life, and does not defend an ideological position, but a right guaranteed in the constitution.”¹⁴⁰ In other words, it believes that food sovereignty is a struggle to protect their way of life, health, and resources in the absence of government protection, and is necessary because institutions have failed to provide for communities in the ways that they are constitutionally obligated. All in all, according to Project Coordinator, Luisa, their food sovereignty goals entail uniting the population to “recuperate ... the power to decide about...agriculture in an independent way...[also] we make a big effort to ensure the production of food for daily consumption.”¹⁴¹ Many CONAMURI rural efforts therefore focus on adopting and preserving agro-ecological techniques in local farming to promote sustainable and traditional practices. In doing so, members engage in everyday resistance, defending alternatives to subtly fight against the dominant model of agricultural production.

¹³⁹ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco. “ÑE’ê Roky.” edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 10, 1-20. Asunción, November 2011.

[CONAMURI] “es una herramienta para la superación de las desigualdades entre hombres y mujeres, pero también para luchar contra la opresión de clases de la que la somos objeto las y los pobres.”

¹⁴⁰ “Conamuri Al Ministro Del Interior: “Defensa de la vida no es una postura ideológica, es un derecho” *E’a*, <http://ea.com.py/conamuri-al-ministro-del-interior-defensa-de-la-vida-no-es-una-postura-ideologica-es-un-derecho/> [accessed February 2, 2014].

¹⁴¹ CONAMURI, “Soberanía Alimentaria: Nuestras Semillas.” 17:59. Asunción November 5 2013.

Defending Women's Rights: A Gendered Perspective

CONAMURI embraces a feminine consciousness and recognizes the significance of its role as the only *women's* food sovereignty group in Paraguay, striving to facilitate female empowerment. Before describing how CONAMURI mobilizes to defend women's rights, it is important to explain the challenging context of the female campesino experience. In general, campesino and indigenous women face many barriers to access and participation in society, despite their vital role in the local economy. For example, although women in Paraguay produce 80 percent of food, they do so with access to only own eight percent of arable land, and suffer far more from hunger than men on average.¹⁴²

The subordination of women in Paraguayan society has been reinforced by the legacy of the patriarchal colonial era, in which male heads ruled families, demanding obedience from their female subordinates.¹⁴³ Under this social system, women "were subject to direct patriarchal control and forfeited their juridical persona, including administration of property to their...husband."¹⁴⁴ They also lacked legal authority over their own children. Even into the twentieth century, women were perceived by men as "lacking in rationality...[and] too weak and impulsive to be treated as... equals. They were therefore regarded as 'outside citizenship' and ... in need of protection."¹⁴⁵ These historical values promoted by male interests continue to assert an influence on Paraguayan social and gender practices today.

Polarization of gender roles has created many challenges for female empowerment. Women are generally less educated and work less outside the home due to structural limitations,

¹⁴² Zibechei, "Paraguay: Women at the Center of Resistance."

¹⁴³ Elizabeth Dore, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century." In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, 1-32: Duke University Press, 2000, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Maxine Molyneux, "Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America." In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America* (Duke University Press, 2000), 44.

familial responsibilities, and cultural norms. Women's role as mothers makes it especially difficult for them to participate. Historians Sylvia Chant and Nikki Craske argue that motherhood in Latin American feminist theory has been conveyed as a position of "self sacrifice...presenting major obstacles to women's progress."¹⁴⁶ Marianismo, a gender ideology that began within the Catholic Church's adoration of Mary, has idealized feminine values of motherhood, offering "a series of beliefs about women's spiritual and moral superiority to men ... to legitimate their subordinate domestic and societal roles."¹⁴⁷ In the same way, historian, Evelyn Stevens, describes that Marianismo has restricted women's ability to wield power in the public sphere outside of their role as mothers:

Among the characteristics of this ideal are semidivinity, moral superiority, and spiritual strength. This spiritual strength engenders abnegation that is an infinite capacity for humility and sacrifice. No self-denial is too great for the Latin American woman...She is also submissive to the demands of the men: husbands, sons, fathers, brothers.¹⁴⁸

Sofia, a CONAMURI secretary, agrees that motherhood has presented a challenge, not just regarding how society treats her, but also concerning her capacity to work outside the home. This emphasizes the divide between women's access to the public and private domain, and the relationship between gender and place. As her boisterous curly-haired two-year-old clambers up her lap, she laughs, "Her at my side...complicates things a lot."¹⁴⁹ According to the United Nations Population Fund, only 7% of Paraguayan women return to work after having their first child, and only 25% of students return to school after a pregnancy.¹⁵⁰ Those who continue to work outside the domestic sphere after having children face much criticism. A CONAMURI

¹⁴⁶Sylvia Chant and Nikki Craske, *Gender in Latin America*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003, 9

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ BriAnne Illich, interview with Diana Viveros. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 22, 2014.

"ella al lado...se complica mucho."

¹⁵⁰ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, "ÑE'ê Roky." edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 8, 1-11. Asuncion, March 2011.

“grandmother,” María, explains that when a woman is seen working outside the home, men sometimes call out, “What are you doing? Your house is dirty. Take care of your child.”¹⁵¹ This demonstrates that society still places boundaries on women’s activity in Paraguay, and “social practices continue to relate gender to place.”¹⁵² Anthropologist Jane Nash explains,

The ‘transgressions’ of women in places dominated by men- the streets, public places in general-fertilize the gender antagonism that erupts in unpredictable ways...The male categories that define women as decent or not decent when they enter these restricted areas still dominate the discourse on sexuality.¹⁵³

However, CONAMURI is working to facilitate an alternative discourse, in which femininity and motherhood become a source of pride that empowers their participation outside the home, rather than limits them to a particular role and space.

CONAMURI also recognizes the prevalence of violence against women, and is concerned because of the lack of education about or legal protection for those who suffer from domestic abuse. Although the government implemented Law 16000 Against Domestic Violence in 1992, the law does not demand punishments against perpetrators, unless it is in response to violence enacted “habitually.”¹⁵⁴ In these circumstances, if enough substantial evidence of habitual abuse is presented, the perpetrator may be fined. In general, women are hesitant to speak out against their abusers, and statistics go severely underreported. However, there were 5,400 reported cases of domestic abuse in Paraguay in 2013.¹⁵⁵

This hesitance to speak out is not simply related to instances of domestic violence, for

¹⁵¹ BriAnne Illich, interview with Hilaria Cruzabie. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 14, 2014.

“Qué estás haciendo? Tu casa está sucia. Cuida de tu hijo.”

¹⁵² June Nash, "Gender in Place and Culture." In *Gender's Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America*, edited by Lessie Jo Frazier Rosario Montoya, Janise Hurtig, 289-296. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 289.

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Paraguay: Protection Available to Victims of Domestic Violence; Effectiveness of the Law against Domestic Violence; Whether the Courts Prosecute Perpetrators of Such Violence. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 3, 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Paraguay, Telefuturo. January 29, 2014. "Más De 5mil Denuncias Por Violencia Intrafamiliar," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEqllP-yC68> (accessed January 29, 2014).

places of leadership, participation, and politics have “traditionally been a man’s world in which women have been marginalized.”¹⁵⁶ Peace Corps volunteer, Lydia Cargill, noted that women infrequently spoke out in Itapúa, the district where she volunteered. She became frustrated, because she desired to create a space in which women would feel comfortable participating and addressing their concerns.¹⁵⁷ However, even at meetings that she hosted specifically for them, they chose to pull their chairs to the side, allowing men to take center stage to discuss issues that primarily concerned women, such as health care during pregnancy.

CONAMURI founders, themselves, established the organization due to sexism and the lack of outlets for participation that they encountered as members of the liberal MCP prior to 1999.¹⁵⁸ The MCP, a large-scale food sovereignty group, treated active female participants like “bitter old women,” mocking their desire and questioning their capacity to mobilize. Female members thus felt that their insight was not valued on the same level as that of male participants. In 1998, Patricia, a CONAMURI founder, divorced her neglectful husband, a leader of the MCP. After moving herself and her children, she cooperated to form CONAMURI, believing that female food sovereignty activists needed their own safe space to participate front and center, without facing the condescension of men.¹⁵⁹ This break away from the MCP reflects the general pattern of the women’s movement evolution in Latin America in the past several decades. These female organizations often developed out of left party movements, but separated to form their own groups in response to the discrimination that they faced as members of these movements.¹⁶⁰

Overall, since its establishment, CONAMURI has enabled women to obtain greater social and

¹⁵⁶ Chant and Craske, *Gender in Latin America*.

¹⁵⁷ Illich, interview with Cargill.

¹⁵⁸ Zibechi, "Paraguay: Women at the Center of Resistance."

¹⁵⁹ Illich, Anonymous Interview.

¹⁶⁰ Janise Hurtig, Rosario Montoya, Lessie Jo Frazier. "A Desalambrar: Unfencing Gender's Place in Research on Latin America." In *Gender's Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 3.

political visibility.

Forming their own creed and goals, CONAMURI denounces the oppressive female reality and declares, “Now we are convinced that violence is not natural, rather that it is naturalized in [our] society that conserves the cultural patriarchy of inequality between men and women. We adopt the challenge to search for social transformation and become the owners of our own history.”¹⁶¹ In this way, they are working to “desalambrar,” or tear down, old norms that reinforce the society of gendered subordination and domination in order to create a new discourse on gender.¹⁶² They also emphasize the importance of defending the rights of indigenous women especially, whom they consider to be some of the most marginalized members of society, due to their “double barriers of gender and ethnic restriction.”¹⁶³ Aside from offering formation courses for women on a variety of subjects, combining written and oral work, providing a place for women to have their voices heard and their needs addressed in local communities, and organizing various women’s events such as the Women’s Day march on March 8, CONAMURI gives women the confidence to defend their own rights.¹⁶⁴

Why We’re Here: Dreams and Aspirations of CONAMURI

Overall, the CONAMURI cause is more than just a social movement for these women; for many, it is their lives’ work, full time job, and family. Nine months pregnant, thirty-year-old Inés continues to attend representative meetings. She shifts slowly to exchange greeting kisses with a new arrival, but immediately resumes cradling her belly protectively. She doesn’t know it

¹⁶¹ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, *ÑE’ê Roky*, edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 9, 1-11. Asunción, July 2011.

“Ahora estamos convencidas de que la violencia no es natural, sino que está naturalizada en la sociedad que conserva la cultura patriarcal de la desigualdad entre hombres y mujeres... nos llama al desafío de buscar las transformaciones sociales y de ser dueñas de nuestra propia historia.”

¹⁶² Hurtig, Montoya and Frazier, “Unfencing Gender’s Place”

¹⁶³ Nash, “Gender in Place and Culture.”

¹⁶⁴ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, *ÑE’ê Roky*, edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 10, 1-20. Asunción, November 2011.

yet, but her son, “un hijo de CONAMURI,” will be born in two days.¹⁶⁵ She continues to work, because the center is like her home, and CONAMURI members, her adopted family. This familial reality is augmented as her three-year-old daughter, Amber, and two-year-old Nacho scamper past the table in pursuit of cicadas. Their delighted screeches intermix with the murmurs in Jopará, a fluid mix of Spanish and Guaraní. It is common to hear the giggles and shouts of CONAMURI children, because to enable more feasible involvement and considering the Paraguayan female context, CONAMURI fosters an environment welcoming to mothers, such as Inés. Members are welcomed, and even encouraged to bring their children, and it is everyone’s collective responsibility, as “aunts,” and “grandmothers” to look after them within headquarters. The facility has washing machines, spare beds, showers, a kitchen, and living room, making the space an actual second home for some participants. CONAMURI is working to raise the funds to purchase this space, which they currently rent. As a young mother, Inés dreams of CONAMURI owning this space in order to create a permanent space where “women can mobilize with their children...and where our sons and daughters can grow. I want to participate alongside my daughter.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ BriAnne Illich, Personal Interview.

¹⁶⁶ BriAnne Illich, Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 18, 2014.

“un espacio de encuentro de mujeres con sus hijos...donde pueden crecer nuestras hijos e hijas. Quiero a participar...junto a mi hija”



Graffiti at CONAMURI headquarters, symbolizing female harmony, including among mothers and daughters

Shifting my chair closer to Inés, I begin speaking to her about her home in el Chaco, the most rapidly deforesting region in the world. She smiles sadly and says she was initially motivated in 2007 to work with CONAMURI because of the consequences of deforestation. She persists on behalf “of the women that are displaced from their homes in the countryside, [who] come to the city, entering into the urban belt of poverty and wanting more than anything to return to the countryside... They don’t stop being campesinos outside of *el campo*.”¹⁶⁷ She wants to help these women to return their homes and to be able to support themselves by means of small-scale *campesino* agriculture. Speaking about her other hopes for the future, she says she wants to encourage women to

participate in real decisions. We live in such a macho society in which women don’t have voice or the space to express themselves. I want women to learn they have the capacity and right to participate. We, as women of CONAMURI, want a

¹⁶⁷Illich. Anonymous Interview.

“Las mujeres desplazadas de sus hogares en el campo, que vienen a la ciudad, entrando en el cinturón de pobreza y queriendo más que todo regresar al campo... No paran de ser campesinos afuera del campo.”

society where there is gender equality, which does not deny anyone opportunities based on gender or social class. We believe that as more women participate in decision making processes, it will be possible to create profound structural change, which will lead to a re-evaluation of women's roles in the future of their countries. It is just a question of justice and respect for dignity.¹⁶⁸

Our Relationships: Looking Inward, Outward and Forward

The role of relationships and personal ties among these “compañeras de lucha” is crucial within CONAMURI. It is cemented by shared food, preparation, and drink. Secretary of Communications, Adriana, argues, “there can be no revolution without tereré.”¹⁶⁹ Tereré is the local drink, and the Paraguayan equivalent of yerba mate. Groups pass around this beverage as a communal experience, sharing stories and news as they do so. This symbol of tereré is especially important, because it emphasizes the value of shared experiences and person-to-person contact in Paraguay. Despite increasing access to technology such as cell phones and Internet, leaders still prefer to meet in person to plan events, even if this means commuting five hours by bus between districts. In other words, some person-to-person contact cannot be replaced for mere convenience. Raquel, a young university student mother, studying social work, explains, “Asunción is a little town, really,” and as a result, the importance of maintaining community links cannot be underestimated.¹⁷⁰ As a result, CONAMURI stresses the importance of democratic relations and organic participation within the organization itself. To emphasize this, Raquel and another university student claim, “in the big organizations they didn’t let us young people participate, and we see that CONAMURI isn’t run by just by two or three, but by everybody together.”¹⁷¹ CONAMURI has built a cooperative environment in which democratic

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

“No hay revolución sin tereré.”

¹⁷⁰ BriAnne Illich, Anonymous Interview. January 18, 2014.

“Asunción es muy pueblito, en verdad”

¹⁷¹ Zibechi, “Paraguay: Women at the Center of Resistance.”

involvement is facilitated and encouraged, opening the sphere of participation to more actors. In other words, even though a hierarchy of leadership is preserved to ensure smooth operations and coordination, everyone's voice is valued and recognized.

CONAMURI, with a history of focusing on promoting female solidarity from within, is now looking outward to form linkages. It recognizes that it needs to prove that it can work and make alliances with other organizations, and that CONAMURI cannot only do things in the countryside. A big focus has been to attract young people, such as Raquel, to the organization, because "tomorrow is their day."¹⁷² Furthermore, although headquarters is a women's space, young men are increasingly getting involved as allies, participating in non-leadership positions.



CONAMURI solidarity of men and women. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/conamuri.paraguay>

One might think that male participation, at an all-female led organization that focuses heavily on rural women's empowerment issues, might be an unwelcome intrusion, especially

¹⁷² BriAnne Illich, interview with Cruzabie.

considering Lydia's example of rural women's hesitance to participate in male presence. On the contrary, the cooperative support of young male "feminists" is encouraging. These boys, often the sons of CONAMURI women, are welcomed with open arms. The organization maintains that these youth have the potential to adopt new values that they will someday pass on to their children. CONAMURI women believe that young men must become involved in the fight for rural women's rights and against machismo's emphasis on male primacy, to prevent the organization from becoming a self-contained island. This smooth collaboration is clear as Raquel jokingly punches twenty-year old Miguel on the shoulder, while he stirs the stew of beef and potatoes that he has prepared for everyone's lunch. Gesturing to his ladle, she giggles and teases that perhaps he isn't "so *machista* after all." All in all, achieving peaceful and natural coexistence within the organization with men is important, because it teaches women about fostering healthy relations among men and women.

CONAMURI now focuses on projecting their cause outward by connecting with the national and international community by means of conferences, alliances and social media. The president of CONAMURI believes this goal of obtaining nationwide and international support and awareness is especially important, because the "structure of the state is so suffocating that the people know nothing."¹⁷³ And, without an awareness of ongoing wrongs, people fail to act to mobilize against the status quo. The efforts to achieve this objective of spreading the word have been very effective. The doorbell rings often at headquarters, announcing the arrival of visitors and volunteers, not only from throughout Paraguay and the rest Latin America, but also the world. Headquarters also hosts many large-scale events for La Via Campesina, promoting their message internationally. CONAMURI, as a woman's organization, takes pride in being highly

¹⁷³ BriAnne Illich, interview with Alicia Armarilla. Personal Interview. Asuncion, February 2, 2014.

regarded as a successful and influential food sovereignty group, and its members are even invited to speak at and attend food sovereignty conferences throughout the world. In the end, CONAMURI is making large strides for women's and *campesino* rights. The movement has enabled campesino women to assertively participate, taking their situation into their own hands to find solutions.

This chapter has described the CONAMURI experience from the perspective of its participants, describing their cause, context, and goals. Because of the increasing importance for CONAMURI to simultaneously maintain inter and intra-organization linkages, analyzing the role and impact of newly introduced social media tools on the social movement is especially necessary. In response, the following chapter will describe the uses of social media within CONAMURI, reveal the nature of a one-month snapshot of CONAMURI Facebook activity and participation, and survey member perceptions concerning its impact and future potential. In the end, the next chapter describes social media's strengths and limitations as social movement tools in Paraguay.

Chapter Six

Social Media's Role and Potential: a CONAMURI Case Study

“Having the campesino population... knowing who they are, what they are, and what they need... and giving them...access to information, that's the key. Because, as I said, how can you fight for your rights if you don't know what those rights are?” Paraguayan freelance blogger Gabriela Galilea

Considering CONAMURI's challenges, personal experiences, and goals, what is the role of social media within the organization? What are its aims, strategies, strengths and limitations? Different groups use social media technology in various ways, achieving diverging results. Therefore, it is vital to recognize the context and intent that influence social media usage. This chapter begins by discussing the motivations that triggered CONAMURI leaders to adopt social media, and the aims they hoped to achieve in doing so. Overall, CONAMURI social media use targets three specific objectives: facilitating internal participation and inclusion despite geographical and temporal constraints, promoting external outreach and visibility to augment intra-organizational support, and creating a new outlet that enables the marginalized to participate and alternative news to be shared.

Remembering these three goals, this chapter describes the social media tools and approaches that CONAMURI employs to reach different audiences and achieve these distinctive aims. Specifically, it focuses on three social media tools, CONAMURI's Facebook group, “fan page,” and Yvytu Pyahu podcast. Each represents a different approach that seeks to achieve one of the three goals. My explanation relies on information gathered from data analysis, personal experiences, and social movement and social media theory. In the end, this chapter provides an introduction into the final chapter that will discuss the need for balanced social movement strategy in order to remain high-impact and sustainable. In this way, it will analyze what tactics

CONAMURI leaders consider necessary when social media activity is not sufficient to achieve CONAMURI aims, and will provide an analysis of opportunities for CONAMURI mobilization in the future.

The Attractiveness of Social Media: An Introduction to Incentives for its Adoption

What motivated CONAMURI leaders to adopt social media engagement tools? What do they hope to achieve with continued use? Before explaining CONAMURI social media perceptions, objectives and impact, it is important to consider the implications of the Adaptive Structuration Theory on Social Media. This theory suggests that, although all social media share select fixed rules and functions, the role and impact of these tools are nevertheless dependent on context and the approach that distinct groups adopt to make them most useful.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the uses and consequences of social media vary within differing social, economic and political environments and are subject to the intentions of particular actors. Their utility and extension is additionally limited by invisible filters, such as access to the Internet and Spanish literacy, excluding or discouraging the participation of particular sectors. This theory is especially important to keep in mind, because, although a CONAMURI case study provides a relevant example of social media use as an advocacy tool, it is in no way universally applicable.

The importance of strategic use and the specific context in which social media tools are employed cannot be underestimated. It is therefore crucial to consider the descriptions of the previous chapters concerning the CONAMURI campesino context in order to analyze how and why social media might play the role that it does within CONAMURI. To support this, Strauss' social world theory states that social media tools "do not have a lot of meaning on their own merits or features: their value comes from using [them] towards the purpose of the social world,"

¹⁷⁴ David P. Brandon and Andrea B Hollingshead, "Characterizing online groups." In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Katelyn McKenna Adam Joinson, Tom Postmes, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips: Oxford Publishers, 2007, 107.

defined as “groups or individuals with a common goal or commitment to common action.”¹⁷⁵

Keeping this in mind, this chapter will explain CONAMURI’s three main social media objectives that spurred the adoption of specific tools: facilitating internal cooperation, attracting widespread audiences, and creating an accessible alternative outlet for expression and information.

CONAMURI, as an umbrella organization whose invested members are scattered throughout Paraguay, recognizes the important role that social media can play in simplifying communication and building strong ties across the country. Distance, family obligations, and other constraints often limit face-to-face planning and interaction. This makes a virtual outlet, less impacted by geographical or temporal constraints, very attractive. Members believe these tools have the potential to promote convenient cooperation across districts. The *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology* defends this notion, arguing that interactivity is the “single most important” feature that distinguishes social media from traditional communication. Similarly, it supports that social media can strengthen potential for internal linkage creation, engagement, commitment, and cooperative capacity.¹⁷⁶ Following this train of thought, a 2001 study revealed that social media interaction has been known to increase sense of physical proximity to others, despite literal geographic isolation. This has motivated increased levels of communication.¹⁷⁷

As a result, prior to adoption of social media tools, CONAMURI leaders argued that uniting members across sectors in a common cyberspace would increase internal communication. Arguably, this could intensify strong-tie links and shared identity, simplifying collective action.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 108

¹⁷⁶ Sundar, S. Shyam, "Social Psychology of Interactivity in Human-Website Interaction." In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Katelyn McKenna Adam Joinson, Tom Postmes, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips: Oxford Publishers, 2007, 89.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 110

Resource- Mobilization Theorists defend this importance of shared identity and frequent interaction, explaining, “movements are contingent...on resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action...when groups share strong distinctive identities and dense interpersonal networks, members are readily mobilizable: both the identity and the networks provide a base for collective incentives.”¹⁷⁸ Similarly, sociologist Joshua Gamson argues, in the absence of collective identity, or if a shared identity becomes too vague, collective action becomes unlikely, if not impossible.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the promotion of collective identity, often created by shared experiences and interactivity, was prioritized by CONAMURI in its social media adoption. In this way, it hoped to ensure its sustainability as a social movement organization. Members argued that only with this collective identity and solidarity support would emotional ties strong grow enough to encourage the commitment necessary to encourage participation in high risk and visible social movement activities.

Next, CONAMURI was driven to employ social media strategies in order to increase instances of external outreach and visibility to build weak intra-organizational ties. Within the organization’s headquarters, there was general concern that the organization might become an isolated and inward-looking organization whose message did not extend sufficiently. Members acknowledged, “[our struggle] is not just a CONAMURI struggle...it’s not just the emancipation of women that will free our world. Instead, it is the emancipation of *all* the discriminated and oppressed...How does it help us to advance like an island? We cannot articulate our message if

¹⁷⁸ Susan Eckstein, "Power and Popular Protest in Latin America." In *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, 6. London, England: University of California Press, 2001.

¹⁷⁹ Maureen A. Scully and W.E. Douglas Creed, “Subverting Our Stories of Subversion.” In *Social Movements and Organization Theory*, edited by W. Richard Scott Doug McAdam, Mayer N. Zald. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

we don't proceed in unity.”¹⁸⁰ As a result, CONAMURI recognized the importance of embracing an approach that facilitated national and international cooperation with external actors.

Social media theory emphasizes that social media outreach can act as a “low level connector... particularly among those who might not otherwise come in contact,” lowering the stakes of participation and often making information more accessible.¹⁸¹ Consequentially, CONAMURI hoped that, by increasing external visibility and interactivity, it might establish weak ties with other organizations and individuals that could eventually develop into stronger linkages with time. In other words, social media can potentially build widespread weak ties within CONAMURI by circulating information, extending outreach, and reducing costs of participation. This could attract diverse members with more moderate stances and less personal stakes in the Paraguayan campesino struggle. Simultaneously, this could enable moderates to overcome prejudices against campesinos and accept a movement often wrongly criticized as radical. The attraction of a heterogeneous population is important to diffuse movement values across social, economic, and national borders, enabling widespread awareness and solidarity. Inviting a greater audience to feel connected to CONAMURI food sovereignty activity also increases organizational visibility and increases the power of pressure mechanisms.

Finally, identifying itself as an organization representing the interests of a marginalized population, CONAMURI prioritized social media adoption to create an alternative space for campesino women to share their stories, access information, and cooperate with likeminded individuals. Marginalized groups often feel “cut off” from mainstream perceptions and

¹⁸⁰ BriAnne Illich, anonymous Interview. January 14, 2014.

“No es solo la lucha de CONAMURI...no es solamente la emancipación de mujeres que va a liberar todo el mundo. Sino que juntos de la emancipación de todos las discriminadas y deprimidas... ¿De que nos sirve de avanzar como una isla? No podemos articularnos si no vamos al conjunto.”

¹⁸¹ Caroline Haythornthwaite, “Social networks and online community.” In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Katelyn McKenna Adam Joinson, Tom Postmes, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips: Oxford Publishers, 2007, 130.

depictions of their own identity and reality, subject to the interpretations of powerful interests.¹⁸²

In response, alternative outlets for minority expression and information sharing can enable populations to participate more fully in the public sphere. In this way, Donald Browne reveals that engagement via electronic media outlets allows groups to identify themselves on their own terms.¹⁸³ CONAMURI values this capacity of social media especially, considering the climate of campesino censorship within Paraguay, explained in chapter three. Leaders believed that social media could help the organization create a space to speak about everyday experiences and forms of resistance, establishing a support group where individuals could promote respect for their identities.

Social media outlets of this kind are unique, because participants perceive their audiences as a particular community with shared experiences. As a result, interaction with audiences is much more personal, and participants strive to remain in contact and cooperate with their listeners. Thus, these outlets not only have the potential to empower individuals, increase awareness, and provide access to information, but also to facilitate strong ties and higher levels of interaction by creating both virtual and face-to-face support groups.

Analysis of CONAMURI Social Media Efforts: Three Goals, Three Approaches

Recognizing the potential value of social media tools to strengthen its shared identity, disseminate its beliefs, and methods of self-expression and solidarity, CONAMURI leaders began incorporating social media tactics. In an initial attempt, CONAMURI's communication

¹⁸² Martin Tanis, "Online social support groups." In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Katelyn McKenna Adam Joinson, Tom Postmes, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips: Oxford Publishers, 2007.

¹⁸³ Donald R Browne, *Ethnic Minorities, Electronic Media and the Public Sphere: A Comparative Study* Edited by Nicholas W. Jankowski: Hampton Press, 2005.

director, Lucia, attended an information session on social media use. Lucia, who joined CONAMURI in 2009, explains,

My arrival at CONAMURI coincided with an important technological movement that allowed us to gain access to greater spaces and forms of alternative communication. Since then, our organization's reach in the urban and national [space] has been more constant.¹⁸⁴

Based on what she learned at the conference, the CONAMURI communications team adopted three separate approaches. Each was aimed at strengthening internal operations, projecting its cause outward, or providing a space for marginalized populations to tell their stories and access alternative news. For the benefit of my study, I focus on three particular efforts, one representing each approach: a Facebook group for internal cooperation, a Facebook fan page for building external linkages, and a podcast program for community news and discourse. As this chapter analyzes the three specific efforts, incorporating both VOX Global inspired data analysis and stories of personal experience, it is important to keep in mind the target audience, intentions and distinctness of each approach.

Goal One, To Strengthen Internal Linkages: And you?, A Facebook Group

CONAMURI acknowledged the need to create a space that encourages members of the food sovereignty movement to interact and cooperate more frequently, via discourse and cyber activity, strengthening internal linkages. In cooperation with CLOC, CONAMURI created an exclusive Facebook group in 2011. Lucia soon took over its management, naming it “I want to eat healthily, and you?”¹⁸⁵ The group is a resource for approximately 7,500 food sovereignty activists throughout Paraguay, helping heavily invested individuals to interact more frequently

¹⁸⁴ BriAnne Illich. Anonymous Interview. Asunción, January 19, 2014.

“Mi llegada a Conamuri coincidió con un momento importante de tecnología que nos permitió acceder a mayores espacios y formatos de comunicación alternativa. Desde entonces, la presencia de nuestra organización en los medios urbanos y de alcance nacional fue más constante.”

¹⁸⁵ “Yo quiero comer sano, ¿Y vos?”

with other activists, creating strong ties and increasing interaction. The group addresses the question, “Based on our knowledge of food sovereignty challenges, how can we make the situation better and what solutions can we provide?” In doing so, it seeks to engage food sovereignty stakeholders in a discussion to create alternatives and solutions, and to plan specific events.

The exclusive nature of this group calls into question the assumption that social media outlets are inherently inclusive. Members must be invited to participate by one of the group managers, such as Lucia. Receiving an invitation requires having expressed dedication to the cause, normally by means of previous and frequent face-to-face interaction. In other words, individuals are not permitted to interact on the page solely because of an interest in doing so after encountering the page during a Facebook search. In fact, I was only permitted access to the page after having been actively involved at the organization in Asunción. These privacy settings preserve the group as a safe space for those genuinely interested, invested, and committed, and free participants from the pressure of being subject to the criticism of opposition. However, this privacy restricts the possibility to create new strong ties, by virtual means, with those that lack the capacity to interact in person. CONAMURI members still consider face-to-face interaction vital to the initial creation of strong-ties. And, although tools such as this group are useful in maintaining and strengthening pre-established networks of interactions, they believe it is very difficult to build anything but superficial linkages by cyber interaction alone.

Nevertheless, the democratic and decentralized nature of the page among members is important to emphasize. Although page managers reveal the power dynamic of inclusion, deciding who may participate, once invited, everyone has an equal voice to post articles, create discussions, or advertise events. Activity is very decentralized and unregulated on the page,

enabling members to build stronger linkages amongst themselves and encouraging an even greater level of participation facilitated by group social pressure.¹⁸⁶ As a result, this group is an invaluable resource for planning countrywide events and activities amongst leaders and active members. Overall, this group has been very important in strengthening internal linkages by easing communication and interactions across cities, uniting efforts in a united cyberspace free from geographical and temporal barriers. It addresses a distinct approach, emphasizing the importance of strong internal networking. The following section, analyzing the CONAMURI Facebook fan page, addresses the second approach of social media activity.

Goal 2, To Spread Awareness Outward: the Facebook “Fan Page”

Lucia established CONAMURI’s Facebook “fan page” in November 2012 to project the CONAMURI cause outward and increase visibility to the community at large. Since, the organization has promoted the page in various manners, through bulletins, pamphlets, radio and television programs, and by word of mouth, gathering a total of 7,021 members by early April 2014. The CONAMURI Facebook page acts as an accessible alternative news source and was born with two goals: increasing outside awareness about the cause, and creating new weak linkages. Overall, it is a resource directed primarily at the outside community, providing access to myriad news articles, videos, photos, and statuses that are relevant to food sovereignty, campesino struggles, and women’s issues.

It creates a space in which participants can engage with material and interact by liking, sharing, or commenting on posts. Carmen, a communications team assistant manager explains, “the purpose of the Facebook page is to inform people...we also have a really young and active

¹⁸⁶ Mario Diani and Florence Passy, *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action Comparative Politics*, Edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

audience that uses social media more...[to] participate at the international level.”¹⁸⁷ Lucia primarily encounters information for the fan page from alternative international and national news outlets, such as Cigarra and E’a.com. The role of this page in the sharing of alternative news is particularly important, because it relates issues to the public that are often disregarded in mainstream press. However, a large portion of the information posted, such as videos and podcasts, is produced by the organization itself. In this way, the page advertises CONAMURI events and achievements, boosting attendance, participation, and support by increasing visibility.

This public fan page, like the private aforementioned Facebook group, similarly calls into question social media theory assumptions. Specifically, the nature of participation on the fan page demonstrates that social media interaction does not inherently embrace an overall decentralization of engagement. Though adopting a more inclusive membership policy than the Facebook group, allowing anyone, regardless of experience, to join the page by liking it, the CONAMURI fan page is still based on a leadership hierarchy. This hierarchy is reinforced by the limited participation capacity of certain members. Anyone on the page is free to comment, like or share a post already screened and posted, but only those articles filtered and approved by Lucia or communication team assistants are posted to the page. This limits the sources of information provided and constrains who has the power to share new articles or news.

This filtering is primarily done to ensure the relevancy and cleanliness of the page, since it acts as a promotion and information tool. However, this filtering might discourage individuals from becoming more active, limiting the diversity of experiences and voices expressed. The following section provides an analysis of the material provided and the corresponding response

¹⁸⁷ BriAnne Illich, anonymous Interview.

“la propuesta de Facebook es que la gente se informe... también tenemos una base muy joven y activa que utiliza los redes sociales más... para participar al nivel internacional”

on the page. Looking forward, it will be important to consider what motivates or discourages individuals from participating.

A One-Month Snapshot of Fan Page Activity: Systematic Data Analysis: What material is posted on the page to attract participation and engagement? What might motivate or discourage individuals from interacting on the page? What characteristics cause certain posts to evoke a large response as opposed to little interaction? Why do particular individuals with certain qualities participate while other similar individuals do not? Although CONAMURI members and social media theorists alike argue that it is difficult to quantify the impact of social media efforts, I was driven to study Facebook fan page interaction to describe the nature of posts and consequent interaction. In this way, I wished to gauge who became involved in the page, and what sorts of posts attracted discourse and virtual engagement. To determine access to, participation on, and the impact of the fan page, I performed a daily systematic data analysis during January. For a review of my analysis technique, please see Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in the Methodology section.

Content, Intention and Frame: I chose to investigate the types of posts, their messages, and their intentions. Of the 165 posts throughout January, the most common in descending order were articles, audiovisuals, statuses, photos, and other. I found the prevalence of articles interesting, because I had become accustomed to the idea that Paraguayans embrace a predominantly audiovisual culture, due to the exclusivity of written text and the Spanish language within campesino communities. However, the approach of this page helps to explain this discrepancy, because the information is directed primarily at the outside non-Guaraní speaking community. Very few posts were in a language other than Spanish, enabling CONAMURI to widen their audience to members outside of the Guaraní speaking community.

According to my second category, intention, 65.5% of posts aimed to spread awareness

or underscore an issue, whereas 34.5% were posted to inspire readers or advertise an event.

Many days' posts were devoted to a particular theme or event, even though other relevant articles published that day were also mixed in. For example, January 1 was dedicated to commemorating the 20-year anniversary of the Zapatista struggle, a movement that stands as an inspiration to CONAMURI. This day of posts evoked a lot of reactions, especially the sharing of articles, from participants outside of Paraguay, specifically within Central America. Similarly, January 9 was devoted to discussing women's rights issues since the day commemorated the 41st anniversary of the execution of Paraguayan feminist and political hero Soledad Barrett Viedma. Logically, these articles involved a much greater Paraguayan response, particularly from women. These two examples demonstrate that managers of the fan page post articles with a particular intent, targeting various specific audiences to evoke certain reactions and engage different populations.

Finally, regarding the frames of posts, 48.5% were diagnostic, 33.3% prognostic, and 18.2% motivational. A diagnostic article underscores an issue without presenting a solution. An example would be an article denouncing hunger and poverty in Paraguay, despite the high level of economic activity in Paraguay, telling the story of a particular community that lacks adequate access to resources. Overall, diagnostic posts generated the most response on average, especially by means of shares, demonstrating the role of the page in spreading more widespread awareness about Paraguayan food sovereignty and campesino concerns. Next, an article is considered prognostic if it presents a solution, alternative or example. For example, Lucia posted an article originating in *La Gran Epoca* that described Argentina's efforts to block the construction of a Monsanto plant and the ultimate political decision to declare the building unconstitutional, due to widespread protests. Articles such as these provide often display success stories or examples for CONAMURI members and supporters to follow, acting as incentives and reminders that

alternatives are possible. These articles generated the most positive third level of response, comments, such as, “Paraguay should do this too!”

A post is considered motivational if it calls people to action or to participate in a particular event. As an example, Lucia posted many statuses advertising activities such as the country wide general protest on March 26. The most common response to these sorts of posts was first degree, likes, a form of demonstrating general support for an event or the movement. Overall, as VOX Global suggests, the diversity of posts is crucial to consider, because it demonstrates the various approaches being employed on the page to attract different stakeholders.

Response, Participation Degree, and Background: Although membership increases quickly on the page, growing from 6,693 to 6,743 members in the span of a month, only 608 individuals, a mere 9% of members, participated actively throughout my analysis, either by liking, commenting, or sharing a post more than once. This discrepancy between membership and participation levels might be explained by the low requirements involved to join versus the relative amount commitment required interact regularly and openly on the page. Throughout the month, participation included 1,030 first degree, 802 second degree, and 39 third degree interactions. This lack of second and third degree activism emphasizes that individuals were more motivated to participate in simple ways that could easily blend in, than in manners that could openly identify them with the movement. Unfortunately, the public and inclusive nature of the page removes the sense of security experienced within the private group, in which individuals need not be concerned about who might be viewing the content of the page.

Liking a post, besides being less time consuming than a share or a comment, can easily seem low-risk, because one’s action can become intermixed with the 50 other likes, making it

less visible to onlookers. On the other hand, sharing a post on one's wall requires openly identifying with the cause to one's friends or to the friends of those who might share the post. Many are not comfortable with their political activity being accessible to a widespread audience. Similarly, commenting on a post opens one to the greater scrutiny of anyone who visits the page. Visitors don't necessarily have to be members or supporters, since the page is public, creating the potential that some onlookers might see the activity as unfavorable. As a result, second and third degree interaction often requires a higher level of engagement or commitment.

However, of participants, the most popular age group was 25-34, demonstrating engagement of a younger population comfortable with social media. 92.1% participated 2-5 times, 5.6% participated 6-10 times, and 2.3% participated 10 times or more. Of those that participated 10 times or more, 57% were mutual friends with a CONAMURI director, demonstrating the high level of commitment involved to motivate active engagement on the public page. Of participants, 59% were women and 41% men, whereas an additional 48 participants were other organizations such as Red Rural Paraguay and Decidamos Paraguay.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, approximately 40% listed their university education in their profiles, demonstrating that this page tends to attract the participation of a more educated and privileged population. This population's greater level of interaction might be explained by its comfort with public writing in Spanish, because literacy and Spanish fluency are two prerequisites for participation on the page. Although some Guaraní and Portuguese audiovisuals and articles circulate the page, the majority of posts are in Spanish, since the page is directed at the extended Spanish-speaking community. This prevalence of Spanish can present a challenge, because Guaraní is the language of the home and community, whereas Spanish is taught in school and used for business. Consequentially,

¹⁸⁸ See Glossary for explanation.

those lacking a solid education are less confident reading and writing in Spanish. As a result, they might be hesitant to participate, demonstrating continued barriers to inclusive interaction.

Although the page is directed at the outside community, and many members live outside Paraguay, actual participation was concentrated mainly in Asunción and large Paraguayan cities (See Figure 6. 1), demonstrating yet again that holding a stake in the issue often drives actual engagement. In fact, 36% of participants were mutual friends with one of the CONAMURI directors, and an additional 37% were listed as working with related organizations in their job descriptions. Thus, a whole 73% had a tie with CONAMURI that was strong enough to be instantly apparent from a brief analysis of their profile. Despite general concentration of participation in Asunción, approximately 23% of participants lived outside of Paraguay (see Figure 6.2), and an additional 20.5% had unlisted profiles, signifying cell phone use for access, hinting at participation in rural areas lacking reliable Internet.

PANCHA CARRASCO



Léia y escribía aunque era prohibido para las mujeres
 En 1842 instigó al pueblo para alzarse en armas
 A los 40 años se convirtió en soldado del Ejército Nacional
 Combatió contra William Walker y los filibusteros
 Única mujer que tomó parte activa en las batallas
 Empuñó el fusil, atendió enfermos,
 consoló desahuciados y enterró a los muertos

NINGUNA MUJER SUMISA HA CAMBIADO LA HISTORIA



Conamuri Paraguay
 Liked · January 28

Cuando una mujer avanza... ¡ningún hombre retrocede!

Like · Comment · Share

47 people like this. Top Comments ▾

88 shares



Maggi Py Mujer de hierro y un gran ejemplo
 Like · Reply · January 28 at 5:41pm



Juan Silva las mujeres con su silencio han dado batalla en diferentes campos y han salido victoriosas , en mi opinión el casi todo lo que se propongan son triunfalistas , pues son mas cautas inteligentes
 Like · Reply · January 29 at 3:12pm

Sponsored Create Ad

New Day, New Arrivals!
modcloth.com



Check out the latest styles! Casual, dressy, mini, maxi -- the cutest dresses are here.

Example of post content and response

101

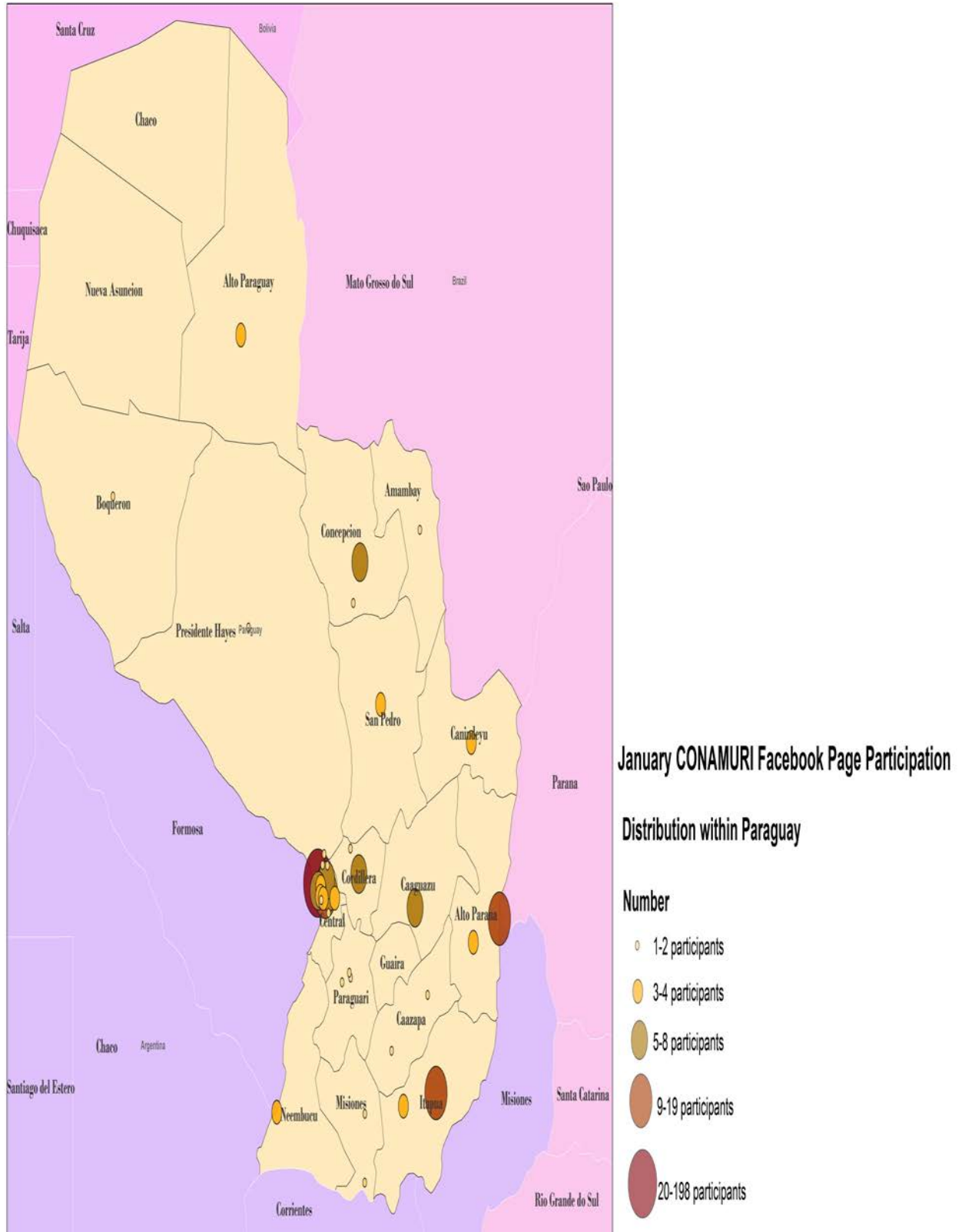
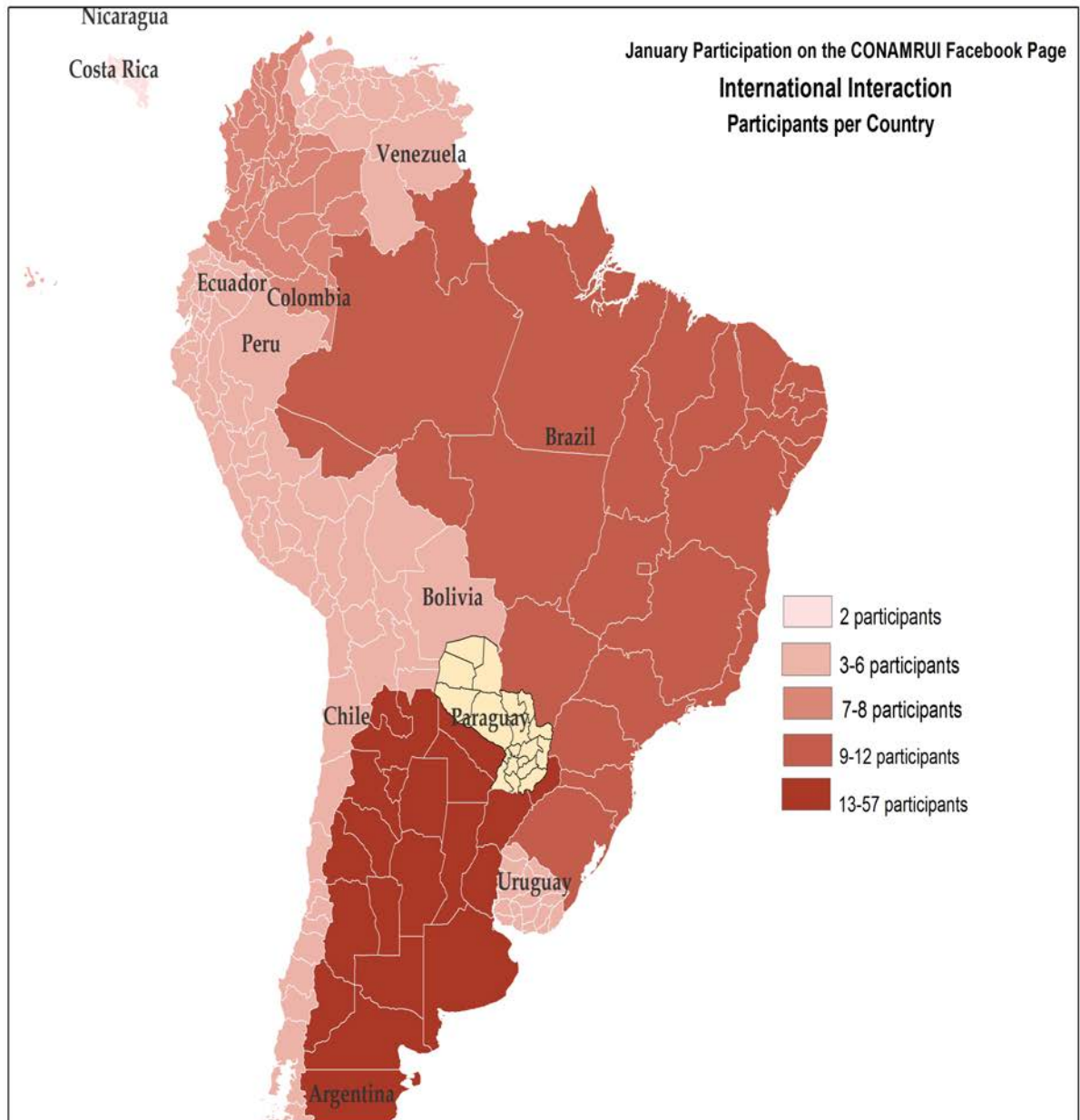


Figure 6.1



125 Facebook participants operated on unlisted profiles, suggesting cell phone use. The activity of these participants is not displayed.

An additional 20 members participated from outside of Latin America.

Figure 6.2

The Online Questionnaire: Considering the challenges that a public page might pose to participation, and to test how the page might succeed or fail at motivating the participation of members with a low level of involvement, I created an online questionnaire, asking members to answer three simple questions (see Table 6.1). Lucia posted it at the top of the page, where it would be the first thing visible to visitors on the page, adjusting the settings so that follow up posts would fall beneath the questionnaire. The questionnaire evoked an even lower level of response than I had initially believed, motivating 14 first degree, 1 second degree and 5 third degree interactions. Only three individuals followed the directions of the post by answering the survey questions, representing a fourth level of engagement. Of the few that participated, all were highly involved members of the organization who accessed Facebook by means of their home Internet access, demonstrating a high level of connectivity and strong ties. Two are from Asunción, and the other is from Canindeyu, but interacts with Asunción directors frequently. All in all, this questionnaire emphasized that the page acts primarily as a tool for information sharing as opposed to direct engagement of members who are not already heavily involved with the organization.

Table 6.1

Anita is a student interested in getting to know CONAMURI better. She is here studying, and wants to know about the interactions on our fan page and how it mobilizes us in defense of our rights. Can you please answer her questions? Thank you for your help!

1. What community are you from?
2. How did you get to know CONAMURI?
 - a. By means of social media
 - b. Through friends and family
 - c. CONAMURI events/advertizing/ other
3. How do you access the page?
 - a. By cell phone
 - b. By computer

Your response can be posted as a comment below, or for your privacy, to Anita at her Facebook address, https://www.facebook.com/brianne.illich?ref=tn_tnmn

Although the general direct participation level on the page was discouragingly low during January, it is important to keep in mind that the primary intention of this page is to inform the outside community and gather more weak tie support. It is impossible to see how many of the total members, or even nonmembers, actually visited the page or read posts during the month. It is entirely possible that an audience much larger than demonstrated by participation benefitted from the information being posted during January. This is a factor that we cannot know for sure. However, what we *do* know is that membership is increasing at a considerable rate, alerting a greater population to the cause. Looking forward, the following section will analyze the role of social media in working to accomplish CONAMURI's third goal: creating an alternative space for information sharing and empowerment.

Goal 3, Podcasts for Power: Spreading the Word of and Empowering the Voiceless

Recognizing the inaccessibility of mainstream media, how can a CONAMURI alternative podcast create an outlet in which marginalized populations can tell their stories and engage in discussions within their communities? How can this impact collective identity and solidarity efforts? How might it empower individuals? Yvytu Pyahu, translated roughly as "New Wind," is a community radio station, operated in the district of Caaguazú, and part of the Paraguayan Association of Community Radio and Alternative Stations. Established in October 2012, in response to President Lugo's ousting, it is a space for vulnerable groups to express their voices, providing listeners with programs, in both Spanish and Jopará, that deliver culturally relevant news, create critical discourses, tell personal stories, or play traditional Paraguayan music. Those that run the station describe the show as a "feminist radio to incite female assertiveness and action... it is the voice of female campesinas."¹⁸⁹ In this way, because mainstream media sources

¹⁸⁹ Ápe Paraguay. October 17, 2012. "Radi Yvytu Pyahu 98.5 Fm." Video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uUcIohGS3k> (accessed December 20, 2013).

have proven themselves “incapable of informing the population in a reflexive and objective manner... Yvytu Pyahu [acts as] an alternative, inclusive, feminist, anti-patriarchal, reflexive and critical medium.”¹⁹⁰ Overall, its objective is to create a space to foster open and supportive communication among different stakeholders to democratize access to information, protect the rights of rural women, defend food sovereignty objectives, and evoke participation.¹⁹¹ Most importantly, it seeks to strengthen the shared campesino identity, a point of strength and solidarity within the movement.

CONAMURI began streaming live access to its community radio show, Yvytu Pyahu 98.5 FM, on the CONAMURI Facebook page in January 2014, simultaneously providing greater access to news and empowering individuals whose stories are told on the show. In making its radio show a podcast accessible in various locations including its Facebook, it has expanded its pool of listeners. Messages expressed by the programs reach a larger audience, gathering more support against the pressure of commercial radio stations and government censorship. Aside from accessing the station on Facebook and Twitter, people living outside Paraguay can now subscribe to the station on ivoox and ustream, allowing one of the tools that was once primarily directed at local communities, to be accessible to the international community at large.

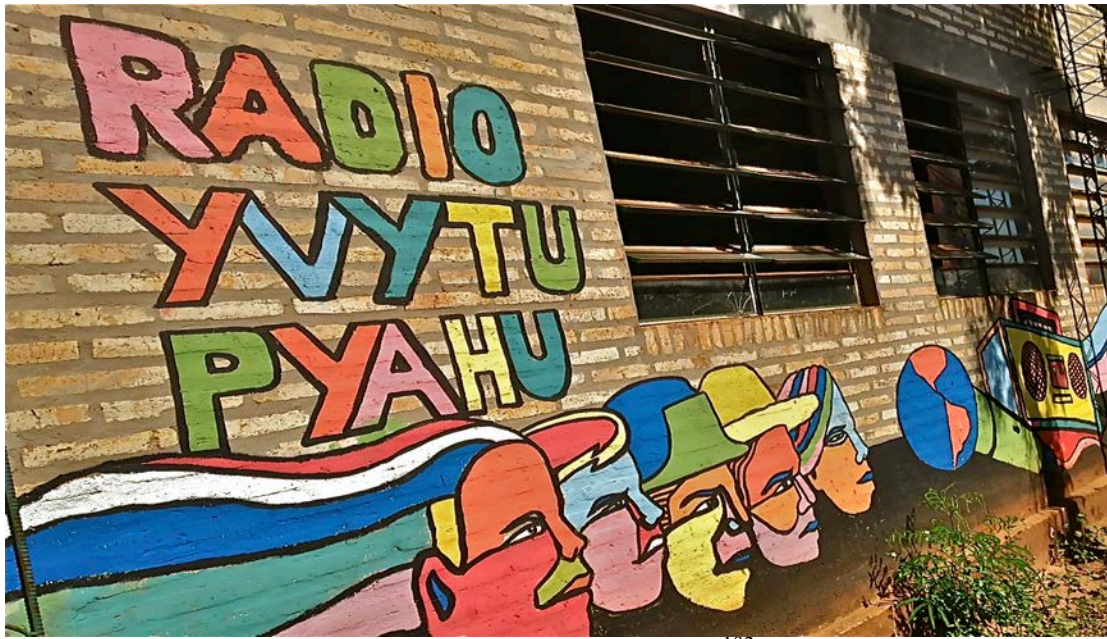
The following section seeks to tell the personal story of Radio Yvytu Pyahu, painting a picture of its efforts and goals, and revealing how the role of the radio station is transforming since the incorporation of social media tools.

“radio feminista para incitar el protagonismo de mujeres... es la voz de mujeres campesinas”

¹⁹⁰ “Conamuri Inaugura Radio Alternativa Yvytu Pyahu”, <http://www.weeffect.org/es/2012/10/17/conamuri-inagura-radio-alternativa-yvytu-pyahu/> (accessed December 30, 2013).

“los medios tradicionales se han mostrado incapaces de informar el público de manera reflexiva y objetiva... Yvytu Pyahu es un medio alternativo, inclusivo, feminista, antipatriarcal, reflexivo y crítico.”

¹⁹¹ Ibid



The Yvytu Pyahu Entrance¹⁹²

The Story of Yvytu Pyahu: CONAMURI's Alternative Communication Outlet

Francisco rubs his eyes blearily as I pass him his morning *tereré*. He murmurs thanks, but does not look away from his computer screen, where he is reading various news articles. As the host of the 6:00 am news, he arrives at the station especially early to set up and prepare for his program. Cyntia, the eighteen-year-old sound manager, waves me over frantically from behind the glass in the sound room, signally that the program is about to begin. Cyntia volunteers at the station from 5:30 am until 4:00 pm daily, managing the sound for all programs. I put on a pair of headphones, and plant myself in front of a computer.

Today we are test running our new streaming podcast system, and it's my job to see if the program is accessible live. As Francisco begins delivering news about a recent campesino protest in San Pedro, his voice also echoes from my computer. I nudge Cyntia and gesture wordlessly to the screen. She beams, and sends a quick text, "It works!" to the manager of the station, Sonia, who will be arriving soon to host the next program.

¹⁹² Names in the following section are changed for the privacy of individuals.

A knock at the door announces Clarita, who assists in managing the station. She also plans on beginning her own Yvyty Pyahu program soon, in which she will translate sections of the Paraguayan Constitution from Spanish to Guaraní. All Paraguayan legal proceedings and documents are recorded in Spanish, excluding a large sector of the population. In response, to inform non-Spanish speaking communities about their rights and to make the legal process more inclusive, she intends to read translated sections, and discuss the implications of these laws on her own show.

Cyntia whispers the good news of the podcast's success to Clarita, who almost immediately posts a link on the CONAMURI page, directing members to the streaming site. Cyntia's desire to celebrate more openly is obvious, but she dutifully waits until the commercial break to let out a celebratory squeal and hug Clarita. The commercial is not the average McDonald's jingle. Instead, the ad is sponsored by an international campaign, "Basta la violencia hacia las mujeres," translated as "Enough with Violence Against Women," and provides an important message about the signs of domestic abuse and how to get help. In fact, most ads on Yvyty Pyahu's station contain an informational message relevant to campesino women. Some include quotes or short interviews with CONAMURI leaders, called "intervenciones," that discuss different political, economic, or social issues.

Soon, the door opens again, revealing Sonia and her three-year-old daughter, Coni. Coni shrieks a loud "Tía," and runs to jump on my lap. Flattered by her unabashed affection, I remind her to stay quiet until the end of Francisco's program. Sonia smiles, relieved that I have unquestionably adopted my role as temporary babysitter during her program. As Francisco's program wraps up, Sonia selects the articles that she will translate aloud to her audience in Guaraní, choosing from posts on the CONAMURI Facebook page. Her program is especially

helpful, for it provides information for those that lack access to the Internet, do not speak Spanish, or are illiterate.

Today, she chooses an E'a.com article about agrochemicals. In the article, SENAVE claims that it is impossible to properly regulate the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals, because the phenomenon is so widespread. After reading the article to her audience, Sonia puts the ex director of SENAVE, Inés, on the line, giving listeners a chance to ask her questions about agrochemical regulations and for her to respond and explain the situation. After Sonia's show ends, Cyntia removes her headphones and squeezes my shoulder.

"You're almost up," she reminds me. I nod, feeling nervous. I had agreed to be the guest speaker on Don Javier's human rights program throughout the week. And, although this wasn't my first time speaking on the show, I was still worried about accepting live radio callers to discuss various Paraguayan human rights issues. It was especially nerve-wracking, because the questions were often posed in Guaraní and translated to me in Spanish; my responses were similarly translated back into Guaraní. I was also painfully aware of my status as a young student and outsider. Despite these challenges, Don Javier was immensely enthusiastic about incorporating a different perspective on his program, and I was grateful for the opportunity to give back to the organization.

....

"I don't know why you get so nervous," Don Javier teases, winking, after the end of his show. "It's just a chance for you to say what you have to say." I nod, recognizing my own gratitude for the space that allowed me to discuss what I cared about with an audience that listened. Recognizing my personal gratitude, I reflected on how meaningful of a tool this outlet must be for the campesino community that often faces barriers to public expression of their

experiences. And, with its added reach as a podcast, it would receive the support of the outside community, acting as further protection from potential censorship and pressure from commercial stations.



Guest speaking on Don Javier's human rights radio show with Yvytu Pyahu

CONAMURI Consequences of Social Media Outreach: An Analysis of Strengths and Limitations

Positive Impact: Interaction, Engagement and Visibility

Reflecting on the approaches and roles of the three separate social media spaces, CONAMURI has adopted social media strategies in order to accomplish a variety of goals, especially to strengthen internal linkages, facilitate intra-organizational and international outreach, and create a new outlet for expression and solidarity. And, despite initial mistrust of social media's capacity to motivate direct involvement, and the fact that opportunity does not always translate into reality, social media has played a huge role in achieving these three goals. Director of formation, Carmen, reveals that she considers the most important role of social media to be its ability to increase organizational visibility and to attract new membership. She claims,

“there have been many repercussions from CONAMURI communication... we are well known on the general level...[regarding our] constant political action.”¹⁹³

She explains that rarely a day passes without visits or communication from individuals attracted to the organization by information gathered from social media or received from a mutual contact. One example of such visitors is Italian couple, Marco and Camilla, who visited CONAMURI headquarters in late January after having discovered the CONAMURI Facebook page. They were drawn to CONAMURI because of their interest in the agricultural conflict in Latin America, and hoped to learn from CONAMURI to help their own Italian organization become more involved in La Via Campesina. The two had tried to form connections with other food sovereignty groups, but CONAMURI was much more responsive, motivating their decision to visit Asunción. Upon arrival, Carmen put the couple in contact with a small rural community in Curuguaty, where they soon traveled.

This not only represents a connection between the rural and urban community, but also a link between marginalized populations and the international community. In the same way, social media is helping CONAMURI to build alliances both laterally with marginalized groups and with interests with a greater political voice. Overall, social media tools have brought many benefits to CONAMURI. However, it must be recognized that these tools are complementary, and are not perceived as substitutes for other activity by the organization. The following section seeks to explain these limitations.

¹⁹³ BriAnne Illich, Anonymous Interview. Asunción, January 14, 2014.

“hay mucha repercussion de la comunicación de CONAMURI ...somos muy conocidas al nivel general ... en accion política constante.”

Limitations

Although social media has helped to build and maintain organizational linkages both internally and externally, increase visibility, and foster solidarity, its negative consequences and weaknesses are important to consider. Related to social media's ability to promote and preserve linkages, CONAMURI nevertheless continues to emphasize the importance of person-to-person interactions in building new relationships, arguing that social media "has accelerated [processes], but does not replace reunions, [or] personal interactions. Although technology makes... one feel closer to that person on chat...personal encounters are not substituted."¹⁹⁴ Membership has clearly increased because of social media's accessibility and outreach. However, these ties are arguably less strong and stakes for participation are lower. This social relation reality may consequentially fail to motivate strong levels of commitment or high-risk organizational involvement. Arguably, there is a "crucial nexus between individual decisions and social relations."¹⁹⁵ Following this logic, if social relations are weak, individuals will not be driven to engage, especially if the interaction could be considered risky.

The low motivation for participation is revealed, for example, by the lack of reaction to my online questionnaire, in which only 3 people in a population of nearly 7,000 participated. Another consideration related to the consequences of lowering the stakes for virtual participation might be over-dependence on social media. Members may become too comfortable with and reliant on social media activity, and in doing so, neglect offline efforts and forms of mobilizing. Many weakly invested CONAMURI social media participants, believing that social media interaction is sufficient, fail to take the next step of attending a meeting or an event, depriving

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

"ha acelerado muchas decisiones pero no reemplaza al reunion, encuentro personal... Aunque con la tecnologia ... se siente cerca de la persona en el chat, ... el encuentro personal no está sustituido."

¹⁹⁵ Diani and Passy, *Social Movements and Networks*

themselves of the opportunity to be inspired more fully. However, without these social media tools, perhaps some individuals would not be involved at all with the organization. Nevertheless, emphasis on face-to-face interaction and the preservation of personal ties has persisted and increased, because CONAMURI recognizes the essential role that these factors play in promoting the sustainability and effectiveness of CONAMURI social movement efforts.

Next, even though social media can act as considerably powerful pressure mechanisms for CONAMURI due to network visibility in the virtual sphere, this visibility does not adequately transfer to the public sphere. Often, more direct and confrontational forms of protest are considered necessary in order to successfully pressure powerful interests into enacting new policy. Social media theorist Susan Eckstein explains that, “elites perceive public protest as threatening, because it is highly visible and may cause contagion.”¹⁹⁶ She argues that this is especially important, because in regions where elite interests dominate, the ability to pressure other classes strongly influences the effectiveness of mobilization. Finally, persisting exclusivity of social media prevent widespread organizational solidarity. Many people continue to lack easy access to the Internet, cutting out important sectors of the population. Furthermore, social media networks depend heavily on written forms of communication, creating an additional barrier. Very few comments or posts on the Facebook group or fan page are in Guaraní, yet the podcast addresses this issue by operating in both Spanish and Guaraní.

Thus, although the organization is beginning to depend on social media increasingly to spread its message and strengthen the cause, it recognizes the limitations of these tools in working to achieve CONAMURI aims. Embracing the need for balance, it still emphasizes the

¹⁹⁶ Susan Eckstein, "Power and Popular Protest in Latin America." In *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, 1-61. London, England: University of California Press, 2001, 48.

importance of other communication efforts achieved through traditional methods to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the movement.

Looking Forward: Achieving a Balance

CONAMURI views social media as complementary, rather than substitute, tools that increase internal communication and interaction, spread awareness and advertise its achievements, and promote solidarity. As a result, its social movement strategy incorporates various techniques, promoting a strategy that combines both “direct and explicit” forms of protest with more “subtle” everyday forms of resistance, a concept first introduced by James C. Scott.¹⁹⁷ It acts in both proactive and reactive manners and works to adopt approaches that target different sectors of the population. In other words, the particular tactic selected to relay information, engage individuals, or evoke response depends on the audience. Considering the limitations of social media and the general goals of CONAMURI, the final chapter of this thesis explains the efforts that CONAMURI adopts when social media efforts alone are not sufficient to achieve social movement aims. In this way, it engages in an analysis of social movement theory, and surveys the potential for CONAMURI mobilization in the future.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

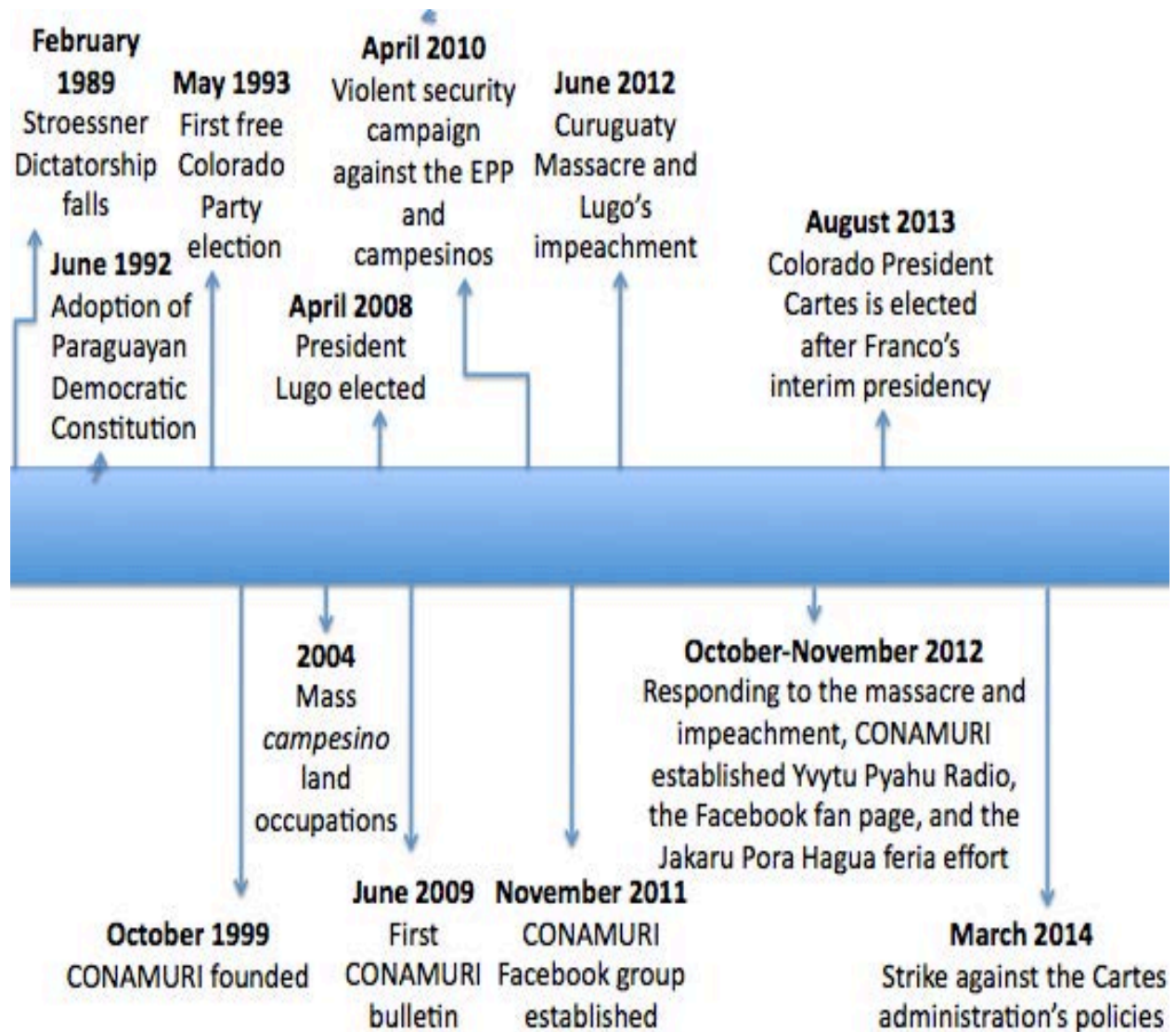
Chapter Seven
When Social Media Isn't Enough: Social Movement Tactics and Looking Forward

Considering the complementary role and considerable impact of social media tools within CONAMURI, what additional social movement tactics are necessary to successfully achieve organizational aims? What do these approaches seek to address? How might political opportunities for CONAMURI mobilization expand or contract? This final chapter explains how CONAMURI devises its social movement strategy to achieve a balance that effectively incorporates various tactics, including social media efforts, to make the largest impact and reap the greatest benefits. Specifically, it describes face-to-face efforts that CONAMURI adopts to effectively promote collective identity and action, facilitate intra-organizational and international cooperation, and increase visibility to bolster negotiation and pressure mechanisms targeted at elite interests. Finally, considering the campesino context and CONAMURI social movement efforts, it seeks to discuss CONAMURI mobilization potential and provide suggestions for the future.

The CONAMURI Approach: Achieving Balance for a Sustainable Movement Future

What approaches do CONAMURI adopt to take advantage of opportunities to strengthen organizational impact? CONAMURI interacts with its socio-economic and political environment to determine effective and inclusive strategy, surveying opportunities to attract participants, coordinate activities, and evoke responses from different stakeholders. In this way, its tactics are dependent on the historical context of high risk protests and censorship, resources and pressure mechanisms, political and social inclusivity, and the interests of other stakeholders. Considering this environment, CONAMURI tactics reflect the identity, beliefs, and experience of the organization as a whole.

**Figure 7.1 Timeline
Paraguayan Events and Corresponding Campesino Response**



Specifically, CONAMURI strategy acknowledges the importance of using social media tools as complements to strengthen the cause. However, it simultaneously maintains various face-to-face efforts to promote internal cohesion and empowerment, facilitate intra-organizational cooperation, and bolster visibility, evoking responses across different sectors. CONAMURI, in particular, recognizes the need for different approaches to engage diverse

stakeholders, attracting new supporters from third parties and inciting reactions from and perhaps negotiations with opponents. Meaning, it is important to provoke not only elite response, but also the interest of other groups and civil society to produce effective, inclusive and sustainable reform.

Lucia explains this need for balance and to adopt a spectrum of approaches:

To achieve successes considering our grand political strategy and focus on social transformation... we can talk of spaces to educate, alternative communications, encounters between the city and the countryside by means of different events such as the organic food fairs, the political incidences in which we participate with state institutions, struggles in the streets, carrying banners and shouting slogans of vindication, organizing bases in order to evoke critical consciousness, our example as a directive that isn't compromised by the temptations of money, the potential of the youth as a new force... In CONAMURI we do all of this... the results are a process of construction.¹⁹⁸

Etzioni and Etzioni explain that embracing this balance of tactics is likely to achieve better outcomes than relying on singular forms of communication and resistance.¹⁹⁹ Overall, as this chapter surveys distinct social movement tactics, it is important to keep in mind the collective identity and intentions of CONAMURI. Looking forward, CONAMURI must strive to produce a synergy between face-to-face and virtual action to achieve a balance in which activity can be coordinated inclusively, organically and efficiently.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Illich, Anonymous Interview.

“lograr conquistas en vistas a nuestra gran estrategia política como lo es la transformación social... Podemos hablar de los espacios de formación, la comunicación alternativa, el encuentro entre campo y ciudad a través de los diferentes eventos como las ferias de comidas orgánicas, la incidencia política a través de la participación con las instituciones del Estado, la lucha en las calles, portando banderas y gritando consignas de reivindicación, organizando a las bases para la elevación de las conciencias, el ejemplo firme de una dirigencia que no se tuerce ante las tentaciones del dinero, la apuesta en la juventud como fuerza latente.... En Conamuri hacemos un poco de todo eso y los resultados siguen un proceso de construcción.”

¹⁹⁹ Haythornthwaite, “Social networks and online community.”

²⁰⁰ Ibid

Collective Identity and Shared Everyday Forms of Resistance

What non-virtual CONAMURI tactics maintain strong-ties and create a collective identity? How can this development of a collective identity help to ensure the sustainability and strength of the movement? In what ways can everyday resistance empower individuals and the campesino community as a whole? As the previous chapter expresses, social media tactics cannot replace the benefits gained from face-to face interaction and shared experiences. In-person interactions build a personal and collective CONAMURI identity that fosters internal solidarity and motivates collective action. Sociologists Mario Diani and Florence Passy defend that personal ties are often established far before collective action occurs, underscoring the importance of strong-tie linkages in facilitating collective and effective social movement action:

Personal friends, relatives, colleagues, and neighbors, may all affect individual decisions to become involved in a movement; so may people who share with prospective participants some kind of collective engagement, such as previous or current participation in other movement activities, political or social organizations, and public bodies.²⁰¹

As a result, strong tie relationships help to ensure the sustainability of a movement by encouraging continued activity by means of social pressure mechanisms and community support. With these linkages, Sociologist Marshall Ganz argues that CONAMURI leaders have the potential “to know where to find local resources, whom to recruit, what tactics to use, and how to encourage constituents to identify with the organization.”²⁰² This can explain why some organizations are able to successfully generate action, while others are not. CONAMURI, by means of frequent face-to-face interactions that encourage strong-ties, is able to transform

²⁰¹ Diani and Passy, *Social Movements and Networks*.

²⁰² Marshall Ganz, “Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements.” In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*, edited by Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, 3-31. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2004.

bystanders into committed activists who are more motivated to engage in high-risk social movement activity. Sociologist Deborah Gould explains the role that emotions and personal connections play in encouraging more committed forms of engagement, emphasizing the need for strong ties:

Protests, strikes, sit-ins, and the like engage people in sometimes dangerous and often risky, intense, and exhilarating activities. In addition, the issues around which people mobilize are usually highly emotionally charged...the current emphasis on rationality and strategic thinking often creates a picture of protesters are exceptionally cognitive and unusually dispassionate. It should go without saying that protesters and activists are rational actors...they make calculations about costs and benefits and strategize about how to secure their interests. But *how* they do so is not self-evident and cannot simply be asserted...Perhaps more useful than an a priori assertion or assumption of rationality is a recognition that people are much *more* than rational actors.

Related to this theme of emotions and solidarity, communal and simple everyday forms of resistance empower and unite individuals by spurring them to assert agency and express the feasibility of alternatives through common action. This reinforces collective identity, increases interactions among members, and strengthens strong ties. Often, social movement theory does not value low-key community organizing enough, disproportionately focusing on visible and high-risk activism. However, Susan Eckstein explains that, “while such quiet forms of defiance rarely result in major change, they can...undermine government legitimacy and productivity to the point where political and economic elite feel the need to institute significant reforms.”²⁰³

Young Paraguayan journalist, Fachu, agrees that some of the most important tactics to strengthen internal linkages and empower individuals are simple tasks and shared experiences:

Communication among militants is by means of channels such as sharing *tereré* and cooking together ...This is a very important political moment, because while they are working, there are also political conversations constructing cooperation...We have to know how to work and produce together.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Ekstein, “Power and Popular Protest,” 8

²⁰⁴ Illich. Interview with Aguilar.

Simply by sharing and interacting, CONAMURI women have the potential to build strong ties and demonstrate their resistance as a united group. CONAMURI has engaged in a variety of in-person efforts to achieve these two aims. Fachu explains that linkages and empowerment are fostered by CONAMURI solidarity courses in topics such as interactive agro-ecological farming techniques, female empowerment and political ideology. CONAMURI representatives host various seminars and conferences within their districts, making opportunities for interaction, education, and information sharing more accessible for isolated rural women. These seminars include “encounters” in which women, with the guidance of representative facilitators, discuss issues such as human rights, female agency and confrontation against machismo, and structural violence within Paraguay.

In various districts, members are encouraged to participate in community building activities, such as hands-on agro-ecological production within community gardens, and the operation of local seed banks to protect native seed variations and make resources more accessible to local farmers. These everyday production efforts act as tools of communication and unification, demonstrating to members their individual capacity, and inviting them to become more interactive with others through alternative outlets. One district representative explains that community-building productive resistance is essential to the movement, stating, “if there is no production, there is no resistance ... In the countryside we are resisting with production ... to inform people...of the power not only of producers, but also of consumers.”²⁰⁵ These simple acts of everyday resistance protect their way of life and maintain the sustainability of the movement.

“La comunicación entre las militante está por otras canales como el terrere y de cocinar o de compartir. Eso es un momento político muy importante, porque cuando están desarrollandose, tambien hay conversaciones politicas construyendo un colectivo... hay un conocerse a trabajar juntas y producir.”

²⁰⁵ BriAnne Illich. Interview with Perla Alvarez Britez. Personal Interview. Asuncion, January 14, 2014.

Si no hay producción, no hay resistencia. ...En el campo estamos resistiendo con la producción y en la ciudad tratamos de informar la gente y cambiar la consciencia...[para informar la gente] del poder “ no solamente de productores pero de consumidores tambien”

Overall, with these community approaches, CONAMURI is working to ensure that members learn to claim ownership over their own reality, take situations into their own hands, and seek solutions independent of government support. As a result, member confidence and commitment strengthens, constructing the internal unity necessary to increase organizational mobilization capacity. Combined with social media internal interaction mechanisms, looking forward, CONAMURI has the potential to strengthen both in-person and virtual internal linkages.

Outreach and Cooperation: Extension of CONAMURI Values

CONAMURI values weak ties that enable organizational access to diverse audiences with whom they may build alliances, receive advice, inspiration or ideas, and cooperate. Although social media has proven relatively effective in building widespread weak ties within the CONAMURI cause, enabling leaders to access populations despite geographic and temporal constraints, the organization continues to emphasize the importance of face-to face interaction to cooperate with external actors on the local, national, and international level.

CONAMURI produce fairs, called Jakaru Porã Haguã, Guaraní for “So we can eat well,” are especially successful in creating local and national linkages.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Zibechi, "Paraguay: Women at the Center of Resistance."



Jakaru Porã Haguã feria April 11, 2014. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/conamuri.paraguay>

They foster connections between rural and urban populations, building support systems across districts, and attracting contributions and recognition from less-invested individuals. These ferias have created an inclusive value chain that incorporates various stakeholders in the process, both promoting the cause and ensuring food sovereignty sustainability. In this way, ferias work to reinforce and defend the local value chain that is being destroyed by the agribusiness chain and supermarket monopolization of production and sales. The chain begins with campesinas, who produce the ingredients throughout 12 districts. These ingredients are later cooked into traditional and popular dishes by CONAMURI representatives, in collaboration with other campesino organizations such as the OLT, who retrieve the produce and compensate the producers. These plates are then sold at events in populated areas in Asunción. La Costanera, a riverside walk where vendors, musicians and entertainers, locals, and tourists alike gather in masses, is a popular location for fundraisers. In fact, ferias have become so popular that the most

recent event on April 11, 2014, sold over 3,000 kilos of food. These events are highly visible, provide an accessible market for campesino agriculture and artisan goods, unite campesino organizations, and act as fundraisers to support CONAMURI. The proceeds from ferias are currently going towards purchasing CONAMURI headquarters in Asunción.



Facebook fan page advertisement of the first CONAMURI feria of 2014²⁰⁷

Similarly, to generate linkages across national borders by face-to-face mechanisms, CONAMURI representatives attend international food sovereignty conferences to share their stories, network with other leaders and organizations, and update themselves on the latest

²⁰⁷ Available at <https://www.facebook.com/conamuri.paraguay>

Translation of side description: JAKARU PORA HAGUA arrives in Asunción from 21 interior communities, bringing a variety of home-grown and agricultural products, cultivated by the campesino agricultural model. The offers available to the public include a variety of fruits and vegetables, aromatic herbs, legumes, palm hearts, eggs, cheese, different flours and grains, pan casero, honey, peanuts, sesame, preserves, sausages and pork, chicken, and duck. For lunch, there will be gallina casera, chipa, soup or chipa guasu, and other healthy and traditional food options from a kitchen in the plaza. Plaza Infante Rivarola de Recoleta - Asunción (Avda. Mariscal López between San Roque González y Teniente. Zotti).

information and suggestions from other movements. During my stay, CONAMURI youth were planning to attend a February Via Campesina food sovereignty conference in Brazil. At this conference, they would meet with over 15000 other representatives worldwide. Similarly, CONAMURI hosts Via Campesina reunions at headquarters, in which food sovereignty from throughout Latin America, especially the Southern Cone, travel to Asunción for information sharing, planning, and solidarity efforts. Concerning worldwide outreach, the CONAMURI president in January had recently returned from a conference in Valencia, Spain where she had cooperated with various Spanish-speaking food sovereignty leaders throughout the globe to share strategies and produce campaign videos to spread information about Via Campesina and other efforts.

Overall, CONAMURI has combined both face-to-face and virtual tactics to build weak ties both across Paraguay and throughout the world. These linkages are vital to ensuring the sustainability of the food sovereignty and campesino movement as a whole, creating spheres of support and solidarity. In the future, these weak linkages can help to facilitate more widespread collective action.

Claiming Visibility: Proactive and Reactive Resistance Outside the Cyber Realm

Proactive and Non-confrontational Action

CONAMURI works to ensure that the organization, and the food sovereignty movement in general, are visible, both in the public and virtual spheres. One way to spread information about their cause is through proactive and non-confrontational activity. For example, its bulletin, ÑE'ê Roky, published both in Guaraní and Spanish, updates the public about its recent achievements. This effort alone has helped CONAMURI to attract support from groups such as

the Fund for Nonviolence.²⁰⁸ Another example of its proactive approach was its program on TV Pública Paraguaya, Ura'Pe, that reached sectors of the population that continued to lack Internet access. Ura'Pe was additionally valuable, because television as opposed to written texts, is considerably more inclusive within the Guaraní oral culture. Television overcomes obstacles often created by social media written materials, most often requiring Spanish literacy.

Ura'Pe was made possible by a Lugo administration project that created a public and accessible television station in which various groups could host diverse programming. Patricia, the director of formation and education, hosted the program, sharing recipes and making visible the process of production and preparation. The show spoke of food sovereignty initiatives, how to prepare traditional Paraguayan dishes, modes of sharing, family and community relations, and was immensely popular and successful. Unfortunately, the program lost funding after Lugo's impeachment. However, CONAMURI continues to make special YouTube episodes with particular topics such as land rights, seed sovereignty, or deforestation in el Chaco. Unfortunately, access to these informational clips requires an Internet connection.

CONAMURI engages in various other proactive efforts to increase non-cyber visibility, such as writing letters to important political figures including the minister of the interior, painting murals, publishing articles in alternative news outlets, and acting as guest speakers on radio and television shows. Despite positive responses to negotiations and peaceful proactive behavior, CONAMURI also recognizes the need for more reactive and confrontational behavior in times of need to defend their rights and draw attention to abuses.

²⁰⁸ Perla Álvarez, Alicia Amarilla, Magui Balbuena, Julia Franco, *ÑE'ê Roky*, edited by CONAMURI, Boletín 8, 1-11. Asunción, March 2011.

High Risk Protests: Visibility in a Confrontational Manner

Often frustrated by delayed or lack of government recognition and protection of campesino rights, CONAMURI underscores the importance of campesino engagement in visible and confrontational reactive activity. Internal non-confrontational organizational efforts and social media activity, although contributing to cohesion, empowerment, and a certain level of visibility, can easily be overlooked by the government, because they do not pose direct obstacles or strains to operation. In contrast, confrontational activity is obvious and disruptive in a way that cannot be brushed aside or ignored. High-risk confrontational mobilization behavior, as first introduced in chapter one, includes a variety of efforts, such as organized marches and protests, roadblocks, land seizures, and other demonstrations. Though sparingly, these techniques are strategically adopted by CONAMURI to achieve one of two objectives: to pressure leaders into acknowledging the direness of their situation and enacting new policy, or to defend themselves against direct threats and abuses.

As much as gradual and respectful negotiation is vital to facilitating greater cooperation, visible demonstration is equally necessary as a social movement tool to achieve greater political visibility and bargaining power. CONAMURI has joined in communal efforts, as a member of larger groups such as The National Coordinator of the Recuperation of Ill-Gotten Lands, and the National Center of Campesina, Indigenous, and Popular Organizations, to participate in large marches and protests to make a larger impression. These protests occasionally deliver positive results regarding political response. For example, a 2011 protest that gathered over 10,000 people to demand land reform motivated the Lugo administration to ratify a border law that limited the renting of land to foreign interests. This was considered a large achievement and demonstrated the power of the population to pressure the government in a situation of political

sympathy for their cause. Unfortunately, Cartes' administration, largely unsympathetic to the campesino cause, has reversed this legislation and has presented a greater obstacle to campesino negotiation capacity. In the end, the non-violent nature of these demonstrations is important to emphasize. CONAMURI does not support the guerrilla activities of extremist groups such as the EPP, and works to disassociate itself from the image of the "violent campesino." As a result, CONAMURI hopes to continue engaging in "public acts" of peaceful protest.

However, CONAMURI conveys that more aggressive and confrontational action is justified in cases of self-defense against direct threats in the absence of sufficient government response. In other words, "tired of the abuses of which they are victims," CONAMURI women sometimes embrace times to "take justice into their own hands."²⁰⁹ This stance is especially relevant now, as isolated campesino populations face escalating levels of violence, and search for outlets to spread awareness about their situation and express their needs to outside communities. The violence these marginalized communities experience not only manifests itself within the narrow definition of physical force, such as brutal military oppression and forced displacement from lands. These peoples also struggle against structural violence that deprives populations of necessary resources guaranteed within the Paraguayan constitution, such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare. Driven by threats to life and liberty, groups have found themselves isolated, voiceless, and driven by desperation to violence. In these circumstances, CONAMURI celebrates campesino assertion of their rights.

Energy was especially high at Yvty Pyahu headquarters on January 28, 2014. The radio station had just received news that a community in Luz Bella, San Pedro was rebelling. They had

²⁰⁹ "Campesinos Hacen Justicia Por Mano Propia Ante Abuso De Sojeros E Inacción De Autoridades." *E'a* (January 29, 2014). <http://ea.com.py/campesinos-hacen-justicia-por-mano-propia-ante-abuso-de-sojeros-e-inaccion-de-autoridades/> [accessed February 2, 2014].

burned 1500 kilos of soy being transported by two large transport vehicles belonging to an agro-industry that had been illicitly spraying agrottoxins less than 100 meters from the community living space, a direct violation of Article 68 of Law 3742 Control of Pesticides.²¹⁰ The community's previous calls for protection against chemical poisoning were improperly addressed, if not entirely disregarded. Luz Bella decided to take matters into their own hands through collective and direct resistance. Many radio show members expressed their hope that the radical day's events represented the beginning of a united campesino revolution. Carmen expressed, "I believe the moment has arrived for us to mobilize...it is time that people know that they have this power to defend themselves."

Despite the often dire conditions that drive this sort of behavior, campesinos are victims of political criticism, being called rash, hysterical, or even dangerous. Nevertheless, CONAMURI defends its stance. In January 2014, the communications team, with the support of Via Campesina, drafted a letter to the Minister of the Interior, promoting the campesino right to actions of self-defense. It argues that radical activity has become "an act of legitimate defense" and a form of self-preservation. It explains that recent campesino mobilization is justified due to lack of government protection of their rights in the face of oppression. In this way, it states that aggressive response is necessary "beginning with the moment in which populations see their entire selves subjected to violations of human rights...defense of life is not a political ideology, but a right guaranteed in our own constitution."²¹¹

²¹⁰ Ibid

²¹¹ CONAMURI, "Relacionada Con El "Conflicto Campesino"." edited by Francisco de Vargas Minister of the Interior. Asunción, Paraguay, January 31, 2014.

"desde el momento en que se ven afectadas poblaciones enteras debido al avasallamiento de sus derechos humanos...la defensa de la vida no se trata de una postura ideológica, sino de un derecho garantizado en la propia Constitución."

Nevertheless, CONAMURI embraces values of non-violence and hopes to promote an image of peaceful protest in the face of oppression. Moving forward, the following section provides a reflection on the experiences of non-confrontational Paraguayan social movement behavior. Specifically, it is a narrative of my own personal experience on January 21, 2014 as a participant in the “Suba del Pasaje” protest in Asunción. The aim of this peaceful protest was to demand lowered bus prices and improved financial support opportunities for university students. Throughout, it describes the relationships among participants and the collective, supportive, and high-enthusiasm nature of the march.

In general, the reflection paints a picture of the positivity and cooperation present in high-risk activism that is often absent in literature. In this way, it hopes to confront the frequent assumption that high-risk behavior is inherently aggressive, threatening, contagious, and “hysterical.” In describing the personal and emotional nature of my experience, this reflection intends to reveal the feasibility and inclusiveness of this sort of activism for CONAMURI both now and in the future.²¹²

A Protest Reflection: The Value of Paraguayan Confrontational Activity

Sara and Alexander stand huddled on the street corner, passing a large jug of tereré between them. Marcos and I join, carrying posters with various slogans. The sign I choose for myself says “State Transport for All” in large red letters. Marcos looks down at me, protectively. The son of a CONAMURI member, he had assured the directors that he would look after me during the protest. They had been very supportive of my attendance, even though the march did not concern a direct CONAMURI issue. They supported that standing in solidarity with other organizations would build CONAMURI linkages, and nothing can replace the value of these

²¹² Names are changed for the privacy of individuals.

personal friendships and strong ties. Adriana had told me that she was especially glad that I would be experiencing the “magic of the organized people...and the heart of the town.”

Although today promises to bring a peaceful march, requiring a great deal of planning, a security team, and notification of the government, I am nevertheless weary. Marcos had been elbowed and punched in the face previously by the police when demonstrations had gotten out of hand. Also, his teasing that he would tell me when to run if the “clubs came out” didn’t settle my nerves.



Standing in the Plaza Italia, waiting for the march to begin on January 21, 2014

“Carlos says we should head to our meeting place in a minute,” Sara says, gesturing to her phone. “He’s keeping me updated on whatsapp,” she explains, “without these ‘ticks,’ there’s no revolution... how else would we all coordinate this once we’ve left home?”

...

On Palma, thirty or so students are already gathered. They wear signs around their necks with labels such as “security team,” “press,” or “section leader” that demonstrate their role in the march, reflecting the hierarchical and organized nature of the student event. Each student greets me with the customary kisses on both cheeks. Although a seemingly long process, each person greets everyone else individually, emphasizing the importance and prevalence of strong personal ties. The assembled students have been working together for weeks as part of the Asamblea Universitaria Estudiantil Permanente, or the Permanent University Student Assembly to organize this event. They have met in person, and have also coordinated and advertised over their Facebook page. Some have their arms around each other and are singing and dancing. Others pose for pictures, or wave to cars that drive by. The familial and jovial environment, surrounded by laughing students, makes me feel instantly safe.

There is a buzz of activity as the different teams coordinate their activity. Two girls, whose signs read “logistical team,” guard a large pile of posters. The posters have been premade to distribute to those who will participate in the march, even though they were not involved in the planning. The logistical team in this way hopes to encourage less-invested individuals to participate and to feel welcome. This team is also responsible for making sure that the march runs smoothly. They will direct march formations and cheers, and carry around large thermoses of water to keep everyone hydrated. The security team is having a meeting in the corner, arms folded. They don yellow armbands to signify their role of maintaining the peace. They will walk on the outsides of the march, remind participants of the peaceful nature of the protest, and ensure that nobody attempts to antagonize the police. The press team runs around taking photos, filming videos, and posting updates on their Facebook page and whatsapp about meeting spots. I raise my eyebrows, impressed by the intense level of organization and leadership, not at all like the

decentralized structure that I had anticipated. Throughout this time, a large crowd of students has gathered.

....

“Alright time to head over! Follow your logistical leaders, and be careful of traffic,” Carlos directs into the megaphone. Marcos nudges me forward and we begin marching. A logistical team member chants into a megaphone, and we follow along boisterously, some jumping up and down, or punching the air.

“¡Estudiantes, carajo! Somos estudiantes, carajo! Venimos desde abajo, carajo! Queremos educación y trabajo!”

Old women wave Paraguayan flags, smiling down at us from their patios. They clap along to the songs, as if we were a parade. Cars honk their horns in support, and children with painted faces blow whistles and giggle, waving at us as we pass. Some people looking onward even join us spontaneously in the march.

We pass fliers to others, advertising the countrywide general strike that is being planned for March 26. This strike, the first of its kind for 20 years, will call for an inclusive model of development. Its demands include agricultural reform, respect for human rights, readjustment of the minimum wage, and reduction in transportation costs. Today, we do not know what a success the strike will end up being. We are unaware that on March 26, 90% of Asunción’s workers will participate by abandoning their posts, and an additional 15,000 campesinos will travel to attend the protest from outside the city.²¹³ As we pass the fliers, we can hardly imagine the results: the strike’s magnitude will motivate President Cartes to express his willingness to negotiate reform.

²¹³ Sanie López Garelli. "Paraguay Vive La Primera Huelga General En Dos Décadas." *CNN Espanol* (March 26, 2014). <http://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2014/03/26/paraguay-enfrenta-la-primera-huelga-general-en-dos-decadas/> [accessed April 21, 2014].



A flyer for the March 26 General Strike

Vendors follow us selling carbonated drinks and *chipas*. Others sell whistles and small Paraguayan flags. The police look onward, calm, sternly and weary, but respectful our right to protest. It appears like the whole of Asunción has prepared for the march. The energy is high and positive, and I cannot fail to recognize the clear element of pride and determination in our march. I smile at a cheekily worded poster, “Pardon the disturbance, we’re protesting here,” a phrase that copies the common construction sign, “Pardon the disturbance, we’re constructing here.” We students finally arrive at the Plaza Italia to unite with all the other groups, a meeting that has been coordinated over Facebook, extending movement ties. Alexander explains that there are approximately 4000 people present.



Heading towards the Plaza Italia

...

“You speak English right?” he asks. I nod, taken aback. “Would you be interested in being the English translator for our Universal Student March page? It’d be great to connect with other university students, but, you know, my English isn’t ideal. And, social media movements are getting big... I’ll ask Marcos for your contact information,” he sputters quickly, recognizing that the march is about to start up again. The crowd surges forward, organized by group leaders.

In the corner, an E’a.com alternative media journalist is taking photos on top of a flowerbed. She waves hurriedly, and I recognize her as Aurora. She is a CONAMURI ally, who is frequently at headquarters, making sure to incorporate CONAMURI perspective into the articles that she publishes. To her left is my other journalist friend, Maribel, with a voice recorder, bouncing her daughter on her right hip. I look around for mainstream media presence, and I’m disappointed to acknowledge that I don’t see any *Ultimahora* or *Abc* microphones visible in the crowd or on the sidelines. They are probably waiting for us at our end destination in front of the cathedral.



Even children get involved in the march, emphasizing the familial experience

...

As we march in the 90-degree heat, workers come out of their buildings to watch and clap along. Nurses and doctors stand outside hospital entrances, construction workers pause to wave as we pass, restaurant customers turn their chairs to face the street. We receive very positive support, and it is clear that our effort is visible in a way that can't be achieved by the creation of a Facebook group or a Twitter post. After what seems like hours of parading, we stop in front of the cathedral, where a band begins to play. We celebrate, hug, dance, and sing along. I scan the crowd with pride, feeling closer with these people after a day than I thought possible. We are united.

A Protest Analysis: Intentions and Results

Later that week as I entered the bus, I handed the driver 2,000 as opposed to 2,400 Guaranís. He winked and handed me my ticket. The protest had successfully changed the transportation costs for certain interior bus prices. To explain this positive outcome, in which the prices for particular buses were effectively lowered, we must consider the variety of actors involved in the issue and the political opportunities that enabled this change to happen. Marches and confrontational activity, such as the march displayed above, played a particularly important role in pressuring the new Cartes administration, because these activities created obstacles that could not be as easily brushed aside or overlooked as more low-key or virtual activism. Visible and reactive protests, such as the one explained above, engaged the community directly and confrontationally to pressure external actors to respond to this relatively simple demand.

In this way, the community took advantage of expanding political opportunities. Sociologist Aldon Morris explains that new political opportunities emerge when “divisions develop among political elites; new external allies emerge, when states weaken, and when new

space in the political system opens.”²¹⁴ In the case of Paraguay, opportunities have arguably grown since President Lugo’s election. The reality of a pro-peasant leader successfully becoming president proved that the conservative and elite-dominated Colorado Party need not dominate politics. Although Lugo’s leadership was short-lived, due to his impeachment in 2012 after the Curuguaty massacre, it represented an opening up of the political system. Citizens are still cynical regarding political involvement, but they recognize the potential for change, and recognize their right to expression, despite growing repression. Social media has also opened these opportunities by giving citizens greater outlets to criticize elites and create divisions among them. Overall, by engaging in more peaceful protests, CONAMURI hopes to set a precedent for campesino empowerment and expression.

As a flexible organization, CONAMURI adapts to changes in its environment and interacts with it, determining when particular tactics might be more effective and when new tools should be adopted. Considering the previous descriptions of its tactical strategy, CONAMURI has strived to achieve balance. Because of this willingness to embrace a variety of relevant approaches and to critically consider the role of diverse tactics, it has arguably been highly successful in remaining sustainable and continuing to grow.

CONAMURI: Synthesis, Looking Forward and Hopes for the Future

Paraguay is a country that is poised for change, revolution and reform. Although the climate for expression faces many challenges due to legacy of the Stroessner regime, elite control of mainstream media, and censorship, marginalization and repression of campesino voices, the creation of new alternative outlets, especially by means of social media, has

²¹⁴ Aldon Morris, “Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals.” In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*, edited by Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2004, 235.

established a space in which critical narratives, discourse and news can be shared. These spaces facilitate empowerment, solidarity and cooperation amongst campesino communities. As a result, they have the opportunity to acknowledge their challenges and seek solutions.

In this context of censorship, struggle, and growing opportunity for expression and mobilization, CONAMURI activism stands as a powerful example of the potential for marginalized individuals to assert agency, make demands, and work to create sustainable alternatives and solutions. Overall, this thesis has revealed that CONAMURI's social media aims and use demonstrate the value of these tools to strengthen internal relations, increase visibility, and create a space for expression. However, CONAMURI organizational strategy also underscores social media's role as a complementary tool, as opposed to a substitute. In other words, its coupling with other social movement tactics is vital to achieve different goals and ensure the sustainability of the movement. As a result, CONAMURI activists should be wary of unbalanced dependence on social media tactics that will take away from crucial in-person activity that is essential to creating linkages and motivating greater levels of commitment and action.

A shop owner in Asunción's bustling Mercado Cuatro, Ernesto, reveals that the women's food sovereignty movement is "Tape Apo." This Guaraní expression conveys that anything monumental within Paraguay requires a single step to begin. In other words, he believes that, gradually, this social movement will accelerate and escalate, until something profound has been formed. "You create the road by walking," he explains, defending that the movement is still in its beginning stages. However, it is growing stronger as its internal ties strengthen and CONAMURI projects its message outward. Paraguayan relations with social media and alternative forms of social movement mobilization have only begun to develop. It will be important to follow and

survey the CONAMURI pathway in the coming years, as it adjusts to new political opportunities, levels of accessibility, and engagement realities.

¡Globalicemos la lucha!

¡Globalicemos la esperanza!

Glossary:

CADEP-El Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya, or the Center of Analysis and Diffusion of the Paraguayan Economy is a research NGO, founded in 1990, that is devoted to social science studies with the aim to develop tools for empowerment and to strengthen the Paraguayan political economy.

CIRD- El Centro de Información y Recursos para el Desarrollo, or the Center of Information and Resources for Development is an organization that was founded in 1988 to support civil society organizations to promote development, democracy and social responsibility.

CLOC- The Latin American Coordination of Campesino Organizations is the Via Campesina umbrella organization for Latin America. Within the Paraguay branch, it is comprised of the OLT, MNOC, CONAMURI, MAP, ONAI and MCP.

DAL- Desarrollando América Latina, or Developing Latin America is an international organization that began operations throughout Latin America in 2011. It focuses on promoting development by researching to solve problems in the region related to education, health, security, transportation, and the use of technology.

EPP-El Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo, or Paraguayan People's army, is a small nationalist guerrilla movement that the government has considered responsible for carrying out terrorist operations within Northern Paraguay such as kidnappings, raids, bombings, armed operations, and attacks since 2005. The EPP declared war on Colorado party leaders since Lugo's impeachment, and uses violence in an attempt to promote campesino aims such as land reform.

Food Security- Food security is defined by the FAO as the necessary conditions for people to access food that is safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate, so as to meet dietary needs that ensure the capacity to live productive and healthy lives.

INDERT- El Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y de la Tierra, or the National Institute of Rural Development and Land is an institution created by the government in 2004 to promote the integration of campesinos and the social and economic development of the nation by providing campesinos with opportunities to access land, and promoting sustainable agricultural projects.

Land Gini Coefficient- A land gini coefficient is the standard measure of land inequality based on the Lorenz curve. 0 describes perfect equality, while 1.0 demonstrates total inequality.

MAP- El Movimiento Agraria y Popular, or the Popular Agrarian Movement is a food sovereignty and campesino organization that has branches in seven districts throughout Paraguay. It is led by campesinos, small-scale producers, and landless peoples in the struggle primarily to promote agriculture reform, food sovereignty and social justice.

MCNOC- La Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas de Paraguay, or the National Table Coordinator of Campesino Organizations is an umbrella campesino organization that promotes movements such as food sovereignty, land reform, landless efforts, and indigenous and campesino rights.

MCP- El Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo, or the Paraguayan Campesino Movement, founded in 1980, is antecedent of CONAMURI. CONAMURI separated from the MCP in 1999 in order to focus more on the woman's struggle and create a space where women could more comfortably and democratically participate.

OCN- Organización Campesina del Norte, or Organization of Northern Campesinos is considered a more militant and radical campesino organization. It is led by young Paraguayan campesinos in the north of the country, and demands increased rights for campesinos. *ABC Color* has circulated the rumor that the OCN is affiliated with the EPP (see above).

OLT- La Organización de Lucha por la Tierra, or The Organization of Struggle for Land was established in 1993, and is a large scale Paraguayan NGO that works towards land reform and protecting the rights of campesino populations. The OLT often cooperates alongside CONAMURI.

ONAI- La Organización Nacional de Aborígenes Independientes, or the National Organization of Independent Aborigines is an organization devoted to promoting Paraguayan indigenous rights that makes up CLOC Paraguay.

Perfecta SAMI- Perfecta SAMI is a company that sells equipment for outdoor activities such as camping and hunting. As a result, it is highly involved in the sale of arms, and has recently been charged with trafficking its goods across the border to Rio de Janeiro drug gangs and Colombian guerrilla groups.

SENAVE- El Servicio Nacional de Calidad y Sanidad Vegetal y de Semillas, or The National Service of Seed and Vegetable Quality and Sanitation was established in 2004 by the government in correspondence with Law 2459 and the Ministry of Agriculture in order to promote safety and sustainability in agriculture.

TEDIC- Tecnología, Educación, Desarrollo, Investigación, y Comunicación, or Technology, Education, Development and Investigation is a think tank of intellectuals that seeks to provide resources to the Paraguayan population to ensure equitable access to the internet and uncensored use of communal sites.

Tierra Malhabida- This term, meaning "ill-gotten land," refers to the territory illicitly taken away from traditional occupants and given away to Colorado Party supporters in exchange for political favors during the Stroessner dictatorship.

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Appendix I

Interview Questions

VOX Global Members

1. What is your role with VOX Global?
2. How does VOX Global quantify the impact and effectiveness of social media and use it strategically?
3. How does the firm define effectiveness?
4. What is the main aim of social media use with VOX Global?
5. How is social media used to move public opinion?
6. What do you look at specifically with content of posts and responses? How do you categorize this behavior?
7. How do you think social media plays a role in advocacy? Who might it impact the most?
8. How do you think it is changing the sphere of influence?
9. What do you think is the potential of social media in the future?

CONAMURI Members

1. When did you first become active in the food sovereignty movement? What attracted you to CONAMURI?
2. What is your role within the organization? How do you engage and participate?
3. Have you seen the strategies of CONAMURI change since you became a member? If yes, what have these changes been? Positive or negative?
4. What is your personal goal as part of CONAMURI? What do you hope to achieve? What do you think will help in achieving these goals? Why?
5. Do you have access to Facebook or other social media? How do you access it? How often do you go on Facebook/Twitter?
6. How is CONAMURI using Facebook as part of the movement?
7. What do you think might be the greatest benefit or negative side effect of using social media as a tool in the social movement?
8. How do you think the use of social media might otherwise influence or change CONAMURI's advocacy efforts?
9. Do you see a trend in the groups of individuals who participate in advocacy activity more online or more in person?
10. Since social media has become popularly and widely used, has membership and participation in meetings and demonstrations increased or decreased? Why do you think this is?
11. Do you feel safe engaging in activism on and offline? Why?
12. Do you feel like posting information online is safe? Who reads or can access this information?
13. Do you think online activism can serve as a bridge to direct activism? Why or why not?
14. Do you see social media as a substitute for or a compliment to other food sovereignty activism? Do you think social media advocacy is an effective strategy at achieving

- movement goals? Why or why not?
15. Has the food sovereignty movement been impacted by the new presidency? How does the political climate play a role?
 16. How do you think being a man/woman impacts your role in society or your ability to engage in social activism? Does this change with social media?
 17. Do you think people are more comfortable or uncomfortable participating in the movement online? Why? What do you think this says about social movements within Paraguay?
 18. Has access to Facebook impacted your ability to stay active in the movement? Do you think this access or lack of access has changed this possibility for others?
 19. Are there groups that might feel more included or excluded as a result of the use of social media? Who do you think does and doesn't have access to social media?

Anonymous political figure

1. How long have you been working as _____? Can you explain your work?
2. What social and political changes have you seen throughout your time?
3. What have been the changes from the most recent political transition?
4. Have you seen the methods of social activism change? Or how do you think the political climate impacts the nature of social movements in Paraguay?
5. What are the most common forms of activism in Paraguay? Do you see this changing? Are protests common?
6. Were there any social movements you were particularly aware of?
7. How effectively do you think can the campesino or common people negotiate with or express their needs to the government?
8. How prevalent do you think the use of social media is here? What do you think the effects of this might be? Do you see social media use as positive or negative? Effective?
9. Is social media accessible to most of the population? If not, who is excluded?
10. How effectively do you think women are able to exercise their democratic voice? What is the female experience like in Paraguay to you? How might this be changing?

Gabriela Galilea

1. What first got you interested in studying social movements and social media?
2. Why is this particularly important in Paraguay? How do you perceive social movement potential? Do you feel like people are able to fairly express their needs and that the government listens?
3. Can you talk a little about Hallucina.com and its role?
4. I heard you're developing metrics to measure the impact of digital content on social media? Can you explain how you intend to analyze this?
5. How do you think social media is influencing social movement strategies? Do you see this as positive or negative? Effective?
6. What is the social movement experience like for a woman in Paraguay?
7. How do you think social media impacts the female advocacy experience?
8. Do you think the use of social media in social movements is inclusive or exclusive? For whom?
9. What do you think is the potential for social movements in the future? Do you have any recommendations on how advocacy organizations may conduct social movements more effectively?

*Participant Observation Questions***Participant Observation Questions to Consider:**

1. How many people volunteer at headquarters on a daily basis? What sorts of jobs are they performing? How many of these deal with social media?
2. Who appears to be in charge? How are tasks divided up or distributed? Does there appear to be a hierarchy of leadership, or is leadership shared fairly equally among members?
3. How are events planned and organized? How does social media play a role?
4. Even though this is a women's organization, how many men are present?
5. What seems to be the priority or goal within headquarters?
6. How many people show up on average to meetings and events? How does this compare to the level of online activity?
7. What is the tone or mood within headquarters? Do people seem relatively optimistic? Discouraged? Is energy within the space high or low?
8. What sorts of topics are discussed at headquarters?
9. What is CONAMURI's relationship with other food sovereignty organizations? The state and political parties? The church?
10. How are new ideas handled? Is there an open space to give suggestions?
11. How easy is it to become a volunteer at headquarters? Do new members start volunteering their services often?

IRB Consent Form, English Version

Awareness, Agency, and Alternatives: Opportunities and Challenges for CONAMURI and the Paraguayan Women's Food Sovereignty Movement in an Age of Social Media

BriAnne Illich, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, United States

By signing below, you confirm that you are aware that:

The information gathered from this interview may be used as data for a thesis on the influence of social media on the women's food sovereignty movement in Paraguay. All responses will be used for research purposes only, and anonymity will be ensured. You have the right to deny answering any question, and to end the interview at any time. In participating in this interview, you also agree also to take full responsibility for any risks associated with the study. You will not receive any monetary compensation, but if you wish to receive a copy of the finished study, please contact me at the contact address listed below.

I, the researcher, hope to ensure that this dialogue is transparent and open, and if you have any questions about the nature of my research or its use, I will be sure to address them.

Please clearly mark your preference. If none is indicated, refusal of consent will be assumed.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to record the interview on a digital audio recorder.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Date

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Participant's Printed Name

Thank you for your participation!

If you have any concerns or questions, do not hesitate to use the contact information below

BriAnne Illich

Email: bnilich@colby.edu