

The Rise of Agro-Extractive Capitalism
Insights from Guatemala in the early 21st century

Alberto Alonso-Fradejas



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The Rise of Agro-Extractive Capitalism
Insights from Guatemala in the early 21st century

De opkomst van agro-extractief kapitalisme
Inzichten uit Guatemala in het begin van de 21e eeuw

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by command of the Rector Magnificus

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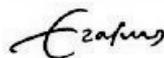
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by

Alberto Alonso-Fradejas

Born in Barakaldo, Spain

**International
Institute of
Social Studies**

The logo of Erasmus University, featuring the word 'Erasmus' in a stylized, cursive script.

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To granny Martina and all of the “indispensable ones” in this world...

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Glossary

ACOFOP Petén's Forest Communities Association

ADINC Farmers Association for the Comprehensive Development of the Northern Basin of the Chixoy River

ADRI Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development

AGEXPORT Guatemalan Exporters Association

AMR Rural Women Alliance

ANACAFE National Coffee Association

APIB Independent Banana Growers Association of Guatemala

ASAZGUA Guatemalan Sugar Producers Association
BANGUAT Guatemala National Bank
BANRURAL National Rural Development Bank
CABEI Central American Bank of Economic Integration
CACIF Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers of Guatemala
CAMAGRO Agricultural Chamber of Guatemala
CCDA Peasant Committee of the Highlands
CentraRSE Guatemalan Business Council for Sustainable Development
CHN National Bank of Mortgage Credit of Guatemala
CICIG International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala
CNOOC National Coordination of Peasant Organizations
CODECA Peasant Development Committee
CONAP National Council of Protected Areas
CONGCOOP Guatemalan Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives
CONIC National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination
COPMAGUA Coordination of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala
CSA Climate Smart Agriculture
CUC Committee for Peasant Unity
DoT Defense of territory
DR-CAFTA Dominican Republic, Central America Free Trade Agreement with the US
ECAS Associative Peasant Enterprises
ECLAC Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGT Guillermo Toriello Foundation
FONTIERRAS Guatemala's Land Fund
FUNDESA Foundation for the Development of Guatemala
FYDEP Company for the Promotion and Development of the Petén
HEIA High external input agriculture
IDEAR Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies
IDB Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
IICA Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
INTA National Institute of Agrarian Transformation
IOM International Organization for Migration

IPC International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
GREPALMA Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild
LEIA Low external-input agriculture
MAGA Guatemalan Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Livestock
MLAR Market-led agrarian reform
MOSGUA Social Organizations' Movement of Guatemala
NTAX non-traditional agricultural exports
OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PACs Collective Agrarian Patrimonies
PAFFEC Family Farming Program for the Strengthening of Peasant Economy
PGT Guatemalan Labor Party/ communist party
PNDR Comprehensive Rural Development Policy
PROPALMA Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program
REDD+ United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RIC Cadastral Information Registry
RSPO Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SAA Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs of Guatemala
SIGAP Guatemalan System of Protected Areas
SIPI Ixcán Union of Independent Palm Growers
TCCC The Coca Cola Company
TGs Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
UNAC National Peasant Union
UNEP United Nations Environmental Programme
URNG Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
US United States of America
USTR US Trade Representative
WB World Bank
WTO World Trade Organization
WWF World Wildlife Fund
YASTACS Young although smartly-trained activists
YASTEXES Young although smartly-trained executives

Abstract

'When she awoke, the dinosaur was still there' (Monterroso 1998 [1959], 77)

Financial, food, energy and environmental/climate crises detonate in 2007-2008 and smolder for years to follow. A global, yet uneven, resurgence of natural resource extractivism and consolidation of environmental services in capital accumulation and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies both drive and express the convergent crises conjuncture in the early 21st century. Global demand for agro-commodities grows, expanding beyond traditional food, fiber and feed uses to include liquid fuels, bio-materials and carbon sinks, in what becomes the rise of 'flex crops and commodities complexes' (Borras et al. 2016). The "land grabbing" and "new extractivism" research agendas in response to the multiple and convergent crises conjuncture have brought issues of contemporary agro-environmental change into the spotlight.

However, both streams of literature have run parallel to one another. While they have offered important insights, the findings have often been disconnected, and therefore partial, in addressing a common problem. Building on trailblazing efforts to bridge critical (agrarian) political economy and political ecology perspectives, I aim to comprehend the nature, character and trajectories of agro-environmental change, and the politics that enable and constrain them, under heightened resource extractivism during the convergent crises conjuncture. Hence, my inquiry is driven by the question: *How does early 21st-century resource extractivism shape the nature, character and directions of agro-environmental change, and with what implications for whom?*

My findings suggest that the restructuring of the agricultural relations of production that results from the rise of flex crops and commodities complexes, as well as the political dynamics behind such an occurrence, underpin a distinct model of resource extractivism after the turn of the century. My examination of this phenomenon in Guatemala during the 2006-2014 period offers a series of insights that may resonate elsewhere. Most especially, burgeoning flex cane and palm complexes from 2005 onward fuel the rise of a distinct form of biomass extractivism. I call this the *agro-extractive capitalist project*. This particular form of organizing labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature into agro-commodity production is capitalist in nature, extractivist in character and underpinned by a new politics of racialized class domination. Regarding the first claim, I argue that value in flex cane and palm commodity production is generated through the exploitation of mostly free labor, with the exception of some residual pockets that still rely on forced labor. But in the largely job-scarce context of Guatemala in the early 21st century, the expansion of cane and palm plantations which results in job losses rather than gains is behind the burgeoning of rural surplus population. Furthermore, the agro-extractive capitalist project downgrades many subordinate class villagers from the latent to the stagnant section of surplus population—or that on the edge of survival. Hence, the agro-extractive capitalist project is fundamentally capitalist in that it not only enlarges the "reserve army of labor", but also pushes the surplus population to the limits of subsistence.

Regarding the second claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project is extractivist in character for three reasons. First, flex cane and palm commodity production is underpinned by the extraction and appropriation of increasingly diverse (agro)commodity surplus value portions and state revenues. As a result, flex cane and palm companies are able to reap super-profits. Additionally, appropriated surplus value and state revenues are progressively financialized, and thus realized in monetary form to fund accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes. Second, flex cane and palm commodity production involves the appropriation of productive and reproductive labor of the plantation workers' families for free. It additionally includes the stockpiling of natural goods and disposal of waste and pollutants at zero

cost. Third, hyper-intensive flex cane and palm commodity production damages workers' health and vitality, and exhausts external nature's energy and materials. It does so in ways that compromise cane and palm commodity production from the cost side, and upends life in the countryside and beyond.

Regarding the third claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project shapes and expresses a new politics of class domination that I call *authoritarian corporatism*. Supporters of the overarching project develop an authoritarian corporatist agenda to recast flex cane and palm commodity production. Instead of simply being yet another accumulation project, proponents of agro-extractivism frame it as an extraordinary response-able phenomenon capable of feeding the world, generating green energy and cooling down the planet, while at the same time sponsoring employment and stimulating economic growth. This agenda involves two strategic shifts. First is the "multistakeholderization" of flex cane and palm commodity chains. And second is swapping out the "bullets and beans" agenda of authoritarian-paternalistic military regimes, once used to counter the communist threat during the Cold War era. Instead, authoritarian corporatism relies on persuasion—and selective violence cloaked in the rule of law—to counter critique and opposition to the agro-extractive capitalist project. But in addition to the policy concessions (i.e. public grants and multi-stakeholder governance) that are part of populist political regimes elsewhere, authoritarian corporatism brings in concessions in private relations of production. As a result, flex cane and palm companies gain recognition and a fame as pro-social businesses, while simultaneously increasing labor and land productivity, expanding plantations, accessing new funds, reducing production costs, and contributing to the reproduction of their businesses' personal and natural conditions of production.

However, the politics behind early 21st-century resource extractivism in Guatemala are anything but a story foretold. The agro-extractive capitalist project also triggers reactions from state and social actors that take both challenging and accommodative standpoints. Challengers use their dissent and/or unrest as a practice of contestation against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and advocate for a transformative project. Accommodators struggle to tame the virulence of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and/or to accommodate themselves to it in the best possible way. They are further divided according to their character (i.e. lawful or criminal) and will (i.e. amenable or reluctant). In sum, the agro-extractive capitalist project reshapes the political terrain of agro-environmental and capitalist transformations through alliances between corporates, the state and a Guatemalan white, oligarchic bourgeoisie permeating both of the foregoing. By legitimizing flex cane and palm commodity production through populist moves, and recurring to force when needed, dissent is suppressed and accommodations are worked out. The result is a new politics of racialized class domination, which ultimate trajectory has yet to be seen.

Samenvatting

In 2007-2008 zijn financiële crises en crises op het gebied van voedsel, energie en milieu/klimaat ontstaan die nog jaren doorwerken. Een mondiale, maar ongelijke opleving van het extractivisme van natuurlijke hulpbronnen en de consolidatie van milieudiensten in kapitaal aangroei en strategieën voor aanpassing aan klimaatverandering geven uitdrukking aan de samenvallende crises in het begin van de 21e eeuw en dragen er ook aan bij. De wereldwijde vraag naar agrogrondstoffen groeit en breidt zich uit van traditioneel voedsel-, vezel- en veevoedergebruik naar vloeibare brandstoffen, biomaterialen en koolstofputten. Dit leidt tot de opkomst van 'complexen van flexibele gewassen en producten' (Borras et al. 2016). Het onderzoek naar 'landjepik' en 'nieuw extractivisme' dat op gang is gekomen na de meervoudige en samenvallende crisissituatie heeft de problematiek van de hedendaagse agro-milieuverandering in de schijnwerpers gezet.

Dit zijn echter twee aparte onderdelen van de onderzoeksliteratuur. Hoewel er belangrijke inzichten uit naar voren komen, zijn de bevindingen vaak losstaand, en dus slechts gedeeltelijk bruikbaar om een gemeenschappelijk probleem aan te pakken. Dit onderzoek bouwt voort op baanbrekende inspanningen om cruciale inzichten uit de (agrarische) politieke economie en politieke ecologie te combineren. *Het doel van het onderzoek is om inzicht te krijgen in de aard, het karakter en de trajecten van agro-milieuverandering en de politiek die deze verandering mogelijk maakt en beperkt ten tijde van versterkt extractivisme van hulpbronnen in de samenvallende crisissituaties. Op basis hiervan is de centrale onderzoeksvraag: Hoe bepaalt het extractivisme van hulpbronnen aan het begin van de 21e eeuw de aard, het karakter en de richting van de agro-milieuveranderingen, en wat zijn de gevolgen voor welke actoren?*

De gegevens wijzen erop dat de herstructurering van de landbouwproductie die het gevolg is van zowel de opkomst van complexen van flexibele gewassen en producten als de achtergelegen politieke dynamiek, de basis vormt voor een duidelijk herkenbaar model van extractivisme van hulpbronnen na de eeuwwisseling. Het hier beschreven onderzoek naar dit verschijnsel vond in 2006-2014 plaats in Guatemala. Het heeft inzichten opgeleverd die ook elders van toepassing kunnen zijn. Vooral de bloeiende flexibele suikerriet- en palmcomplexen bevorderen sinds 2005 de opkomst van een duidelijke vorm van biomassa-extractivisme. In dit proefschrift wordt dit het *agro-extractieve kapitalistische project* genoemd. Deze specifieke vorm van het organiseren van arbeidskracht, grond, geld-kapitaal, kennis en technologie en externe natuur in de agrogrondstoffenproductie is kapitalistisch, winningsgericht en stoelt op een nieuwe politiek van raciale klassenoverheersing.

Wat de eerste stelling betreft wordt in dit proefschrift betoogd dat de waarde die de productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen oplevert ontstaat door vooral gebruik te maken van gratis arbeid, met uitzondering van enkele overgebleven gevallen van dwangarbeid. Binnen de context van het gebrek aan banen in Guatemala in het begin van de 21e eeuw is de uitbreiding van suikerriet- en palmplantages, die eerder tot minder dan tot meer banen leidt, echter de oorzaak van het toenemende bevolkingsoverschot op het platteland. Bovendien heeft het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project tot gevolg dat veel dorpingen uit de lagere sociale klassen afglijden naar het stagnerende deel van de overtollige bevolking. Daar bevinden ze zich aan de rand van het bestaansminimum. Dit betekent dat het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project niet alleen het 'reserveleger van arbeidskrachten' vergroot, maar ook de overtollige bevolking in een situatie brengt waarin ze nauwelijks kunnen overleven.

Wat de tweede stelling betreft zijn er drie redenen voor het winningskarakter van het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project. Ten eerste wordt de productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen ondersteund door de toe-eigening van steeds diverser wordende delen van de meerwaarde van (agro)grondstoffen en overheidsinkomsten. Hierdoor kunnen bedrijven in de flexibele suikerriet- en

palmproductie superwinsten behalen. Daarnaast worden de toegeëigende meerwaarde en de overheidsinkomsten geleidelijk gefinancierd, en zo in geld omgezet om de accumulatie in de flexibele suikerriet- en palmplantages te financieren. Ten tweede wordt bij de productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen gratis gebruikgemaakt van de productieve en reproductieve arbeid van de gezinnen van de plantagearbeiders. Verder worden bij deze productie kosteloos voorraden natuurlijke hulpbronnen aangehouden en afval en vervuilende stoffen verwijderd. Ten derde schaadt de hyper intensieve productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen de gezondheid en vitaliteit van de arbeiders. Ook zorgt dit alles voor uitputting van natuurlijke hulpbronnen. De productiewijze van suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen is vanuit het oogpunt van de kosten onverantwoord en verstoort het leven op het platteland en daarbuiten.

Wat betreft de derde stelling: het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project geeft vorm en uitdrukking aan een nieuwe politiek van klassenheerschappij. Daarvoor is in dit proefschrift de term *autoritair corpopulisme* bedacht. Aanhangers van het overkoepelende project ontwikkelen een autoritair corpopulistische agenda om de productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen in een nieuwe vorm te gieten. In plaats van het te presenteren als het zoveelste accumulatieproject, noemen voorstanders van agro-extractivisme het een buitengewoon 'verantwoord' initiatief. Dit zou het niet alleen mogelijk maken om de wereld van voedsel te voorzien, groene energie op te wekken en de planeet te koelen, maar ook om werkgelegenheid te scheppen en economische groei te bevorderen. Deze agenda brengt twee strategische veranderingen met zich mee. Ten eerste de introductie van meerdere stakeholders in de productieketen van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen. Ten tweede het inruilen van de 'bewapeningsagenda' van autoritair-paternalistische militaire regimes, die tijdens de Koude Oorlog de communistische dreiging moest bezweren. In plaats daarvan maakt autoritair corpopulisme gebruik van overtuiging – en selectief van geweld onder het mom van handhaving van de rechtsorde. Hiermee wordt kritiek op en verzet tegen het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project geneutraliseerd. Naast de concessies op het gebied van beleid (namelijk overheidssubsidies en multistakeholder-governance) die populistische politieke regimes elders doen, brengt autoritair corpopulisme ook concessies met zich mee op het gebied van particuliere productierelaties. Hierdoor krijgen producenten van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen erkenning als prosociale bedrijven. Tegelijkertijd neemt de arbeids- en grondproductiviteit toe en breiden deze bedrijven plantages uit, boren ze nieuwe geldbronnen aan, verminderen ze productiekosten en leveren ze een bijdrage aan de reproductie van de persoonlijke en natuurlijke productievoorwaarden van hun onderneming.

De politiek achter het grondstoffenextractivisme in Guatemala aan het begin van de 21e eeuw is echter allesbehalve een uitgekristalliseerd verhaal. Het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project lokt ook reacties uit van overheids- en maatschappelijke actoren die zowel kritische als instemmende standpunten innemen. De critici verzetten zich met hun afwijkende mening en/of onrust tegen het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project en pleiten voor een transformatief project. Mensen die ermee instemmen worstelen met de schadelijke kanten van het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project en/of proberen zich zo goed mogelijk aan te passen. Verder houden sommige actoren zich aan de wet, maar vertonen andere illegaal gedrag, en willen sommige actoren meewerken terwijl andere terughoudend zijn. Samenvattend hervormt het agro-extractieve kapitalistische project de politiek van landbouw-milieu- en kapitalistische transformaties. Dit gebeurt door middel van allianties tussen bedrijven, de overheid en een blanke, oligarchische bourgeoisie van Guatemala die zich begeeft op beide genoemde gebieden. De productie van flexibele suikerriet- en palmgrondstoffen wordt gelegitimeerd door middel van populisme en zo nodig met gebruik van geweld. Op deze wijze wordt tegenstand onderdrukt en komt men tot een vergelijk. Dit resulteert in een nieuwe politiek van raciale klassenoverheersing waarvan de afloop nog niet vaststaat.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Convergent global crises in the early 21st century

Long in the making, climate/environmental, energy, food and financial crises detonate in the in 2007-2008 and smolder for years to follow. At times competing and at others mutually-reinforcing vectors and expressions for these convergent crises include: i) mounting financial speculation on hydrocarbon, mineral and biomass commodities futures,¹ following the financialization wave of the world economy since the 1970s;² ii) heightened global demand for raw materials and agricultural commodities on the heels of the rise of the BRICS and MICS since the 1990s;³ iii) peaking world oil production,⁴ and; iv) increasing temperature and occurrence of severe weather events associated to ‘anthropogenic’⁵—or rather ‘capitalocenic’⁶—climate change.⁷

Beyond their ultimate reasons, there are two key and interrelated “booms” behind the global crises. On the one hand there is a surge in transition discourses, including moving towards green energy, feeding a growing world population, taking climate change seriously, and to a lesser extent, building more reliable financial and monetary systems. While competing and often even ruling out each other, ideas on how to tackle the global crises stem from state,⁸ corporate⁹ and social actors,¹⁰ and persist well beyond the aftermath of the financial crisis detonation in 2007-2008. On the other hand prices for raw and semi-processed natural resource-based commodities begin to soar since 2001 and especially from 2007-2008 onward, albeit in a highly volatile fashion¹¹ (ECLAC et al. 2011). Figure 1 shows that whereas the commodities boom collapses around 2014, prices for metals, food and fuel (energy) remain significantly higher than those prior to the mid-2000s.

¹ Clapp (2009), Ghosh (2010), Isakson (2014b)

² Epstein (2005) Krippner (2005), Duménil and Lévy (2005), Fine (2007)

³ Cotula et al. (2009), ECLAC et al. (2011), Deininger and Byerlee (2011). BRICS (Brazil, Russian, India, China and South Africa), and MICS (middle-income countries).

⁴ Hirsch et al. (2005), Murphy and Hall (2011)

⁵ i.e. Human-led (Crutzen and Steffen 2003)

⁶ i.e. Accumulation-led (Moore 2016)

⁷ (Fischer and Knutti 2015)

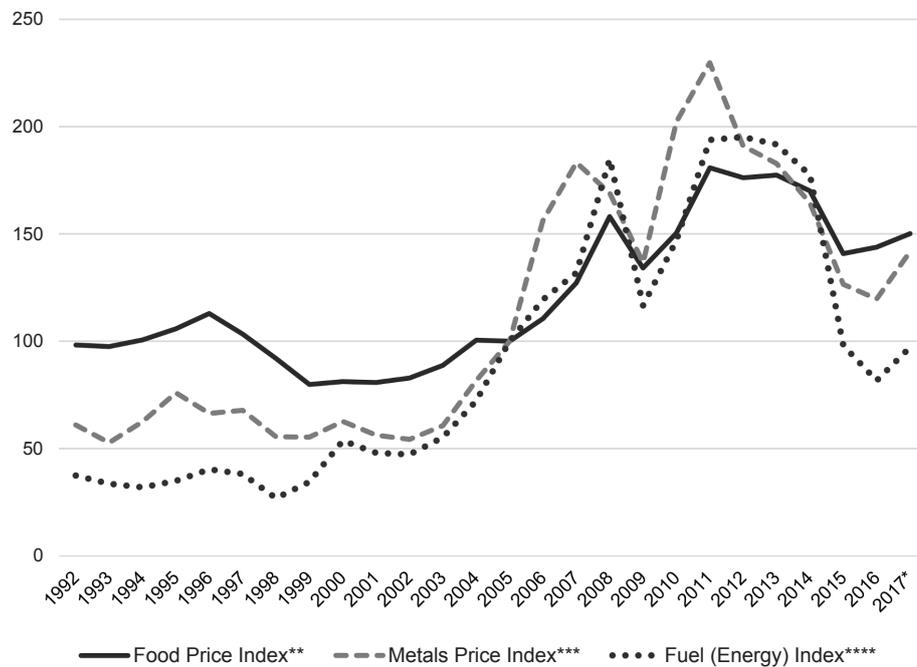
⁸ Best epitomized in the 2030 ‘Agenda for Sustainable Development’ approved by the United Nations in 2015 (UN 2015).

⁹ Jointly funneled through the World Economic Forum’s global, regional and industry agendas (WEF. 2017)

¹⁰ As expressed, for instance, in the agendas of transnational agrarian, food, and climate justice movements.

¹¹ From the perspective of any kind of market-oriented agricultural producer, it is in the sudden and substantial price variability for their produce, coupled with rising costs of farm inputs and transportation, that the “food crisis” hits. As Jansen reminds us, ‘though price shocks might be highly problematic for some producers, higher food prices do not, in general, lead to an agrarian crisis’ (2015, 217). Of course, this is different for cultivators who are “net food-buyers”, as Jansen also acknowledges (ibid).

Figure 1 Food, fuel (energy) and metals commodity price indexes 1992-2017 (2005=100)



* January to June 2017 average

** Includes cereals, vegetable oils, meat, seafood, sugar, bananas, and oranges price indices

*** Includes copper, aluminum, iron ore, tin, nickel, zinc, lead, and uranium Price Indices

**** Includes crude oil (petroleum), natural gas, and coal price indices

Source: Author elaboration with data from IMF (2018)

Whereas their effects had already been felt by millions of people and non-human species worldwide even before 2007-2008, and their relevance in the *longue durée* of agrarian, environmental and capitalist transformations has yet to be written,¹² the preceding dynamics are assembled in a way that helps make sense of a particular world historic conjuncture. For explanatory purposes, I call this “the convergent crises” conjuncture. In this context, the first decade of the 21st century witnesses a global, yet uneven,¹³ resurgence of natural resource extractivism—and the consolidation of environmental services—in capital accumulation and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Global demand for agro-commodities grows, expanding beyond traditional food, fiber and feed uses to include liquid fuels, bio-materials and carbon sinks, in what becomes the rise of ‘flex crops and commodities complexes’ (Borras et al. 2016). These involve crops (e.g. corn, soybean, sugarcane or oil palm), but also trees, with ‘multiple uses (food, feed, fuel, fibre, industrial

¹² Oya (2013), Friedmann (2016)

¹³ Across sectors, world regions, countries and even at various regional levels within countries (Borras et al. 2011, White et al. 2012, Hall 2013b)

material, etc.) that can be flexibly interchanged' (ibid, 94). Relatively dormant since the 1980s,¹⁴ flex crops and commodities complexes are thrust into the ring in the early 21st century to take down the convergent world crises. Corporate flex crops and commodities complexes consolidate and upgrade within former strongholds, and set off to conquer uncharted territories.

But how is the early 21st-century extractivist fever unfolding? Particularly in the realm of biomass extraction, to what extent, how and with what consequences—for whom—is the rise of the flex crop and commodities complexes unfolding? What is it that enables and constrains this trend in the current world-historic conjuncture? And is it possible that this solution now contributes to the problem? These are the overarching questions triggering this research. I turn now to pinning down the particular ways in which I frame, interrogate and investigate them.

1.2. A research *problematique* and question: Resource extractivism and agro-environmental change in the early 21st Century

The convergent global crises conjuncture has spurred a good deal of political and scholarly work and debate particularly, but not only, regarding the agrarian and environmental dynamics behind heightened resource extractivism. To this end, two important research agendas have gained relevance from the mid-2000s onward. One concerns the investigation of a new global land rush. The other one involves analyzing the massive wave of natural resource extraction projects that is spilling over the world.

On the one hand there is the 'research rush on the global land rush' (Edelman et al. 2013, 1528). Following GRAIN's 2008 report alerting the public to the 'global land-grab for food and financial security' (2008), the phenomenon was initially assessed by mainstream actors who have an agenda to frame and influence these land deals as potential drivers of good governance and poverty alleviation.¹⁵ As the Director of the Agricultural and Rural Development Department of the World Bank argues

'[W]hen *done right*, larger-scale farming can provide *opportunities for poor countries* with large agricultural sectors and ample endowments of land. To make the most of these opportunities, however, countries will need to *better secure local land rights and improve land governance*. Adopting an *open and proactive approach* to dealing with investors is also needed to ensure that *investment contributes to broader development objectives*' (in Deininger and Byerlee 2011, xv emphasis added).

Despite important nuances among them, assessments of the global land rush from such a perspective share common epistemological and ontological stances. Epistemologically, they rely on neo-classical and neo-institutional perspectives, which are built on the assumption that outcomes of land deals depend on the state of governance and market competition in the places where they unfold. Hence, land deals are ontologically divided into lawful, transparent and

¹⁴ With notorious exceptions like the Brazilian flex cane complex (McKay et al. 2016), US flex corn complex (Gillon 2016), Argentinean and Brazilian flex soy complexes (Brent 2015, Oliveira and Schneider 2016), Scandinavian flex tree complex (Kröger 2016), or the Indonesian and Malaysian flex palm complexes (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2016). Apart from the flex corn and flex tree complexes in the US and Scandinavian countries, respectively, which show longer genealogies, the other flex crops and commodities complexes in these countries thrived in the aftermath of the 1973 oil crisis, and especially under heightened neoliberal globalization from the 1990s onward.

¹⁵ This is the perspective of the World Bank (World Bank 2008, Deininger and Byerlee 2011), The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (von Braun 2008, Von Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009) and the political core within the International Land Coalition (ILC) to which the latter two and other international governmental organizations are part, together with a variety of NGOs, social organizations, and scholarly or otherwise research centers (Cotula et al. 2009, Anseu et al. 2012).

desirable “land acquisitions”, and regretful “land-grabs” that do not abide by the rule of law and market fair play. A major player in transnational agrarian politics, The International Land Coalition (ILC), describes corrupt land grabs

‘as acquisitions or concessions that are one or more of the following: (i) in violation of human rights, particularly the equal rights of women; (ii) not based on *free, prior and informed consent* of the affected land-users; (iii) not based on a thorough assessment, or are in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered; (iv) not based on *transparent contracts* that specify clear and binding commitments about activities, employment and benefits sharing, and; (v) not based on effective democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation’ (2011, emphasis added).

In addition to these mainstream assessments, there are also those undertaken from critical perspectives. Activist journalists and NGOs (like GRAIN) initially put forth these critiques, and engaged scholars in the academy later follow this lead.¹⁶ Indeed, the new wave of critical scholarship on the global land rush improves our understanding of the drivers, actors and socio-economic implications of the phenomenon. But during what Edelman et al. (2013, 1520) call ‘the making sense period’, roughly between 2007 and 2012, most critical and mainstream research on the global land rush suffers from a series of analytical flaws. These are captured by Edelman et al. (2013) and include the need to improve the analysis in various ways. First, it is key to situate inquiries about the global land rush within longer historical trajectories of agrarian change. Second, it is helpful to pay attention to the multiple and often competing legal frameworks behind the land-grabs. Third, it is necessary to broaden our understanding of land-grabs beyond “dispossession” and “land”. Fourth, it is important to ‘provide an empirically and historically grounded analysis of specific land grabbing stories, in order to make sense of the political, social and economic implications of differentiated outcomes with different time horizons [which might] give rise to differentiated political reactions’ (2013, 1525). Fifth, it is essential to pay more and better attention to research methodologies, and the quality (or lack of it) of available data.

On the other hand the notion of “extractivism” regains momentum in scholarly and political debates following the primary commodity boom at the turn of the 21st century. Of particular relevance in this regard are the contributions of what Martínez-Alier calls the Latin American “post-extractivist” school’ (2015).¹⁷ One of its founders, Eduardo Gudynas, defines conventional extractivism as ‘activities which remove great quantities of natural resources that are not then processed (or are done so in a limited fashion) and that leave a country as exports’ (2010, 1).¹⁸ This is a definition endorsed by Alberto Acosta (2013, 63) and Maristella Svampa—co-founders of the post-extractivist school—although the latter qualifies Gudyna’s definition in Marxian terms by arguing that extractivism involves ‘the expansion of frontiers to territories formerly considered ‘unproductive’ (Svampa 2013, 118).¹⁹ Nonetheless, lead scholars from the post-extractivist school argue that a “progressive new extractivism” or just “new extractivism” is on the rise in the early 21st century in South American countries under left-leaning “pink tide”

¹⁶ Critical scholarship on the global land rush gains global momentum from 2011 on. It is this year that ongoing-yet-dispersed national and to a lesser extent transnational critical research on the global land rush coalesces in an “International Conference on Global Land-grabbing”. This is convened by the “Land Deal Politics Initiative” (LDPI) at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) of Sussex University in the UK, followed by a second LDPI conference in Cornell University in the US in 2012.

¹⁷ Broadly associated with the European “de-growth” school, although with meaningful differences (see Brand et al. 2017).

¹⁸ Although in Brazil extractivism is used to name to the reproductive activities of hunter-gatherer communities.

¹⁹ See also Moore (2000) and Harvey (2003).

governments.²⁰ The new extractivism follows the conventional extractivism's 'style of development based on the *appropriation of Nature* [only that] the *state* plays a more active role, and gives extractivism a greater legitimacy because it *redistributes* some of the *surplus* to the population'²¹ (Gudynas 2010, 1 emphasis added). For Svampa, differences between conventional and new extractivisms occur along the fault lines of the structural shift 'from the Washington Consensus with its focus on finance to the Commodities Consensus based on the large-scale export of primary products' (2013, 118). What they do all agree on, however, is that new extractivism is not only about mineral and hydrocarbon extraction but also involves farming, forestry and fishing.²²

Contributions by the post-extractivist school are manifold. But whereas the bulk of attention is devoted to the analysis of new extractivism as a political project,²³ the ecological terms of exchange among countries,²⁴ and the social metabolism of extraction,²⁵ the social relations of production behind resource extractivism, and their enabling and constraining politics, have received lesser and narrower attention. Often, materialist analyses of the new extractivism have focused on structural drivers,²⁶ and on the economic terms of exchange between countries.²⁷ Svampa discusses land, and to a lesser extent labor, relations in soy production and mining. But as I discuss further on, finance and financiers play a larger and more important role in (biomass) extraction projects under convergent global crises than what is acknowledged by Svampa's 'Commodities Consensus' (2013, 118). Thus, apart from enlightening elaborations on structural drivers, bio-physical dynamics and ecological distribution relations in resource extractivism, labor, land, financial and knowledge and technology relations and politics are generally un- or under-explored in the literature on new extractivism. This makes it is easy to confuse means with ends, and take extractivism for granted as a compelling phenomenon beginning with colonial and imperialist plunder rather than as a historically situated dynamic. Despite the repeated calls by key authors of the post-extractivist school and others against the absolutization and de-historicization of extractivism as an analytical category,²⁸ much of the literature on new extractivism conceals more than it reveals about the various trajectories, differentiated outcomes and multiple and fluid politics behind contemporary resource extractivism.

To be clear, there is no such thing as an "extractivist mode of production". The history of natural resource extraction for productive and reproductive purposes is as old as that of humanity. Different modes and forms of producing commodities to use or exchange rely on resource extraction to a larger or smaller extent. The question that remains is how to account for the different degrees of "extractiveness" of a mode/form of production, which range from

²⁰ i.e. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

²¹ Especially through social grants.

²² Gudynas (2010, 2), Acosta (Acosta 2013, 83, 62), Svampa (2013, 118-9)

²³ For informed reviews of this rich body of literature see Burchardt and Dietz (2014), Bebbington (2015), and Arsel et al. (2016) among others.

²⁴ Hornborg (1998), Rice (2007)

²⁵ Giampietro and Mayumi (2000), Leff (2006), Martínez-Alier et al. (2010)

²⁶ Acosta (2013), Svampa (2013b), Veltmeyer and Petras (2014)

²⁷ Prebisch (1959), Frank (1969), Emmanuel (1972)

²⁸ Indeed, Gudynas reminds us extractivism is not akin to capitalism, the latter being a 'much broader phenomenon' (2013, 8). Similarly, though à la Regulation School, Acosta and Svampa understand extractivism as a 'mode of accumulation' (2013, 62), and a 'type of accumulation' (2013, 118), respectively. And Veltmeyer argues 'extractive imperialism has taken *different forms* through the age of conquest, commercial capitalism, the rise of industrial capitalism and the emergence of monopoly capitalism to the present age of global megacorporations allied with financial capital' (2013, 80 emphasis added).

necessary to predatory extractivism. Many insights are thus gained if rather than taking it at face value as a steady and timeless phenomenon, extractivism is contextualized within historically-situated aims and forms of organizing labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature into natural resource extraction. Gudynas' three necessary conditions for extractivism—'large scale of extraction, limited processing, and export destination' (2013, 5)—may or may not be part of the equation. But if so, they neither take place nor evolve in a social vacuum. They are drivers and manifestations of concrete productive relations and (fragmented class) struggles in a specific socio-ecological formation within a particular time span.

Thus, whether, how and the extent to which external nature is exhausted, or the breadth of the 'metabolic rift' (Marx N.D. [1894]) between resource extractivism and external nature, is a necessary yet insufficient criterion to assess the "extractiveness" of a mode/form of production. For me, there are two additional and key sets of criteria. The first set revolves around labor, and includes two specific criteria. One involves the intensity to which workers' health and vitality are damaged in the extractivist process. The other concerns whether, how and to what extent, resource extractivism relies on the appropriation of (re)productive family-labor for free. The second set involves looking at primary commodity production through the lenses of Marx's theory of value (N.D. [1894]). It includes criteria regarding the range and ways in which the different portions of the (agro)commodity value—other than those amounting to wages and constant capital replacement fund—as well as state revenues, are appropriated by non-direct producers for productive purposes. In other words, criteria which is helpful for the examination of whether, how and to what extent land's ground-rent, interests, royalties from intellectual property rights, payments for environmental services and state subsidies are extracted and appropriated by non-direct producers for accumulation purposes.²⁹

Finally, and also generally speaking, there are three additional omissions in the literature on the global land rush and new extractivism. The first has to do with the ways in which the role of the state is analyzed, if at all. More often than not, the state is approached either as an autonomous entity detached from the society it governs, in an orthodox Weberian fashion, or as an overwhelming instrument of class rule, in a narrow Marxist interpretation. As a result, the intrinsically contradictory role of the state in land-grabbing and natural resource extraction is rarely fully captured. The second omission is rooted in discussions on the politics behind land-grabs and resource extractivism. Analyses are often limited to the politics between "land-grabbers and land-grabbed", or resource "extractors and extractees". There is a common analytical disregard of the politics *across* and *within* actors situated in these opposing political standpoints, and particularly across and within dominant powers, usually towards the "right" of the ideological-political spectrum. As Edelman argues, the analysis of conservative and right-wing collective action has been generally neglected 'in part due to Touraine's (and others') limiting of the field to movements that seek "historicity" and in part because researchers overwhelmingly choose to study "attractive" movements with which they sympathize' (2001, 302-3). And third, whereas analyses have focused on heightened land grabbing and resource extractivism as a result of the convergent crises, it remains the question on the inverse

²⁹ The productive use of appropriated surplus value and state revenues by non-direct producer is key to differentiate "extractivist" from merely "rentier" modes/forms of production.

relationship, namely how the land and resource rush shapes the scope and trajectories of the convergent crises.

Certainly, both streams of literature have brought issues of contemporary agrarian and environmental change into the spotlight. But generally speaking, the land grabbing and new extractivism research agendas have run parallel to each other and offered important, yet disconnected and thereby partial, insights into a common problem. As a result, their contribution to an “in breadth and depth” understanding of the role, directions and implications of agro-environmental change during the multiple and convergent crises conjuncture has been constrained. I believe there are many synergies that stem from bridging analytical categories and methodologies particular to both streams of literature. Specifically, this is done by bringing critical (agrarian) political economy perspectives into critical environmental studies and vice-versa. There have already been some important steps taken in this direction. For instance, Borras et al. (2012) understanding of land-grabbing involves natural resources other than land. Mehta et al. (2012) explore the nexus between land and water grabbing. Through their notion of ‘green grabbing’, Fairhead et al. explain how ‘the appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends’ (2012, 237) thrives in the early 21st century. Like Gudynas, Acosta and Svampa, Martínez-Alier et al. (2010) include crops and trees in their analysis of the social metabolism of contemporary extractivism and associated conflicts. Margulis et al. (2013), Wolford et al. (2013) and McKay (2017) analyze the role of the state in the global land rush from critical state-society interactive perspectives. And Hall et al. (2015) discuss a diversity of political reactions from below to land grabbing.

I thus build on the foregoing authors’ and others’ groundbreaking research to bridge critical agrarian and environmental studies for the investigation of contemporary directions of agro-environmental change in *breadth* and *depth*. In breadth because I analyze: i) plantation agriculture as biomass extractivism; ii) agro-ecological, social and policy structures; iii) labor in the bio-economy and external nature’s energy and material flows in agrarian political economy; iv) social relations around multiple forces of production, that is, labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations; v) the productive and political roles of different subjects differentiated along class, gender, ethnic and generational lines; vi) supportive, challenging and accommodative responses to resource extractivism and associated directions of agro-environmental change, and vii) economic, environmental and ideological distribution conflicts. In depth because I examine: i) change and continuity in agro-ecological, social and policy structures; ii) labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations of production, but also of distribution, property and reproduction; iii) class in intersection with ethnic, gender and generational attributes; iv) politics between, but also across and within fragmented dominant and subordinate classes in supportive, challenging and accommodative political standpoints, and; v) politics of resource extractivism as dynamic and generative processes.

Along these lines, I aim to comprehend the nature, character and trajectories of agro-environmental change, and the politics that enable and constrain them, under heightened resource extractivism during the convergent crises conjuncture of the early 21st century. Hence, my inquiry is driven by the following primary research question:

How does early 21st-century resource extractivism shape directions of agro-environmental change, and with what implications for whom?

In this research, addressing this main research question involves dealing with two research sub-questions:

- i) *What are the social relations of production in the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes in the early 21st century?*
- ii) *What are the politics of agro-environmental change in Guatemala during the convergent world crises conjuncture?*

1.3. An in breadth and depth investigation: Analytical approach and methodological strategy outline

This research involves an effort to bridge critical agrarian and environmental perspectives. Hence, it makes a call for, and relies on, a *broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach* to try to overcome the previously stated limitations in studies on land-grabbing and new extractivism, while still building on their contributions. As a repeated point of clarification, my critique of these heterogeneous and rich streams of literature is not expressed to dismiss them, nor is it a claim that “they got it wrong and I got it right”. Rather, my argument for, and use of, a broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy perspective emanates from my interest in grasping contemporary directions of agrarian and environmental change in breadth and depth. I do this as comprehensively as my empirical material and analytical abilities allows me, and in ways coherent with my core epistemological and ontological tenets. Put another way, my general analytical approach is problem- rather than strictly theory-driven, and is principled in rigorous, yet critical and transformative scholarship.

To develop this general analytical approach, I blend critical agrarian political economy, political ecology and political sociology perspectives, and pour both “old wine in new bottles” and “new wine in old bottles”. This means that, on the one side, I take the Edelman et al. critiques and recommendations outlined earlier into serious account, together with four more. First is Oya’s call to re-engage ‘with debates on the classic agrarian questions in a Marxist political economy tradition in order to move the land grab research agenda towards more conceptually and empirically challenging research questions’ (2013, 1532). Second is White et al.’s recommendation for research on land grabbing ‘to disentangle the immediate and the more fundamental dynamics at work [and] explore the complex dynamics of corporate land deals in a broad agrarian political economy perspective’ (2012, 620). Third is Edelman and León’s suggestion to approach the investigation of the global land-rush ‘as the history—conceptually and methodologically speaking—of the present’ (2013, 1698). And fourth is Borrás’ advice for rigorous scholar-activism to (re)engage ‘with critical theories in order to *interpret actual conditions* in the rural world, taking politics seriously in order to engage on questions of how to contribute to *changing existing conditions* in the agrarian world, and utilising *rigorous and appropriate research methodologies* in order to equip us with the necessary analytical tools to carry out the first two tasks’ (2009, 17 emphasis added).

On the other side, I pour “new wine in old bottles” for critical agrarian and environmental studies to better fit to the increasingly diverse, uneven, interconnected and fluid social and

ecological formations of today's world. To this end, I bring to the table critiques by institutionalist, radical and substantivist scholars, as well as by critical agrarian political economists and political ecologists, of narrow materialist accounts. Broadly speaking, these include the need to pay more and better attention to: i) the “political” in (agro-environmental) political economy;³⁰ ii) the nature and role of state power(s);³¹ iii) household size and composition dynamics (Chayanov 1966 [1924]); iv) diverse forms of class agency;³² v) age and sexual divisions of labor, and gender and generational politics;³³ vi) external nature and environmental politics,³⁴ and; vii) issues of belongingness, moral economy, racialized ethnicity, and culture and ideological politics more broadly.³⁵

As a result of these fusions, my broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach looks into early 21st-century resource extractivism through the methodological lens of the *agrarian question* of the convergent crises conjuncture. Key components of the agrarian question have been discussed by classic political economists within liberal³⁶ and critical³⁷ currents in the 18th and especially the 19th century. But it was first posed as such by Kautsky and Lenin at the turn of the 20th century and with regard to the German and Russian contexts. Since then, the agrarian question offered a useful set of relational queries to discuss agrarian and capitalist (as well as socialist) transitions and transformations elsewhere. It has been employed to analyze whether and how agriculture contributes to industrialization (Byres 1995), as well as whether and how industry contributes to agriculture (Moyo et al. 2013) since the Maoist Chinese experience.

I understand the investigation of the agrarian question of the convergent crises conjuncture in the early 21st century as a means rather than an end. I am therefore not interested in using it as a “Rostowian index” to measure whether a particular stage of (capitalist) development has been achieved. Rather, I use the agrarian question as an analytical tool because of its tremendous heuristic power to grasp whether, why and how key aspects of everyday human and non-human life in the countryside—and beyond—change as expressions and vectors of broader ecological and societal transformations. This is certainly not to say that the agrarian question addresses each and every aspect of agro-environmental change, let alone that this is the only way of investigating them. Rather, thinking in terms of an agrarian question instead of just “land”, “labor” or “external nature” is helpful in avoiding the usual tendency to lose sight of the forest for the trees.

Furthermore, following Hart's call to “de-naturalize” (cf. historical materialism) the world-historic dynamics of the early 21st century, and render them ‘historically and geographically specific, as well as interconnected’ (2006, 988), my general analytical approach is inspired by what she calls ‘critical ethnographies of globalization’ (2002, 819). These draw on ‘detailed historical ethnographies to illuminate multileveled processes in ways that are enabling of critical practices

³⁰ Brenner (1976), Wood (1981)

³¹ Poulantzas (1978), Fox (1993), Scott (1998), Jessop (2007)

³² Lenin (1964 [1899]), Kautsky (1988 [1899]), Moore Jr. (1966), Wolf (1969), Paige (1975), Przeworski (1977), Scott (1985), Edelman and Borras (2016)

³³ Agarwal (1992), Deere (1995), O’Laughlin (2007), Razavi (2009), White (2016)

³⁴ Blaikie (1985), O’Connor (1988), Martínez-Alier and O’Connor (1996) Foster (2000), Moore (2010)

³⁵ Thompson (1971), Wolf (1966), Mintz (1973), Scott (1976), Edelman (1999), Peluso and Vandergeest (2001), Hale (2004), Li (2007), Ploeg (2008), Hall et al. (2012)

³⁶ (e.g. Smith 1993 [1776], Ricardo 1891 [1821])

³⁷ (1887 [1867], e.g. Proudhon 1970 [1840], Marx 1977 [1852], Marx and Engels 1969 [1848], Engels 2010 [1884], 1951 [1894]).

and the formation of alternatives' (ibid).³⁸ Hence, I ground my investigation of early 21st-century resource extractivism in Guatemala during 2006-2014. There are two main reasons for this.

On the one hand, it makes sense. Following two decades of neoliberal restructuring of the Guatemalan economy and polity—during which resource extractivism kept a low profile in accumulation strategies—circumstances are swiftly changing from 2005 onward. Together with heightened extractivism of minerals and hydrocarbons, a “green gold” pandemic washes over the country during the convergent crises conjuncture. Sugarcane and oil palm (hereafter cane and palm) plantations and processing plants spread like wildfire, and the small Central American country becomes a leading world producer and exporter of multiple flex crop commodities by 2014.³⁹ To enable flex cane and palm complexes to proliferate, energy (e.g. hydropower dams) and communications (e.g. roads and ports) infrastructure mega-projects multiply. And agro-ecological, social and policy structures are reconfigured to meet the particular challenges of what is generically categorized as a ‘new economic model’.⁴⁰ Supporters of this model argue that it will bring about Guatemala’s buoyancy in the face of global climate change and the economic downturn that is particularly acute in the U.S. and EU—countries upon which Guatemala’s economy (and polity) has traditionally been dependent.⁴¹ Poverty⁴² and hunger⁴³ go from bad to worse in 2006-2014, capitalist macro-economic health notwithstanding. Criminal violence—especially that associated with drug-cartels and criminal urban mara-gangs—skyrockets to levels unheard of, even during the bloody internal armed conflict in 1962-1996. Agrarian, labor and environmental conflicts also multiply.⁴⁴ At the same time, leaders of social justice-oriented movements cannot understand why ‘peasant communities’ do not revolt against this new ‘offensive of capital’.⁴⁵ Indeed, the main actor behind the “new economic model” is the national oligarchic bourgeoisie, despite its thick ties to foreign capital. Nonetheless, the more fundamental dynamics at work behind the “new economic model” in Guatemala from 2005 on remain largely unexplained beyond these immediate factors.

On the other hand, an “in breadth and depth” investigation of contemporary resource extractivism requires diverse and rich empirical material, which is not always easily and readily available. This means direct and systematic engagement with the subjects and contexts of

³⁸ See Edelman (1999) and Li (2007) for seminal examples in 1990s Costa Rica and early 2000s Indonesia, respectively.

³⁹ In fact, by 2016 Guatemala will become the fourth largest Latin American palm oil producer and the tenth worldwide, as well as the largest palm oil exporter in Latin America and the fifth in the world (USDA. 2016). Furthermore, by that year Guatemalan flex palm agribusinesses will show ‘the world’s largest increase rate in palm oil exports in the last 20 years’ (GREPALMA. 2016a).

⁴⁰ Solis and Solano (2006), Hurtado (2008), Government of Guatemala (2012), Palencia Prado (2014). This naming resembles the one coined by Bulmer-Thomas (1996) to refer to the non-traditional exports-based new model of corporate globalization in Latin America.

⁴¹ As a US Congressional Research Service report explains, ‘[Guatemala] has maintained generally sound macroeconomic policies, and enjoyed annual GDP growth rates of over 5% before the economy slowed as a result of the onset of the global financial crisis and U.S. recession. Significant declines in exports, remittances, and foreign direct investment slowed growth to 0.6% in 2009. The Guatemalan economy began to recover in 2010, with GDP growth of 2.9% [...] estimated at 3.3% for 2013, and forecast to be 3.4% in 2014’ (Taft-Morales 2014, 12).

⁴² Poverty levels decrease from 56% to 51% between 2000 and 2006, but soar to 59.3% in 2014 (World Bank. 2017b).

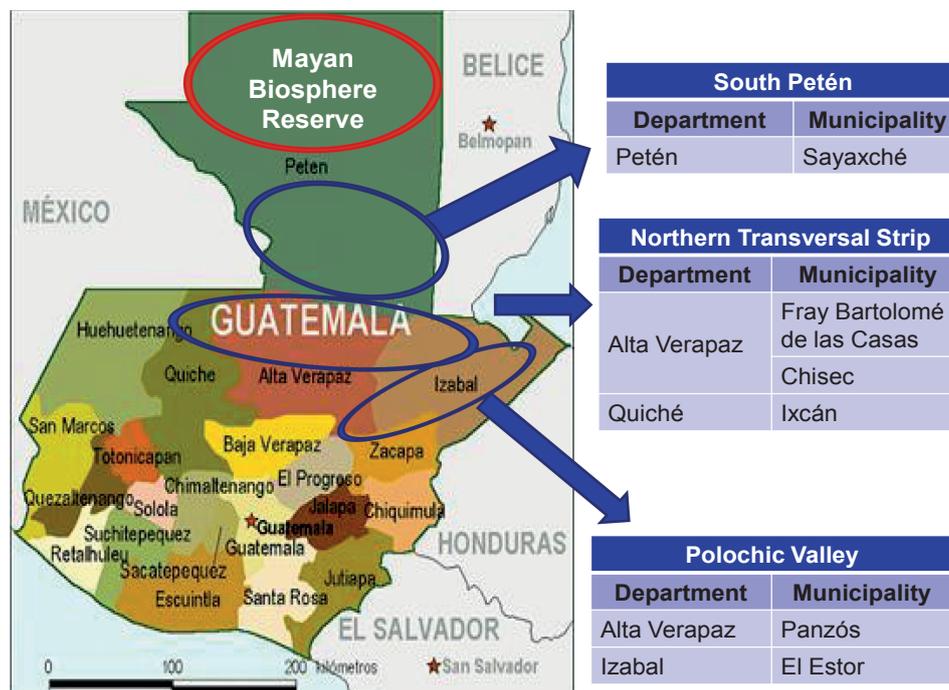
⁴³ ‘Chronic child malnutrition is at about 50%, the highest rate in Latin America, and fourth-highest rate in the world. The proportion of the population living with hunger has increased by 80% over the past 20 years, from about 17% in 1991, to 30.5% in 2012’ (Taft-Morales 2014, 12).

⁴⁴ ‘As of August 2013 there are 1.293 cases [of land disputes] on record, involving 1.059.873 persons (81% of them indigenous people), 66% of which are in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Petén, and Quiché [i.e. mostly in the northern lowlands]’ (IACHR 2015, 193).

⁴⁵ Interviews with CCDA Secretary General, CNP-Tierras Secretary General, Guatemala’s Women Sector National Board member, and H.I.J.O.S board member in November 2013, April 2009, November 2011 and June 2010, respectively

research is key. I have been in a “privileged” position to conduct first-hand, comparative field research in Guatemala before and during the unfolding of the “new economic model” that began in 2005. Hence, the other primary reason for me to look into early 21st-century resource extractivism in Guatemala during 2006-2014 is because it is feasible. The puzzle behind this research, and the ways to go about solving it, are informed by the author’s life and work in Guatemala as an activist-researcher on agrarian and environmental issues for more than a decade, from 2003 until 2014. This research builds on empirical material gathered in multiple locales and events in Guatemala and abroad (see Annex 1), but especially on that collected through eight years of systematic fieldwork during the 2006-2014 period, or the core time span of this research, in the northern lowlands. This region encompasses almost half of the Guatemalan territory, and is mainly inhabited by the “Maya-Q’eqchi’” peoples (hereafter Q’eqchi’).⁴⁶ The 1,6 million hectare “Mayan Biosphere Reserve” at the northernmost part of the country marks the agrarian frontier for thousands of subordinate class (Q’eqchi’) cultivators, a few dominant class owners of haciendas and ranches, and cane and palm companies especially from 2004-2005 onward. Figure 2 depicts a map of the northern lowlands, including the twenty villages from six municipalities (i.e. townships) part of the three northern lowlands’ sub-regions in which fieldwork was carried out.

Figure 2 Map of Guatemala with sub-regions, departments and municipalities of research in the northern lowlands region.



Source: Author’s elaboration based on Government of Guatemala (2009). Scale: 1:3.000.000

⁴⁶ With an estimated population of more than two million people, the Q’eqchi’ peoples is “probably” (since the last official population census dates back to 2002) the largest of the 22 Mayan peoples in Guatemala.

My investigation of resource extractivism in Guatemala during the 2006-2014 period through a broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach is based on a *four-pronged methodological strategy*. First, I trace core aspects of agro-environmental change during the convergent crises conjuncture in the early 21st century through the history of agrarian, environmental and capitalist transformations in Guatemala, beginning with the Liberal Revolution of 1871. Second, I discuss change and continuity in agro-ecological, social and policy structures, amid the rise of flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala during 2006-2014. Third, I carry out an interactive analysis of productive relations in agriculture under convergent global crises in two-steps. First I analyze labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations of production, distribution and reproduction in and around the flex cane and palm complexes. Then, I examine the ways in which all of these particular productive relations interact with one another to form and articulate the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of the dominant mode/form of production in agriculture during 2006-2014. This step also seeks to understand whether, how and to what extent such productive relations and interrelations are different from previous times. Fourth, I investigate the why, who and how of the politics of agro-environmental change under multiple and convergent crises in Guatemala. A “multi-dynamic politics” framework makes this possible, allowing for analysis of fluid and generative politics between, across and within dominant and subordinate fragmented classes in supportive, challenging and accommodative standpoints vis-à-vis resource extractivism and associated directions of agro-environmental change.

1.4. The rise of agro-extractive capitalism: Core insights from Guatemala in 2006-2014

After somewhat losing relevance during neoliberal globalization in the 1980s and 1990s, resource extractivism re-gains momentum worldwide, albeit unevenly, in capital accumulation and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies not long after the turn of the millennium. But unlike in previous times, early 21st-century resource extractivism is justified as part of the solution to convergent climate/environmental, energy, food and financial/economic crises. Biomass extraction, through flex cane and palm complexes in particular, is framed as a transitional vehicle to socially and environmentally sound forms of food, feed, bio-materials and green energy production—championing the needs of humans and the planet. At the same time, transnational financiers find a lucrative way out of the ‘over-accumulation crisis’ (Harvey 2003) in the flex crops and commodities complexes, simultaneously lowering food, feed, bio-materials and energy production costs and putting a barrier to ‘under-production crises’ (O’Connor 1988). As a result, flex crops and commodities complexes consolidate and upgrade in their former strongholds, and expand into unchartered territories. The restructuring of agricultural relations of production behind the rise of flex crops and commodities complexes, as well as the political dynamics that constrain and enable it, underpin a distinct model of resource extractivism after the turn of the century.

Certainly, this world-historic dynamic plays out differently across time and space. My examination of this phenomenon in Guatemala during 2006-2014 offers a series of insights on the ways in which resource extractivism shapes the nature, character and directions of agro-environmental change in the early 21st century. These insights may well resonate elsewhere. Most especially, burgeoning flex cane and palm complexes from 2005 onward fuel the rise of a distinct form of biomass extractivism that I call the *agro-extractive capitalist project*. This particular form of

organizing labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature into agro-commodity production is capitalist in nature, extractivist in character and underpinned by a new politics of racialized class domination.

Regarding the first claim, I argue that value in flex cane and palm commodity production is generated through the exploitation of mostly free labor, with the exception of some residual pockets that still rely on forced labor. But in the largely job-scarce context of Guatemala in the early 21st century, the expansion of cane and palm plantations which results in job losses rather than gains is behind the burgeoning of rural surplus population. Furthermore, during neoliberal globalization between 1986 and 2005 in Guatemala, many rural dwellers were pushed into the *latent* section of surplus population.⁴⁷ The agro-extractive capitalist project from 2005 onward, however, downgrades many subordinate class villagers from the latent to the *stagnant* section of surplus population ‘with extremely irregular employment [and] characterised by maximum of working-time, and minimum of wages’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 444). Hence, the agro-extractive capitalist project is fundamentally capitalist in that it not only enlarges the “reserve army of labor”, but also pushes the surplus population to the limits of subsistence.

Regarding the second claim, and following the “extractiveness” criteria I outlined previously, the agro-extractive capitalist project is extractivist in character for three main reasons. First, flex cane and palm commodity production is underpinned by the extraction and appropriation of increasingly diverse (agro)commodity surplus value portions⁴⁸ and state revenues⁴⁹. As a result, flex agribusinesses can either limit or do away with external claims over the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production, such as ground-rent from landlords or interests from financiers, and reap super-profits in return. In addition, appropriated cane and palm commodity value portions and state revenues are increasingly financialized, and thus realized in money form to fund accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes. Second, flex cane and palm commodity production involves the appropriation of productive and reproductive labor of the plantation workers’ families for free, as well as the stockpiling of natural goods and disposal of waste and pollutants at zero cost. Third, hyper-intensive production of flex cane and palm commodities damages workers’ health and vitality, and exhausts external nature’s energy and materials, in ways that compromise the very production of cane and palm commodities from the cost side. Moreover, and paraphrasing O’Connor, it weakens ‘the viability of the social and “natural” environment as a means of life’ (1988, 34).

Finally, regarding the third claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project shapes and expresses a new politics of racialized class domination that I call authoritarian corporate populism, or in short, *authoritarian corpopulism*. This is purposed to recast the flex cane and palm complexes. Instead of just another accumulation project, flex cane and palm commodity production is carefully molded into an extraordinary *response-able* phenomenon capable of feeding the world, generating green energy and cooling down the planet, while at the same time sponsoring employment and stimulating economic growth. To make sure everyone—but especially customers—gets that message, the “young although smartly-trained executives” (YASTEXES)

⁴⁷ Or that struggling to reproduce itself through farming always ready to provide the cheapest labor within a potentially expanded labor-force (Marx 1887 [1867], 444).

⁴⁸ Discussed further on, these include in this research ground-rent, interest, profit, intellectual property rights’ royalties, payments for environmental services and means of production replacement fund.

⁴⁹ Subsidies and tax exemptions.

holding key positions in the flex cane and palm complexes embark on a campaign to upgrade the image of flex cane and palm complexes. This involves switching from basic sustainable branding through corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity chain responsibility. To this end, the authoritarian corporatist agenda involves two strategic shifts. The first one is the “multistakeholderization” of flex cane and palm commodity chains. Shaping and expressing changes in the “Governance” policy dogma under the World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative”, the YASTEXES switch their corporate governance approach from shareholder- to stakeholder-centered, while ensuring that shareholders remain at the core. And the second step is swapping out the “bullets and beans” of authoritarian-paternalistic military regimes, once used to counter the communist threat during Cold War times. Instead, authoritarian corporatism relies on persuasion, and selective violence cloaked in the rule of law, to counter critique and opposition to the agro-extractive capitalist project.

The result is the reproduction of the racialized class hegemony of the white oligarchic bourgeoisie, and in particular of its agro-extractivist fraction behind flex cane and palm companies in Guatemala. In addition to the public policy concessions that are part of populist political regimes elsewhere (e.g. public grants and multi-stakeholder governance),⁵⁰ authoritarian corporatism involves concessions in private relations of production. These are connected to a series of fixes that cane and palm companies implement, affecting labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology, and ecological relations to soften the blow on people and the environment. Political and productive concessions act to upgrade flex cane and palm corporations as pro-social businesses, while simultaneously increasing labor and land productivity, expanding plantations, accessing new funding sources, reducing production costs, and contributing to the reproduction of their businesses’ natural and personal conditions of production.

However, the politics behind early 21st-century resource extractivism in Guatemala are anything but a story foretold. The agro-extractive capitalist project also triggers reactions by state and social actors that take both challenging and accommodative standpoints. The former includes political subjects who turn their dissent and/or unrest into a practice of contestation against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and advocate for a transformative project. Certainly, not all subordinate agrarian class subjects dissent from the agro-extractive capitalist project, let alone make a practice of contestation out of their dissent when it does occur. And there are also dominant agrarian class subjects who feel anything but enthusiastic about the agro-extractive capitalist project. Nonetheless, the bulk of challengers come from fragmented subordinate agrarian classes. Rather than from a particularly adversely affected, capable or visionary subordinate class/fraction, gender or generation, challengers traverse the spectrum of all fragmented agrarian classes. This is partly an outcome of the intertwinement of economic, environmental and ideological grievances in the countryside. But it is also partly the result of the seizure of political opportunities and heightened abilities for representation, coordination and mobilization at the grassroots through alliances with state and social actors. Spanning across all of these allies, the diverse group of ‘young although smartly-trained activists’ (YASTACS) stands

⁵⁰ Certainly, post-Washington Consensus economic reforms in 2006-2014 Guatemala swap out neo-classical *laissez-faire* for neo-institutional subsidiarity. Among other things, this suggests that the neoliberalism of today is not that of 30 years ago.

out for their fresh contributions and profound commitment to challenging the agro-extractive capitalist project.

Following heightened expansion of flex cane and palm companies—and opportunities to build alliances at the grassroots in response—the challengers’ political agenda gravitates towards the strengthening of villagers’ abilities to gain, regain, maintain and control access to land and other natural resources. Struggles against land dispossession now include the strengthening of livelihoods (especially through farming intensification), environmental, health and labor grievances, as well as the reaffirmation of local sovereignties. In other words, challengers gradually move from contesting flex agribusinesses’ expansion, to struggling against agro-extractive capitalism, and promoting a transformative life project. This framing process results in the challengers’ contention being articulated as “defense of territory”, and is advanced through two main strategies namely, convergence and land sovereignty. Gradually, national partisan peasant, indigenous peoples, youth, and women’s movement organizations and allies acknowledge the impetus and legitimation of grassroots struggles in defense of territory, and steer their political agendas to support them. Nonetheless, convergence and alliance building efforts between, across and within challengers at the grassroots, and (trans)national state and social actors, are not free of tension. First, there are material and ideological cleavages across fragmented subordinate class challengers. Second, there are key fractures across the national peasant, indigenous people, women and youth social justice movements. Third, there are competing political subjectivities within fragmented classes of proletarians, family farmers and petty capitalist farmers. And fourth, there are non-antagonist yet troublesome contradictions within the national partisan peasant movement.

For their part, accommodators struggle to tame the virulence of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and/or to accommodate themselves to it in the best possible way. They are further divided according to their character (i.e. lawful or criminal) and will (i.e. amenable or reluctant). All accommodators stem from both dominant and subordinate fragmented classes, and share a pragmatic perspective on the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes as an inevitable phenomenon. Nonetheless, a series of competing political agendas branch out from this common core. One informs the “dog-eat-dog” struggles of criminal accommodators, or those who accommodate the agro-extractive capitalist project through the “backdoor”. These are subjects who rely on illicit means of social reproduction, either as a result of the ways they incorporate themselves into the agro-extractive capitalist project, or because they simply cannot fit into it. The former case indicates criminal incorporation into the flex agribusinesses’ labor regime—either as narco-outgrowers or as corporate thugs. In the latter case are the outcasts who eventually wind up working as hitmen in narco-trafficking cartels, or joining a criminal mara gang in Guatemala City. The other political agenda is a driver of the lawful accommodators’ efforts towards “inclusive, ethical and sustainable development”. This agenda is advanced through “win-win private accountability” and “chicken bus assistant” strategies of contention, articulated by progressive state actors and big transnational conservation and development NGOs performing as “response-ability gatekeepers” in multi-stakeholder platforms of corporate performance certification like BONSUCRO or the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. Thus, various accommodators act in ways that do not necessarily appeal to their fellows. As a result, tensions occur across and within groups of accommodators.

In sum, the agro-extractive capitalist project reshapes the political terrain of agro-environmental and capitalist transformations through alliances between corporates, the state and a Guatemalan white, oligarchic bourgeoisie permeating both of the foregoing. By legitimizing flex cane and palm commodity production through populist manoeuvres, and recurring to force when needed, dissent is suppressed and accommodations forged. The result is a new politics of racialized class domination which trajectory is still to be seen.

1.5. Dissertation overview

This manuscript includes fourteen chapters. Apart from this introductory chapter, the following analytical-methodological chapter, and the final conclusion chapter, the bulk of this dissertation is organized in three parts.

Part I sets the stage. To this end, it presents the outcomes of the first and second components of my methodological strategy in two subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 advances the genealogy of agro-environmental change during early 21st-century convergent crises in Guatemala. To situate my work, I review the broad contours of agro-environmental transformations through four key periods in the Guatemalan post-colonial history since the 1871 Liberal Revolution and their particular world-historic conjunctures. Chapter 4 puts forth an analysis of change and continuity in agro-ecological, social and policy structures amid the rise of flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. To unpack these components, I first detail the rise of flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala during the convergent crises conjuncture. I then examine change and continuity in the agro-ecological, social and policy structures within the surge of flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014.

Part II presents an interactive analysis of productive relations in Guatemalan agriculture under convergent crises in 2006-2014 and includes six chapters. Chapters 5 to 9 analyze labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations of production (narrowly understood), distribution and reproduction in and around the flex cane and palm complexes. Then, chapter 10 examines the ways in which all of these particular productive relations interact with one another to shape and express the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of the dominant mode/form of production in agriculture in 2006-2014, as well as whether, how and to what extent this is different from previous times.

Part III discusses the why, who and how of the politics of agro-environmental change under convergent crises in Guatemala. A “multi-dynamic politics” framework makes this possible, allowing for analysis of the fluid and generative politics between, across and within dominant and subordinate fragmented classes in supportive, challenging and accommodative standpoints vis-à-vis the rise of flex cane and palm complexes and associated directions of agro-environmental change. Chapter 11 reveals those who show a supportive political standpoint vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project, and why and how they do so. This lays the foundation for my understanding of the politics between supporters and challengers, as well as between supporters and accommodators. At the same time, chapter 11 analyzes the politics across and within agro-extractive capitalist project supporters. Chapters 12 and 13 follow the same lines of analysis as chapter 11, but for agro-extractive capitalist project challengers and accommodators, respectively.

Finally, if (s)he made it this far, the reader might have already noticed this manuscript is written following an analytical rather than a narrative style. There are two reasons for this. First, I can only but acknowledge my limited abilities to write in an entertaining way, let alone in scholarly texts of this size and in other than my native language. Second, there is also a purpose for this dense and at times rather text-bookish style. And this is to attempt to make this doctoral research a pool of empirically-grounded and meticulously-elaborated—yet always subjective—arguments, from which to mobilize resources for further scholarly and other purposes. This said, I only hope to be clear enough⁵¹ to transmit a good deal of what I learned and unlearned—bodily, emotionally and intellectually—about the political economy of agro-environmental and capitalist transformations in the early 21st century, mainly but not only, from the Guatemalan experience. And if not to entertain, I hope to at least challenge the adventurer reader on her assumptions, ideas and perspectives in this regard.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Salena Tramel for her commitment in the painstaking task of copy-editing this dissertation. Thank you also to Zoe Brent, who didn't think twice about answering the author's call for help to copy-edit one chapter.

Chapter 2 Analytical approach, methodological strategy and research methods

2.1. General analytical approach

The puzzle, analytical categories and methodology behind this research are all anchored in a broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach. My aim here is to explain the reasons for this choice, and what exactly I mean by this general analytical approach.

Particularly, I discuss the ways in which I believe the classical agrarian question offers fertile ground from which to develop a methodology for the investigation of the ecological, socio-economic and political dimensions of resource extractivism and associated directions of agro-environmental change today.

2.1.1. *A broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach*

My approach to critical agro-environmental political economy is “broadly cast” in four main ways. First, core research matters and categories in political ecology and sociology generally resonate with—if not stem directly from—those particular to (critical) political economy. The ways this is so are revealed when I lay bare my understanding of (critical) political economy, ecology and sociology. In doing so, I start by differentiating between new and classic understandings of political economy. The former is a ‘branch of neo-classical economics which ‘applies the basic economic logic of constrained choice to circumstances in which private transactions fail to maximise welfare’ (Caporaso and Levine, 1992: 86). It addresses market failure, and, within a property rights framework, focuses on externalities, public goods and monopoly’ (Byres 1995, 561-2). The latter is concerned with the analysis of ‘accumulation, class and the state’ (ibid, 561).⁵² Within the latter, Byres further differentiates between the “Marxist” and “non-Marxist” variants. Following Bernstein’s call for a ‘political economy of agriculture less confined by its historic sources and preoccupations and more committed to problematizing what is changing in today’s (globalizing) capitalism’ (2006b, 16), I prefer the term “critical” rather than “Marxist”—even if the two are commonly used interchangeably—to make room for radical, substantivist, feminist and institutionalist critiques of liberal-bourgeois political economy.

Similarly, within the long tradition of political sociology along pluralist, power-elite and Marxist perspectives—and their many variants—I subscribe mainly, but not exclusively, to the latter perspective. I rely on critical political sociology for its unique framework for the analysis of social relations behind wealth generation, the role of social classes and the state, or ‘the relational and political side of property and labour regimes, labour processes and structures of accumulation’ (White and Dasgupta 2010, 600). Finally, the more recently developed political ecology field also shows competing perspectives between and within Marxist and non-Marxist critical perspectives. In general, though, I subscribe to Blaikie and Brookfield’s argument for a political ecology that ‘combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy’ (1987, 17).⁵³

⁵² Similarly, for Wolf classical political economy ‘entailed a concern with *how wealth was generated in production*, with the *role of classes* in the genesis of wealth, and with the *role of the state in relation to the different classes*. These concerns were common to conservatives and socialists alike’ (1982, 20 emphasis added).

⁵³ This is a perspective clearly and usefully articulated by Agarwal in her ‘feminist environmentalism’ thesis ‘Women’s and men’s relationship with nature needs to be understood as rooted in their material reality, in their specific forms of interaction with the environment. Hence, insofar as there is a gender- and class (/caste/race)- based division of labor and distribution of property and

Second, my analytical approach is broadly cast because it is theoretically-informed and empirically-grounded, but it is neither theoreticist nor empiricist. This means I ground empirical evidence in relevant theoretical debates while staying away from conceptual straitjackets which are either excessively teleological and/or simplifying, or ultra-relativist and methodologically unmanageable. The arguments developed in this research are the outcome of an interactive process between empirics and analytics through which the latter are reviewed in light of the former and vice-versa.

And third, my approach is broadly cast because it is materialist but not “materialistic”. As Poulantzas explains, ‘class division is not the exclusive terrain of the constitution of power, even though in class societies all power bears a class significance’ (1978, 43). Hence, I rely on a material-ideational perspective, which considers the material, the ideological and the political as co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing. In the agrarian and environmental realms, this perspective is informed by two key debates. On one side there is the critique of Locke’s (1947 [1689]) foundational notion of private property as an absolute and natural right. Proudhon in particular de-naturalized this “right” by revealing the forceful means through which private property emerged and is reproduced under capitalism, which led him to conclude that “property is theft” (1970 [1840]).⁵⁴ On the other side, there is the so-called “Brenner Debate”, sparked by Brenner’s (1976) argument on the pre-eminence of political (i.e. relations of property) over economic (i.e. development of the productive forces) and demographic factors in transitions to capitalism in Europe. In short, ‘social-property systems, once established, tend to set strict limits and impose certain overall patterns upon the course of economic evolution’ (Brenner 1982, 16).⁵⁵ And it is ultimately the balance of social forces which shapes systems of social-property.⁵⁶ Indeed, the focus of Brenner and others⁵⁷ in the “Analytical” or “Political” current of Marxism on political institutions—especially the state—and class struggle is inspiring for my investigation of resource extractivism under convergent crises in Guatemala. But at the same time it is constrained in two ways. First, Brenner argues ‘it is of critical importance to recognize and analyse systematically the differing long-term *processes of class formation* which characterized the various regions within feudal Europe’ (1982, 17 emphasis added). But he does not discuss the trends of agrarian differentiation behind such processes of class formation (Bernstein 1996, 28). Second, the general disregard of the dialectical method by Political Marxists results in the separation of class structures and struggles from changes in the configurations of the forces of production, state powers and world markets.

However, a perspective that argues for the pre-eminence of class (and not only) struggles in a dialectical fashion with the forces of production and the state is that of Poulantzas’ Conjunctural

power, gender and class (/caste/race) structure people’s interactions with nature and so structure the effects of environmental change on people [and vice-versa], and their responses to it’ (1998a, 197).

⁵⁴ Despite their differences later on, Proudhon’s analysis is celebrated by Marx and Engels in their first joint work (The Holy Family 1980 [1844]), and underpins Marx’s elaboration on ‘primitive accumulation’ in volume I of Capital (1887 [1867]).

⁵⁵ Brenner further explains that ‘under *different property structures and balances of class forces* in various European regions, precisely the same demographic commercial trends yielded widely divergent economic results, not only with respect to long-term trends in the distribution of income, but to overall patterns of the development or non-development of productive forces. For this reason the *relatively autonomous* processes by which class structures were established, developed and transformed have to be placed at the centre of any interpretation of the long-term evolution of the pre-industrial European economy’ (1982, 17 emphasis added).

⁵⁶ ‘Class structures themselves emerge as the outcome of class struggles whose results are incomprehensible in terms merely of market forces’ (Brenner 1977, 27).

⁵⁷ Especially Wood (1981, 1990)

Marxism. Especially in his latest work,⁵⁸ *State Power and Socialism*, Poulantzas claims ‘the political field of the state (as well as the sphere of ideology) has always, in different forms, been present in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production’ (1978, 17).⁵⁹ Poulantzas calls on fellow Marxists for a more nuanced understanding of power in class societies, and in so doing agrees with Political Marxists in that it is ultimately through class struggle that social change ensues.⁶⁰ Furthermore, ‘not only do class struggles have primacy over, and stretch far beyond, the State, but the relations of power also out measure the State in another sense: *relations of power do not exhaust class relations* and may go a certain way beyond them’ (Poulantzas 1978, 43 emphasis in original).

Poulantzas’ material-ideational elaborations on power have implications for the way I understand state and state agency. Regarding the former, if power is expressed in the state, but it is neither created by nor bounded to it, this means the state is neither fully autonomous from the society it governs (Weber 2004 [1919]), nor a mere appendage of class power.⁶¹ Instead, the state is ‘grounded in social struggles’ (Poulantzas 1978, 40), and thus ‘like ‘capital’, it is rather a relationship of forces, or more precisely, *the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions* such as this is expressed within the State in a necessarily specific form’ (ibid, 128-9 emphasis in original). Precisely to distance himself from certain Marxist orthodoxy, Poulantzas further stresses ‘the State is not purely and simply a relationship, or the condensation of a relationship; it is the *specific material condensation* of a relationship of forces among classes and class fractions’ (1978, 129 emphasis in original). This is paramount to my general analytical approach for three reasons. First, because by qualifying the state as a “specific” relationship of social forces, Poulantzas highlights the contingency and fluidity of state power following changes in the composition and balance of forces in society. Second, because the notion of “condensation” suggests that it is not only the hegemonic class/fraction that shapes the state to its “image and likeness”. Rather, state power reflects the interests of other dominant as well as subordinate classes/fractions involved in that relationship of social forces behind the state. Third, because the “materiality” of the state—as expressed in its branches, apparatuses and normative-regulatory instruments—allows it to keep ‘relative autonomy’ (Poulantzas 1978, 127) from the hegemonic class/fraction in society.⁶²

⁵⁸ In which he takes distance from Althusser’s clean-slate division between the economic (base) and the ideological-political (superstructure).

⁵⁹ He further argues that ‘wherever there is class division and thus class struggle and power, the State *already exists* as institutionalized political Power [...] *Right from the beginning* the State marks out the field of struggles, including that of the relations of production: it organizes the *market and property relations*; it institutes political domination and establishes the politically dominant class; and it stamps and codifies all forms of the social division of labour -all social reality- within the framework of a class-divided society’ (Poulantzas 1978, 39 emphasis added).

⁶⁰ ‘All power (and not just class power) can exist only insofar as it is materialized in certain apparatuses (and not just state apparatuses). *These apparatuses are not mere appendages of power, but play a role in its constitution: the State itself is organically present in the generation of class powers.* But in the relationship between power and apparatuses, and more especially between class struggle and apparatuses; *the fundamental role is played by the (class) struggle*, whose field is none other than that of the relations of power, economic exploitation, and political-ideological domination and subordination. *Struggles always have primacy over, and constantly go beyond, the apparatuses or institutions*’ (1978, 44-5 emphasis added)

⁶¹ Marx and Engels (1969 [1848]) and especially Lenin (1970 [1918]). But see *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1977 [1852]), for a more nuanced understanding of class power by Marx.

⁶² For ‘the State’s *material aspect as an apparatus* does not at all disappear if we view the state as the condensation of a class relationship. [This because] The State is *not reducible to the relationship of forces*; it exhibits an opacity and resistance *of its own*. To be sure, change in the class relationship of forces *always affects* the state; but it does not find expression in the State in a direct and immediate fashion. It adapts itself exactly to the materiality of the various state apparatuses, only becoming *crystallized in the State in a refracted form* that varies according to the apparatus’ (Poulantzas 1978, 130-1 emphasis added)

Two key insights follow from the above with regard to the way I understand state power. First, the institutional-material form of the state mirrors the very contradictions between, across and within fragmented classes in society. This means the relative autonomy of the state is expressed through ‘the diverse, contradictory measures that each of these classes and fractions, through its specific presence in the State and the resulting play of contradictions, manages to have integrated into State policy’ (Poulantzas 1978, 135). Second, the state ‘does not exercise power: its powers (always in the plural) are activated through the agency of definite political forces in specific conjunctures’ (Jessop 2007, 37). Hence, I approach state power following Poulantzas’ critique of Althusser’s negative (or restrictive) conception of state power (1971).⁶³ Rather, for Poulantzas the state plays a “positive” role in organizing and legitimizing class hegemony ‘by establishing a *variable field of compromises between the dominant and dominated classes*; quite frequently, this will even involve the *imposition of certain short-term material sacrifices on the dominant classes, in order that they long-term domination may be reproduced*’ (1978, 184 emphasis added).⁶⁴ Nonetheless, and precisely because of the conjunctural nature of the state, successful reproduction of class hegemony is by no means guaranteed. Rather than assumed, then, whether and how the state reproduces class hegemony needs to be investigated against the backdrop of material, ideological and political relations in particular social formations.

2.1.2. *The agrarian question as a methodological umbrella*

The investigation of the agrarian question has a long history of helping to understand the role and implications of broader societal transformations for the countryside, and vice-versa. Particularly, since the 1970s the agrarian question during neoliberal globalization has sparked a series of competing interpretations. Their review is a task others have already successfully carried out. I limit myself here to argue that—competing interpretations notwithstanding—there seems to be a consensus on two fundamental aspects of the agrarian question of globalization. First, albeit unevenly and in diverse forms, changes in productive relations associated with the restructuring of capitalist forces of production during neoliberal globalization have strongly shaped agro-environmental and capitalist transformations worldwide. Together with Bernstein’s argument on the growing rift between *farming* and *agriculture*,⁶⁵ major transformations under neoliberal globalization since the 1970s include i) ‘depeasantization’ (Araghi 2009), and the generalization of capitalist relations in agriculture; ii) shrinking relevance of direct land control for the appropriation of agricultural surplus; iii) increased metabolic rift between agriculture and external nature, and; iv) the growing limitations of farming and agriculture for social reproduction purposes. The latter aspect has been framed by Bernstein as an ‘agrarian question

⁶³ ‘That acts and functions through repression and ideological inculcation and *nothing else*. It assumes that the State’s efficacy somehow lies in what it forbids, rules out, and prevents; or in its capacity to deceive, lie, obscure, hide, and lead people to believe what is false’ (1978, 30 emphasis in original).

⁶⁴ See also O’Connor regarding how together with the conditions for accumulation ‘the state must also create the conditions for social harmony’ (1973, 6); Fox Piven and Cloward on social welfare as a mechanism to control of the poor (1993), and Fox’s ‘twin foundations of state rule in capitalist societies: the continuation of private capital accumulation and the preservation of some historically conditioned minimum of political legitimacy’ (1993, 30).

⁶⁵ ‘agriculture in capitalism today is not synonymous with, nor reducible to, farming, nor is it constituted simply as a set of relations between agrarian classes (landed property, agrarian capital, labour), as in the “classic” agrarian question. Rather, agriculture is increasingly, if unevenly, integrated, organized, and regulated by the relations between agrarian classes and types of farms, on one hand, and (often highly concentrated) capital upstream and downstream of farming, on the other hand. Moreover, such integration and regulation operates through global as well as national (and more local) social divisions of labour, circuits of capital, commodity chains, sources and types of technical change (including in transport and industrial processing as well as farming), and markets’ (2006, 454 emphasis added).

of labor’, namely ‘what if the forms of capitalism [today] are incapable of generating sufficient, and sufficiently secure, employment to provide ‘a living wage’ to the great majority?’ (2006b, 13). These transformations notwithstanding—or arguably as a result of them—Ploeg argues processes of ‘repeasantization’ (2008) have unfolded around the world during neoliberal globalization.⁶⁶

Second, there is consensus the agrarian question remains a useful analytical lens for exploring the directions of agro-environmental change following, and feeding into, broader societal transformations. Nonetheless, this consensus is contingent on the agrarian question paying more and/or better attention to relatively neglected aspects. As a result, the agrarian question has been dissected into its various components, including for instance the agrarian question of labor, land, ecology, gender, or generation.

Therefore, and on the one hand, I approach the agrarian question as ongoing rather than as a one-off question “resolved” or completed at some point in time. On the other hand, while informed by the foregoing discussions on different components of the agrarian question in late capitalism, I investigate these components in an interactive fashion. It is in this way the agrarian question offers both a set of relational questions and a methodological umbrella for the investigation of directions of agro-environmental change. For the purpose of this research, I develop a four-pronged methodological strategy. First I trace the roots of core aspects of agro-environmental change during early 21st-century convergent world crises in the history of agrarian and capitalist transformations in Guatemala since the Liberal Revolution of 1871. Second, I discuss change and continuity in agro-ecological, social and policy structures in Guatemala amid rising flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. Third, I carry out an interactive analysis of productive relations in agriculture under convergent global crises. Fourth, I investigate the “multi-dynamic politics” of agro-environmental change in Guatemala under heightened resource extractivism in the early 21st century. I now turn to discuss each of the four components of my methodological strategy in detail.

2.2. A genealogy of agro-environmental change during convergent world crises in Guatemala

By tracing the historical roots of core aspects of agro-environmental change during the early 21st-century convergent crises in Guatemala I do not aim to engage in a full-fledged analysis of the past. This is something others have fruitfully done before, as I discuss in chapter 3. Rather, my genealogical perspective is epistemologically anchored in the difference between the past ‘as the period before the events directly recorded in any individual’s memory’ (Hobsbawm 1997, 10), and history as ‘the unity of the past, present and future’ (ibid, 23). Hence, my interest in historicizing agro-environmental change in Guatemala ‘has less to do with introducing a deeper temporal frame than with *viewing contemporary processes as the history*—conceptually and methodologically speaking—*of the present*’ (Edelman and León 2013, 1698 emphasis added). This means my direct experience in Guatemala during the early 21st century inevitably shapes my account of the history of this period. As Bloch explains ‘the historian never escapes from time. But, in an inevitable oscillation [...]he sometimes considers the great weaves of related phenomena which run over

⁶⁶ Repeasantization for Ploeg is not only characterized by the return to petty commodity production as a reproductive strategy, but also by the latter being sought in an autonomous fashion from corporate-captured, high external input-dependent agriculture.

long periods, and sometimes the *specific moments in which these currents are channeled into the powerful vortex of direct experience* (1953, 156 emphasis added). And the years spanning from 2006 to 2014 are, arguably, one such “specific moment”, and thereby my main chronological unit of analysis. Can I really claim historical change on the basis of a time span that is a bit less than a decade in duration? As previously stated, it might be too early to assess the relevance and “place” of resource extractivism under the early 21st-century convergent crises conjuncture in the *longue durée* of agro-environmental and capitalist transformations. But as Bloch argues in this regard, ‘the most precise measurement [...] is the one which is best adapted to the nature of the events [...] Metamorphoses of social structure, economy, beliefs, or mental attitude cannot conform to an overly precise chronology without distortion’ (1953, 184). Thus, ‘reality demands that its *measurements be suited to the variability of its rhythms*, and that its boundaries have wide marginal zones. It is only by this plasticity that history can hope to adapt its classifications’ (Bloch 1953, 189 emphasis added).

In articulating a genealogy of present agro-environmental dynamics, my research question(s) are aimed at uncovering ‘the patterns and mechanisms of historical change’ (Hobsbawm 1997, 30). To this end, and in tune with my broadly cast critical agro-environmental political economy approach, I lean on a methodological framework that, on the one hand, stems from ‘a collaboration between general models of social structure and change and the specific set of phenomenon which actually occurred’ (Hobsbawm 1971, 29). And on the other hand, it is ‘based on the one element of directional change in human affairs which is observable and objective, irrespective of our subjective or contemporary wishes and value judgements, namely the persistent and increasing capacity of the human species to control the forces of nature by means of manual or mental labour, technology, and the organization of production’ (Hobsbawm 1997, 31). Hence, my approach to the genealogy of agro-environmental change during convergent global crises in Guatemala entails ‘viewing the present moment as an epiphenomenal result of earlier social and material processes and restoring the agency of contending social classes, rather than understanding their actions as entirely over-determined by the various *dei ex machina*—commodity booms or multilateral lending, for example’ (Edelman and León 2013, 1698). Using this approach, I rely on a series of analytical categories to account for different dynamics of agro-environmental change (and continuity) in the Guatemalan society, bearing in mind that

‘this form of ownership, or those beliefs were not, of course, absolute beginnings. Inasmuch as their development proceeds from the most ancient to the most recent times, human phenomena are governed primarily by chains of similar phenomena. To classify them according to kind is to *lay bare the principal effective lines of force* [...]. It is the business of the historian to be always testing his classification in order to justify their existence and, if it seems advisable, to revise them’ (Bloch 1953, 147-8 emphasis added).

Thus, I take seriously the task of qualifying social groups, phenomena and relationships by means of both well-established and ad-hoc categories. ‘At any rate, in order to do justice to the facts themselves’, Bloch explains, ‘we are here forced to substitute for the language of the past a nomenclature which, if it is not strictly invented, is at least reshaped and shifted about. Conversely, moreover, the names sometimes vary according to time or place, independently of any variation in the thing themselves’ (1953, 160).

Therefore, I link the main directions of change and continuity from 2006-2014 in productive relations in agriculture and in the politics of agro-environmental change, including the role of the state, to four remarkable periods in Guatemalan post-colonial history of capitalist and agro-environmental transformations.⁶⁷ These include: i) agro-environmental change under imperialism, ranging from the liberal revolution of 1871 and 1943, leading to the triumph of the 1944 social democratic revolution; ii) the Cold War period during the social democratic decade that took place in Guatemala between 1944 and 1954, or the “Revolutionary Spring”; iii) the Cold War in Guatemala after the 1954 coup and through the three decades of military rule that ensued until new democratic elections were held in 1985, and iv) under neoliberal globalization in Guatemala between the beginning of the structural adjustment of the economy and polity in 1986 and the signing of the free trade agreement with the US (DR-CAFTA) in 2005.

2.3. Analysis of change and continuity in agro-ecological, policy and social structures

My second methodological component has a twofold aim. First, to discuss the drivers and immediate effects of the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala during 2006-2014, and second, to analyze their relations with the agro-ecological, social and policy structures during this period. In pursuing the former aim, I assess the rise of the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes through two distinct yet complementary “measurement scales”. On one hand, a metric scale to describe changes in the number of hectares under cane and palm cultivation (area), and production of flex cane and palm commodities (mass).⁶⁸ On the other hand, the ‘scale of capital’⁶⁹ behind the flex cane and palm complexes. This is useful to identify who controls these business complexes, and how their geographical expansion and investment strategies are orchestrated.

I then discuss change and continuity in the Guatemalan agro-ecological, social and policy structures in 2006-2014. Since these structures shape and express the main ecological, socio-economic and political directions of agro-environmental change amid rising flex cane and palm complexes, they are key to my inquiry. I look into the “policy structure” through the analysis of change and continuity in the statutory regulations feeding into and resulting from the surging flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014, with special attention to the model-paradigms that justify them. This because such legitimating paradigms are prone to undergo a dogmatization process through which they are made indisputably true by state authority. I examine the “agro-ecological structure” through analyses of land-use, and direct and indirect land-use change. Direct land-use change concerns ‘change in human use or management of land *within* the product system being assessed’. Indirect land-use change refers to that ‘which occurs *outside* the product system being assessed’ (ISO. 2013). And I investigate change and continuity in the “social structure” in rural areas in which flex cane and palm companies expand. The ways classes—and particularly agrarian classes⁷⁰—are empirically identified, and its features and differentiation tendencies analyzed, are the subject matter of long-standing debates. It requires

⁶⁷ Nonetheless, I make some references to colonial times, and set special emphasis on the last period immediately preceding my main research span in 2006-2014.

⁶⁸ Subject to the vagaries of money markets, the monetary scale is less useful to account for material production dynamics.

⁶⁹ (Franco et al. 2013, Edelman 2013c).

⁷⁰ By “agrarian” classes I mean those including subjects whose simple or expanded reproduction strategies revolve around farming (including fishing and livestock breeding), regardless of whether they are also involved in other agricultural realms downstream or upstream farming (e.g. financiers, input suppliers, processors, traders, consumer goods manufacturers, etc.).

the selection of criteria which are methodologically consistent across time and space, and empirically-driven yet conceptually sound. And this, no matter from which perspective, is already a challenging task. But the challenge increases considering I also aim to identify class fractions,⁷¹ and examine the ways in which material and socio-cultural attributes intersect within class structures, and shape their differentiation over time.⁷²

2.3.1. *Materialist criteria for the identification of agrarian classes and fractions*

Commonly used criteria to classify agrarian populations in Guatemala include farm size-, income-, and class-based attributes. Nonetheless, these are all limited in some way or another for my purposes here. Farm size criteria bundle diverse forms of “small-scale” farming under the category of “family farming”.⁷³ As a result, labor relations among subordinate agrarian classes are obscured. Similarly, income-based criteria assume all “specialized family farming households” rely solely on family labor for farming (Romero 2015). This undermines the investigation of patterns of labor surplus extraction in the many Guatemalan households farming that do hire labor. And class-based criteria either do not account for dominant agrarian classes and fractions (Figueroa Ibarra 1980), or do not engage with the nitty-gritty details of the empirical identification of agrarian classes and fractions in 2006-2014.⁷⁴

Therefore, I need to develop my own criteria for the empirical identification of agrarian classes and fractions in Guatemala during this period. In doing so, I draw on previous inspiring debates. These range from Lenin’s (1982 [1899]) analysis of differentiation of Russian peasantry in the late 19th century;⁷⁵ to key debates on agrarian differentiation in Asia, Africa and Latin America during the second half of the 20th century;⁷⁶ and to more recent efforts such as those by Oya (2001, 2004). Among them, methodological reflections by Oya, de Janvry and White are very useful. For White,

‘differentiation [...] involves a cumulative and permanent (i.e. non-cyclical, which is not to say that it is never reversible) process of change in the ways in which different groups in rural society -and some outside it- gain access to the products of their own or others’ labor, based on their differential control over production resources and often, but not always, on increasing inequalities in access to land’ (1989, 20 emphasis added).

⁷¹ ‘A broad stratification may not be too difficult for the entire population distribution’, Oya explains. ‘Nevertheless, it is a different (and more difficult) exercise to attempt a classification of farmers *within* one of the allegedly homogeneous ‘categories’... choosing the right criteria [for this] is a hazardous process’ (2004, 304 emphasis in original).

⁷² As Yuval-Davis argues ‘categorical attributes are often used for the construction of inclusionary/exclusionary boundaries that differentiate between [...] *who is entitled to certain resources and who is not*. In this way the *interlinking* grids of differential positionings in terms of class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, ability, stage in the life cycle and other social divisions, tend to create, in specific historical situations, *hierarchies of differential access to a variety of resources* - economic, political and cultural’ (2006, 199 emphasis added).

⁷³ See Guatemalan National Statistics Institute (INE) (2005), following Barraclough and Domike (1966).

⁷⁴ See recent works by Krznaric (2003), Oglesby (2004), Solano and Solis (2006), Hurtado (2008), Solano (2010, 2011), Palencia Prado (2014).

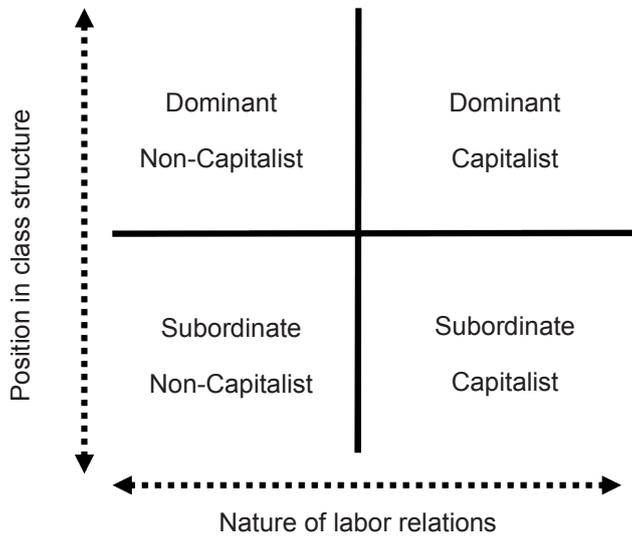
⁷⁵ Lenin (1982 [1899]) argues the middle peasantry from the village communes of Tzarist Russia is a class doomed to disappear with the generalization of capitalist relations of production. The middle peasantry, engaged in simple reproduction activities, was to break-up into the two fundamental capitalist classes: The (petty) rural bourgeoisie, including former middle peasants who successfully engage in expanded reproduction, and the rural proletariat involving those who fail to do so.

⁷⁶ (White 1989, 1981, there are simply too many authors and works to be mentioned but see, inter alia, Kay 1974, 1994, Byres 1977, Deere and de Janvry 1979, Bernstein 1979, Bardhan 1982, Bharadwaj 1985, Kitching 1985, Sender and Smith 1986, Patnaik 1988, Cousins et al. 1992, Krishnaji 1995, Mamdani 1996, Wright 1997).

In his informed review of materialist methodologies for class identification, Oya explains there is a consensus about criteria concerning '(i) the nature of *labour appropriation*, that is, forms of labour mobilisation and labour surplus appropriation; and (ii) the degree of *reliance on their own means of production* (including land) *as opposed to labour-power*' (2004, 304 emphasis added). And in his analysis of the agrarian question in Latin America during the 1960s and 70s, de Janvry argues 'the *only difference* between a capitalist producer and a peasant one is the capacity to generate and expropriate a surplus via the use of *hired labor*' (1981, 152 emphasis added). This means, through empirical research in South East Asia, Latin America and West Africa, White, Oya and de Janvry, respectively, agree on the centrality of labor criteria for the identification of agrarian classes and fractions.

Thus, in this research classes and class fractions are fundamentally—but not only—identified through labor-related criteria. It is worth stressing that my labor criteria go beyond whether (money) wages are paid or not. This is because the wage-labor relation is necessary but not sufficient for capitalist relations of production. Marx argues the “double freedom” of workers, from property over their own means of reproduction and from coercion to work, is the precondition for labor to be mobilized into “truly capitalist” relations of production (1887 [1867], 500). Nonetheless, evidence from outside of Great Britain suggests ownership or access to means of subsistence does not always nor necessarily preclude workers from hiring out their labor. Examples include the urban proletariat stemming from a peasantry endowed with land from former Junker estates in late 18th- and early 19th-century Prussia (Kautsky 1988 [1899]), allotment-holding rural proletarians of late 19th-century Russia (Lenin 1982 [1899]) or Latin American farming proletarians in the 20th century. Freedom from coercion to work stands, then, as the sine-qua-non condition for workers to be mobilized into “truly capitalist” wage-labor relations. Conversely, those involved in coercive labor relations, regardless of wages being paid or not, are involved in non-capitalist labor relations. This means agrarian classes can be broadly categorized as part of *capitalist or non-capitalist* productive relations according to labor mobility criteria. Additionally, and regardless of their capitalist or non-capitalist nature, not all classes enjoy the same power in the economic class structure. Some are in a *dominant* position, other in a *subordinate* one. Hence, figure 3 shows my four primary categories of agrarian classes following labor mobility and relative power position in the class structure.

Figure 3 Primary categorization of agrarian classes according to nature of labor relations and position in the class structure



Source: Author elaboration.

In order to further refine my primary class categorization I rely on additional materialist criteria. These range from the reliance—to different extents and in various ways—on forces of production other than (mobile) labor-power,⁷⁷ to the degree of marketed farm produce. But in addition to their conceptual salience, my choice of additional class identification criteria is driven by their empirical relevance to the research subjects and contexts. Table 1 summarizes my whole set of criteria (labor and non-labor) for the identification of classes and fractions across the capitalist/non-capitalist and dominant/subordinate preliminary divisions.

⁷⁷ i.e. land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature, but also family labor.

Table 1 Criteria for the identification of agrarian classes and fractions

Nature of labor relations	Position in the class structure	Classes and fractions identification criteria
Capitalist	Dominant	Range, extent, and forms of control over the productive forces* in agro-commodity chains**
	Subordinate	Mobile labor hired and family labor hired-out Mix and intensity of (re)productive activities (farming and/ or wage labor)
Non-capitalist	Dominant	Range, extent, and forms of control over the productive forces* in agro-commodity chains**
	Subordinate	Share of marketed produce per hectare
		Productivity of family farm labor Cultivated land (number of hectares)

* Most distinctively for me labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology, external nature

** Following Hopkins and Wallerstein's definition of the commodity-chain as 'a network of labor and production processes'⁷⁸ whose end result is a finished commodity' (1986, 159 emphasis added).

Source: Author elaboration.

My class identification criteria outlined, I advance now to the way I examine agrarian class structures and their differentiation over time. On one side, hierarchies between and across dominant and subordinate classes and fractions at a particular point in time are analyzed as the *features* of the agrarian class structure. Features qualify the subject's position in the class structure—from higher to lower—according to the following four categories: i) hegemonic, ii) robust, iii) weak, and iv) marginal. On the other side, I examine *tendencies* of agrarian differentiation through the analysis of broad directions of change and continuity in the agrarian class structure over time. Specifically, classes and fractions are qualified as: i) burgeoning, ii) enduring, or iii) decomposing. Additionally, and only for subordinate agrarian classes in 2006-2014, the broad directions of class differentiation are further nuanced with the analysis of class mobility. This involves comparing the class position of a particular subject at a point in time with that shown by the same subject at a previous point in time.

2.3.2. *Socio-cultural criteria for the intersectional analysis of class structures and differentiation*

My understanding of the agrarian class structure and social differentiation can be further enhanced if I bring on board socio-cultural attributes dividing classes. There are two main reasons for this. First, pre-eminence of labor and other materialist criteria for the identification of agrarian classes and fractions does not pre-empt the relevance of other sort of criteria for their analysis. Especially for subordinate agrarian classes, household size and demographic

⁷⁸ Including 'the prior transformations, the raw materials, the transportation mechanisms, the labor input into each of the material processes [...] as well as the reproduction of the labor forces involved in these productive activities' (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1977, 128).

composition related-criteria offer relevant *and* complementary insights. These factors were elaborated by Chayanov through his analysis of agrarian differentiation among late 19th Century Russian peasantry. Rather than permanent economic polarization into antagonistic classes (i.e. the proletariat and the bourgeoisie)—as was the case for Lenin (1982 [1899]) —for Chayanov and others in the Russian Organization and Production School,⁷⁹ the differentiation of the peasantry is a socio-demographic, non-polarizing and cyclical phenomenon (Chayanov 1966 [1925]). Accordingly, the amount of land cultivated, involvement in wage-work relations, and the relative share of marketed farm produce follow changes in size and demographic composition within the peasant household (HH) (ibid). Chayanov derived this thesis from the analysis of a peasantry mostly dedicated to the production of use values, under parochial and highly constrained land, labor and credit markets. This could have been the case in the Guatemalan highlands until the end of the 19th Century, and in the northern lowlands well into the 20th Century (Hurtado 2008). But it is quite an unrealistic assumption in the face of the gradual (yet uneven) formal and real subsumption of social reproduction to labor, land, money and commodity markets in Guatemala from the 1940s on (McCreery 1994). Changing HH size and demographic composition patterns are, nonetheless, very useful for the analysis of sex and age divisions of labor in agrarian social formations, as well as for the investigation of gender and generational politics of agro-environmental change. Hence I endorse White’s “Solomonic” take regarding the preferred methodology for the analysis of agrarian differentiation, that is, ‘in the analysis of most situations, frameworks are needed which do not restrict us to either focus but allow us to incorporate them both as opposing but coexisting “tendencies” and focus precisely on the nature and implications of their coexistence’ (1989, 28).⁸⁰

Second, class formation, endurance and decomposition can be approached as historical vectors and actual expressions of material relations crossed by ideological and political power rifts. Hence, in the analysis of social structures and their change over time I take distance from both idealist subjections of social relations to cultural patterns and values, and structuralist over-determinations of beliefs and ideology. As Yuval-Davis explains, ‘in specific historical situations and in relation to specific people there are some social divisions that are more important than others in constructing specific positionings. At the same time, there are some social divisions, such as gender, stage in the life cycle, ethnicity and class, that tend to shape most people’s lives in most social locations’ (2006, 203). Hence, I approach the relationship among forms of production, values, identity, social structures, and external nature as dialectical, material-ideational relations.

Following from the above, non-materialist criteria relevant to the intersectional analysis of agrarian class features and differentiation tendencies in Guatemala in 2006-2014 include HH size and composition aspects, and class divisions based on age,⁸¹ sex, and ethnicity, as outlined in table 2 shortly. Arguably, ethnicity is the least straightforward of all. Generally speaking, this is because ethnicity can be understood ‘as *both* a way in which individuals define their personal

⁷⁹ And somehow even for some within the Bolshevik ranks like Kritsman (1984 [1926])

⁸⁰ Similarly, Friedmann explains, ‘the social formation provides the context for reproduction of units of production, and *in combination with the internal structure of the unit*, determines its conditions of reproduction, decomposition, or transformation’ (1980, 160 emphasis added).

⁸¹ I understand age as indicative of the ‘stage in the life cycle’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, White 2016), rather than in mere a biological terms

identity and a type of *social stratification* that emerges when people form groups based on their real or perceived origins [regarding] *ancestry* and *culture*' (Gregory et al. 2009, 214 emphasis added). Furthermore, 'many use the term only to refer to minority groups, assuming that people in the majority are 'normal' while everyone else is 'ethnic' [when the fact is] *everyone has an ethnic background*, whether or not it is acknowledged' (ibid, 215 emphasis added). In Guatemala, ethnicity has been racialized at least since colonial times. A minority of Spanish and later other European residents and their (creole) offspring in positions of economic, political and religious power has traditionally categorized the large majority of Mayan others as racially "Indian", and the mix of Europeans and Mayans as "ladino".⁸² And this racialized understanding of Guatemalan peoples' ethnicity persists in the 21st century as a strong identity marker and social stratification criterion (see González-Ponciano 2013). Thus, I understand ethnicity in-between constructivist and primordialist accounts—and in a broadly relational way—as the socially-constructed, relatively stable-yet-fluid, self-attachment to distinctive bloodlines and/or cultural heritages. This lends ethnicity both ideational and material roots and implications. Hence, I employ ethnicity in this research in two ways and for two purposes. First, I understand it as a key socio-cultural class division for the analysis of productive relations in agriculture. Second, I consider ethnicity among the key identity-markers shaping beliefs and interests for the analysis of the politics of agro-environmental change.

Table 2 Primary socio-cultural class divisions according to position in the class structure

Position in the class structure	Socio-cultural class divisions
Dominant	Extra-economic means of achieving a dominant class position (i.e. bloodline, cronyism, crime)
	Age
	Ethnicity
Subordinate	Age
	Consumer-labor balance (C-LB)
	Total number of economically active HH members
	Sexual division of economically active HH members

Source: Author elaboration

2.4. Interactive analysis of productive relations in agriculture

Byres explains 'a very narrow reading of the agrarian question is concerned largely, if not exclusively, with class relationships. A fuller reading should include the outcome with respect to the form taken by the productive forces' (1995, 570 emphasis added). To carry out this fuller examination I rely on the third component of my methodological strategy, namely the interactive analysis of *diverse* productive relations around *multiple* forces of production in agriculture. This way of examining the socio-economic dimension of resource extractivism stems from Marx's

⁸² Curiously enough, Ladino is the language of the Sephardi people, or Iberian Peninsula Jews expelled from Spain in 1492.

critique of bourgeois political economy, and particularly from his theory of value. I discuss this in detail shortly. It suffices to point out here that the process of agro-commodity production is underpinned by a series of social relations behind the organization of multiple forces of production in the productive process—for us here: labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations. But at the same time, each of these five relations involve a diversity of production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction relations. Hence, for instance, there are “land relations” of production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction, as well as labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological “distribution relations”. Table 3 summarizes the set of twenty different productive relations analyzed in this research.

Table 3 Diverse productive relations around multiple forces of production in agriculture

Multiple (→) and diverse (↓) productive relations	Labor (W)	Land (L)	Financial (F)	knowledge & technology (K&T)	Ecological (E)
Production (p) (narrowly-defined)	W-p	L-p	F-p	K&T-p	E-p
Distribution (D)	W-D	L-D	F-D	K&T-D	E-D
Property (P)	W-P	L-P	F-P	K&T-P	E-P
Reproduction (R)	W-R	L-R	F-R	K&T-R	E-R

Source: Author elaboration

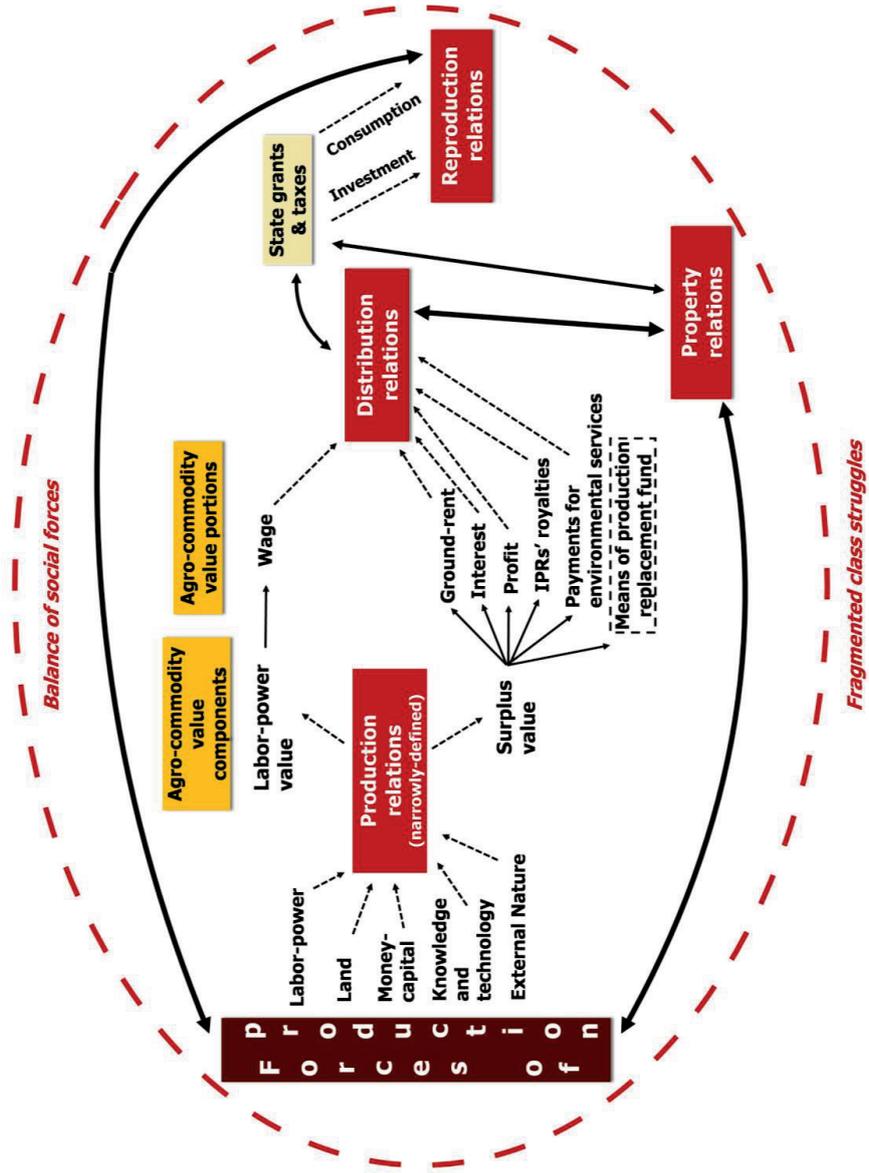
Following from the above, my interactive analysis of diverse productive relations around multiple forces of production in agriculture involves two steps. First, I analyze labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations of production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction amid rising flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. Then, I examine the ways in which all of these particular productive relations interact with one another to form and articulate the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of the dominant mode/form of production in agriculture during 2006-2014. This step also seeks to understand whether, how and to what extent such processes are different from previous times. In doing so, I qualify productive relations between, across and within fragmented agrarian classes as: i) cooperative class relations of either mutualistic (win-win) or commensalistic (win-null) character,⁸³ and; ii) contradictory class relations of either antagonistic (e.g. bourgeoisie-proletariat) or non-antagonistic (e.g. across fractions of the bourgeoisie) character.⁸⁴ All of these class relations are crossed by material, ecological and ideological dynamics and interests, and conflict and collaboration can stem from contradictory and cooperative relations between, across and within fragmented classes alike. Hence, these categories are also useful to discuss the politics of agro-environmental change, as explained further on in this chapter.

⁸³ The “mutualistic” and “commensalistic” categories on the character of cooperative class relations are from ecological science.

⁸⁴ The “antagonistic” and “non-antagonistic” categories on the character of contradictory class relations are from Mao (1968).

Figure 4 depicts the forces of production, main components and portions of agro-commodity value, and productive relations informing my analysis. Then I turn to, first, situate my approach to forces of production and productive relations in agriculture within Marx's theory of value in capitalism. And second, discuss in detail what I mean by, and how I analyze, labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations of production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction around labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature as key forces of production in agriculture.

Figure 4 *Multiple forces of production, components and portions of agro-commodity value, and diverse productive relations in agriculture*



Source: Author elaboration

2.4.1. *Forces of production and productive relations in agriculture*

Marx identifies nature (hereafter external nature), human labor and its instruments as the basic forces of commodity production (and service provision) (1887 [1867], 124-5). He further differentiates between ‘means of production’ (or ‘constant capital’)—including ‘the instruments and the subject of labour’—and ‘productive labour’ (or ‘variable capital’)—involving labor-power itself (ibid, 126). It follows that forces of production are neither given nor immutable. They vary in range and condition over time following changes in natural cycles, and in the scope for productive labor through gradual knowledge creation (Marx 1887 [1867], 126). Under capitalism, all productive forces become (fictitious) commodities regardless of whether they are initially produced as commodities or not. For instance, labor-power, land, knowledge and external nature are not produced as commodities, but in the capitalist production process they are treated *as if* they were commodities. Furthermore, “money” can become a means of production (i.e. money-capital) when directly feeding into capitalist production (Marx N.D. [1894], 211-2).

Thus, under the generalized-yet-uneven capitalist mode of production, I identify five key forces of production in agriculture including labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature. These are mobilized into production of (agro)commodities (or provision of services) through a series of social relations—“productive relations”. These can be read in two ways. One is limited to the organization of the forces of production into the specific process of transformation of nature into (agro)commodities (for own-use or exchange). For explanatory purposes, I term this reading as “production relations narrowly-defined”. The other interpretation includes the former, but goes beyond it. Specifically, it involves the ways in which, i) productive forces are organized in the transformation of nature into (agro)commodities; ii) different portions of the labor-generated (agro)commodity value are distributed; iii) ownership of productive forces and entitlements to (agro)commodity value portions are politically

sanctioned, and; iv) (agro)commodity value portions appropriated by different agents are used—after public taxes and grants—for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes. In other words: relations of (agro)commodity production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction.⁸⁵ For explanatory purposes, I call this interpretation as “productive relations broadly-defined”.

It stems from the above that production of agricultural commodities (for own-use or exchange) involves *multiple* social relations around labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature, namely labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations. But at the same time, each of the latter five relations involves a *diversity* of social relations other than those strictly informing the organization of productive forces in the very process of transformation of nature into a commodity (i.e. production relations narrowly-defined). These are the distribution, property and reproduction relations of agro-commodity production. As demonstrated in the previous discussion of forces of production by Marx, multiple and diverse productive relations are vectors and expressions of the way in which value is created under the dominant mode/form of production in a particular place, at a particular point in time.⁸⁶ Under capitalism, Adam Smith argued ‘wages, profit, and rent are the three *original sources of all revenue*, as well as *of all exchangeable value*’ (1993 [1776], 43 emphasis added). Hence, for Smith and (neo)classical mainstream (political) economists—even today—‘capital-interest, land-ground rent, labour-wages [is] the trinity formula which comprises all the secrets of the social production process’ (Marx N.D. [1894], 568). Indeed, for Marx who places labor-power at the core of value creation in capitalism, Smith’s “trinity formula” creates the

‘illusion that value arises out of its own component parts. And namely, the various component values of the commodity acquire independent

⁸⁵ Summarized by Bernstein in four fundamental critical political economy questions: ‘i) who does what? ii) who gets what? iii) who owns what? and iv) what do they do with it?’ (2010, 22-3).

⁸⁶ Which itself mirrors and shapes the balance of social forces at that place and time.

forms as revenues, and as such revenues they are related back [...] to those sources – however, *not as components of value, but rather as revenues*, as components of value falling to the share of these particular categories of agents in production: the labourer, the capitalist and the landlord. But then one might fancy that *these constituents of value, rather than arising out of the division of commodity-value, conversely form it instead only through their combination*, which leads to the pretty and vicious circle, whereby the value of commodities arises out of the sum of the values of wages, profit and rent, and the value of wages, profit and rent, in its turn, is determined by the value of commodities’ (Marx N.D. [1894], 586).

Therefore, “surplus value”— the labor-generated value beyond that which is necessary for the worker’s own reproduction⁸⁷—is not simply divided as “revenues” among the owners of the means of production (e.g. ground-rent for the landlord, and interest for the financier), and the rest appropriated as profit by the agent in control of the labor process (i.e. the capitalist). This overlooks the need to assign a portion of surplus value to replace the part of the means of production consumed/exhausted in the production process (Marx N.D. [1894], 587). Furthermore, the (neo)classical perspective on value creation obscures the inner organization of the capitalist mode of production through diverse productive relations. By presenting commodity value portions as mutually independent revenues, ‘production relations are converted into *entities* and *rendered independent* in relation to the agents of production [i.e. fragmented classes]’ (ibid, 576 emphasis added). The division of the labor-generated (agro)commodity value involves *distribution* relations between, across and within different classes involved in the productive process. And whether and how—after public taxes and grants—these (agro)commodity value portions are used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, are the

⁸⁷ And it is this exploitation of labor that enables the expanded reproduction of capital (i.e. accumulation). Following Marx’s theory of value under capitalism ‘the entire value portion of commodities, then, in which the total labour of the labourers added during one day, or one year, is realised, the total value of the annual product, created by this labour [...] is equal to the wage, or the value of the variable capital, plus the surplus-value, which in turn is divided into profit and rent’ (Marx N.D. [1894], 580).

outcome of *reproduction* relations. Finally, *property* relations between, across and within classes determine who owns which productive force, and thus who is entitled to which portion of (agro)commodity value.

All of the foregoing productive relations are controversial. But property relations tend to be especially so,⁸⁸ and particularly during the convergent crises conjuncture. This is why I dedicate some extra space to discuss them. Considering my research problem, the property controversy underlies who owns what land, money-capital, knowledge and external nature's flows of energy and materials as means of production,⁸⁹ and thus who is entitled to ground-rent, interest, royalties from intellectual property rights and payments for environmental services as agro-commodity surplus value portions. The debate on whether, which and how rights *in* “things” should exist and play out predates capitalism, mercantilism or feudalism, and stretches well beyond the Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, or Western Europe more generally. But considering its current traction—including in Guatemala—I focus my discussion on the liberal strand of property developed during early modernity in Western Europe, and spread elsewhere in the world since then through colonialism and imperialism. It was in England the so-called “Father of Liberalism” —John Locke—argued in 1689 that freedom and protection of human life is akin to protection of, and respect for, *unlimited* and *unconditional* individual private property.⁹⁰ Locke ‘was adamant that property could have been instituted in a *state of nature* without any special conventions or political decisions’ (Waldron 2012, emphasis added). And the naturalization of private property is behind the making of ‘the right of private possession into the *right of absolute property*’ (Proudhon 1970 [1840], 72 emphasis added). In other words, the replacement of ‘limited and not always

⁸⁸ Property relations *imbue* the conditions of production themselves and their representatives with a specific social quality [i.e. class]. They *determine* the entire *character* and the entire *movement of production*’ ((Marx N.D. [1894], 606 emphasis added, c.f. the Brenner debate).

⁸⁹ Since as we will see, labor relations in the Guatemalan countryside in 2006-2014 are mostly capitalist relations involving free labor, despite remnants of debt peonage.

⁹⁰ In his own words, for the ‘mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name: property’ (Locke 1947 [1689], 123).

saleable rights *in* things [...] by virtually unlimited and saleable rights *to* things' (Macpherson 1978, 8 emphasis in original).

The understanding and justification of private property as an individual right of “natural” (or pre-dating and not-contingent on social regulation) and “absolute” (or unlimited and unconditional) character, came to lie at the heart of liberal bourgeois emancipatory struggles from the 17th Century on, including in Latin America during the 19th Century.⁹¹ Nonetheless, contradictions between and across capitalist and non-capitalist classes led many modern liberal republics to leverage the relative autonomy of the state in order to impose certain limits on property as an exclusive, individual right to things. Most often, these external limits⁹² follow the Napoleonic Code's provision on property as ‘the *right* of enjoying and *disposing* of things *in the most absolute manner*, provided they are not used in a way *prohibited by the laws or statutes*’ (art. 544 Code Napoleon 1900 [1804], 150 emphasis added).⁹³ Nonetheless, there are those who disregard any kind of limits on the individual right to property. This is especially the case of the Austrian School Libertarians, whose perspective on this regard is best articulated through Rothbard's extreme recasting of the notion of human rights in terms of private property, so that all ‘human rights are property rights’ (1982, 115).⁹⁴

Therefore, my inquiry on property relations involves five key interrogations: i) a “what” question regarding the very understanding of

⁹¹ E.g. the 1871 Liberal Revolution in Guatemala.

⁹² There are even cases in which the bundle of individual private property rights are further constrained by *internal limits* associated with a requirement of social performance, which Duguit coined as the ‘social function of property’ (1975 [1911]).

⁹³ Hence, ‘the position of a private owner is best understood not as a single right to the exclusive use and control of the object in question, but as a *bundle of rights*, which may vary from case to case (Honore 1961). For instance, an individual might be allowed to sell, mortgage, inherit, or rent farmland, but not to build a residential housing lot’ (Waldron 2012, n.p. emphasis added). This is why I speak of property *rights* rather than *right*.

⁹⁴ Rothbard explains his narrow understanding of human rights in the following terms: ‘Liberals generally wish to preserve the concept of “rights” for such “human” rights as freedom of speech, while denying the concept to private property. And yet, on the contrary the concept of “rights” only makes sense as property rights. For not only are there no human rights which are not also property rights, but [...] *human rights, when not put in terms of property rights, turn out to be vague and contradictory, causing liberals to weaken those rights on behalf of “public policy” or the “public good”* (1982, 113 emphasis added).

property. Is property the owned thing or a right? If the latter, is it an absolute (unlimited) right? Or an externally and/or internally limited one? ii) a “why” question as to the moral justifications behind a particular understanding of property; iii) a “whose” question relative to the specific institutional form property takes in a social formation (i.e. common, public or private; and within the latter individual, communal or collective private property); iv) a “how” question concerning the normative-regulatory frameworks and instruments through which property relations are governed (i.e. by statutory law, custom, and/or convention), and; v) a “by whom” question about where the authority to sanction changes in property relations lies (i.e. the state and/or the “community”, generally speaking).

2.4.2. *Labor relations*

Labor relations are cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes shaping the ways: i) labor-power is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) agro-commodity value is divided between labor-power’s value and surplus value; iii) ownership over the fruits of labor is politically sanctioned —as expressed in the division of value between labor-power value and surplus value, and; iv) labor-power value and surplus value are appropriated by different production agents and used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. As discussed earlier, the mediation of wages is a necessary but not sufficient condition for capitalist labor relations. Even more strongly so than “freedom” from means of production, freedom from coercion to work stands as the sine-qua-non condition for labor to be mobilized into “truly capitalist” productive relations. Conversely, those forced to work are involved in non-capitalist labor relations, even when wages are paid (e.g. in the case of some debt-serfs). While theoretically there is little room for the misinterpretation of labor relations, coexistence and variation over time of capitalist and non-capitalist relations complicates the discussion on labor relations in the Guatemalan social formation, and elsewhere. Despite their

generalization, capitalist labor relations in agriculture are far from ubiquitous in the early 21st century, let alone in previous periods.

Hence I find it useful to bring on board the category of “*form of production*” for the analysis of change and continuity in labor relations.⁹⁵ According to Smith, ‘different modes of production, including capitalism, take different *forms* that *depend* upon the *general economic environment*—an environment that often includes several different forms of production as well as the particular conditions of the market integrating the forms’ (1984b, 210 emphasis added). Generally speaking, a form of production is defined by ‘how producers deploy *labour* (their *own* or that of *others*)’ (Smith 1984b, 202 emphasis added). This is akin to Bernstein’s notion of ‘*labour regime*’, or the ‘specific methods of *mobilizing* labour and *organizing* it in production, and their particular *social, economic and political conditions*’ (1988, 31-32 emphasis added). In the analysis of labor regimes it is important to pay attention to who is “in” and who is “out”—willingly or otherwise—as well as to the ‘terms of incorporation’, ranging from advantageous to adverse (Du Toit 2004, 1003). Furthermore, the category of labor regime also resonates with non-commoditized productive and reproductive labor, including in my research context that of elders, children and especially women. Hence in exploring labor relations amid rising flex cane and palm complexes I pay special attention to ‘the inter-dependence of commodified and non-commodified labour in the process of accumulation’ (O’Laughlin 2009, 205). In doing so, I follow Razavi’s perspective, namely

‘bringing the *domestic arena* into the analytical framework demands *not only* that we scrutinize what goes *inside* domestic institutions - cooperation and conflict, pooling/sharing and inequality in resource

⁹⁵ (1984b, de Janvry 1981, 1980, Friedmann 1978, Smith 1984). Capitalism is very much a part of Guatemala’s modern history. However, as elaborated in chapters 2 and 3, commoditization of labor as well as money-capital and land offshoots before independence from Spain in 1821, emerges after the 1871 Liberal Revolution and spreads widely from the 1940s on (McCreery 1994, Castellanos Cambranes 1996). Nonetheless, commoditization of these key forces of production is gradual and uneven across regions and sectors in the Guatemalan countryside. It is precisely to account for this pace and avoid forcing empirical dynamics into generalist abstract notions of capitalism that I employ the concept of forms of production in this study.

allocation and in the division of unpaid work necessary to sustain the members of the household- *but also* that we tease out the *interconnections between domestic structures and broader economic and political processes*' (2009, 188 emphasis added).

Finally, it is important not to miss the fact that labor commoditization, or “proletarianization”, is also the process of formation of a ‘reserve army of labor’ that is ‘a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a *surplus population*’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 438 emphasis added). Marx further differentiates among the floating, latent and stagnant section of surplus population. *Floating* surplus population is to be found in ‘the centres of modern industry - factories, manufactures, ironworks, mines, etc.’ where ‘labourers are sometimes repelled, sometimes attracted again in greater masses, the number of those employed increasing on the whole, although in a constantly decreasing proportion to the scale of production’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 443). The *latent* section of surplus population includes semi-proletarianized agricultural workers ‘reduced to the minimum of wages, and always stand[ing] with one foot already in the swamp of pauperism’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 444). The reproduction strategy of latent surplus population in the Latin American countryside of the 1970s was branded by de Janvry as ‘functional dualism’ (1981), and involves subsistence farming subsidizing (casual and badly paid) wage-work. The *stagnant* section of the surplus population involves workers ‘with extremely irregular employment [furnishing] to capital an inexhaustible reservoir of disposable labour-power. Its conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class; this makes it the broad basis of special branches of capitalist exploitation. It is characterised by maximum of working-time, and minimum of wages’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 444). Finally, ‘the lowest sediment of the relative surplus population finally dwells in the sphere of pauperism’, to constitute what Marx branded as ‘the dangerous classes’ (ibid).

2.4.3. *Land relations*

Land relations involve cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes around the ways: i) land is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the ground-rent portion of agro-commodity value distributed; iii) land ownership and entitlements to ground-rent are politically sanctioned, and; iv) ground-rent is used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. But land is not just another means of production. Despite the subject of different human interventions, land remains a natural (i.e. not manufactured) means of production. Hence besides its intrinsic meaning as a natural ‘means of creation’ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 70) land can mean—alternatively or simultaneously—other things to different people, or to the same people at different times. As Li explains, land’s “resourceness” is not an intrinsic or natural quality. It is an *assemblage* of materialities, relations, technologies and discourses that have to be pulled together and made to align’ (2014b, 1 emphasis added).

In Guatemala during 2006-2014, land performs as a highly coveted resource in three fundamental ways, namely as a means of production, as soil, and as territory. I have already argued that from a materialist perspective land is a fundamental force of production in agriculture. And this is the meaning of land on which my investigation of land relations is focused. Land as soil is discussed as part of ecological relations. I simply flag here that land as soil performs as a source of environmental resources and services (or “goods”) and a deposit for waste and pollutants (or “bads”), following Martínez-Alier and O’Connor (1996). Land as territory informs the analysis of land relations, but is discussed in detail as part of the politics of agro-environmental change.⁹⁶ Derek Hall usefully discusses “territory” as one among three ‘central elements of *land control* over which people struggle

⁹⁶ See Sauer (2012, 86) for an informed discussion on the tensions between the meaning of land as ‘a ‘modern’ means of production and a ‘traditional’ use of the land’ as territory.

within and across international borders’ (2013, 11 emphasis added).⁹⁷ Hall leans on the category of territory to refer to ‘the relationship between land and *identity*, and to the existence of (or aspirations for) *political authority* over land’ (Hall 2013, 11 emphasis added, see also Moore 2005, Borras and Franco 2012). Hall’s broad yet clear understanding of territory speaks to the Guatemalan context in which land is understood (and contested) as territory by state and social actors. The latter include seigniorial and bourgeois oligarchs, subordinate class Mayan and ladino people, and a series of “criminal entrepreneurs”⁹⁸ stemming from dominant and especially subordinate fragmented agrarian classes for whom effective control over land as territory is paramount (i.e. drug-cartels and criminal urban mara gangs).⁹⁹

Therefore, the fact that land is a natural and immobile means of production (i.e. non-manufactured and thus non-reproducible even if biologically controllable to some extent), as well as a source of environmental goods and sink for environmental bads, and a politically coveted territory, gives a distinct character to the investigation of land relations of production (narrowly defined), distribution, property and reproduction. I examine land relations of production (narrowly-defined) through the mechanisms of land control by flex cane and palm companies, and the ways these relations shape and are shaped by relations between, across and within fragmented agrarian classes. In this regard, Peluso and Lund’s understanding of land control mechanisms as ‘practices that fix or consolidate forms of access and exclusion for some time’ (2011, 668) is very useful. Most relevant to this analysis, land control mechanisms can be property rights-based or not.

Property rights-based mechanisms of land control are underpinned by the liberal notion of property as a right to things. They are mainly

⁹⁷ He also includes ‘regulation and property’ (ibid.).

⁹⁸ Paraphrasing Blok’s (1974) analytical category in his seminal work “The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860-1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs”. The author is grateful to Eric Gutierrez for leading him to Blok’s work.

⁹⁹ See Goodhand, Meehan and Pérez-Niño (2014, 1) for an informed review of the ‘role of illicit economies within broader processes of state formation and agrarian change’.

divided into freehold and leasehold mechanisms. Generally speaking, the latter endow tenants with temporary and limited land property rights—generally to use and sometimes also to sublet—in exchange for a rent. Conversely, freehold land property rights include both leasehold and alienation rights (i.e. to transfer land’s ownership through sale, donation, or inheritance). The distinction is key, for as it often goes in liberal-capitalist states, only the bearers of land property rights are entitled to land’s ground-rent. This is understood here in the way Marx defines it in volume III of *Capital*, building on the initial conceptualization by Ricardo (1891 [1821]). For Marx, ground-rent is the portion of agro-commodity value the land-owning classes are entitled to by their mere condition as proprietors of a non-reproducible means of production (Marx N.D. [1894], 572). The typologies (i.e. absolute, differential, and categories within the latter), origin, realization, appropriation and re-appropriation (e.g. through taxation) of land’s ground-rent have been subject to thorough and ongoing debates between and across liberal and Marxist political economists. But for my purposes here, such a rich discussion boils down to the questions of who appropriates land’s ground-rent and how.

In addressing who can appropriate land’s ground-rent it is worth recalling that ‘the mere legal ownership of land does not create any ground-rent for the owner. But it does, indeed, give him the power to withdraw his land from exploitation until economic conditions permit him to utilise it in such a manner as to yield him a surplus’ (Marx N.D. [1894], 534). One such manner of using land productively is as a means of agro-commodity production. In this case, the “generated” ground-rent can be realized in money form through the land market, and used as a financial tool. Land’s ground-rent is realized in money form through market deals involving the full (i.e. freehold land property rights) or partial (i.e. leasehold land property rights) exchange of land property rights. Additionally, actual or expected money flows from land sales or rentals can be rendered fictitious capital and used as a funding tool. This is traditionally done through mortgages. More recently, securitization of forecasted land rental payments has gained salience. For explanatory

purposes, the realization of land's ground-rent through market deals is discussed in the chapter on land relations, and the use of land's ground-rent as a financial tool is analyzed in the financial relations chapter. Regarding how land's ground-rent can be appropriated, I have just argued land's ground-rent appropriation as a portion of agro-commodity value is contingent on land freehold property rights. Nonetheless, this does not guarantee appropriation of land's ground-rent, let alone its realization in money form. Furthermore, the lack of freehold or leasehold property rights over land does not pre-empt benefitting from land as a means of production, soil or territory through means other than the appropriation of its ground-rent. In other words, there are also non-property rights-based mechanisms of land control. These include contract-farming, as well as common property resources of various kinds—squatters, indigenous peoples living in situations where no notion of property in land exists at all, etc.

Therefore, there is a need to assess who controls what land and how to analyze land property relations beyond a strictly property rights-based perspective, or as land “access-beyond-property” relations. For this, Ribot and Peluso's “Theory of Access” (2003) is enlightening. Their broad understanding of resource access as the ‘ability to benefit’ (2003, 154) from that resource, and of ‘ability as akin to power’ (2003, 155), is particularly useful for the analysis of both property rights-based and other land control mechanisms. Ribot and Peluso develop their theory of access around three key dynamics ‘constitutive of relations among actors in relation to resource appropriation, management or use’ (2003, 158-159). These include gaining, maintaining, and controlling resource access. *Gaining* access concerns ‘the more general process by which access is established’ (ibid, 159). Access *maintenance* ‘requires of expending resources or powers to keep a particular sort of resource access open’ (ibid). And access *control* involves ‘the ability to mediate others’ access’ (ibid, 158), and hence speaks directly to Peluso and Lund's understanding of land control mechanisms. Hence, property rights-based land control mechanisms are no more and no less than ‘one set of access relationships among others [...] in a larger array of

institutions, social and political-economic relations, and discursive strategies that shape benefit flows' (Ribot and Peluso 2003, 157).

Finally, land relations can be of a cooperative or contradictory nature. The former involve legitimate and sanctioned land relations, including voluntary land deals between, across and within fragmented classes, although not all voluntary land deals are necessarily "willful" (e.g. distressed land sales). The latter include land relations that are not necessarily legitimate even if potentially legal, as with state-sanctioned forms of forced land dispossession. Contradictory land relations are epitomized in critiques of the 'invisible hand' (Smith 1759, 350) allocating the wealth of nature (including land) to different social classes. Among them, Marx's theory of 'primitive accumulation' (Marx 1887 [1867]) stands out. This has been the subject of much political and scholarly debate and theorization, including David Harvey's notion of 'accumulation by dispossession' (2003), which argues that primitive accumulation is ongoing as capital's response to overaccumulation crises. Regardless of whether from "above" or from "below", I understand land dispossession as operating through forced as well as voluntary market deals, the latter including willful and unwilling voluntary deals. In other words, and generally speaking, I follow Jansen's nuanced perspective on the current land rush, in which 'many reported cases are examples of *brutal dispossession* or privatization of common or state land made possible by corrupt and/or neoliberal states. But many other cases are the result of *expanded reproduction*: simple commodity producers or capitalist entrepreneurs selling or renting their land to large firms' (2015, 221 emphasis added).

2.4.4. *Financial relations*

Financial relations are the cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented class creditors and debtors, which inform the ways: i) money-capital is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the interest portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) ownership of money-capital

and entitlements to interest are politically sanctioned, and; iv) interest is used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants.

The use of credit and debt—the outcomes of lending and borrowing—for productive purposes dates back millennia (Gerber 2014, 732-733). In capitalist transitions and changes, the centrality of finance and the financier class,¹⁰⁰ was stressed long ago by classical liberal political economists,¹⁰¹ and their critics.¹⁰² Particularly for Marx, ‘the two characteristics immanent in the credit system are, on one hand, to develop the incentive of capitalist production [...] to the purest and most colossal form of gambling and swindling, and to reduce more and more the number of the few who exploit the social wealth; on the other hand, to constitute the form of transition to a new mode of production’ (N.D. [1894], 306).

A scholar of reference in contemporary critical financial studies, Krippner, advances a useful definition of finance as ‘*activities* relating to the provision (or transfer) of *liquid capital* in the expectation of future *interest, dividend, or capital gains*’ (2005, 175 emphasis added). Surely evident to Krippner, it is worth qualifying three key aspects of her definition for explanatory purposes. First, financial “activities” do not happen in a vacuum. They are constrained and enabled by climate and ecology, as well as by customary, statutory and conventional institutional arrangements between, across and within fragmented classes in state and society. In other words, financial activities shape and express financial relations of production (narrowly defined), distribution, property and reproduction, as well as the productive relations around forces of production other than money-capital in historically and geographically situated conjunctures. Second, the “liquid capital” Krippner refers to can be either “money-capital” or just “money”. This difference is key to

¹⁰⁰ According to Marx, ‘money-capital is advanced by a separate class of capitalists’ (N.D. [1894], 213).

¹⁰¹ (Smith 1993 [1776, Ricardo 1891 [1821])

¹⁰² (Proudhon 1848, and Marx and Engels (1969 [1848])

understanding how distinct types of loanable cash are used for different purposes, and so accrue different types of financial income. Marx's differentiation between "money" and "money-capital", and between "money-capital" and "real capital" are enlightening in this regard. As an abstract representation of the price of commodities and services, "money" becomes "money-capital" when directly feeding in a capitalist production process (Marx N.D. [1894], 211-212). In other words, when performing as a capitalist force of production. Furthermore, even in the form of "money-capital", money should not be conflated with "real capital", for 'the mass of money to be transformed back into capital in this manner is a *result of the enormous reproduction process, but considered by itself*, as loanable money-capital, *it is not a mass of reproductive capital*' (Marx N.D. [1894], 348 emphasis in original). Third, the owner of loanable money-capital is thus entitled to a portion of the (agro)commodity value in the form of interest. This can be appropriated by the financier (i.e. what Krippner brands as "interest"), or by the capitalist¹⁰³ in the form of profit of enterprise and/or capital gains. Additionally, money-capital is so coveted and distinct a force of production because it allows its owner to claim a portion of commodity value to which generation (s)he did not actually contribute. This happens when money-capital is rendered 'fictitious capital', namely

'interest-bearing paper [electronic records today, that] actually represents nothing more than accumulated claims, or legal titles, to future production whose money or capital value represents either no capital at all, as in the case of state debts, or is regulated independently of the value of real capital which it represents [in the case of private securities]' (Marx N.D. [1894], 338, 321).

Thus, fictitious capital involves contractual rights against a debtor that can be transacted in the (financial) market. This means, fictitious capital takes the form of, and is treated like, any other exchangeable asset. In finance, the assignment of contractual rights to future payments is known as "securitization" (Solomon and Bitton 2014, 130).

¹⁰³ Or alternatively by a direct producer, funding simple reproduction with her savings.

Securitization is, therefore, a key means of turning interest—as well as all other (agro)commodity value portions—into fictitious capital. “Fictivization” of wages, land’s ground-rent and financial interest through wage advances, mortgages, and loans, respectively, dates back centuries if not millennia. More recently, fictivization has increased in breadth and depth to include both new (agro)commodity value portions, and forms of turning newer¹⁰⁴ and older value portions into fictitious capital. Compared to other means of funding (i.e. bank loans, corporate bonds, or venture-capital) securitization has clear advantages in terms of costs, potential volume of funding and control over corporate governance (Solomon and Bitton 2014, 132-5). Additionally, it is usually ‘considered off-balance-sheet in terms of accounting’ (ibid, 127), or in other words, “tax-free”.

Therefore, finance plays a major role in simple and expanded reproduction strategies¹⁰⁵ worldwide, albeit unevenly. There are times when finance and financiers permeate more and more realms of life. These are times of so-called “financialization”. Krippner defines financialization as ‘a pattern of accumulation in which profits accrue primarily through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production’ (2005, 175). Complementarily, Epstein endows financialization with agency, institutional shape and geographical scale, and so defines it as ‘the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors, and financial institutions in the operation of domestic and international economies’ (2005, 3). It follows from these definitions that financialization is a phenomenon which pre-dates capitalism and is not bounded by it. The latest financialization wave in the world economy is described as a vector and an expression of the neoliberal turn in the 1970s (Arrighi 1994), which thrives under convergent world crises in the early 21st Century. As with neoliberalism or capitalism more generally, ‘financialisation is not an analytical tool from which outcomes can be readily and simply read off. It is a *process*

¹⁰⁴ E.g. through securitization of royalties for intellectual property rights and payments for environmental services.

¹⁰⁵ And in consumption, of course, although this goes beyond our research problem.

that *interacts* with others that need to be identified in the context of *specific* economies. [Thus it] is appropriate to talk of *varieties of financialisation*’ (Fine 2011, 6 emphasis added). Hence, rather than taking for granted world financialization trends, I discuss them in terms of key historical milestones of the Guatemalan variety of financialization of its economy since the late 19th Century, as a pre-condition to the analysis of the role of finance and financiers in simple and expanded reproduction in agriculture.

2.4.5. *Knowledge and technology relations*

Knowledge and technology relations involve cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes shaping the ways: i) knowledge and technology are organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the intellectual property right (IPR) royalty portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) knowledge and technology ownership, and entitlements to IPR’s royalties, are politically sanctioned, and; iv) royalties are used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. My inquiry of knowledge and technology relations involves the analysis of who is entitled to benefit from what kind of agricultural knowledge and technology, for what purposes, and how. I understand knowledge and technology as the historically-produced instruments of labor, and thus, as key forces of production. Generally speaking, knowledge and its applications (i.e. technology) are collectively-produced over time in the form of use values readily available for anyone to use (i.e. knowledge commons). Thus, knowledge ‘only acquires a commodity form insofar as it is made artificially scarce and access thereto depends on payment of rent’ (Jessop 2007b, 120). Jessop argues knowledge is commoditized through three fundamental processes:

‘First, as opposed to being an organic and inseparable part of creative labour in general, knowledge is codified, detached from manual labour, and disentangled from material products to acquire independent form in expert systems, intelligent machines, or immaterial products and

services. Second, by analogy with the disembedding of economic activities from their wider social contexts, knowledge is disembedded from its social roots and integrated into extra-economic institutional orders, functional systems, and the lifeworld and subject to creeping commodification so that the primary code governing its use becomes profitable/unprofitable rather than true/false, sacred/profane, healthy/diseased, etc. And, third, knowledge no longer circulates in closed economic units (householding), through reciprocity, and/or through redistribution but is allocated through profit-oriented markets' (2007b, 120).

Maybe less bloody than land in form, but also with major implications for society and nature, knowledge commoditization mirrors that of other natural commons by means of enclosures. In the same way private property rights over land entail the ability to charge a rent for others to benefit from it, intellectual private property rights—codified in copyrights, patents and trademarks—entitle knowledge owners to license it in exchange for an agreed payment (i.e. a fee or royalty) (WIPO. 2017b). Hence, knowledge and technology are key forces of production subject to the market and private appropriation. This means, first, claims over knowledge and technology by different fragmented classes are neither naïve nor value- or interest-free (Jansen 1998). And second, different knowledges associated with different ontologies, and multiple ways of knowing particular to various epistemologies, coexist and shape each other in multiple ways (Altieri 1987). Considering the 'uncontested mapping of the border between science and other forms of human cultural activity has simply remained elusive' (Gregory et al. 2009, 666), knowledge and technology are approached here as hybrid collective constructions informed by different knowledges and ways of knowing through time and space. As Agrawal explains from a critical political economy perspective,

'the attempt to create distinctions in terms of indigenous and western [knowledge] is potentially ridiculous. It makes much more sense, even from the point of view of *neo-indigenistas*, to talk about multiple domains and types of knowledges, with differing logics and

epistemologies. Somewhat contradictorily, but inescapably so, the same knowledge can be classified one way or the other depending on the interests it serves, the purposes for which it is harnessed, or the manner in which it is generated' (1995, 433 emphasis in original).¹⁰⁶

For instance, low or high external input-based forms of farming, and different ways of fractioning and processing crops, all rest on hybrid knowledges stemming from multiple combinations of scientific, indigenous and local ontologies and epistemologies. In Guatemala (as elsewhere) decades of green revolution- and biotechnology-informed agricultural knowledge, enclosed through intellectual property rights, combine with agricultural knowledge commons, including millenary Mayan farming knowledges and technologies used in low external input agriculture and agro-ecology more recently.

2.4.6. Ecological relations

Ecological relations are the cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes which inform the ways: i) environmental goods (i.e. resources and services) and bads (i.e. pollutants and waste) are organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities, and environmental bads are transferred during or as a result of the productive process; ii) the payment for environmental services (PES) portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) ownership of environmental goods and bads, and entitlements to PES, are politically sanctioned, and; iv) PES are used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. Land uses have been humanly manipulated for the purpose of farming and animal breeding for centuries. But while “land” is used as a catch-all term, there is more to land than “farmland” and “grazing land”. Understood as soil, (farm)land is a constituent part of a broader (agro)ecosystem. As co-produced natural-social entities, I understand agroecosystems as

¹⁰⁶ See Martínez-Torres and Rosset (2014) for a similar argument regarding transnational agrarian movement La Vía Campesina's “dialogo de saberes”.

‘conceptual constructs, defined in both spatial and functional terms, that are used to describe parts of the biosphere managed primarily for the purpose of producing food, fiber, and other agricultural products; they are made up of people, domesticated plants and animals, biotic and abiotic elements of the underlying soils, drainage networks, as well as interdigitating areas that support natural vegetation and wildlife’ (Waltner-Toews 1996, 686).¹⁰⁷

The amount of energy and nutrients farming (or animal husbandry, fishing, forestry, mining, etc.) demands from the agroecosystem varies among crops and forms of farming. These differences are captured by the notion of ‘social metabolism’, meaning ‘the manner in which human societies organize their growing exchanges of energy and materials with the environment’ (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010, 1). This is a concept developed from Marx’s analysis of the growing “metabolic rift” between (industrial) agriculture and nature in capitalism,

For ‘capitalist production [...] disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 325-6). This leads to the ‘irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself’ (Marx N.D. [1894], 567).¹⁰⁸

Indeed, whereas he posits that only labor has the ability to create value in capitalism, Marx argues that this ability rests upon external nature’s flows of energy and materials,

‘If we take away the useful labour expended upon [use values], a material substratum is always left, which is furnished by Nature without the help of man. The latter can work only as Nature does, that

¹⁰⁷ In any (agro)ecosystem, ‘the two most fundamental processes [...] are the *flow of energy* among its parts and the *cycling of nutrients*. [...] The energy flow is directly related to its trophic structure [i.e. that mirroring relations among species in the agroecosystem’s community to meet their nutritional requirements]. The cycling of nutrients [is] linked to the flow of energy: the biomass transferred between trophic levels contains both energy in chemical bonds and matter serving as nutrients’ (Gliessman 1997, 25-26 emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸ For a review of Marx’s ecological analysis see Foster (2000).

is by changing the form of matter. Nay more, *in this work of changing the form* [the worker] *is constantly helped by natural forces*. We see, then, that labour is not the only source of material wealth, of use values produced by labour [...] labour is its father and the earth its mother' (Marx 1887 [1867], 30 emphasis added).

But while Marx extensively elaborated on the contradictions between capital and labor to develop his theory of capitalism as a crisis-ridden system, he did not elaborate a structured theory on the contradictions between capital and external nature. James O'Connor explains that these contradictions concern the ways 'capital limits itself by *impairing its own social and environmental conditions*, hence increasing the costs and expenses of capital, thereby *threatening capitals' ability to produce profits*, i.e., threatening economic crisis' (1988, 13 emphasis added). For O'Connor this stands as the second fundamental contradiction in capitalism 'between capitalist production relations (and productive forces) and the *conditions* of capitalist production' (1988, 16 emphasis in original). Updating them to the late 20th-century world-historic conjuncture, he understands production conditions in the original Marxist sense as those related to "[i] external physical conditions" or natural conditions; [ii] labor power of workers or "personal conditions of production"; and [iii] "communal, general conditions of social production" (O'Connor 1998, 144).¹⁰⁹ For O'Connor, capitalism's second contradiction is 'based on the process of *capitalist-created scarcities* of external and human nature' (1988, 19 emphasis added). Considering the high—and growing—costs of reproducing the general, and especially the natural and social conditions of production, this contradiction pushes towards an

¹⁰⁹ Hence, he claims in very actual terms "*external physical conditions*" are discussed in terms of the viability of ecosystems, the adequacy of atmospheric ozone levels, the stability of coastlines and watersheds; soil, air and water quality; and so on. "*Labor-power*" is discussed in terms of the physical and mental well-being of workers; the kind and degree of socialization; toxicity of work relations and the workers' ability to cope; and human beings as social productive forces and biological organisms generally. "*Communal conditions*" are discussed in terms of "social capital", "infrastructure", and so on [...] In short, production conditions include commodified or capitalized materiality and sociality excluding commodity production, distribution, and exchange themselves' (O'Connor 1988, 17 emphasis added).

economic crisis which ‘assumes the form of a “liquidity crisis” or *under-production* of capital’ (O'Connor 1998, 18 emphasis added).

I discuss the ways in which the reproduction of the general conditions of social production is addressed by public and private actors. But I put special emphasis on the reproduction (or not) of the personal and natural conditions of agro-commodity production. Regarding the former, I have discussed the way labor-power is commoditized, the fruits of its labor appropriated by non-producing classes, and its biological reproduction conditioned by the very labor process in (agro)commodity production. But how does this work for natural conditions of production? Until the 1960s, commoditization of external nature worked mainly through the parceling of earth's surface into “square meter-plots”, over which different types of claims (property rights-based or otherwise) are made and sanctioned (or not) by a sovereign authority. Effective land ownership includes the ability to appropriate land's ground-rent, together with a range of (agro)ecosystem resources and services which depend on the policy structure (e.g. freshwater, biodiversity, nutrients, underground minerals, genomes, etc.). Thus, land's ground-rent accounts for the portion of surplus value that land owners are entitled to claim over commodities obtained from their land. Since not all land plots are the same, the notion of differential ground-rent (Marx N.D. [1894], Ricardo 1891 [1821]) accounts for soil quality differences within and between (agro)ecosystems. These differences include biophysical aspects like geographical location, climate, soil and water nutrients, as well as human-made “improvements”, such as communications infrastructure, land clearing, irrigation systems, or cadastral registration.

Thus, land's ground-rent (absolute or relative) bundles together the agro-commodity value portions to which owners of land (as means of production *and* as soil) are entitled. But land's ground-rent as a portion of agro-commodity value does not fully account for the wide range of environmental revenues attached to land as soil nowadays. Whereas most environmental resources and services are still appropriated, used

and disposed ‘gratuitously’, heightened commoditization of external nature from the late 20th century onward results in an ever-growing range of environmental resources and services which are priced and treated as if they were a (manufactured) commodity. Joan Martínez-Alier and Martin O’Connor have argued about the futility of pricing environmental resources and services, for ‘the existence of conflicts and indeterminacies about economic *and* ecological distribution has, for a practical result, the incommensurability (or at least, incomplete measurability) between different dimensions of the economic and ecological goods and bads’ (1999, 389 emphasis in original). Nonetheless, the fact is that prices are allocated, and markets developed, for both environmental goods and bads. As a result, an ever-growing range of environmental resources and services, as well as pollutants and waste generated during or as a result of using such resources and services, are commoditized in the name of sustainable development and climate change mitigation efforts. Of particular relevance to my research problem is the rise of markets for carbon dioxide emissions, and (agro)ecosystem services more generally. The former are the outcome of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Kyoto Protocol’s compliance carbon offset mechanisms would be later complemented with a myriad of voluntary carbon offset mechanisms. The market for (agro)ecosystem services gains momentum following the 2003 “Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” (MEA), which explains

‘ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include *provisioning services* such as food, water, timber, and fiber; *regulating services* that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality; *cultural services* that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits; and *supporting services* such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling’ (2005, v emphasis in original).

Under the convergent crises world-historic conjuncture, payments for environmental services (hereafter PES) increase in breadth and depth as key financial pillars of a thriving ‘green economy’ (UNEP 2011). As with

other forces of production during this context, this means, on one hand, (agro)commodity value portions other than traditional ground-rent from land can now be claimed through entitlements over environmental resources and services, including those associated with (agro)ecosystems' performance as pollution sinks and waste dumping sites. For example, oil palm companies receive payments for generating biogas out of palm oil mill effluent (POME). On the other hand, securitization allows for the realization of PES in money form, and thereby for their use as a financial asset. By 2014, "ownership" of environmental goods and bads is still usually mediated by land property relations. But there are some environmental goods and bads (e.g. underground resources, carbon (C) and genomes) for which the ability to benefit from is not mediated by land property rights—since they are not physically bounded or attributable to a particular (agro)ecosystem—or at least by freehold land property rights—because they are accessed on leasehold or concession bases. In other words, like with land as means of production, there are property rights-based and non-property rights-based mechanisms of controlling environmental goods and bads. Hence, ownership of environmental goods and bads, and entitlements to PES, need to be investigated through strict property and "access-beyond-property" lenses, as I propose to do with land as a means of production.

However, unlike with land as means of production, appropriation and use of environmental resources and services by some might result not only in the exclusion of others, but also in others bearing the brunt of pollution and waste generated by the appropriation and use of environmental resources by a third party. Hence, 'the peaceful functioning of the neoclassical economic *perpetuum mobile* circuit may be disrupted not only because it can run out of energy or because of the excessive burdens of the pollution it throws onto the surrounding biophysical system, but also by *internal distribution conflicts*' (Martínez-Alier and O'Connor 1996, 159 emphasis added). Mirroring concern with economic distribution found in the field of political economy, Martínez-Alier and O'Connor introduce the notion of 'ecological distribution' to refer to the 'social, spatial and temporal asymmetries or inequalities in

the use by humans of environmental resources and services (whether traded or not), for example, in the depletion of natural resources [...] and in the burdens of pollution' (1999, 381). Indeed, insofar as economic distribution is the subject of political economy, ecological distribution is proposed by Martínez-Alier and O'Connor (1996) as the subject matter of political ecology.

Therefore, I aim to walk Martínez-Alier and O'Connor's path, only "backwards." That is, from political ecology to a critical agro-environmental political economy. This is because, whether, how and the extent to which environmental "goods and bads" are commoditized is a vector and an expression of economic and ideological distribution relations mediated by property institutions—especially but not only under state's authority—and hence an outcome of the balance of social forces. To this end, I elaborate on two competing quantitative valuation languages (Martinez-Alier 2009) of human and external nature interaction. One is the futile-yet-mainstream language, which accounts for this interaction in monetary flows that ultimately figure in the stock market and the overall GDP. The other is the biophysical language of social metabolism, accounting for energy and materials flows to, from and within the (agro)ecosystem which humans are part of. These quantitative valuation languages notwithstanding, following my critical agro-environmental political economy approach my analysis of ecological relations (of production (narrowly-defined), distribution, property and reproduction) leans primarily on a qualitative valuation language of relational character.

2.5. Multi-dynamic analysis of the politics of agro-environmental change

This fourth and final component of my methodological strategy is concerned with the investigation of the politics of agro-environmental change under convergent world crises. Here, I examine the politics behind the rise of flex cane and palm complexes during 2006-2014, through a "multi-dynamic politics" framework. This is useful to go

beyond the story of heroes and villains, and analyze politics in breadth and depth. In breadth meaning I cast my analytical net widely enough across the political spectrum to include all main competing political standpoints vis-à-vis burgeoning flex cane and palm complexes. Generally speaking, these involve *supportive*, *challenging* and *accommodative* political standpoints. *Supporters* actively defend and/or promote the dominant directions of agro-environmental change. Similarly, but pushing in the opposite direction, *challengers* actively demonstrate their dissent or unrest via practices of contestation (cf. Li 2007), and struggle for an alternative transformative project. And as it is often the case, neither all of those who consent to the main directions of agro-environmental change actively support them, nor do all those who dissent actively challenge them. Many (and often “most”) take an accommodative political standpoint regardless of their sympathy or disapproval. This is not akin to saying that *accommodators* do not have any agency or play no role in the politics of agro-environmental change. They do so through their efforts to mold themselves to better fit their circumstances, and vice-versa. Political subjects in supportive, challenging and accommodative standpoints can stem from both dominant and subordinate fragmented (agrarian) classes, their organizations and allies may be within the state and/or society, at multiple geographical scales. In-depth means I delve into the “politics within the politics”¹¹⁰ of agro-environmental change. To this end I examine the political dynamics *between*, *across* and *within* fragmented (agrarian) classes¹¹¹ in supportive, challenging and accommodative political standpoints. And in so doing I approach these multiple politics as fluid and generative processes.

Two of the three reasons behind the “multipleness” of my multi-dynamic politics framework were discussed above. The third concerns

¹¹⁰ The author is grateful to Professor Jun Borras for suggesting this wording.

¹¹¹ For as Zeitlin and Ratcliff explain, ‘the internal relations of a class sets limits on, if indeed they do not actually determine, the way it recognizes, articulates, organizes, and acts on its own immediate and historical interests as a class—and engages other, dominant or subordinate, classes in struggle’ (1988, 11).

the analysis of multiple realms of political contention—agrarian, environmental and labor related, for (re)distribution and recognition—and I come back to it further on. The need for a methodology fit for the examination of multiple politics is research problem-driven and stems from observed empirical dynamics in Guatemala and elsewhere. The way in which I develop such a methodology draws on six main sources. First, there is Susan George’s call to ‘*study the rich and powerful, not the poor and powerless*’ (1976, 289 emphasis in original). Second, it is Borras and Franco’s argument about how ‘the configuration of actors and the intersections, character and trajectory of political contestations are far more diverse and complex than casual claims in the current media and popular literature on land deals would suggest’ (2013, 1730-2). Third, I lean on Borras, Franco and Wang’s identification of ‘three competing political tendencies among state and non-state actors with regard to global governance of land grabbing: first is *regulate in order facilitate land deals*, second is *regulate in order to mitigate adverse impacts and maximize opportunities of land deals*, and third is *regulate to stop and rollback land deals* (2013, 163 emphasis in original). Fourth, there is Edelman’s argument on ‘the heterogeneity, complexity, change, and contradiction that characterize the contemporary peasantry and its organizations’ (1999, 185). Fifth, I take seriously Fox’s distinction ‘between accountability relations *within* and *among* state and civil society actors, rather than treating state and society as implicitly monolithic’ (2007, 16 emphasis added). And sixth, I am inspired by Mao Tse-Tung’s reading of Lenin’s materialist dialectics (1965 [1914]). Especially regarding the multiple contradictions among fragmented classes, Mao calls for avoiding ‘one-sidedness’, namely ‘to understand only the peasants but not the landlords’ (1968, 40).¹¹² In the early 20th century Chinese ‘semi-colonial society’, Mao understands the contradiction *between* ‘imperialism and feudalism *and* the great masses of the people’ to be the ‘principal contradiction’ (1968, 47). But in engaging with the latter he relies on the analysis of the contradictions *across* peasants and proletarians (1968,

¹¹² He acknowledges we might ‘never achieve this completely, but the demand for all-sidedness is a *safeguard against mistakes and rigidity*’ (Mao 1968, 42 emphasis added).

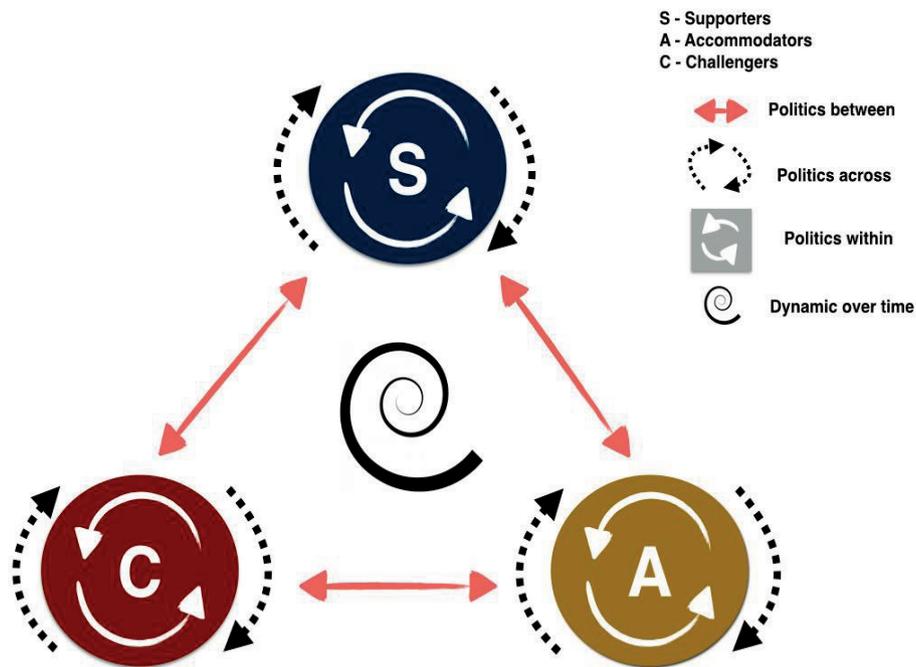
100), or industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie (1968, 105), as well as *within* the Chinese Communist Party (1968, 107).

Furthermore, political subjects might switch from/to supportive, challenging and accommodative political standpoints. As Mao explains, '[a]mong the numerous major and minor contradictions which are determined or influenced by the fundamental contradiction, some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially resolved or mitigated, and some new ones emerge' (1968, 43). Hence, rather than as static stale processes, politics are better approached as dynamic, generative processes. The agency of political subjects can transform their context as well as themselves. And subject transformation might involve the subject's role in politics, the particular ways (s)he navigates change, and the very interests and values informing her/his political subjectivity. As a result, I treat politics as *dynamic* processes in which outcomes are often transitory and rarely follow a pre-determined script. In other words, I approach the investigation of the politics behind resource extractivism as anything but a story foretold. This is helpful to avoid the essentialization of usually messy and fluid political subjectivities along class, gender, ethnic and many other lines, and their consideration as static and monolithic, and thereby haunted by some sort of "false consciousness" when their agency does not match with their expected historicity. Rather, political processes mirror the contenders' fluid political subjectivities, which themselves shape and express changes in political opportunities and constraints, or the 'consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national-dimensions of the political struggle that encourages people to engage in contentious politics. By political constraints, I mean factors—like repression, but also like authorities' capacity to present a solid front to insurgents- that discourage contention' (Tarrow 1998, 20). Nonetheless, as Tarrow himself came to acknowledge 'the term 'political opportunity structure' *should not be understood as an invariant model inevitably producing social movements, but as a set of clues for when contentious politics will emerge*' (ibid, emphasis added). In their critique of the structuralist bias of the political opportunity structure theory, Goodwin and Jasper argue that

‘there may be no such thing as objective political opportunities before or beneath interpretation—or at least none that matter; they are all interpreted through cultural filters’ (1999, 33).

Figure 5 depicts the rationale behind my multi-dynamic politics framework for the inquiry of fluid and generative politics between, across and within supporters, challengers and accommodators to the dominant directions of agro-environmental change. It is through this methodological framework I discuss the why, who and how of the politics of agro-environmental change. I next turn to discuss the analytical categories on which I rely to address each of these aspects.

Figure 5 Multi-dynamic politics framework



Source: Author’s elaboration.

The discussions on whether, the extent to which, and ways in which agency shapes structure (and vice-versa), as well as on the transition from interpreting to changing the world, have a long history and offered

multiple competing perspectives. I cannot do justice here to the vast scholarship behind these debates. Rather, I focus on the conceptual tools I use to explain the reasons why agro-environmental transformations are usually contentious political processes.

Regarding the structure-agency debate, and in-between structuralist accounts which doom agents to simply navigate forces beyond their control (e.g. Althusser 2001), and post-structural elaborations which sweep agency away from Earth's face (e.g. the early Foucault 1970), Marx's quintessential maxim on how '[wo]men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past' (1977 [1852], 12), remains my analytical compass. This leads me to a more contemporary and nuanced elaboration on the structure-agency debate by Archer (2000). She explains humans are born to a series of inherited socio-economic and cultural attributes (class, gender, religion, etc.) which endow agents with an aprioristic social position (Archer 2000, 314). These inherited attributes 'do not *determine* the particular Social Actor an individual chooses to become, but they strongly *condition* what type of Social Actor the vast majority can and do become' (ibid, 285 emphasis added). In the interaction among agents originally privileged and not, 'those making strong judgements about 'justice' or 'injustice' will tend to find themselves as 'members' of opposing groups [...], whilst those without strong views are the likely non-participants in these collective struggles' (ibid, 302). These supportive, challenging and accommodative standpoints are conditioned by structural (material) and cultural (ideational) 'constraints and enablements' (Archer 2000, 285 c.f. Tarrow's political opportunities and constraints 1998). But subjects also influence the structural and cultural tides as historical social actors, meaning 'with particular roles with their rule requirements' (2000, 287). For Archer, then, political subjectivities are informed by an internal assessment process which is 'evaluative (rather than calculative, as is the case for 'Modernity's Man') and meditative (rather than appropriative, as is the lot of Society's Being)' (2000, 297). Thus, Archer argues for the

possibilities of collective action to enhance ‘the opportunities for Agents to become the Social Actor with whom they can identify’ (2000, 282).¹¹³ Accordingly, she considers social movements as ‘the stepping stone to acquiring a social identity through taking on a role(s) in which people can invest enough of themselves to feel at home with what they have become’ (ibid, 75).

Regarding the debate on what it is that triggers agency, only the critical agrarian studies camp provides us with a diversity of competing interpretations, mainly (but not only) through Marxist, Substantivist and Radical Agrarian Populist perspectives (and their manifold variants and combinations). Among them, those by Paige (1975),¹¹⁴ Wolf (1969),¹¹⁵ and Scott (1976)¹¹⁶ are of particular relevance to my research problem and context. But there are also pertinent interpretations from the environmental studies field—especially in Martínez-Alier’s ‘environmentalism of the poor’ (2002)—as well as from the study of identity politics—such as Escobar’s notion of ‘cultural distribution conflicts’ (2008). The review of these competing interpretations of subordinate rural class agency boils down to the following questions: are the politics of agro-environmental change under the convergent world crises driven by (re)distribution or recognition claims? If the former, are they material, ecological or cultural distribution claims? If the latter, are

¹¹³ This resembles E.P. Thompson’s (1971) discussion on class formation as a historical process underpinned by subjects’ own experience and participation in social processes

¹¹⁴ Who posits a rural proletariat—with nothing (more) to lose and everything to win—as the historical revolutionary subject.

¹¹⁵ Who considers the middle-peasantry in a better position to engage in transformative politics, precisely because it has much to lose.

¹¹⁶ Who, following E.P. Thompson, argues the breakup of moral economy arrangements of inter-class reciprocity which result in the violation of the subsistence minimum for subordinate classes prompts them to revolt. Edelman explains how ‘with less emphasis on consumers’ involvement in local food markets and more on producers’ values or mores [...] Scott’s treatment of values was an integral part of a larger framework that situated moral economy within a system of conflictual class relations’ (2012, 59, 60). And this is essential to Thompson’s understanding and use of the concept of moral economy.

they struggles for recognition and the “right to have rights” of subaltern genders, generations, nationalities, racialized ethnicities¹¹⁷ (etc.)?

Informed by empirical dynamics in Guatemala during 2006-2014, my answers to these fundamental questions coalesce into one, namely the insights that stem from the relational analysis of material, environmental and ideological distribution relations and politics behind resource extractivism, and of the various ways in which broader claims for (re)distribution and recognition intersect and overlap within them.¹¹⁸ In fact, this is also the third reason behind the “multipleness” of the multi-dynamics politics framework. As advanced earlier, class relations and power are *simultaneously* ecological, ideological and material.

Furthermore, history has shown time and again that power struggles are not only class struggles, and class agency is not always just informed by the interests associated in theory to a particular class (i.e. classes in themselves are not necessarily classes for themselves).¹¹⁹ These arguments resonate with Thompson’s (1971) approach to class as embedded in socio-cultural dynamics of capitalist transformation, Bourgeois’ notion of ‘conjugated oppression’,¹²⁰ Edelman’s discussion on the multiplicity of identities and interests behind social agency,¹²¹ Fox’s

¹¹⁷ The biological fact that there is only one *single* human race, no matter phenotypical and genetic differences, has long been recognized by the United Nations (UNESCO 1978, art. 1).

¹¹⁸ ‘Capitalist transformations’, Cini et al. explain, ‘shape the way in which (a) the organization of labour and production shifts, (b) political institutions and settings evolve, and (c) cultural and ideational formations develop; in turn, all these transformations condition the way in which social mobilizations arise and develop’ (2017, 440).

¹¹⁹ Of course, I claim no novelty for these arguments. They are found in the works of Agarwal (1998b), O’Laughlin (2009), or Razavi (2009) on gender politics in agrarian transformations, White (2016) on generational politics of agrarian change, Wolf (1955), Alavi (1973), or Scott (1976) on the role of kinship in agrarian politics, and Edelman (2001), Hale (2004) or Li (2014a) (2014) on ethnicity in dynamics of agro-environmental change.

¹²⁰ Which ‘occurs when an economic structure [...] conflates with ideology [...] to create an experience of oppression that is more than merely the sum of its constituent parts: class and ideology’ (Bourgeois 1988, 4).

¹²¹ He explains the category “peasant” could be understood not just as a role or a social structural position, but *also* as a form of identity and self-ascription (and *not necessarily a primordial or overarching* one, since it could *coexist* in the same person alongside multiple other identities, ranging from “indigenous” to “microentrepreneur,” “migrant,” “teacher” or “electrician.”) (Edelman 2008, 251-2 emphasis added).

argument on the co-constitution of (class) interests and identities,¹²² and Hale's understanding of identity as a 'social radar'.¹²³ Moreover, the intersection between socio-cultural and material attributes and claims/interests is something informing key scholars within the environmental and cultural politics camps like Martínez-Alier¹²⁴ and Escobar,¹²⁵ respectively. Indeed, competing political standpoints in the face of dominant trajectories of agro-environmental change are 'thickened' (Hale 2004) by an analysis that looks at meaning. Hall et al. argue 'struggles over resources are, *simultaneously*, struggles over meaning' (2012, 166 emphasis added). And Ribot and Peluso claim 'beliefs, ideological controls and discursive practices, as well as negotiated systems of meaning, shape all forms of access [to resources]' (2003, 168).

Therefore, I discuss the politics between, across and within supporters, challengers and accommodators through the identification of tension- and/or conflict-ridden cooperative and contradictory relations of material, ecological *and* ideational nature between, across and within fragmented classes. In so doing, I pay attention to the ways the identities and interests informing the political subjectivity of fragmented classes feed into and from 'political opportunities and constraints' (Tarrow

¹²² 'The pursuit of interests and the formation of collective identities are often posed as mutually exclusive motivations for collective action, but this dichotomy is false. Identities are constituted through the definition and defense of interests, while interests are formed through the identification of rights and claims' (1993, 24).

¹²³ For him it is 'useful to treat the notion of identity as the set of points of personal reference on which people rely to navigate the social world they inhabit, to make sense of the myriad constellations of social relationships that they encounter, to discern their place in these constellations, and to understand the opportunities for action in this context. It is, in a certain way, a kind of *social radar*, a perceptual device through which people come to see where they stand in relation to the human environment' (2004, 463 emphasis added).

¹²⁴ 'The environmentalism of the poor relates to actions and *concerns in situations where the environment is a source of livelihood*. This is reinforced by other values, such as the defense of indigenous territorial rights [...], or the claim to the sacredness of particular elements of nature [...] *When livelihood is threatened*, those affected will be motivated to act provided that there is a sufficient degree of democracy and they are not suffocated by fear as is often the case' (2012, 101 emphasis added).

¹²⁵ 'Cultural distribution conflicts do not emerge out of cultural difference per se, but out of the difference that this difference makes in the definition of social life: whose norms and meaning-making practices define the terms and values that regulate *social life concerning economy, ecology, personhood, body, knowledge, property*, and so forth' (2008, 14 emphasis added).

1998)/‘structural constraints and enablements’ (Archer 2000), to shape the *political agenda* of supporters, challengers and accommodators over time.

2.5.1. *Who is involved in the politics of agro-environmental change?*

The multi-dynamic politics framework requires the careful identification of the supportive, challenging and accommodative camps’ constituencies. In doing so, I offer a “cast of characters” behind each competing political standpoint following four criteria: i) class; ii) ethnicity, gender and generational attributes, iii) the geographical scale(s) in which constituents operate, ranging from the local to the trans-national, and; iv) whether constituents are corporate, social or state actors. The latter criterion stems from a state-society interactive approach for which ‘the most relevant cleavage is not between an ostensibly dichotomous state and society. Instead, driving forces for institutional change can be found in the conflicts between contending forces embedded in *both* state and society’ (Fox 2007, 12). Accordingly, corporate actors are those of public or private nature which belong to or represent a business corporation. They can be companies as well as their trade and political organizations. Social actors include social groups along fragmented class lines and their trade, cultural and political organizations, which are neither business corporations nor part of the state. Different from state agencies and branches, Fox defines state actors as ‘groups of officials whose actions push or pull in the same political direction’ (1993, 29). He notes ‘many state organizations are composed of a *range* of actors with different interests, who struggle to control the agency, to determine its goals, and to decide how to pursue them’ (ibid, emphasis in original).

Additionally, I explore changing alignments of social forces in supportive, challenging and accommodative stances over time. This entails discussing the purpose and politics of alliance-making across and within supporters, challengers and accommodators. By doing this, I keep in mind that complementary relations do not preclude tensions

and/or conflicts, and vice-versa, contradictory (even antagonistic) relations do not pre-empt cooperation.

2.5.2. *How do politics of agro-environmental change unfold?*

More often than not, agrarian and capitalist transitions and transformations are the outcome of cumulative and messy politics rather than one-off events with clear ideological-political boundaries.¹²⁶ A helpful contribution to the systemic empirical analysis of such “cumulative and messy politics” over time, and across struggles and forms of struggling, is offered by the political opportunity structure and resource mobilization theories of contentious politics. Hence, after identifying the political agendas and constituents of the supportive, challenging and accommodative camps, these theories offer useful categories to describe the ways in which contentious politics unfold between, across and within these spheres. The fact that processes of contentious politics usually unfold in a gradual fashion is not akin to say they unfold always at the same pace. There are times during which contention simmers down, and others when it thrives. This reveals what Tarrow brands ‘cycles of contention’, characterized by ‘heightened conflict, broad sectoral and geographic extension, the appearance of new organizations and the appropriation of old ones, the creation of new “master frames” of meaning, and the invention of new forms of collective action’ (2012, 224). Considering that ‘the power to trigger sequences of collective action is not the same as the power to control or sustain them’ (Tarrow 1998, 23), I examine contention cycles around agrarian transformations in Guatemala by means of two key analytical categories namely, contention frames and repertoires of supporters, challengers and accommodators.

Frames of contention refer to shared understandings and identities that justify, dignify and animate collective action’ (Tarrow 1998, 21). They are the outcome of “framing processes”, which for Snow and Bendford involve “*naming*” grievances, *connecting* them to other grievances and

¹²⁶ Moore Jr. (1967), Wolf (1969), Scott (1976, 1985), Byres (1996).

constructing larger frames of meaning that will resonate with a population's cultural predispositions and communicate a uniform message to power holders and others' (1992, 136 emphasis added). Framing is a continuous process, and so contention frames can vary in terms of 'problem identification and direction or locus of attribution; flexibility and rigidity, exclusivity and inclusivity; interpretive scope and influence; and degree of resonance' (Benford and Snow 2000, 618). Hence, frames of contention, like 'the symbols of collective action, cannot be simply read like a 'text', independent of the conditions in which they struggle, [it is necessary to] relate text to context, the grammar of culture to the semantics of struggle' (Tarrow 1998, 109).¹²⁷ 'Repertoires of contention' are broadly defined by Tilly as 'the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests' (1995, 41). The repertoire 'draws on a long history of previous struggles' (Tilly 2006, 35). But at the same time, 'the changing interaction of [...] everyday social organization, cumulative experience with contention, and regime intervention—produces incremental alterations in contentious performances. At any given moment, however, that interaction promotes clustering of claim-making in a limited number of recognizable performances, a repertoire' (ibid, 43). Tarrow further argues 'the repertoire is at once structural and a cultural concept, involving not only what people *do* when they are engaged in conflict with others but what they *know how to do* and what others *expect* them to do' (1998, 30 emphasis in original). Hence, in line with my material-ideational general analytical approach, contention repertoires are vectors and expressions of historical experience as much as of shifting structural and cultural conditions.

I discuss the repertoires of contention that supporters, challengers and accommodators deploy over time in light of three mechanisms: strategies and tactics, means, and forms of struggle. First, contention

¹²⁷ McAdam et al. explain 'framing and interpretation go well beyond how a movement's goals are strategically formed to a much broader set of *interpretive processes*. Among the most important are those that result in attribution of *new threats and opportunities* by one or more parties to an emerging conflict and the reimagining of the legitimate purposes attached to established social sites and/or identities' (2004, 48 emphasis added).

strategies refer to the general ways in which political subjects plan to advance their agendas. They are operationalized through contention *tactics*, which dictate the specific course of action towards the contention strategy to which they respond. Second, *means* of contention involve the specific mechanisms of political agency. Rather than seeing these means as mutually exclusive, I approach them as mutually amplifying, compensating, complementing or reinforcing.¹²⁸ Hence, means of contention for me may be coercive, violent, regulatory, disruptive, advocative, solidarity-building and/or bargaining in nature. Third, *forms* of contention refer to the broad ways in which contenders mobilize their political agency. For me these include, overt or covert, structured but not always and necessarily transformative, *partisan* forms. Then, covert, unstructured but not necessarily depoliticized or ahistorical, *everyday* forms of struggle. And finally and to a lesser extent, overt and usually unstructured *rightful forms of resistance*.

Partisan forms refer to contention forms characteristic of social movements. Rather than as a “thing” (e.g. an organization or coalition) I understand social movements as processes. Particularly, as ‘those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents’ (Tarrow 1998, 2). Hence social movements involve a potentially wide array of political subjects, whose contributions to the movement’s political agenda, frames and repertoires of contention is prone to change over time.

¹²⁸ This resonates with Poulantzas’ perspective on symbolic and coercive means of domination as mutually-recursive. Understanding ‘law [as] an integral part of the repressive order and of the organization of violence’ (1978, 77), he explains how ‘even if violence is not concretized in the daily exercise of power as it used to be, it still, and indeed more than ever occupies a *determining* position [...] Physical violence and consent do not exist side by side like two calculable homogeneous magnitudes, related in such a way that more consent corresponds to less violence. Violence-terror always occupies a determining place- and not merely because it remains in reserve, coming into the open only in critical situations. *State-monopolized physical violence permanently underlies the techniques of power and mechanisms of consent: it is inscribed in the web of disciplinary and ideological devices; and even when not directly exercised, it shapes the materiality of the social body upon which domination is brought to bear*’ (Poulantzas 1978, 80, 81 emphasis in original).

Notwithstanding partisan forms of collective action, Tilly reminds us that ‘social movements are a particular, historically discrete form of organizing contention and not the be-all and end-all of contentious politics’ (in Tarrow 2012, 222). Of particular relevance to my research context and subjects are what Scott coined as ‘every day forms of peasant resistance’ (1985). He defines these ‘weapons of the weak’ as ‘the nearly permanent, continuous, daily strategies of subordinate rural classes under difficult conditions’ (Scott 1986, 22). This means that even when there is an apparent consent to dominant powers, these might be still contested through covert and unstructured everyday resistance practices. Nonetheless, Scott also explains how ‘at times of crisis or momentous political change [everyday forms] may be complemented by other forms of struggle which are more opportune. [Everyday forms] are the stubborn bedrock upon which other forms of resistance may grow’ (1986, 22 emphasis added). Hence, rather than exclusively focusing on one or the other, I am interested here in understanding whether, and if so how informal, unruly styles of politics intersect with more formally organized movements, as well as with electoral and institutional politics.

Finally, O’Brien defined ‘rightful resistance’ as ‘a form of popular contention that (1) operates near the boundary of an authorized channel, (2) employs the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb political or economic power, and (3) hinges on locating and exploiting divisions among the powerful’ (1996, 33). Without challenging the roots causes of the status quo, rightful resistance ‘is a kind of partially sanctioned resistance that uses influential advocates and recognized principles to apply pressure on those in power who have failed to live up to some professed ideal or who have not implemented some beneficial measure’ (ibid.).

2.6. Research methods

As previously pointed out, this research is informed by the insights gained through the author’s everyday life and work in Guatemala as an activist-researcher on agrarian and environmental matters for more than

a decade in 2003-2014, that is, before and during the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes from 2005 onward. Of particular relevance is empirical material gathered through direct, comparative field research in multiple locations and events in Guatemala and abroad (see Annex 1), but especially the data gathered during eight years of systematic fieldwork during 2006-2014—the core time span of this research—in the northern lowlands region. While the author was able to access to a relatively large amount—and arguably unique—information and informants, three major limitations and challenges need to be acknowledged in this regard.

First, some information and/or informants are just beyond the reach of this (and arguably most other) scholarly researchers. This includes, on one hand, business plans and political strategies of most oligarchic family business group patriarchs, drug-traffickers and criminal mara gang leaders. On the other hand, highly informative everyday life events this researcher could not access to due to his socio-cultural attributes (e.g. women's gatherings to do the laundry and bathe in the river during which adult men should refrain from showing up). Second, there is the challenge of interpretation of language, both Maya-Q'eqchi' and Spanish. Despite this researcher being fluent in the latter and conversational in the former, it is challenging to interpret the different ways of speaking, use of metaphors and body languages by different epistemic research subjects. For example, Maya-Q'eqchi' people's narratives often work through approximation and comparison in a recurrent circular count of time and history rather than through the numerical specificity and absolute measures within a linear account of time and history many non-Mayan state and corporate actors—but also academic analytical frameworks—rely on. Third, there is the challenge stemming from widespread criminal, economic, and political violence in Guatemala during 2006-2014.¹²⁹ The northern lowlands in particular are not only the arena of economic and political violence following agrarian

¹²⁹ The so-called northern Central American triangle (including Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) was considered the most violent region in the world in 2011 (Kruijt 2011).

and environmental transformations, but also that of a war for territory between Guatemalan and Mexican drug cartels. This makes fieldwork a challenging task, and systems of information control¹³⁰ essential for the safety of research subjects and researcher.

Following the character of my general analytical approach and methodological strategy, this research builds on information gathered, selected and analyzed through a mixed methods perspective. This is helpful to avoid becoming, ‘a monomaniac of log-linear modeling, of discourse analysis, of participant observation, of open-ended or in-depth interviewing, or of ethnographic description’, and especially ‘to mobilize all the techniques that are *relevant and practically usable*, given the *definition of the object* and the *practical conditions of data collection*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 90 emphasis added). My research toolbox includes first-hand and secondary sources of both qualitative and quantitative character. Before describing each one in particular it is worth noting that ‘the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is not solely a methodological distinction, and therefore, discussions of Mixed Methods Research cannot be confined to the methodological level but must be carried out at the level of research paradigms, including issues of epistemology and ontology’ (Harrits 2011, 161-2). Hence, the ‘the mixing of methods should solve the basic epistemological problem of the social sciences, namely, that the *research object is a research subject*, and has an understanding of his/her own social reality that sometimes competes with the researcher’s understanding’ (ibid, 159 emphasis added). This is something Bourdieu addressed ‘suggesting that quantitative analysis can supply an objective or *observer’s perspective* that can then be supplemented (and *reflexively* contextualized) by an *interpretive perspective* integrating the views of the subjects themselves’ (in Harrits 2011, 161 emphasis added).¹³¹ From these epistemological grounds

¹³⁰ Encryption, multiple back-ups in different places, use of codified language to account for sensitive issues, field information records always ready to discard, and so on.

¹³¹ In a similar fashion, but regarding the interrelations between micro and macro phenomena, Appadurai argues ‘attention needs to be put on how the micro-motives can be understood through qualitative research, and the macro-outcomes can be identified quantitatively’ (1989, 256).

‘more important than causality is the possibility of *exploring interpretatively the reasons and logics given in the discourses of the subjects themselves and comparing them with the results of statistical analysis*’ (ibid, 159 emphasis added).

It follows from the above that it does not make much sense for me to try and link each research method to a particular aspect of my research question(s) or methodological components in an unambiguous fashion. The ways each one contributes to different sort of analyses—or to the same analysis in different ways and thereby help in triangulating information—are revealed in the following chapters. Here I focus on describing the ways in which I understood and carried out each of my eight main research methods, including: i) individual and group semi-structured interviews; ii) participant observation and observant participation; iii) two waves of gender-differentiated household panel survey; iv) geographic information system analysis; v) secondary source analysis; vi) soil analysis; vii) water analysis, and viii) two documentary films.¹³²

2.6.1. *Semi-structured interviews*

This research builds on information gathered through 111 individual interviews, and 49 group interviews involving some 424 participants, which are all detailed in Annex 1. Individual and collective interviews were broadly structured around different topics with different types of informants, but open enough for the conversation to touch on other relevant yet unplanned topics. Informants include a wide range of highly diverse subjects in terms of: i) class, generation, gender, ethnic, religion and nationality attributes; ii) corporate, state and social actors; iii) geographical scale from the grassroots to the trans-national scale, and through village, municipality (township), department and regional level in Guatemala and abroad; iv) political standpoint (i.e. supportive, challenging and accommodative), and; v) occupation.¹³³ Names of

¹³² All of these methods were funded through collaborations orchestrated, and projects written and executed, by the author.

¹³³ Including cultivators, agricultural workers, cattle breeders, staff in flex cane and palm companies, staff in trade, research and political organizations of the flex cane and palm

informants and villages were omitted for anonymity reasons. Some of the informants were identified a priori, and others were the outcome of snowball interviewing. Following prior consent, all interviews were digitally recorded except in parts in which informants asked to stop recording.

In conducting interviews as well as participant observation I kept in mind Jackson's recommendations regarding oral-testimony information analysis is better informed 'by awareness that people have differential abilities to 'speak' and to 'hear', that reliance on direct speech alone, as evidence, is unwise, and that speech is not to be equated with power and silence with weakness' (Jackson 2006, 540). In a different yet complementary way, Portelli argues 'the importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire, emerge' (1991, in Edelman 1999, 41). In analyzing oral testimonies and events, emphasis is placed in the interpretation of 'outcomes as well as the outcome-generating events themselves' (Appadurai 1989: 273). This is why participant observation—and observant participation—is highly relevant and insightful.

2.6.2. Participant observation and observant participation

This method was employed in both everyday life and selected organized events informing the research problem. The former include formal community events—assemblies, religious/spiritual ceremonies, planting and harvest celebrations, weddings, “quinceañera” celebrations (of a girl's fifteenth birthday), conflict resolution, and so on—as well as more informal, everyday sort of events—like sharing a meal, walking to fetch water or firewood, listening to and sharing anecdotes and life stories at a community shop after a day of work, cooking, helping the young ones with school work, walking with cultivators and plantation laborers

complexes and business guilds, state officials, land brokers, labor contractors, staff in NGOs and social organizations, teachers, traders, moneylenders, artists, nurses, priests, physicians, scholars of various disciplines, journalists, activists, Mayan spiritual guides, lawyers, agronomic engineers, drivers, builders, hitmen, bodyguards and sex-workers.

to/from their workplace, playing football, and so forth. The latter include 37 selected events directly related to the research problem (see complete list in Annex 1). In many of these everyday life and selected organized events the researcher was part and parcel of the organization and development of the event, and thereby able to access insider information. In other words, it was possible to upgrade from participant observation to observant participation. Finally, it is worth noting participant observation allowed for the identification of interviewees.

2.6.3. Two waves of gender-differentiated panel household survey

Two waves of household panel survey were carried out in twenty villages from the six municipalities (townships) part of the three distinct northern lowlands sub-regions on which this research builds on (see map in figure 2 earlier).¹³⁴ The two HH survey panels were carried out in 2010 and 2014.¹³⁵ Whereas there is not a long period ranging between the first and second panel wave, the selected years are very relevant. As I discuss further on, productive relations in flex cane and palm commodity production are restructured in major ways from late 2012 onward. Hence, the 2010 and 2014 household survey panels account for conditions prior to and after these changes.

The first wave was carried out in 2010, and involved 294 women-head-of-HH, and 292 men-HH-of-HH, totaling 586 respondents. The design of the original 2010 sample stratified at village level (at a 5% significance level) is included in Annex 2. The second panel wave in 2014 could only include 203 of the 285 HHs surveyed in 2010. This is a non-randomly missing data case, meaning the intention was to survey the same households in 2014 as in 2010.¹³⁶ Hence, I included the 203 HHs surveyed in both 2010 and 2014 in order to build a balanced 2010-2014

¹³⁴ Including: i) Panzós and El Estor municipalities in the Polochic sub-region; ii) Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Chisec and Ixcán in the Northern Transversal Strip, and; iii) Sayaxché in South Petén.

¹³⁵ With the invaluable collaboration of a team of six Maya-Q'eqchi' surveyors each year, three female and three male.

¹³⁶ But 83 of the HHs surveyed in 2010 were not available for the 2014 panel for different reasons ranging from decease to change of residence.

database.¹³⁷ In these 203 HHs, the female and male heads-of-HH were surveyed,¹³⁸ meaning 406 surveys in 2010 and the same number in 2014. This data allowed for a 2010-2014 longitudinal analysis, which is more robust than cross-sectional analyses of 2010 and 2014 to deal with questions of attribution and causality (Davies 1994). Nonetheless, the time bias remained an analytical challenge in the sense that I had to identify and differentiate between changes associated to seasonal crisis/welfare periods, and those changes of more structural character (Appadurai 1989). Hence, statistical analysis was conducted bearing in mind the need to reflexively contextualize its outputs within an interpretive perspective feeding from other research methods. In so doing, survey data was allowed to “speak for itself”, but narratives were harnessed with the theoretical and methodological tenets discussed above.

2.6.4. *Geographic information system analysis*

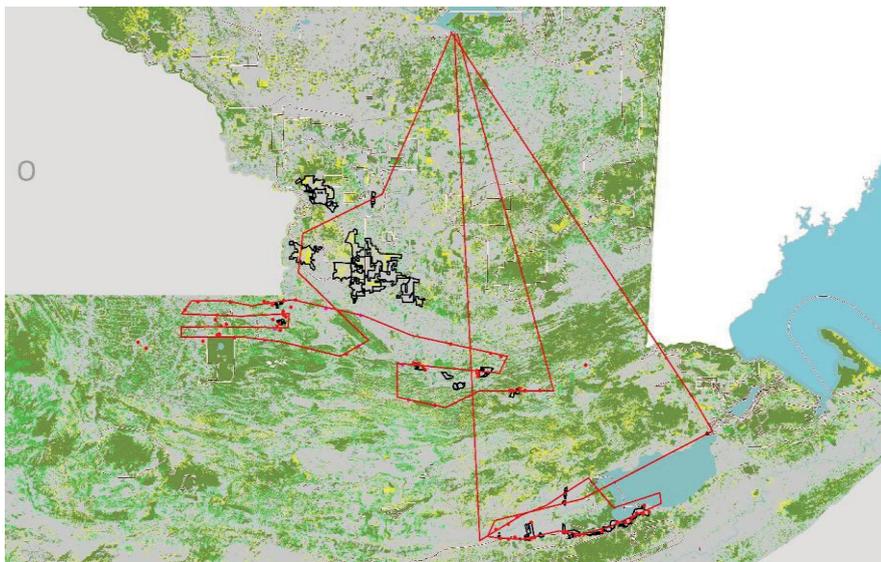
This method allows for a rigorous examination of patterns of flex crop expansion and associated land uses changes over time. These analyses were carried out on the premise that mapping is not only informed by technical aspects but also—and especially—by socio-political ones (Sheppard 2005). To this purpose, I gathered information through different tools, including purchased satellite imagery, field record of cane

¹³⁷ Tests of significance in means (continuous variables) and frequencies (categorical and dichotomous variables) differences for the 2010 and 2014 HHs were performed with regard to thirteen variables of key relevance for the research problem. None of these means differences/relationship was statistically significant. Thus attrition in the 2014 survey is random, and thereby its representational power is not compromised vis-à-vis the 2010 survey.

¹³⁸ The female-head-of-HH questionnaire includes 10 sections (11 in 2014) on: i) the questionnaire’s reference data; ii) surveyed woman’s personal data; iii) the HH physical characteristics; iv) the HH size and demographic composition; v) facts and opinions on land resource access and control abilities; vi) participation on land deals and perception on cane and palm plantations; vii) organizational affiliation(s); viii) HH animal production; ix) HH expenses; x) income sources other than agriculture, and only for 2014; xi) water access and quality. The male-head-of-HH questionnaire includes 8 sections on: i) the questionnaire’s reference data; ii) surveyed man’s personal data; iii) facts and opinions on land resource access and control abilities; vi) participation on land deals and perception on cane and palm plantations; v) organizational affiliation(s); vi) HH farm production; vii) employment, wages and labor conditions; viii) income sources other than agriculture.

and palm plantations' GTM coordinates, interviews with different types of land resources users and administrators (e.g. state officials and community land authorities), and our own aerial pictures. These aerial pictures are the outcome of a collaboration established by the author between the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR) and the National Council of Protected Areas in Petén. This involved an invitation to fly over cane and palm expansion areas in the northern lowlands in January 2010 to take aerial pictures with a camera attached to the aircraft. The route of the flight is depicted in figure 6.

Figure 6 Flight route for aerial pictures of cane and palm areas in the northern lowlands. January 2010.



Source: CONAP-Petén.

The geographical information was then processed and analyzed through ArcView and F-GIS software.¹³⁹ I compared the data gathered in 2010 with official national land use maps from the year 2000 and 2003/5 to account for land uses changes directly associated to cane and palm

¹³⁹ With the invaluable collaboration of the Head of Geographic Information Systems of the National Council of Protected Areas in Petén, and the Head of the Geographic Information Lab of the Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture in Guatemala City.

plantations. Additionally, I analyzed the potential land use changes of expanding palm plantations by comparing land uses in the 2003/5 national land use map with the areas identified in 2008 by the government as suitable for palm cultivation (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) 2008).

2.6.5. Secondary source analysis

These include the review of relevant journalistic, academic, activist and policy literature, recorded in the list of references. Additionally, information was gathered from various other sources, especially: i) ORBIS Database on Corporations; ii) carbon offsetting projects database of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; iii) International Monetary Fund's commodity price database; iv) FAOSTA; v) Guatemala's Newspaper and Periodicals Library; vi) Guatemala's National Property and Cadastral Registries; vii) Guatemalan Banking Authority databases, and: viii) Guatemalan National Statistical Institute databases, especially the 1979 and 2003 National Agricultural Censuses

2.6.6. Soil analysis

This is the outcome of the collaboration organized in June 2009 by the author between the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR), David Tarrasón from the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF) of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Sara Mingorría from the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) of the UAB, and Aníbal sabaja from the School of Agronomy of the Guatemalan National University (FAUSAC). This involved the sampling of soil from different types of palm plantations and subordinate class cultivators' farms located in four of the six municipalities of research in the northern lowlands (i.e. Ixcán, Fray, Panzós and El Estor). Analysis of soil samples was then conducted with *La Motte AST-5* Agricultural Soil Testing Outfit. Comparative soil analysis aims to address the implications of different crops and farming systems on the soil's endowment of nutrients and, thereby, on the

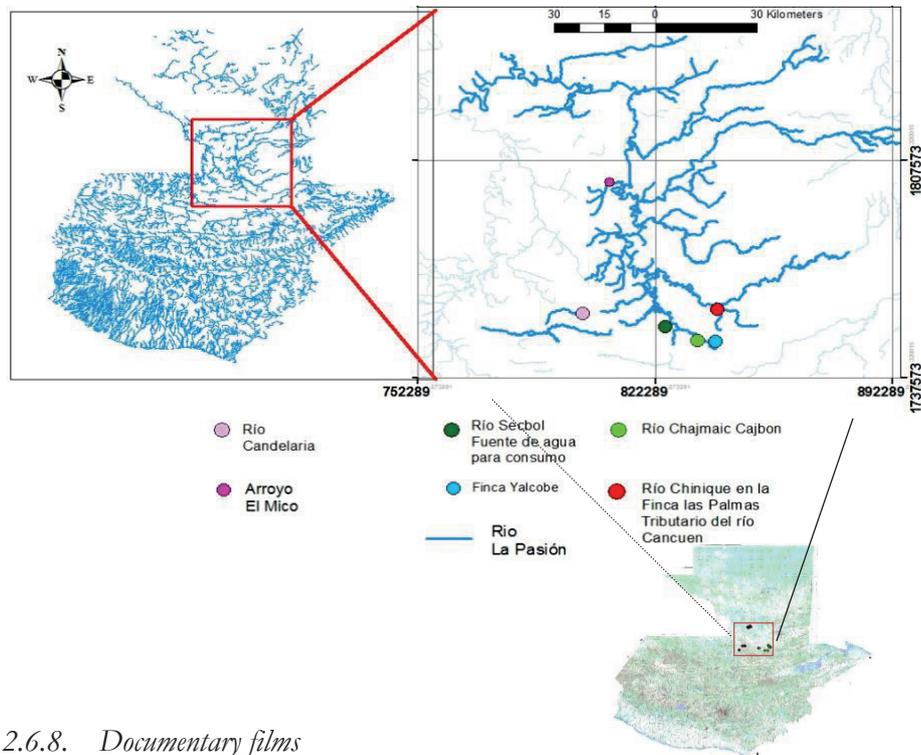
breadth of the metabolic rift between different crops and forms of farming and nature's energy and materials flows.

2.6.7. *Water analysis*

This is the outcome of the collaboration organized in June 2013 by the author between the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR), and the Institute of Hydro-biological Research (IIH) of the Sea Studies Center (CEMA) of the National University of Guatemala (USAC). It involved collecting water samples from a series of freshwater bodies¹⁴⁰ depicted in figure 7. Samples were collected in areas in which these freshwater sources run through palm plantation, close to palm oil mills and elsewhere. The parameters evaluated included: i) total dissolved solids (TDS) in milligrams/liter; ii) salinity (S) in grams/kilogram; iii) electrical conductivity (EC) in microsiemens/centimeter; iv) dissolved oxygen in milligrams/liter; v) oxidation-reduction potential (ORP) in millivolts; vi) water pH, and vii) water temperature in Celsius degrees. These parameters help comparing the implications different crops and forms of farming have on the quality of different freshwater bodies.

¹⁴⁰ Including the Secbol, Chajmaic Cahabon, Candelaria, Chinique, Cancuen and La Pasion rivers, and the El Mico stream.

Figure 7 Water sampling areas



2.6.8. Documentary films

These films are the outcome of the collaboration organized by the author between the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR), and Caracol Producciones during 2009-2011. Two documentary films resulted from this collaboration, in which the author participated as producer, interviewer and film co-editor. One was filmed and produced during the week of mass-evictions in the Polochic Valley discussed further on. The title is “Evictions in the Polochic Valley”.¹⁴¹ The other was filmed and produced between 2009 and 2011 in all the research zones and Guatemala City. The title is “Aj R’al Cho’ch: Sons and Daughters of the Earth”.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUfbH0kSVOs>

¹⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgpEvC94OM0>

PART I Setting the stage

Chapter 3 A genealogy of the agro-extractive capitalist project

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the historic roots of core aspects of agro-environmental change during the early 21st-century convergent crises conjuncture in Guatemala. To trace these processes, I delve into the main directions of change and continuity in agricultural productive relations and the politics driving them—with an eye on the role of the state—through four key periods in Guatemalan post-colonial history of capitalist and agrarian transformations in the context of broader world-historical conjunctures. Although I do not explore directions of agro-environmental change in these four periods with the same breadth and depth that I do for the 2006-2014 timeframe, I give special emphasis to the 1986-2005 period immediately preceding my main chronological unit of analysis.

Therefore, I first review agro-environmental change under imperialism, ranging from the liberal revolution of 1871 and 1943, on the heels of the triumph of the 1944 social democratic revolution. Mirroring trends elsewhere in Latin America and beyond, the decades following the Central American region's independence from Spain in 1821 were marked by disputes between the liberal and conservative elite—even more specifically, between “seigniorial” and “bourgeois” creole oligarchs. Broadly speaking, whereas the latter advocated for trade liberalization, separation of Church and state powers and universal suffrage, the former favored trade protectionism, the Church's involvement in government and limited suffrage. In 1871, liberal forces led by General Justo Rufino Barrios and supported by Mexico seized power and held it firmly for the liberals during more than 70 years. Using the Lockean liberal maxim of individual private property as a

natural and absolute right (for some) as a key state-building principle, this period was marked by the massive enclosure of Mayan communal land. This process of primitive accumulation was largely driven by the increasing labor demands of the burgeoning coffee economy. Coffee production for export thrived in a world historic conjuncture in which British imperialist hegemony was contested by the post-Civil War US, and a unified Germany undergoing a rapid industrialization process. Capitalist productive relations generalized in banana plantations owned by the US United Fruit Company from 1906 and in coffee production from the 1930s on. But coffee haciendas relied on forced labor drafted by the state all throughout the 1871-1943 period. In a nutshell, I argue that agro-environmental change under imperialism imperialism in Guatemala was characterized by the “agro-extractive mercantilist” mode of production.

Subsequently, I delve into the Cold War period during the social democratic decade that took place in Guatemala between 1944 and 1954, or the “Revolutionary Spring”. In October 1944 a group of military officials, among them Colonel Jacobo Árbenz who would later be elected President, led a coup that paved the way for democratic elections. Philosophy professor Juan José Arévalo won the election in a landslide and initiated a series of social-democratic reforms. Those reforms were expanded by his successor Colonel Jacobo Árbenz, who was also democratically elected by a broad majority in 1951. In a world-historic conjuncture stained by the beginning of the Cold War, President Árbenz’s trade relationships with the Soviet bloc, the legalization of the communist party, and the confiscatory land reform that impacted the US United Fruit Company’s idle plots, prodded the US government to label President Árbenz a “Red”. In June 1954, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) orchestrated a coup in Guatemala, ousting President Árbenz and rolling back the social democratic reforms of the “Revolutionary Spring”. Dynamics of agro-environmental change in 1944-1954 therefore revolved around the “social-democratic project of agro-capitalism from below”, supported by thousands of peasant leagues at the grassroots.

I then turn to review Cold War agro-environmental change in Guatemala after the 1954 coup and until new democratic elections are held in 1985. If Cold War politics had indeed been instrumental in slashing the Revolutionary Spring, then they were absolutely integral to the 30 years of authoritarian military rule that ensued.¹⁴³ During this period, capitalist relations in the countryside kept unfolding gradually and unevenly—but resolutely—while state efforts focused on keeping the “communist threat” at bay. An internal armed conflict broke out in 1962 and lasted until 1996. With the military state on one side of the battlefield, and a series of Marxist-Leninist guerrillas organized through the “Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity” (URNG) on the other, more than 200,000 people were killed or “disappeared”, and more than 1 million people were displaced and became refugees (UN Guatemala's Truth Commission 1999).¹⁴⁴ All throughout this period, and especially during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the politics of insurgency and counter-insurgency were at the heart of the agro-environmental transformations. This time of the “bullets and beans agro-capitalist” expansion is characterized by the authoritarian-paternalist political regime within which both family farming and commercial agriculture developed. Despite genocidal violence, the Cold War period witnessed a wealth of peasant and labor organizing efforts that would prevail over time. In fact, this period was the genesis of the partisan rural social justice movements of 2006-2014.

Finally, I examine agro-environmental change under neoliberal globalization in Guatemala between the beginning of the structural and sectoral adjustment of the economy and polity in 1986, and the approval of the free trade agreement with the US (DR-CAFTA) in 2005. I give these years special attention since they are those preceding, and most directly shaping, the events of my main research time span. Amid

¹⁴³ A failed attempt to restore democracy was that led by President Méndez Montenegro from 1966 to 1970. He was a lawyer and university professor whose government's possibilities for democratic reform were completely undermined by his pact with the military.

¹⁴⁴ In a country of 4,5 million people when the conflict broke in 1962 and less than 11 million when it ended in 1996 (World Bank. 2017b).

widespread political violence, a transition to civilian rule took place in 1985 with a constitutional assembly and the celebration of general elections. The winning Christian-Democratic party of Vinicio Cerezo (1986-1990) set into action the liberalization, de-regulation and privatization reforms of the Washington Consensus policy package. Between 1987 and 1996, the government and the URNG engaged in peace negotiations, and both dominant and subordinate classes and allies influenced that process in ways. A return of bourgeois democracy allowed for the neoliberal globalization project that was well established in many parts of the world to root itself in Guatemala. The neoliberal restructuring of the Guatemalan countryside affected everyone, but its negative impacts hit subordinate agrarian classes the hardest. A rural exodus occurred as a result, in which hundreds of thousands of “inefficient” subordinate class cultivators fled to Guatemala City and to the US. This is why I argue that agro-environmental change in Guatemala during this phase of neoliberal globalization is one built on a “purge agro-capitalist” foundations.

3.2. Agro-extractive mercantilism: Dynamics of agro-environmental change under imperialism in Guatemala circa 1871-1943

The first half of the 19th century witnessed a series of important political ruptures. Despite these instances, things remained largely the same in terms of economic and political power distribution. Since independence from Spain in 1821, state-building in Guatemala and Central America was marked by the seemingly contradictory policies straddling conservative and liberal ideologies that enabled the rise of the creole oligarchy as the racialized class hegemon. As Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes explain, ‘at the beginning of the nineteenth century, besides the small group of people dedicated to trade, small crafts, and the civil and military bureaucracy, most Central Americans were devoted to subsistence agriculture. Export agriculture, in contrast, was a relatively small part of economic activity [although] the main source of income for the colonial elite and, as time passed, was the basis for the most dynamic

sector of the economy' (1995, 16). The Central American indigo dye export business during colonial times was controlled by Guatemalan merchants through their control of trade and credit mechanisms rather than indigo plantations and "obrajes" (processing works) (Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes 1995, 14, 19).

What would become El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica organized themselves under the Central American Federation from 1824-1839. This period was characterized by continued political tensions and warfare that led to the fragmentation of Central America into these five countries. But 'the political disintegration of Central America and the loss of the cohesive power of the credit of the Guatemalan merchants', Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes explain, 'contributed to weakening the integration of the regional economies and, with the liberalization of external trade, to reorienting productive activity towards exports' (1995, 31). Furthermore, 'between 1850 and 1880, moving people and products to and from Central America became easier, shipping was regular, ports had better facilities, roads had improved, and railroad building had begun' (Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes 1995, 41). Hence, the political economy trends in Guatemala and Central America that are often identified with the rise of the liberal regime. These 'led to the incorporation of Central America into the world economy, the consolidation of the state, the privatization of land, and the formation of exporting oligarchies, can be found in changes that began in the middle of the [19th] century' (Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes 1995, 76). Particularly in Guatemala, 'the roots of the coffee industry were firmly grounded in the conservative period [and] its development was more responsive to economic incentives (better investment climate and freight changes) *than to party labels or policies*' (Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes 1995, 43 emphasis added). And this is something that would prove to persist into the present, its changing forms and short-lived exceptions notwithstanding.

One such exception is the 1938 peasant revolt led by Rafael Carrera against the Liberal government of Mariano Gálvez, still within the

Federal Republic of Central America. In 1839, Carrera ‘allowed the conservative Rivera Paz to take over the position of president, and withdrew Guatemala from the Central American Federation’ (Handy 1984, 53). In 1844, Carrera took over the presidency, a position he held until his death in 1865. Carrera’s revolt ‘success’, Handy explains, ‘marked the only time in Guatemalan history that peasants, ladino and Indian, have been able to significantly alter national legislation and press their interests’ (1984, 54). Until 1865, ‘peasant land [...] was more secure. Although Carrera was less intent on forcing economic development, he did not try to finance this development from the toils of peasants or by robbing village funds’ (Handy 1984, 54).

However with the liberals taking firm grip over the Guatemala state from 1871 onward, and the world coffee and later banana fever spilling into Guatemala and gathering steam from the early 20th century onward, public and private efforts lean toward securing land, labor, credit, and farming and processing technology for the rise of these crops. A class of mercantilist landlords¹⁴⁵ was located at the very core of the rise of the coffee economy, and from the 1930s on, some of them became dependent agrarian bourgeois with growing “‘free-labourness’” in productive relations (McCreery 1994, 328). Many among them were well-established members of the colonial seigniorial oligarchy, while others were entrepreneurial urban creoles and ladinos with access to capital and/or political influence. Still large numbers of others were newly arrived immigrants from Spain and Italy (in the southern Pacific coast piedmont), and especially Germany (in Alta Verapaz department). The liberals (and conservatives alike) welcomed them in Guatemala, believing strongly in European knowledge and racial supremacy.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, mercantilist landlord and later dependent agrarian bourgeois coffee growers at the periphery of an impending imperialist world ‘food-

¹⁴⁵ McCreery explains ‘the Indians of Guatemala largely rejected a shift to petty commodity production of coffee both because it offered no evident advantages over their existing combination of subsistence agriculture, handicrafts, and trade and because the permanent nature of coffee bushes ran counter to their ideas of community possession and use’ (1994, 335-6).

¹⁴⁶ Castellanos-Cambranes (1986), Palma-Murga et al. (2002)

regime¹⁴⁷ saw themselves at the center of Guatemala's founding myth as the 'Creole Homeland' (Martínez Pelaez 1976).

Conversely, banana plantations were mostly in the grip of foreigners, particularly of the US United Fruit Company (UFCo). In 1906, UFCo acquired some 20.000 hectares of cheap land in eastern Guatemala's Motagua River valley, and by 1913, it had come to own more than 51.000 hectares, of which some 11.000 were banana plantations (Adams 2011, 145). When Dictator General Ubico seized power in 1931, UFCo had already monopolized banana and coffee exports, acquired ownership of docks and railroads and came to quite literally rule more than 200.000 hectares of land (Chapman 2008).

The coffee, and later banana, economy developed robustly where planters had access to roads and railways to transport their produce to sea docks for export. In fact, railways projects involved concessions of vast tracts of land on either side of the tracks.¹⁴⁸ Hence, access to railways was connected to planters' access to land in a foundational way. In the 1870s and 1880s, the state installed a rail network to connect coffee production areas in the southern Pacific coast piedmont, coercing indigenous people to provide a plentiful source of cheap labor. A German private company became involved in these transportation endeavors in the 1890s in order to transport coffee from the Polochic area to the Caribbean port of Santo Tomás Castilla (McCreery 1994, 201, 218). In addition to the railways, the refrigerated steamships of the early 20th century made the banana boom in Guatemala and Central America possible (de Janvry 1981, 65). Coffee farming and processing technologies developed, however unevenly, 'in the half century after 1880. By the 1920s and 1930s most large growers owned a wide array of capital equipment and machinery on their properties [and in fact] one of the best-known mechanical coffee dryers adopted worldwide, for

¹⁴⁷ A concept developed by Friedmann and McMichael 'which links international relations of food production and consumption to forms of accumulation broadly distinguishing periods of capitalist transformation since 1870' (1989, 95)

¹⁴⁸ (Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes 1995, 41, Williams 1994, 225).

example, was the Guardiola, invented by the owner of Guatemala's finca Chocola' (McCreery 1994, 216). Even considering that knowledge was available, coffee cultivation technologies lagged behind. Coffee planters 'faced difficulties, for example, in getting skilled workers who could prune efficiently and in overcoming the high costs of transporting fertilizers' (ibid, 217).

Indeed, from 1871 and until the turn of the 20th century, mercantilist landlord coffee growers were at pains to access to credit, let alone do so on favorable terms. This was the Achilles heel of the coffee economy throughout the 1871-1943 period, as well as the planters' headache.¹⁴⁹ Credit was costly, except that provided by foreign financiers, for which only the largest—and often foreign—coffee planters qualified. It was for this precise reason that especially German and also Italian settlers gained control the Guatemalan coffee economy. As McCreery explains, 'only persons with access to [...] funds could move directly into coffee on a large scale [and] in part because foreigners had access to more capital at lower rates than did Guatemalans, they quickly assumed leadership roles in coffee production' (1994, 170). This is not meant to say that finance and financiers played no role in reinforcing the coffee economy. On the one hand, coffee growers accessed credit 'through the intermediation of merchant capital. Banks lent money to merchant houses against goods, credits, and bills, and these houses in turn discounted funds and merchandise to the growers' (McCreery 1994, 211). On the other hand, and also in McCreery's words, 'it is clear that after 1880 the profits to be made from coffee attracted unprecedented amounts of capital from local and foreign sources' (1994, 214). This transnational financial inflow, together with the competitive devaluation of the Guatemalan peso (in silver) vis-à-vis international currencies (in gold standard) and associated currency speculation, would result in the "financialization 1.0" wave of the Guatemalan economy. Following constrained access to credit in the aftermath of the 1929 financial crash in the US, the Guatemalan state funded the "Crédito Hipotecario Nacional" (CHN) (National Bank of

¹⁴⁹ (McCreery 1994, Martínez Pelaez 1976, Castellanos Cambranes 1996)

Mortgage Credit) with a US \$2.5 million loan at a 7% annual interest rate from the Swedish Match Company ‘in return for a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of matches’ (McCreery 1994, 314). The rationale behind CHN’s foundation was ‘the creation of an institution of agricultural credit that would make available cheap, long-term mortgages to landowners’ (ibid.). But ‘except to a fortunate few, the bank did not provide the cheap mortgages [...] planters had sought since the 1860s’ (McCreery 1994, 315).

The colonial land enclosure certainly involved the granting of private land by the Spanish crown (“mercedes reales de tierras”) to conquistadores according to their position in the military,¹⁵⁰ but it also involved royal communal land grants to indigenous people (“Pueblos de Indios”). While constricting accumulation but allowing for the simple reproduction of the indigenous population, “Pueblos de Indios” provided Spanish rulers with food surpluses, a means of social control, taxes and a reservoir of labor to be drafted through the “repartimiento” system for public works and private (e.g. cochineal and cattle ranching) purposes.¹⁵¹ The public system of forced wage-labor enforced by the Bourbons in the 18th Century would basically continue under the guise of labor “mandamientos” after independence from Spain in 1821, and into the 1860s. The conservatives’ governmental labor policy stated, ‘the Indian was a free agent and could be compelled to work only under extraordinary circumstances’ (McCreery 1994, 168).

Following the liberals’ seizure of state control in 1871 many things changed, but others remained. A major change in land relations is rooted in the establishment of the “General Property Registry” in 1877, answering the government’s call for all land to be privately registered. “Tracts already under cultivation [...] could be bought by the possessor at a reduced price, but since the definition of “cultivated” included only

¹⁵⁰ Non-aristocratic, infantry soldiers were granted “peonias” ranging between 40 and 80 hectares of land. Conversely, nobility members in higher military ranks were eligible to “caballerias” ranging between 200 and 400 hectares (Velasquez 2011, 2).

¹⁵¹ (Velasquez 2011, 2 see also, Castellanos Cambranes 1996).

“plantings of coffee, sugar cane, improved pasture, and cacao”, the Indians tended to be shut out. Their centuries old corn plantings gave them no special claim, and a few could afford the prices set by the state’ (McCreery 1994, 203). Hence, a new enclosure of indigenous people’s land was underway, also jeopardizing land held by the Catholic Church. Its purpose was to make way for commercial coffee plantations. Between 1871 and 1873 alone, nearly half a million hectares of land were privatized (Nugent and Robinson 2000 in World Bank 2003, 33). And some ‘some 3.600 persons received plots averaging 450 hectares each during the period between 1896 and 1921’ (Plant 1995 in World Bank 2003, 33). This obviously reshaped the agro-ecological structure in coffee production areas. McCreery explains how ‘in the boca costa [piedmont] from Santa Rosa [department] to the Mexican border [...] trees protecting shade-grown coffee had replaced the primeval forest that so impressed travelers in the mid-nineteenth century’ (McCreery 1994, 331). The most distinctive feature of this massive and relatively swift process of land commoditization—even if it was far from complete—was that it was never to be rolled back. Quite the contrary, as I discuss further on, it expands through both statutory and informal means from its inception to the early 21st century.

Another reason for landlord mercantilist class coffee planters to control increasing tracts of land was to separate indigenous people from their own means of reproduction, so they can count on their labor-force in coffee plantations. This reason is just as important as the drive for access to farmland, if not more so. But “freeing” indigenous people from their own farms was not matched with their freedom to work as wage-labor in a way that is truly mobile. Workers did receive wages, even if they rarely came through in entirely cash forms.¹⁵² In order to mobilize and control indigenous people’s labor in coffee plantations during this period, coffee planters relied not only on wages but also on

¹⁵² Most often, wages consisted of ‘a package of payments that included advances, money wages, credit, food sometimes free, sometimes at or below market cost, other consumer good sunder concessionary conditions, and services such as medical care and protection from military recruitment or past debts’ (McCreery 1994, 329)

labor draft legislation enforced through a ‘growing, and growingly effective, system of state power’ (McCreery 1994, 329). Decree 177, or the infamous first agricultural labor law by the liberals, was passed in 1877. This law revived the colonial “repartimiento” system of forced-labor and the conservative’s post-colonial labor “mandamientos”, so that ‘the governors of the departments were now to grant planter requests for agricultural labor drafts from the Indian communities’ (McCreery 1994, 188). Decree 177 aptly described the three main categories of agricultural workers at the time, namely

‘resident workers (colonos) [...] who could not leave the property without the owner’s permission, whatever their contract, until they had paid off their debts [...] seasonal workers bound by wage advances (mozos habilitados) who though not living on the property, had accepted wage advances to work on the finca [estate] at specified times of the year [...], and workers who did not receive advances (mozos no habilitados) who were free labor and a category of Indian workers increasingly rare as coffee growers expanded their control over the countryside’ (McCreery 1994, 188).

However, Decree 177 strategically diverged from previous forced-labor mandates in that ‘when workers in debt to another employer are included in a mandamiento draft, [the employer] has the right to ask for these back and the authorities have the obligation to give them’ (McCreery 1994, 189 emphasis added). The Labor Code of 1894 outlawed labor drafts, although the threat of forced-labor in public works detachments remained for those who had been subject to Decree 177 labor drafts. Besides fleeing into the wilderness or to neighboring Belize or Mexico, which many did,¹⁵³ ‘the only ways in which one could avoid this were to pay an annual tax of 10 pesos, to *live as a colono*, to have a *debt* of at least 30 pesos *for labor on a rural property*, or to *contract for at least three months’ work* a year on an *export plantation*’ (1994, 190 emphasis added). Finally, badly hit by the 1929 crisis of North Atlantic capitalism, coffee planters redoubled their pressure on the state to

¹⁵³ Hurtado (2008), Grandia (2012)

support their labor requirements. As a result, Dictator General Ubico passed another infamous law in 1934. The “vagrancy law” compelled all (near)landless peasants ‘to work for at least 150 days a year on export plantations’ (WB 2003, 35).

Therefore, labor-draft laws from 1871-1943 more or less directly forced wage-labor into the thriving coffee export economy, and did so successfully. But they were also responsible for the slow development of truly capitalist free-labor relations in the Guatemalan countryside. For most indigenous people, the only legal way out of draft labor was to engage in debt peonage labor relations with coffee planters through the proceedings of labor contractors (*contratistas*) and facilitators (*habilitadores*).¹⁵⁴ McCreery brands such a relation debt ‘servitude’ rather than ‘peonage’, for ‘in Guatemala the state went beyond the enforcement of debt peonage contracts common to much of Latin America in these years to force Indians into debt servitude. Given the option of contracting with a *finca* or confronting repeated, and increasing, demands for draft labour, the choice, if unattractive, was not difficult’ (1994, 223 emphasis added). It is because of this that the *colonato* labor regime thrived in coffee estate in this period, while banana plantations relied more on non-resident indentured and especially on truly mobile labor. Labor regimes in coffee and banana plantations were influenced by the fact that the demand for workers in coffee plantations was concentrated during the harvest months between August and December,¹⁵⁵ while in banana plantations it was more consistent throughout the year.

In sum, then, ‘the Guatemalan coffee *finca* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the product of the growing incorporation of local land and labor into a world economy dominated by North Atlantic capitalism, *but it was not itself capitalist*’ (McCreery 1994, 328

¹⁵⁴ These exceptions were written into the 1894 Labor Code and the 1934 Vagrancy Law, and stemmed from Decree 177

¹⁵⁵ Based on US Embassy communications, Handy estimates in 425,000 the number of agricultural laborers in the 1940s, ‘with close to 150,000 of these being seasonal migrant workers (for 11,200 coffee *fincas*)’ (1994, 53).

emphasis added). This, and the proliferation of family labor forms of agricultural and crafts production, are behind my “mercantilist” branding of the dominant form of production in Guatemalan agriculture from 1871-1943. Since especially coffee but also banana production relied heavily on the appropriation of land and productive and reproductive labor rents, environmental goods (and free transfer of bads) and to a much lesser extent and only for the larger growers and merchants, of interest, as well as of a series of state revenues, I consider it highly extractivist in character. Thus, I call the dominant form of agricultural production in Guatemala circa 1871-1943 as “agro-extractive mercantilism”.

Politically, and paradoxically for an allegedly liberal political regime, agro-extractive mercantilism leaned on coercive mobilization and control of indigenous peasant labor. Despite their role in the liberal militias, this seems to be another case in which ‘peasants have provided the dynamite to bring down the old building. To the subsequent work of reconstruction they have brought nothing; instead they have been [...] its first victims’.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, as Stavenhagen explains, ‘the Indians, who during the colonial epoch were a subjugated ethnic group, became [after independence] a subjugated class of poor peasants-all without modifying their ethnic characteristics’ (1975, 173-4). A meaningful exception was that of a small group of Mayan bourgeois, particularly from the Guatemalan highlands’ capital of Quetzaltenango.¹⁵⁷ ‘Too high an altitude for coffee growing, would-be finqueros did not covet Quetzalteco land’, Grandin explains, ‘therefore, a sudden loss of subsistence land did not, as it did in many other communities, compel Quetzaltecos to become plantation workers. Further, the mandamiento enacted between 1877 and 1894, was not applied in Quetzaltenango’ (2000, 112). Threatened by ‘the national equation of race with proletarianization’ (Grandin 2000, 145), a group of wealthy Maya-K’iche’s from Quetzaltenango founded the “Sociedad El Adelanto” in

¹⁵⁶ (Moore Jr. 1966, 480, c.f. Shanin 1966b)

¹⁵⁷ See Taracena Arriola (1999), Grandin (2000) and Velásquez Nimatuj (2002).

1894 ‘to promote a vision of Indian ethnicity that was not bounded by class’ (ibid.).

Elsewhere in the country, Mayan peasants resisted forced labor drafts and land dispossession in the ways ‘they always had fought state and landowner demands, with appeals to *tata presidente*, partial compliance, evasion, fraud, and, though very rarely, violence¹⁵⁸’ (McCreery 1994, 319). In other words, the resistance repertoire of contention included a mix of ‘everyday forms of resistance’ (Scott 1985), rightful resistance (O’Brien 1996) and was organized through unstructured and rather spontaneous collective action, including revolts against abusive landlords and government officials. In using this combination of tactics, they initially leaned on the community as a political instrument. According to McCreery,

‘accommodation and resistance to three hundred years of Spanish and creole rule generated among the indigenous populations a defensive “traditional” Indian culture focused on the *pueblo de indios* or *municipalidad* [...] The inhabitants had erected political and social structures that normally held outside exploitation to tolerable levels while at the same time damping tendencies toward differentiation and exploitation among the population itself’ (1994, 326-7).

Specifically in the land-scarce and highly populated Guatemalan western highlands, coffee- and later banana-led agroextractive mercantilism delivered a fatal blow to the remnants of the moral economy-driven ‘closed corporate peasant community’ (Wolf 1957). By the 1930s, and coerced labor mechanisms notwithstanding, ‘population pressure, declining availability of resources and new needs and possibilities –and these included schools and medical care, not merely consumer baubles– both drew and pressed individuals into the wage labor market’.¹⁵⁹ Or

¹⁵⁸ The Q’eqchi’ people in Alta Verapaz department revolted against the coffee economy in 1864, 1879, 1885 and 1906 (Castellanos Cambranes 1996). But as Grandia argues ‘perhaps, the most common method of Q’eqchi’ resistance was migration north, east, and west into the Maya lowlands, where they could continue subsistence agriculture, competing with state-led plans to incorporate these hinterlands into the national economy’ (2012, 45).

¹⁵⁹ McCreery (1994, 328 c.f. Kay 1974)

seen from a different-yet-complementary perspective, the latest phase of agro-extractive mercantilism was marked by a growing relative surplus population in the Guatemalan countryside.

3.3. The social-democratic project of agro-capitalism from Below: Cold War agro-environmental change in Guatemala during 1944-1954

Coffee planters' abuses, that found resonance in General Ubico's regime, ignited the "October Revolution" of 1944. Professor Juan José Arévalo was installed as the country's first democratically elected president as an outcome. This inaugurated a short-lived "Revolutionary Spring" paramount to 20th century societal history in Guatemala, Latin America and beyond. Arévalo's administration in 1945-1951, and even more so Árbenz's in 1951-1954, took on the challenging and pioneering task of building and maintaining an alliance of peasants, urban and rural working classes and a nascent national (agro)industrial bourgeoisie. It was intended to counter the electorally defeated yet powerful landlord and dependent agrarian bourgeois classes. Presidents Arévalo and Árbenz set out to advance through this class alliance a series of structural reforms of the Guatemalan economy and polity, laying the groundwork for a social-democratic project of (agrarian) capitalism from below. In fact, the governments from the Revolutionary Spring period readily jumped on the bandwagon of Latin American structuralism and its import substitution industrialization (Prebisch 1959) policy paradigm-turned-dogma, and did so early.

The 1945 Guatemalan Constitution provided a legal anchor for such social-democratic policy reforms. Arévalo's administration was the first one to enact a government-independent national monetary policy through 1945 Monetary Law and Organic Law of the Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT) 'which served as legal sustenance for the beginnings of a modern Central Banking system' (Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT). 2015). It also created a series of Ministries and state agencies that would pave the way ahead for the Guatemalan state

apparatus in years to come. Most distinctively, for the first time in Guatemala's history, a series of state agencies are created and/or redirected to support petty commodity production, including in farming. And the cooperative was the prioritized business model. The "Institute for Production Development" (INFOP) was created in 1948 to, among other things, 'support farming and livestock production, especially of those crops and realms of activity which contribute to a better diet and food system and provide raw commodities [especially cotton] for the country's industries' (Guatemalan Congress (Asamblea Legislativa) 1948). The INFOP coordinated with the newly created "Cooperative Institute" and "Department for Cooperative Development". A series of agencies were also created during this period to manage public procurement of food and food reserves, agricultural credit for petty commodity producers, and agricultural research and extension services.¹⁶⁰

However, it was in the realms of labor and land relations where the Revolutionary Spring governments introduced the most profound, contentious and ultimately fatal, reforms. Regarding labor, the 1945 Constitution did away with Dictator Ubico's 1934 vagrancy law, and so Guatemala became 'the last country in the Western Hemisphere to end state-sanctioned coerced labor' (McCreery 1994, 322). The "Guatemalan Institute of Social Security" (IGSS) was created in 1946, and the "Ministry of Labor" in 1947. A new Labor Code was enforced in May 1947, and reviewed in 1948 to enshrine minimum wages, and freedom to use the right to strike (Álvarez Aragón et al. 2012) although 'it was still illegal to strike during the harvest' (Handy 1994, 69). Legal free-laborness reshaped the agricultural labor regime for some, but not for others. Thousands remained as *colonos* in coffee estates, although debt-servitude was now changed—at least formally—by tenancy relations through which hacienda tenants were granted the right to farm a subsistence plot in exchange for a rent usually paid in labor or in kind.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Jan 2013-Feb 2015 Guatemalan Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Livestock (MAGA), July 2013.

¹⁶¹ (Martínez Peláez 1976, Piedrasanta Arandi 1971, Palma et al. 2002).

And for the growing masses who depended on at least temporal work in plantations, debt peonage and labor agents' intermediation continued to be the norm rather than the exception (Handy 1994). In fact, free-laboriness initiated a fundamental feature in 20th-century productive relations in Guatemalan agriculture: the functional dualist semi-proletarianization of family farmers. The notion of functional dualism was originally developed by Kautsky (1988 [1899]) as a productive relation, and categorized as "semi-proletarian social relations" by Kay (1974) and Stavenhagen (1975). De Janvry explains that it 'emerged between the capitalist sector, which produces commodities (on capitalist latifundio and commercial farms) on the basis of semiproletarian labor, and the peasant sector, which produces use values and petty commodities on the basis of family labor and delivers cheap wage labor to the capitalist sector' (1981, 84).¹⁶²

But if there were outstanding changes regarding labor policy structure and relations, those concerning land were the most subversive in Guatemala's history. The last 18 months of the Revolutionary Spring were witness to the only pro-poor state-led redistributive agrarian reform in the country. While acknowledging private property, the 1945 Constitution made it subject to internal limits by requiring property to perform 'a social function' (Guatemalan Constitutional Assembly 1945, art. 90, c.f. Duguit 1975 [1911]). Latifundia are banned (ibid, art. 91) and the government is licensed to confiscate land, prior to compensation, 'in the event of public utility or necessity or legally demonstrated social interest' (ibid, art. 92). Hence, legitimized by his 1950 electoral sweep, President Árbenz called for Agrarian Reform. In 1952, the Congress approved "Decree 900 agrarian reform law" as a means of unleashing capitalist productive forces in the countryside. As Decree 900's article 1 clearly states, 'October Revolution's agrarian reform aims to liquidate

¹⁶² Through functional dualist relations, de Janvry continues, 'two advantages are secured: the possibility of exploiting family labor on subsistence plots that cost the employer nothing and the possibility of paying the worker for his effective labor only when it is needed. On the average the price of labor power will be the difference between the cost of subsistence for the worker and his family and the production of use values or petty commodities that can be obtained from the land plot [...] *Labor costs are thus transformed from fixed to variable*' (1981, 83 emphasis added).

feudal property in the countryside and the productive relations behind it in order to develop capitalist agriculture and make way for Guatemala's industrialization' (Guatemalan Congress 1952, author's translation).

Article 3 includes goals other than land redistribution, such as, 'd) introduce new forms of farming providing, especially poorer peasants, with livestock, fertilizers, seeds and extension services, and; e) increase agricultural credit for all peasants and capitalist farmers more generally' (ibid.).

In short, Decree 900 stipulated redistribution of latifundia land under individual freehold property, lifetime use rights and long term lease forms (ibid, art. 4). It mandated expropriation (with compensation) and redistribution of unutilized/underutilized latifundia land in excess of 90 hectares. Thus, it excluded tracts with coffee, banana, cotton or sugarcane plantations (ibid, art. 10, a, b), but included idle land held by coffee planters and even the United Fruit Company (UFCo). 'Forest reserves', including the large rainforest in the northern lowlands, were also excluded from redistribution (ibid, art. 11). Decree 900 orchestrated an agrarian reform led by the President, administered by the "National Agrarian Department" (DAN) and carried out through a series of hierarchically organized public-private committees at municipal (Local Agrarian Committees), departmental (Departmental Agrarian Commissions) and national (National Agrarian Counsel) levels. Non-state actors in the national and departmental bodies included a representative from the landed oligarchy-controlled "General Association of Agriculturists" (AGA), another one from the "General Workers' Confederation" and two from "Guatemala's National Peasant Confederation". But in the agrarian reform's trailblazing "Local Agrarian Committees", which were responsible for the identification and follow up of land expropriations, there were no AGA representatives. Instead, three representatives from the local peasant organizations and/or trade unions were involved (ibid, arts. 52 to 57).

Between 1952 and July 1954 alone, 606.438 hectares of land were (re)distributed (Palma et al. 2004, 141-2) among some 100.000

beneficiaries, or 19% of those eligible to benefit from Decree 900 (Handy 1994, 95). Among them, the Q'eqchi' colonos and debt-serfs in the coffee hacienda haven of Alta Verapaz benefitted disproportionately (Grandia 2012, 47). In addition to favorable conditions “from above”, this impressive record of land redistribution in just 18 months is an outcome of massive agitation, organization and mobilization for agrarian reform at the grassroots, ‘often influenced by the communist party, the Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT)’ (Brockett 2005, 201). “Guatemala’s National Peasant Confederation”, formed in 1950, ‘grew to a membership in the hundreds of thousands organized locally in unions and peasant leagues’ (Brockett 2005, 132). Urban trade unions, especially in Guatemala City, also thrived in the 1944-1954 period (Álvarez Aragón et al. 2012). This emancipatory experience of indigenous and ladino subordinate (agrarian) classes would remain forever vivid and unmatched in the country’s political history.

However, the preceding “truly liberal”, social-democratic project of capitalist transformation would enrage domestic hacienda patrons and foreign powers alike. As Handy explains, ‘fear of Indian revolt was such a prominent part of rural Ladino’s psyche that they viewed any relaxation of the constant scrutiny and tight control employed by Ubico [...] as an invitation to bloody Indian uprising’ (1994, 53). It is important not to overlook the fact that the Revolutionary Spring blossomed during the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War between the Eastern and Western Blocs. Revolutionary Spring governments’ policies, and especially a confiscatory land reform affecting 185.000 hectares, or 71% of the land held in Guatemala by the United Fruit Company (Handy 1994, 171), led many within US President Truman’s administration to brand Árbenz a communist (Chapman 2008). But growing fears of sovietisation in its “backyard”, exacerbated by the Cuban revolutionary upraise of July 1953, led President Eisenhower to authorize the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to organize the 1954 coup that ultimately overthrew Árbenz (CIA (Barrett. 2011).

3.4. Bullets and beans agro-capitalism: Cold War agro-environmental change in Guatemala circa 1955-1985

Guatemala—and Central America more generally—was a crucial Cold War battlefield. Even if the Cold War arrived in Guatemala during the social-democratic decade of 1944-1954, it festered during the three decades of military regime and bloody internal armed conflict that followed. The Guatemalan landed oligarchy retaliated fiercely after Árbenz was overthrown. Thousands of alleged communists were jailed, tortured and/or killed in the coup's aftermath (Handy 1994, 194-5). But the pace of the purge slowed by the late 1950s in an effort by successive military rulers to strengthen their social legitimation. Besides, the plans of the landed oligarchy to seek revenge and annihilate the communist threat once and for all faced two obstacles. First, 'popular forces did not intend to remain demobilized', and second, 'the United States wished to turn postliberation Guatemala into an anticommunist "showcase for democracy"' (Brockett 2005, 202). Following the "Alliance for Progress", promoted by US President Kennedy and subscribed to by all states in the Americas (with the exception of Cuba) in the Punta del Este Conference in 1961, the US added development cooperation to the intelligence and military relationships that it already held with most Latin American and Caribbean.¹⁶³ Among the series of socio-economic development programs in the Alliance for Progress that were to be advanced through USAID and its "Peace Corps", agrarian reform stood out.

In Guatemala, Árbenz's redistributive agrarian reform was stopped and rolled-back as quickly as it was carried out. By 1956, less than two years after the coup, 79% of the expropriated land (Cabrera 2002, 21) had been already given back to landlords and, of course, to the UFCo. While backing the military dictatorship, the US pressed the Guatemalan government to combine consent-building with coercion as

¹⁶³ This does not mean such collaboration ended. 'Altogether from 1950 to 1979, the United States supplied Guatemala with over \$60 million in military assistance and trained over thirty-three hundred Guatemala military officers at U.S. military facilities' Brockett 1988, 106).

governmental mechanisms. And this “carrot and stick” strategy would resonate, to different degrees and in different ways, with the succession of authoritarian-paternalist military officials that would hold office until 1985. Hence, after a counter-insurgent overhaul, some of the Revolutionary Spring policies continued under military rule. In the agrarian and environmental realms, these policies emphasized the development of the agricultural public sector and land distribution through so-called agricultural colonization and settlement programs rather than through redistributive land reform.

Regarding the agricultural sector, the agencies linked to the “Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food” (MAGA) involved 20.000 officials (IICA 1993, 3). The MAGA brought together the agricultural knowledge research and development “Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology” (ICTA), farming (DIGESA) and livestock breeding (DIGESEPE) extension services, the “National Forest Institute” (INAFOR), an agricultural development bank (BNA, and then BANDESA), and the “National Agricultural Marketing Institute” (INDECA) managing food reserves and a system of price floors for food producers and ceilings for consumers (Gauster and Alonso-Fradejas 2008). The agricultural public sector grew to such extent that every municipality in the country had an “Office of Agricultural Affairs” run by a team of 4 to 5 people including extension agents and a nutritionist. And this outreach turned the agricultural public sector agencies from 1955-1985 into unique vehicles for counter-insurgency intelligence and the spread of green revolution knowledge and technologies.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, this period saw a great deal of Alliance for Progress USAID-funded projects looking to “modernize” subordinate class cultivator’s forms of farming—which as it often goes, meant increasing their dependence on synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and such. It was also through a USAID US\$ 8,5 million loan in 1970 that cultivation of internationally celebrated non-traditional

¹⁶⁴ Interview with senior official from the Planning Department (UPIE), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) in March 2006.

export crops (e.g. broccoli, snow peas, flowers or decorative plants) takes off among family and petty capitalist farmers.¹⁶⁵

Regarding land policy, and in line with the counter-insurgent prescriptions of the “Alliance for Progress”, a series of agrarian colonization and settlement land distribution programs substituted redistributive agrarian reform. The 1956 “Agrarian Statute” set the new agrarian colonization policy into action, starting with the allotment of individual plots on state land (“parcelamientos”) in “Agrarian Development Zones” in the Pacific southern coast region (Velásquez 2011, 4). However, it was through the 1959 “Company for the Promotion and Development of the Petén” (FYDEP), and the 1962 “Agrarian Transformation Law” (Decree 1551) with its associated “National Institute of Agrarian Transformation” (INTA), that agrarian colonization thrived. With the southern coastal region already saturated, INTA and FYDEP focused on the colonization of the immense tropical forest lowlands in the north of the country, particularly in the Northern Transversal Strip (INTA) and South Petén (FYDEP) sub-regions. Formally envisaged as escape valves for land-hungry, rebellious indigenous people from the western highlands,¹⁶⁶ these vast areas were subject to two key informal settlement processes. On one side, influential state officers, especially high-rank military men, grabbed so much land for their own use that the Northern Transversal Strip came to be known as the “General’s Strip”. In South Petén, cattle ranchers were initially entitled to individual plots of 675 hectares, which were later reduced to 225. A way around this was registering different plots in the name of various kin to build larger estates than were legal, and such became common practice (Grandia 2012, 55).

On the other side, thousands of Q’eqchi’ families from Alta Verapaz’s highlands and Polochic Valley settled uninvited along the Northern Transversal Strip and South Petén following their centuries-old tradition

¹⁶⁵ Interview with FAO Representative in Guatemala, September 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with President of the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA) in 1965-9, March 2006.

of migrating into the lowlands' rainforest to flee landlords' and/or state's abuse and repression—commonplace since Spanish colonization and throughout the 1871-1943 era of agro-extractive mercantilism. Shrinking land availability, ongoing harsh conditions for hacienda tenants and counter-insurgent repression would push many more to migrate north in 1955-1985 in search of livelihood and refuge. Two broad types of land property rights were possible for the Q'eqchi and other subordinate class indigenous people and ladino settlers: i) individual private plots of 16 hectares in the Northern Transversal Strip, and 23 in South Petén; ii) collective private plots in the form of "Collective Agrarian Patrimonies" (PACs), "Cooperatives", and "Associative Peasant Enterprises" (ECAS) from 1984 onward.¹⁶⁷ These formulations of collective land property involved the shared organization of agricultural production and/or distribution within a group. Despite the removal of the internal limits to property rights enshrined in the Revolutionary Spring Constitution of 1945, land property rights for agrarian colonization beneficiaries are subject to external limits, more specifically that land could not be sold for 25 years (10 from 1992 onward).

While still below Árbenz's 1952-1954 agrarian reform redistribution figures, military regimes' colonization programs from 1955-1974 redistributed a total of 538.917 hectares (Grandia 2012, 47). Land distribution figures notwithstanding, FYDEP and INTA were able to provide provisional land title deeds only for 'one-fifth' and 'less than 15 percent of the land allotments assigned between 1959 and 1982', respectively (Grandia 2012, 56, 51). In attempting to regularize the myriad of informal land transactions that followed the agrarian colonization of the northern lowlands, the state passed Decree 49-79 law in 1979. The new law allowed for land registration in the National Property Registry after 10 or more years of peaceful and in good faith tenure of the plot (Velasquez 2011, 19). Decree 49-79 was used as a mechanism for the legal dispossession of thousands of individual and

¹⁶⁷ Interview with 1964-9 INTA President, March 2006.

collective subordinate class settlers whose unregistered land was suddenly owned by someone else (Velasquez 2011, 20). Hence, land grabs, whether more or less straightforward, were the crony way of achieving dominant agrarian class position—and these processes thrived during 1955-1985.

In such an agrarian context, coffee and banana plantations continued to be of utmost relevance for dominant agrarian class producers, and the land devoted to those plantations grew throughout the period (Brockett 1988, 46). But Cold War politics, and economic booms and busts in the US, would provide the necessary incentives for the beef, cotton and sugar (and later on flex cane) complexes to fully emerge and prosper. The rise of the beef complex in Guatemala from the 1960s forward was driven by the US fast-food industry's demand for cheap beef and resulted in the gradual increase of beef export quotas from Central America (Grandia 2012, 147). Beef exports soared, from 0,8 thousand metric tons (TMT) in 1961-65 to 14,7 TMT in 1969-71 and 17, 8 TMT in 1980-81 (Brockett 1988, 49). This restructured cattle ranching in Guatemala in two ways. First, many ranchers switched from the extensive ranching of semi-wild cattle feeding on natural grassland, to relatively more intensive forms made possible by the spread of improved pastures and state of the art breeding technologies (Grandia 2012). Second, the thriving cattle ranching "business" offered a unique cover for "narco-ranchers" to hide air drug-trade operations and launder illicit moneys from the 1980s on.¹⁶⁸ Initially encouraged by the Revolutionary Spring governments as feedstock for Guatemala's textile industry, cotton became the second largest export commodity after coffee in the 1960s and 70s (Brockett 1988, 60). Insect and disease control and enhanced communication infrastructure opened the Pacific southern coast lowlands for cotton (ibid, 70), and cane, and as a result, land under cotton increased 20-fold between 1948-52 and 1976-78 (ibid, 44). Finally, the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 would switch

¹⁶⁸ Interview with 1964-9 INTA President and with a senior official from the Planning Department (UPIE), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA), both in March 2006.

the large US sugar import quotas to the Central American isthmus (Oglesby 2004). And after more than a decade of profitable sugar exports, the largest companies within the Guatemalan sugar complex were healthy enough to seize the opportunities that had opened for fuel ethanol and biomass electricity generation in the 1973 oil and financial crisis world-historic conjuncture.¹⁶⁹ In addition to the rise of the beef, cotton and sugar complexes for export to the US, the Central American Common Market established in 1960 offered a favorable policy structure and a larger market for nascent Guatemalan and fellow Central American (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie to engage in import substitution industrialization (ISI).¹⁷⁰

Agrarian colonization, and especially the expansion of land-clearing cattle ranches, cotton and cane plantations ‘destroyed almost one-half of [Guatemala’s] remaining forests in less than two decades’ (Brockett 1988, 90), leading to the ‘systematic destruction of the land’ (ibid.). Also, massive pesticide use greatly damaged the health of plantation workers and rural dwellers. Brockett quotes a report finding ‘more than fourteen thousand poisonings and forty deaths from pesticides in the Pacific lowlands between 1972 and 1975 alone. [People in Guatemala] were thirty-one times as likely to have DDT in their blood as people in the United States’ (1988, 91).

The persistence and growth of coffee and banana plantations, and rising cotton and especially cane plantations, demanded a large seasonal labor-force. This made functional-dualist semi-proletarianization skyrocket from 1955-1985.¹⁷¹ Conversely, agrarian colonization programs and a

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Human Resources Manager of Consorcio Azucarero Central (subsidiary of Guatemalan Madre Tierra flex cane company), in Dominican Republic, January 2014.

¹⁷⁰ The ISI process was actually captured by the bourgeois oligarchy and did not alter traditional patterns of wealth distribution in meaningful ways. Segovia explains the funds for ISI in Central America, especially for the purchase of industrial producer goods, came from the traditional bourgeois oligarchy (2004, 6).

¹⁷¹ As Brockett explains, ‘by 1975 some 60 percent of the economically active rural population of the [western] highlands migrated to work on the [southern coast] plantations [...] making it the world’s largest migratory labor force as a percentage of total population (Paige 1975: 361). By the end of the decade, some estimated that around six hundred thousand peasants were part of this seasonal migration [...] yet the income earned in this work is meager, while the transportation,

large agricultural public sector allowed for the development of Family and petty capitalist farmer classes producing food surpluses (especially maize and beans) for domestic and Central American markets through swidden farming.¹⁷² Whereas cultivators from the western and Alta Verapaz highlands were forced to work at least temporarily in coffee, banana, cane or cotton plantations, most first generation agrarian colonization beneficiaries were able to avoid labor migration to the fincas. Some still worked for a wage in the farms of their petty capitalist farmer neighbors. Others continued to exchange labor with village neighbors during planting and harvest seasons, as they had been doing for centuries (Schwartz 1990). Regardless of land being registered individually or collectively with INTA and FYDEP, the generalized communal government of land resources facilitated swidden farming and labor exchanges. This system of community-led government of land relations involves the yearly allocation of individual land plots to every family according to household size and composition features, while keeping a village forest reserve and a fallows area.

Agrarian colonization and heightened farming livelihoods notwithstanding, a rural surplus population gradually developed over the course of the 1954-1985 period. The urban population grew from 25% in 1950 to 40% in 1980 (Brockett 1988, 86). Additionally, 'between 1964 and 1973, the number of urban jobs in Guatemala increased at only one-half the rate of growth of the urban population' (ibid.).

But despite expanding capitalist relations and military governments' legitimizing efforts, anti-insurgent authoritarianism and violence left a strong mark on the character of agro-environmental change all throughout 1955-1985. It is for this reason that I borrow the "bullets and beans" expression from General Ríos Montt, who used it to

living, and working conditions are often subhuman, according to an International Labour Organization report' (1988, 88).

¹⁷² Interviews with 1964-9 INTA President, and senior official from the Planning Department (UPIE), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA), in March 2006.

describe his short but bloody government program from 1982-1983.¹⁷³ In my formulation, “bullets and beans agro-capitalism” is a fitting way to brand the generalized form of productive relations and politics in the countryside during the 1955-1985 period. State organized repression of indigenous people and subordinate agrarian classes was nothing new in that period, nor is it today. What was new in 1955-1985 was the level of sophistication (through military intelligence), scale (e.g. napalm bombs) and especially magnitude (i.e. massacres) of state and paramilitary violence. If after the counterrevolutionary purge of the late 1950s and early 1960s (e.g. in Zacapa department) state repression targeted peasant and labor organizers, it reached a genocidal magnitude from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. The state’s “scorched earth” and “take the water from the fish” terror campaigns involved mass killings, rapes and reducing villages and farms to ashes in areas of guerrilla influence to destroy their alleged provisioning and grassroots support systems (UN Guatemala's Truth Commission 1999).¹⁷⁴ The military was actively supported by ultra-right-wing paramilitary death-squads like the “White Hand”, including landed upper classes who supported the military’s logistical requirements, and even napalm-bombing campaigns, with their own private aircrafts (ibid). Indeed, the Guatemalan oligarchy actively supported the army’s anti-communist campaigns or kept silent (Krznaric 2003).

¹⁷³ An Army officer interviewed by the New York Times in 1982 explained ‘the Government’s message to the Indians and peasants was simple: “If you are with us, we’ll feed you, if not, we’ll kill you”’ (Bonner 1982).

¹⁷⁴ 626 villages were burned down to ashes and most of their inhabitants raped and massacred. Since 93% of the actions of violence were performed by state actors, 80 % of the victims were civilian, of which 53% were Mayan and 30% of “unregistered ethnicity”, the UN classified this conflict as a genocide against the Mayan people. Some 160 such massacres took place in the northern lowlands region only. Among them, the May 29 1978 massacre of Panzós stands out for its magnitude, and early and overt character. Following the pacific demonstration of hundreds of Q’eqchi’ peasants in front of Panzós municipality to protest landlord abuse, the army closed the exits from the square and opened fire indiscriminately. 53 people (including children) were killed and some 47 wounded. An unidentified number of people drowned in the close-by Polochic River when trying to escape. In the 4 years following the massacre, the UN recorded at least another 310 selective killings by the military in the area (UN Guatemala’s Truth Commission 1999).

As expected, the state and paramilitary repressed any form of social justice-oriented claims against their policies, while discouraging political organization and collective action. For instance, most “Local Agrarian Committees” and peasant leagues that were part of the “National Peasant Confederation” (CNCG) were dismantled, and from 1955-1986 the number of trade unions in the country shrank by 73% compared to 1944-1954 (GHRC 2009). However, this is certainly not a case of lack of resistance and mobilization. At one end of the spectrum, “scorched earth” and “take the water from the fish” military campaigns forced hundreds of thousands into exile and internal displacement. An outstanding experience in internal displacement is that of the self-branded “Communities of Population in Resistance” (CPRs), communities of civilians fleeing genocidal violence. Sometimes even for more than a decade, they hid out and led nomadic lifestyles in the forest, but in doing so they were suspected of collaborating with the guerrillas. Thus, non-combatant CPRs were made military targets (Falla 1998).

At the other end of the spectrum, this period brought peasant and labor organizational efforts of the Revolutionary Spring to fruition, and witnessed the rise of armed and otherwise militant organizations along Marxist-Leninist, ethno-nationalist, Christian-Democrat and liberation-theology principles and combinations thereof. Broadly speaking,¹⁷⁵ these included, first, three Marxist-Leninist guerrilla groups stemming from the “Guatemalan Labor Party” (PGT or communist party).¹⁷⁶ In 1982, the three of them joined forces, together with the National Board Core of PGT, under the “Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity” (URNG). Second, the “Tojil Indian Movement” which publicly emerged in 1977 as an ‘armed Mayan organization simultaneously revolutionary and nationalist’ (Bastos and Camus 2013, 74). Third, “Catholic Action” which, despite its origins as a ‘conservative reaction to the changes

¹⁷⁵ For informed reviews of the “never-ending history of resistances” in Guatemala before the 1996 peace agreements see the collection edited by Vela (2008) under the same name, and Bastos and Camus (1996, 2003), Brockett (2005, 1988), Brett (2006) and Macleod (2008, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ The “Armed Rebel Forces” (FAR) was the first guerrilla to stem from the PGT in 1962. Two more would stem as FAR splits, the “Guerrilla Army of the Poor” (EGP) in 1972 and the “Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms” (ORPA) in 1979 (Macleod 2008, 145, 146).

catalyzed by the reforms following October Revolution of 1944' (Brockett 2005, 133), gravitated towards a Christian-Democrat standpoint following the 1954 coup. Animated by the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, many radicalized and embraced "liberation theology", calling on the Church to join forces with the oppressed to bring about social and political change. Fourth and most distinctively, after covert grassroots organizational efforts since the early 1970s, the "Committee for Peasant Unity" (CUC) held its first National Congress in 1978. CUC mobilized ladino and mainly indigenous people from across multiple fragmented agrarian classes, among them Hacienda-tenants, Family and petty capitalist farmers and rural proletarians. These different ideological standpoints met head on within CUC, each one being more relevant than others to different constituents across CUC's multiple strongholds across the country (Macleod 2011, 450). Nonetheless, class-based demands and principles were dominant in CUC at the time (Bastos y Camus 2003, 47).

Three key actions in which CUC played a leading role, all in 1980, were pivotal points in Guatemala's political history.¹⁷⁷ First, members of CUC joined forces with members of the Guatemala City Settlers Coordination and San Carlos University Students Association (AEU) to seize the Spanish Embassy in protest of the "scorched earth" and "take the water from the fish" military campaigns. The Guatemalan army burned down the Spanish embassy, killing all of its occupants and Embassy employees, with the exceptions of the Ambassador who was freed through Red Cross intermediation, and a CUC member who managed to escape the fire (though he was later killed by the police). Second, just two weeks later after the Embassy massacre, CUC, the EGP guerrilla, "Tojil Indian Movement" and other indigenous people organizations gathered some 150 members in the old Mayan City of Iximché (today's Tecpan township in Chimaltenango department). The "Iximché Declaration" became an extremely relevant political manifesto, and was widely disseminated after the meeting. It argued that racism,

¹⁷⁷ Interview with CUC Secretary General, August 2011.

patriarchy and class exploitation mutually reinforced one another, established for the first time the Mayan peoples as a political subject (rather than the “Indian”), and made a call for the underprivileged masses to unite and rebel (Macleod 2011, 457).¹⁷⁸ Third and finally, CUC organized a massive strike of some 100,000 cane cutters in the Pacific southern coast region in late 1980 that led to a 200% wage increase. Following these actions, heightened state repression brought CUC closer to the EGP guerrilla organization and forced it to operate clandestinely.

This was precisely the trajectory of another major agrarian justice partisan organization, the “Peasant Committee of the Highlands” (CCDA). In this case closer to the original FAR guerilla, it materialized in 1982 in San Martín Jilotepeque.¹⁷⁹ This township is significant in that it was one of the two epicenters of the “campesino a campesino” agro-ecological movement in the early 1970s. Both the campesino a campesino movement and CCDA, which had overlapping membership, were subject to military repression under accusations of collaboration with the guerrillas. These factors led to the near annihilation of the campesino a campesino movement, and drove the remnants of CCDA underground.

3.5. Purge agro-capitalism: Agro-environmental change under neoliberal globalization in Guatemala circa 1986-2005

The transition to civilian government following the 1985 general elections and Constitutional Assembly is a milestone in recent Guatemalan history. Evidently, some things changed while others remained the same. Most distinctively, a peace negotiation process

¹⁷⁸ Despite coordinated political actions like Iximché Declaration, distrust, tension and even conflict reigned between the revolutionary and Mayan movements in the early 1980s. Even between URNG and the also armed and revolutionary “Tojil Indian Movement” there was a fundamental clash on the latter’s demand for territorial autonomy which the former perceived as ‘ethno-populist’ (Macleod 2008, 231-2). There were also politics playing across Marxist-Leninist guerrillas, including with regard to the “indigenous question”, and across the indigenous people movement organizations, including on the “revolutionary question” (Bastos and Camus 2003).

¹⁷⁹ Interview with CCDA Secretary General, November 2013.

began in 1987 and resulted in a series of peace agreements between the government and the URNG to which both parties had subscribed by December 1996. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, state counterrevolutionary policy in Guatemala had been focused on civilian massacres. But from 1986-1996, a switch up occurred, bringing back the state counter-insurgent policies of the 1960s and early 1970s that had to do with the selective repression of guerrilla members, peasant and labor organizers. This period also saw radical economic changes. The return of bourgeois democracy allowed for the neoliberal globalization process that was already in full swing elsewhere, to fully take flight in Guatemala. Interestingly enough, the genocidal violence of the later 1970s and early 1980s can be considered a detour, but definitely not a waste of time. ‘The scorched earth counterinsurgency’, Robinson explains, ‘had the effect [...] of destroying the peasant economy and peasant forms of organization, bringing the Indian population [...] under the sway of capitalist economic laws. [It was] an instrument of primitive accumulation’ (2003, 105). With support from inter-governmental organizations like the World Bank, the IMF and the IADB, and especially considering US involvement,¹⁸⁰ the Christian-Democrat administration of President Cerezo (1986-1990) launched the structural reform of the Guatemalan economy and polity along Washington Consensus prescriptions. These macro-economic and sectoral reforms unfolded along neoliberal “governance” and “trickle-down” policy paradigms-turned-dogmas.

Even though it had already been selectively enforced a few years earlier, the governance model paradigm can be broadly traced back to the principles and political agenda put forth by the United Nations

¹⁸⁰ ‘In Central America, the watershed in the turn to the new model was the 1984 Kissinger Commission Report [...]. In its economic dimension it called for the integration of the region into the global economy. Concrete measures included a roll-back of local state intervention in the economy, a greater opening up to transnational corporate investment, the elimination of price controls and dismantling of ISI industries, export promotion, particularly of non-traditionals, and the establishment of free trade zones’ (Robinson 2003, 158).

“Commission on Global Governance”¹⁸¹ through its 1995 “Our Global Neighbourhood” report. On the premises of a more interdependent world system in which the ‘growth of international civil society’ signals the shift ‘from states to people’, the report calls for the renewal of ‘the international system that the UN Charter put in place [by] expanding the rule of law and *enabling citizens to exert their democratic influence*’ (UN Commission on Global Governance 1995, xiv emphasis added). This meant moving away from a state-led governmental model paradigm in favor of one based on public-private “governance”, where such governance is understood as ‘the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, *public and private*, manage their common affairs’ (ibid, 2 emphasis added). Additionally, although ‘*states and governments remain primary public institutions* for constructive responses to issues affecting peoples and the global community [...] in some cases, *governance will rely primarily on markets and market instruments, perhaps with some institutional oversight*’ (ibid, 3, 4 emphasis added).

Thus, the governance model paradigm called for heightened involvement of private actors in policy-making and implementation through public-private partnerships and “multi-stakeholder” processes. This is key because, as McKeon explains, there is a (big) difference between “*multi-actor*” in civil society circles—and what has come to be known as ‘*multistakeholderism*’ in which everyone enters the room on the same footing, ignoring differences in interests, roles, and responsibilities among the parties, and negating power imbalances’ (2017, 380 emphasis added).

“Public-private partnership” has been used in Guatemala since the 1990s to mean the privatization of public services. The country joined the regional privatization tsunami late but did so with a high level of commitment. Every public service in the country ranging from water to mail, energy, railways or agricultural extension was in private hands by

¹⁸¹ Involving 28 prominent members most of whom ‘are or have been politicians and heads of either international organizations (e.g., the World Bank, the Commonwealth) or corporations’ (Massicotte 1999, 128).

2000. The dismantling of the agricultural public sector in particular was organized through the 1993 “Agenda for Agricultural Reactivation and Modernization”. Facilitated and funded by the “Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture” (IICA), this agenda was a response to the ‘repeatedly demonstrated facts that the state is neither an efficient administrator, nor should it have a broad set of functions’ (IICA 1993, 3), and the need to ‘subordinate [agricultural policy] to macro-economic policies’ (ibid 2). The agenda was developed through ‘a national consultation to build a strategic alliance with the private sector (businessmen and agro-industrialists, NGOs, cooperatives and small farmers)’ (ibid 3). As a result, a ‘new management style for agricultural policies’ moved into the spotlight from 1994 forward.¹⁸²

This meant, on the one hand, the privatization of most agricultural and food public services ‘for the sake of efficiency’ (IICA 1993, 7), and also in compliance with Guatemala’s commitments to the “World Trade Organization” (WTO). In short, public agricultural extension services (i.e. DIGESA and DIGESEPE) were dismantled, price support policies for food producers and consumers ended, post-harvest public infrastructure was transferred to the private sector,¹⁸³ and the state “Agricultural Development Bank” (BANDESA) was restructured into the public-private “National Rural Development Bank” (BANRURAL) (Gauster and Alonso-Fradejas 2008). It was only during the right-wing populist administration of President Portillo (2000-2003)¹⁸⁴ that the government intervened on behalf of subordinate class cultivators through the “Fertilizer Distribution Program”.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, the new management style in agriculture conceived the “National Agricultural Development Council” (CONADEA). This was envisioned

¹⁸² Interview with Jan 2013-Feb 2015 Guatemalan Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Livestock between, July 2013.

¹⁸³ Use-rights of public silos and warehouses were transferred for free to Cargill and Mexican tortilla giant GRUMA-MASECA (interview with senior official from the Planning Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, in March 2006

¹⁸⁴ During which former dictator and genocidal scorched-earth campaigner General Ríos Montt is elected President of the National Congress for Portillo’s political party.

¹⁸⁵ PROFER originally involved the free distribution of 4 sacks of chemical fertilizer to some 400.000 cultivators a year (Gálvez et al. 2013, 74).

to serve as a ‘coordination, information exchange, consultation, and reconciliation body across different social groups in agriculture’ (Gonzalez 1999, 105). The CONADEA institutional model initiated multi-stakeholderism in agricultural policy making and implementation, even if the Guatemalan oligarchy had since long performed in such official positions (e.g. in the Guatemalan Sugar Board).¹⁸⁶

It is precisely through “governance” dogma principles and institutions that the “trickle-down” model policy paradigm informed development policy in 1986-2005. The trickle-down model paradigm advocated for *laissez-faire* policies and gained momentum world-wide in the 1980s due to the particular supply-side economics promoted by US President Reagan and UK Prime Minister Thatcher. This economic policy allowed for the wealthy to become even wealthier, so the poor could benefit from the rich peoples’ wealth spillovers. It also made state legitimation efforts contingent on those aimed at facilitating accumulation. In Guatemala, socially-austere and (big) business-friendly policy packages were wrapped into demand-side oriented “allocative and productive efficiency” neo-classical economics jargon. This meant that trickle-down policy packages were not aimed to simply benefit the wealthy, but were rather the means to allow the economic agents to “efficiently” respond to consumers’ demands at the lowest production cost. Put simply, this was done to to sell the idea of capitalist progress and modernization for all.

The “governance” and “trickle-down” model paradigms-turned-dogmas spread like wildfire through macro structural and sectoral adjustment, affecting the entire Guatemalan policy structure.

¹⁸⁶ Beard explains that since the 1960s the “Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers” (CACIF) has been involved in 27 state agencies including the Monetary Board, Social Security Institute and National Minimum Wage Commission’ (2001, in Segovia 2005, 89).

3.5.1. Macro structural adjustment

Neoliberal reforms restructured fiscal, monetary and trade and investment policies—all of which are of great relevance to the trajectories of agro-environmental change. First, a series of legal reforms during this period sought to attract foreign investors and enhance the competitiveness of domestic exporters. On the one side, and most distinctively, the 1989 laws on “Free-Trade” and “Export Processing and Maquila” zones created a parallel tax system for eligible export companies, both national and foreign (Guatemalan Congress 1989). On the other side, a major fiscal reform in 1992 increased the Value Added Tax rate from 7% to 12% while simultaneously exempting exporters from VAT (Guatemalan Congress 1992). Additionally, a “Renewable Energy Projects Development Incentives Law” was passed in 2003 that exempted companies like sugar mills producing electricity from cane bagasse from paying VAT and Corporate Tax (Guatemalan Congress 2003).

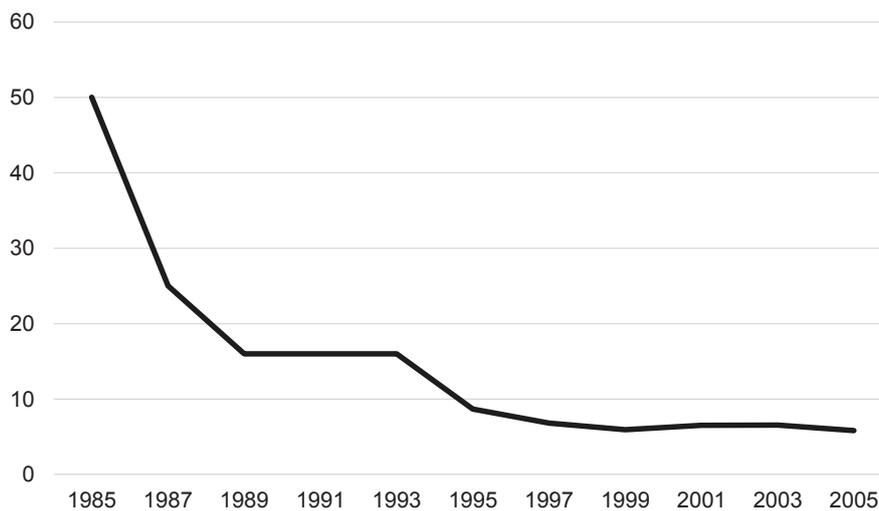
Second, the exchange rate for the Guatemalan Quetzal (GTQ) was liberalized in 1989, setting off a free-floating monetary policy style. This was part of a broader set of policy reforms to which I will return when discussing adjustment in the financial sector. It is important to point out here, however, that these reforms resulted in the (competitive) devaluation of the GTQ against the US\$ by 168% in 1986-2005 (Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT). 2016).¹⁸⁷

Third, resulting from and adding to the previous two fiscal and monetary policy reforms, the trade regime was deeply restructured. As elsewhere in the region, the aim in Guatemala was to liberalize ‘domestic markets in order to provoke a price-led supply response’ (Spoor 2002, 383). Depicted in figure 8, the swift and dramatic process of imports liberalization during this period was a response to, first, unilateral concessions for Guatemalan exports by the US and the EU through the 1984 “Caribbean Basin Initiative” and the 1985 “Generalized System of

¹⁸⁷ From 2.85 GTQs per US\$ in 1986 to 7.62 GTQs per US\$ in 2005.

Preferences”, respectively. Second, it matched regional trade liberalization within the “Central American Integration System” from 1991 on. And third, broader multi-lateral negotiations on world trade liberalization during the “Uruguay Round” in 1986-1994 led to the inclusion of Guatemala in the “General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade” (GATT) in 1991, and in the World Trade Organization from 1995 on.

Figure 8 Most favored nation import tariff rate (in %) in Guatemala. 1985-2005



Source: Author's elaboration with data from Alonso-Fradejas and Gauster 2006 (years 1985 to 1993) and WITS-World Bank (2016) (years 1995-2005).

Nonetheless, this general picture of trade liberalization in Guatemala conceals a highly selective process that reflected whose interests would be protected and whose would not. Particularly in agriculture, whereas staple food commodities produced by subordinate class cultivators were subject to import tariff reduction or elimination, dominant agrarian class traditional export crops and commodities (coffee, bananas, sugar, palm

oil and so on) were either excluded from liberalization¹⁸⁸ or protected through non-tariff-related trade barriers (e.g. the compulsory sugar fortification with vitamin A).

Import-tariff protection notwithstanding, the traditional coffee economy was badly hit by the liberalization and de-regulation of trade and investment. Following the collapse of the “International Coffee Agreement” regulating world coffee prices from 1989 on, the World Bank funded new countries for their coffee production, especially Vietnam (Vakis 2003, 30). This, together with above average yields in major hubs of production like Brazil (ibid), and the discretionary management of world coffee reserves by transnational companies (Greenfield n.d.), led world coffee prices to plummet by half in 2001-2004 (IMF. 2018). According to Guatemala’s “National Coffee Association” (ANACAFE), the coffee sector faced ‘its worst crisis in 150 years. Exports fell 25% and world trade in 59%. For the first time since 1870 coffee is not the main source of foreign currency in the country. More than 250.000 workers lost their jobs’ (ANACAFE. 2016).

Increasingly slow and complex multilateral negotiations at the WTO led the US to push for a free trade agreement in the first “Summit of the Americas” in 1994. This was meant to advance a “Free Trade Area of the Americas” (FTAA), ‘in which barriers to trade and investment will be progressively eliminated [...] by the year 2005’ (Organization of American States 1994). The FTAA never materialized due to the “Pink Tide”, where leftist governments gained political momentum in Latin America from the late 1990s on, the outright opposition of Brazil even

¹⁸⁸ Roasted coffee remained protected with a 20% import tariff rate until 1997, reduced to 15% since 1999 (and up to 2014). Import tariff rates for palm oil and its fractions followed the same pattern of roasted coffee. And cane sugar also remained protected with a 20% import tariff rate from 1995 onwards (WITS-World Bank. 2016). Conversely, import tariff rates for wheat were eliminated from 1998 on. Import tariffs for corn, or Guatemala’s main staple food, remained in 1986-2005 (20% for white and 15% for yellow corn). But following WTO’s 1995 “Agreement on Agriculture”, import quotas at zero or reduced tariff rates for yellow corn were discretionally enforced every year. Since this crop was highly subsidized through US “Farm Bills” between 1995 and 2004, imports from the US resulted in dumping practices (Alonso-Fradejas and Gauster 2006, 13).

before President Lula came to office in 2003, and also due to mass social opposition from Canada to Argentina and through the Caribbean. However, the liberalization agenda was alternatively advanced through a myriad of bilateral and sub-regional “free trade agreements” (FTAs). Among the many to which Guatemala ascribed,¹⁸⁹ the “Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement” (DR-CAFTA) stands out. DR-CAFTA negotiations kicked off in 2003, and despite frontal opposition from Central American under-privileged classes (including subordinate class cultivators) and corporate actors (like seed and agro-chemicals companies), the agreement was drafted in by 2004, and quickly ratified by the Guatemalan Congress in March 2005. The FTA with the US became the ultimate expression—and a point of no return—for the import liberalization process in Guatemala.¹⁹⁰ DR-CAFTA approval notwithstanding, domestic food production was ruined through a combination of generalized import tariff elimination or reduction for basic food staples since 1986, the enforcement of high WTO import quotas and the dumping of imported US yellow corn (with large amounts of yellow corn sent as food aid through “Public Law 480”). Between 1986 and 2003, national production of maize, beans, rice and wheat shrank by 22%, 26%, 23% and 80%, respectively (Gauster y Garoz 2004 DESCGUA/CIIDH).

3.5.2. Sectoral adjustment

The “governance” and “trickle-down” policy dogmas also came to inform sectoral policies critical to the main trajectories of agro-environmental change under neoliberal globalization. On the one hand were the trade and investment facilitation infrastructure and energy mega-projects that were part of the 2001 “Puebla to Panama Plan” (PPP). On the other hand, and even more showing, neoliberal prescriptions on labor, land, financial, knowledge and environmental

¹⁸⁹ See complete list in: <http://portaldace.mineco.gob.gt/tratados-y-acuerdos-comerciales>

¹⁹⁰ A new yellow corn import quota was added to the WTO one before its complete liberalization from year 10 on. White corn was exempted from tariff reduction (remaining with a 20% tariff rate), but an import quota of 20.400 tones (subject to a 2% annual increase) was introduced (USTR n.d.).

policy paradigms were folded into the national policy structure as unquestionable dogmas.

First, the “flex-labor” policy paradigm-turned dogma was nothing more than the normative anchoring of functional dualism into increasingly capitalist labor relations. In other words, this policy enabled the mobilization of semi-proletarianized cultivators’ labor-power by rural employers. So when employers needed a labor force, they were able to make the most of it—and easily get rid of it when that was not the case. The flex-labor policy dogma is a response to the heightened workers’ mobilization that occurred from 1977-80. The massive cane cutters’ strike of 1980 caused flex cane companies to rethink their mechanisms of labor control and surplus extraction in two fundamental ways. First, they flexibilized employment by ‘moving the formerly permanent plantation workforce into new settlements on the periphery of the plantations (turning these workers into a more ‘flexible’ seasonal labor force instead of a year-round, unionized workforce) and securing a deeper control over the recruitment of migrant workers’ (Oglesby 2004, 560). And second, they streamlined the plantation labor process and linked wages to performance. ‘Databases record daily worker productivity and the year-to-year labor history of each cane cutter. In a typical yearly evaluation, cane cutters receive a weighted score based on productivity (40%), work quality (40%), and ‘attitude’ (20%), and these records are the basis for a more sophisticated selection procedure designed to recontract individually with only the most highly productive and cooperative workers’ (Oglesby 2004, 560).¹⁹¹ Despite the wage increase piecework entailed for cane cutters, wages still remained below

¹⁹¹ As Oglesby keeps explaining, ‘the harvest labor process was reorganized along Tayloristic principles to increase worker productivity radically. Workers are expected to cut at least five tons of cane a day (an average worker in 1980 would have cut one ton a day); at Pantaleon [flex cane company], by the mid-1990s, one quarter of the workforce cut over nine tons a day. The increase in output is linked both to technological changes (including heavier machetes) and the mechanization of cane loading, but it is also about getting workers to work harder and longer. ‘Champion’ workers are rewarded with prizes that range from T-shirts and tape recorders, to bicycles and household goods’ (2004, 561).

the cost of the “food” and “basic needs” baskets¹⁹² (Oglesby 2004, 566).¹⁹³

The emergent flexible labor regime in plantation agriculture was assimilated more *de facto* than *de jure* in statutory labor policy. Labor mobilization was back with the return to civilian rule, and there were still too many haciendas and ranches relying on immobile labor for agrarian bourgeois classes to radically change labor policy. Nonetheless, the existing policy framework was broad enough to accommodate the needs of both traditional landlords and bourgeoning (transnational) agro-industrial bourgeois. Despite some reforms, labor relations remained regulated by the 1961 Labor Code. The special agricultural regime in this Labor Code caused rural workers to be subject to shorter holiday periods and a minimum wage below that in other sectors. Furthermore, ‘the Labor Code does not require written employment contracts for workers in the agricultural sector and labor law allows up to 30 percent of agricultural workers’ wages to be paid in food and supplies’ (Verité 2014, 93). Women and children were considered assistants to adult male wage-earners (Guatemalan Congress 1961 [1995], art 139) and hence subject to lower wages, if they received wages at all.¹⁹⁴ It is telling that whereas the 1985 Constitution stressed workers’ right to free labor (Guatemalan Constitutional Assembly 1985, art. 102) the 1961 Labor Code in force ‘fails to explicitly prohibit and sanction forced labor’ (Verite 2014, 98). This means that hacienda-tenancy (colonato) relations and wage advancement-based systems of labor recruitment were given *carte blanche* in 1986-2005.¹⁹⁵ Even so, the Labor Code allows for piecemeal wage systems (Guatemalan Congress 1961 [1995], art. 88).

¹⁹² In Guatemala, ‘the Food Basket is defined as the amount of food needed to feed an average household of 5,38 members. The Basic Needs Basket adds to minimum food requirements those related to water, electricity, dressing, housing, transport, education, etcetera’ (INE 2016).

¹⁹³ More generally, 64% of all agricultural workers earned in 2000 wages below the legal minimum (Vakis 2003, 60)

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Head Lawyer of the Committee for Peasant Unity -CUC- Legal Team, July 2011

¹⁹⁵ Although a 2005 Constitutional Court provision made businesses which hire workers through labor contractors solely responsible for labor violations (Reynolds 2012b).

Second, the “land good governance” policy dogma entailed the resignification of the Lockean conception of property as a natural right guaranteed in an almost absolute manner, which had informed the 1871 Liberal Revolution. In this regard, the 1985 Constitution shook off the internal limits to property rights that had been imposed for different reasons during the Cold War era. The Constitution states, ‘private property is guaranteed as the right *inherent* of human beings. Every person can *freely dispose* of her belongings *abiding by the law*’ (Guatemalan Constitutional Assembly 1985, art. 39 emphasis added).¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, through several resolutions in 1986-2005, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court asserted that the national Constitution has pre-eminence over international private and public law, including UN or Inter-American System human rights covenants (Velásquez 2011, 10).

In sum, land good governance policies sought to achieve the full and “proper” commoditization of farmland in Guatemala once and for all.¹⁹⁷ Among other things, this meant turning the 1877 General Property Registry into a trustworthy institution. As discussed earlier, agrarian colonization agencies in the northern lowlands (INTA and FYDEP) held a mandate to formalize colonized land from the 1960s onward—and it was a contentious and slow process. It was estimated that as of 2002 in the northern lowlands ‘90% of the current owners have no legal backing for their land title and are not the original beneficiaries’ (Cabrera del Valle 2002, 22). Elsewhere in the country confusion reigned and land conflicts abounded (Santa Cruz 2007). As Chacon Veliz explains ‘by 1993, of all the titles in the General Property Registry 60 percent had never been updated since the first inscriptions in the late 19th century, [and] 18 million documents in the registry lacked appropriate signatures’

¹⁹⁶ Whereas there is no clause on the social function of land in the current Constitution passed in 1985, article 39 acknowledges the right of the state to confiscate property rights, including those over idle land, ‘for *duly verified* social benefit or public interest reasons’ (ibid.). But besides cash payment at market instead of property registry price (art. 40), confiscation requires of Congressional approval. This constrains the government’s power to limit the absolute character of property, and results in confiscations for public interest only for energy and transport infrastructure development projects.

¹⁹⁷ See Zoomers’ and Haar’s (2000) edited volume on the processes of privatization and individualization of land ownership during neoliberalism in Latin America.

(2003, in Grandia 2012, 120). Cabrera found that nearly a decade later ‘approximately 70% of the country’s territory is immersed in this confusing tangle of limits, locations and legitimate property rights’ (Cabrera del Valle 2002, 24).¹⁹⁸

New civilian administrations from 1986 forward, and to some extent the Peace Agreements negotiated between 1990 and 1996,¹⁹⁹ (re)interpreted these land issues as problems of unclear and insecure land property rights. Accordingly, a tripod institutional setting, commonly known as “La Herradura” (the horse-shoe), gradually developed from 1996 on. One leg of La Herradura was the “Legal and Technical Unit/Protierra” (UTJ/Protierra), upgraded to the “Cadastral Information Registry” (RIC) in 2005. These institutions had the mandate to survey land plots and geo-reference their actual limits and extension, and the World Bank “Land Administration Projects” (LAPs) provided the necessary funds. “LAP-Phase I” was carried out from 1999 to 2003 (and later extended until 2007) in the contentious northern lowlands department of Petén with the support of a US\$31 million loan by the World Bank (Cabrera 2002, Grünberg et al. 2012). The second leg of La Herradura, “The Presidential Dependency for the Resolution of Land Conflicts” (CONTIERRA), aimed to facilitate UTJ/Protierra’s work through land conflict resolution. CONTIERRA was originally planned as a “bridge agency”. It was to act in this way while the agrarian code and courts, mandated in the peace agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and Agrarian Situation, were developed. Since this never happened, land conflicts continued to be dealt with through mediation and civil and penal law. CONTIERRA was upgraded into the “Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs” (SAA) in 2002, and the mandate to define and coordinate the

¹⁹⁸ Indeed, more often than not the location and limits of the land plot on the title deed did not match realities on the ground. A simple glance at the General Property Registry books shows altered or torn apart pages (author’s own observations).

¹⁹⁹ Including the 1994 “Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict”; and especially the 1995 “Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples” and 1996 “Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and Agrarian Situation”. Nonetheless, our focus here is on the policy mechanisms which were not only envisaged in the peace agreements but actually implemented.

implementation of the national land policy was added to that of land conflict resolution (Garoz et al. 2005).

“Market-led agrarian reform” (MLAR) replaced agrarian colonization, and became the preferred land policy in Guatemala from 1986 forward.²⁰⁰ Land access policy therefore came to rely on ‘voluntary transactions between ‘willing sellers’ and ‘willing buyers’ and the removal of various ‘distortions’ from land and agricultural markets’ (Lahiff et al. 2007, 1417).²⁰¹ The third and last leg of La Herradura namely, the “Land Fund” (FONTIERRAS), was created in 1999 to serve this purpose. FONTIERRAS actually held a double mandate: i) regularize land property rights (i.e. title land), and; ii) grant subsidized credit, non-refundable financial support and technical assistance to groups of landless and near-landless families for them to purchase and/or lease farmland (art. 3 Decree 24-99). The MLAR was promoted and supported by international donors, especially USAID²⁰² and the World Bank (Deininger and Binswanger 1999, Deininger 1999). While the Guatemalan state financed FONTIERRAS’ credit-portfolio with US\$ 52 million, the World Bank chipped in another US\$ 23 million for FONTIERRAS’ institutional strengthening and development projects for land beneficiaries²⁰³ from 1999-2005 (WB 2006, 2). FONTIERRAS was an autonomous multi-stakeholder state agency. Its seven seats/seven votes Board of Directors was ‘presided by the Minister of Agriculture, and includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the National Agricultural Development Council (CONADEA), the Agricultural Chamber of Guatemala (CAMAGRO), the cooperative

²⁰⁰ This year the new civilian administration of President Cerezo created the “National Land Commission” which, despite considering other than market-based mechanisms, focused mainly on the latter to promote land access (Garoz and Gauster 2002, 28).

²⁰¹ Except for land restitution to internal conflict refugees and IDPs. Instead of their former land, refugees and IDPs were granted new farmland through a revolving fund (FORELAP) established for this purpose in 1992.

²⁰² The MLAR in Guatemala ‘built upon lessons learned from a small-scale program supported with USAID assistance, which financed a total of 30 farms for beneficiaries in 1998 and 1999’ (WB 2006, 5).

²⁰³ It is in this way FONTIERRAS became a state agency pioneering in neo-institutional economics “subsidiarity” principles in an age of neo-classical economics’ *laissez-faire*.

sector, and indigenous peoples' and peasant organizations' (art. 10, Decree 24-99).

However, by 2005 it had become clear that 'MLAR does not constitute and promote redistributive land reform' (Borras 2007, 286), meaning 'there is no essential pro-poor transfer of significant wealth and power' (ibid 284). On the one hand, the MLAR redistributed just 4% of the country's farmland among less than 5% of the land-scarce population in 1997-2005 (Garoz et al. 2005). It is of little surprise, then, that the Gini index regarding land distribution barely dropped from 0,85 in 1979 to 0,84 in 2003 (National Statistics Institute (INE) 2003). On the other hand, the poor quality of the land redistributed and the lack of basic infrastructure (water, energy, roads etc.) led many MLAR beneficiaries to abandon, re-sell their land property rights or default on debt payments.²⁰⁴ MLAR in Guatemala ended up helping dominant agrarian classes that had been squeezed by low and volatile prices during neoliberal globalization (e.g. coffee growers and cattle breeders) to transfer their modernization costs (i.e. to enhance their competitiveness or to exit agriculture) to (near)landless subordinate agrarian classes and the state. At the same time, the "land good governance" policy dogma failed to redistribute the land it had succeeded in titling, especially through individual private property.²⁰⁵ Land title deeds, more broadly, delocalize land markets and make them accessible to capitalized outsiders. Hence, they 'do not just clarify existing rights; they change relations of access and exclusion' (Hall et al. 2012: 47).²⁰⁶ In spite of such clearly negative outcomes, the government indicated in 2005 that

²⁰⁴ Garoz et al. 2005. World Bank 2006

²⁰⁵ For instance, land under collective property in Alta Verapaz department in 2003 was barely 14,5% of that in 1979 (INE 2003, 21)

²⁰⁶ 'The standardized rights represented by a title are often out of step with local practices that customary land tenure regimes, in their infinite variety, readily accommodate. The gap has implications for local land relations, since old ways of doing things come under challenge but new methods are not fully established. It also has implications for legibility, as registers of title deeds may bear little relation to possession and the accompanying sense of legitimate entitlement that exist on the ground' (Hall et al. 2012: 43)

‘(i) it remains committed to promoting broader access to land by the poor through the use of *market-based instruments*, and that (ii) support to FONTIERRAS will be maintained, albeit with a different mix of priority interventions which *favor land leases*. Concerning land purchases, the Government’s stated policy is to favor a less costly program than the one executed to date by FONTIERRAS, with increased involvement of commercial banks through guarantee funds’ (in World Bank 2006, 12 emphasis added).

Third was the “Financialization” policy paradigm-turned dogma. Between 1989 and 2005, a three-step policy reform enabled the “financialization 2.0” wave of the Guatemalan economy. The first step was taken in 1989 by bringing together the elimination of the Guatemalan Quetzal’s fixed exchange rate with the liberalization of interest rates (Larios 1999). A second step involved the “Financial Modernization Program” that was initiated in 1993 (Romero n.d.). It was intended to reform domestic financial regulations in order to ‘facilitate macro-economic stability, foster the further liberalization of the financial market, and give a bigger role to market signals in the allocation of financial flows [to] meet the challenges of financial globalization’ (Rodríguez Guevara 2007, 74, 42). The “Financial Modernization Program” dismantled state-sponsored rural credit systems (i.e. through BANDESA) in favor of private ones through commercial banks, credit cooperatives and other for-profit and not-for-profit micro-finance institutions.²⁰⁷ The third and most comprehensive financial reform step was set into action by the joint World Bank-International Monetary Fund mission to Guatemala in 2000 as part of their “Financial Sector Assessment Program” (FSAP). The mission concluded

‘that a few financial institutions were insolvent [and that] the size of the problem is probably larger as an important segment of the

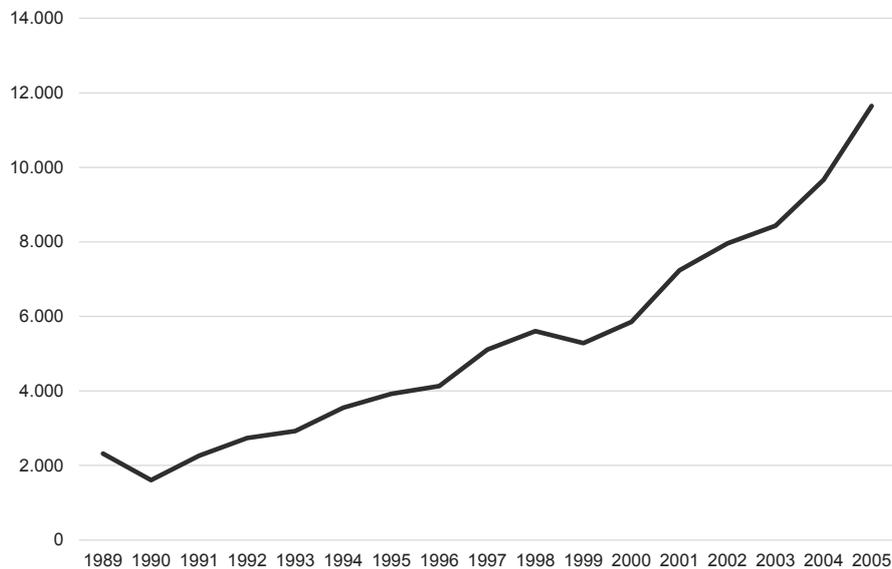
²⁰⁷ As Spoor explains, ‘predominant ideas about credit moved away from using subsidized credit to promote technological innovation, and to use development banks to reach the peasant farmers, towards an emphasis on real positive interest rates, viable rural financial institutions and market-led access to credit’ (2002, 396).

financial sector consisting of offshore and off-balance-sheet operations (*estimated to be about the same size of the regulated system*) are outside the reach of official supervision and regulations. In addition, deposits from the public sector, especially the social security system, are supporting financial institutions' (IMF. 2001, emphasis added).²⁰⁸

In brief, the “financialization 2.0” wave strengthened the transparency of the Guatemalan banking system amid chronic corruption in military (and then civilian) administrations, and increasing drug money laundering. But it also allowed for international financial capital to flow in and out the country more easily and reliably, and for domestic financiers to basically regulate the banking system, and charge an average annual interest rate of 18,3% during 1986-2005 (Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT). 2016b, and 2016c). This led to an impressive and swift capitalization of Guatemalan private banks. Figure 9 shows the total assets held by private banks increased by 403% in 1989-2005. As a result, the average annual growth rate of the private banking sector soared from 2,4% in 1980-1989, to 6,8% in 1990-2000 (World Bank 2003, 45).

²⁰⁸ The WB and the IMF recommended comprehensive reforms, and to ‘act expeditiously to put in place anti-money-laundering legislation’ (ibid). As a result, four laws were passed in 2002 to restructure the character and procedures of the Central Bank, the functioning of the banking sector and the ways banking supervision was to be performed.

Figure 9 Guatemalan private banks' assets. 1989-2005 (US\$ millions)



Source: Author elaboration with data from (Romero n.d.) for the 1989-2000 period, and the Guatemalan Banking Authority for 2001-2005.

Fourth, there was the “Knowledge Enclosure” policy paradigm-turned dogma. Neoliberal globalization involved the delocalization of industrial production, or parts thereof, from North Atlantic powerhouses to Southern countries. Among other things, this required securing a worldwide system under which transnational corporations would be able to protect their intellectual property rights (IPRs). Such a system would additionally help these corporate actors protect the commoditization of world biological resources through bioprospecting (or “bio-piracy”), considering that most Southern countries—including Guatemala—were reluctant to ratify the “International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants” (UPOV).²⁰⁹ In this vein, the WTO introduced the 1994 “Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

²⁰⁹ The UPOV Convention was drafted in 1961 ‘principally by industrialized governments seeking to provide protections for plant breeders in their own and overseas markets’ (Helfer 2004, 21). Since then, it performed as the main instrument defining and protecting plant breeders’ intellectual property rights. Nonetheless, many Southern countries have refrained from ratifying UPOV, especially after its 1991 reviewed Act, precisely to protect their local and indigenous knowledges’ (ibid, 29-30).

Rights” (TRIPs)²¹⁰ as part of a ‘global “package deal”. Industrialized nations secured a commitment from developing nations to provide minimum standards of effective legal protection to intellectual property products, [which] in exchange received a commitment from industrialized countries to open their domestic markets to [...] the developing world’ (Helfer 2004, 33-4). The TRIPs agreement stipulated that national laws had to include mandatory enforcement of IPRs by 2000, and the Guatemalan congress reformed its IPRs legislation that year in order to comply (Decree 57-2000). In fact, the “Knowledge Enclosure” policy dogma in Guatemala went even farther than the standards set by TRIPs for IPR protection. This was due to the IPRs provisions that were written into Guatemala’s free trade agreement with the US (DR-CAFTA). In addition to expanding IPR protection periods beyond those set forth by TRIPs, DR-CAFTA obliged Guatemala and its other signatories to ratify the 1991 UPOV Act (Helfer 2004, 41).

The combination of such IPR legislation with the privatization of state services led to the unique germplasm bank—that the Guatemalan “Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology” (ICTA) had been putting together for decades—to be sold for almost nothing to the Guatemalan transnational seed company “Semillas Cristiani Burkard (SCB)”.²¹¹ Furthermore, the “Knowledge Enclosure” policy dogma also included the privatization of agricultural knowledge extension services. Following the 1993 “Agenda for Agricultural Reactivation and Modernization”, extension services were transferred from the state to private consultants and NGOs. Private extension services in 1986-2005 focused on two type of farming HHs: MLAR beneficiaries and those HHs producing non-traditional crops. In 1999, the World Bank allocated US\$ 16,5 million loan to Guatemala earmarked for MLAR purposes. In 2006, however, the World Bank acknowledged that this system was not working (World Bank 2006), and instead made a net

²¹⁰ This was the ‘first and only IPR treaty that seeks to establish universal, minimum standards of protection across the major fields of intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, trademarks, industrial designs, integrated circuits and trade secrets’ (Helfer 2004, 33).

²¹¹ Interview with two researchers from ICTA, November 2008

transfer to the agronomic services firms that were flourishing at the time. HHs producing non-traditional export crops (NTAX)²¹² will be analyzed at a later point in this chapter. These HHs notwithstanding, just 3% of farming HHs enjoyed extension services in 2003, 70% of which were “non-poor” (Vakis 2003, 29, 76).

Finally, there was the green enclosure policy paradigm-turned dogma. Opposite to the land commoditization drive of the land good governance policy paradigm, this involved de-commoditization of large tracts of land by turning them into natural reserves. Following a ‘cult of wilderness environmentalism’ (Martinez-Alier 2010) and the “parks without people” approach to natural resource conservation (Grandia 2012), the state began a process of conservation enclosure in 1989. The “Guatemalan National System of Protected Areas” (SIGAP) would later engulf 31% of the national territory (Decree 4-89). SIGAP turned out to be yet another example of multi-stakeholder governance, having been designed by public and private consultants funded by the USAID (CONAP et al. 2008). The majority of protected areas came to be administered by a bunch of big international conservation NGOs and their Guatemalan counterparts (Ybarra 2011), supervised by the government’s “National Council of Protected Areas” (CONAP).

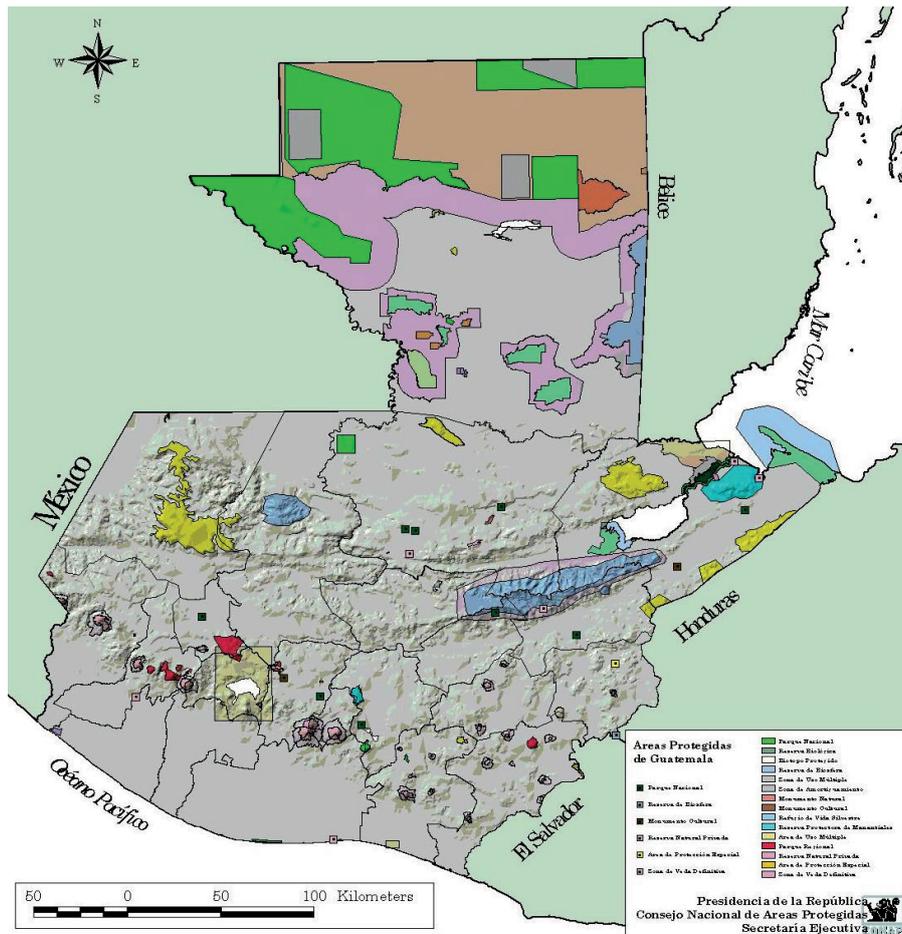
The green enclosure policy dogma meant that the national agrarian frontier would legally be closed, once and for all. Accordingly, it meant that those escaping labor control and landlessness by fleeing beyond the agrarian frontier could legally be prosecuted. In addition, it spurred conflict by dispossessing thousands of cultivators, among them many who had formally benefited from agrarian colonization in the earlier period. Overnight, they found themselves to be squatters on their own land.²¹³ Figure 10 shows the areas enclosed under SIGAP, including the

²¹² Interview with senior official from the Planning Department (UPIE), Ministry of Agriculture, March 2006.

²¹³ See inter alia Cabrera 2002, Hurtado 2008 and Grandia 2012. A meaningful case was that of 24 forest communities organized through the “Association of Forest Communities of Petén” (ACOFOP). After a decade of litigation, in 2005 ACOFOP was granted forest concessions over

2.160.204 hectares Mayan Biosphere Reserve (CONAP 2015) in the northern lowlands department of Petén.

Figure 10 Guatemalan System of Protected Areas (SIGAP).



Source: CONAP 2015.

445.804 hectares in the “multiple use zone” of Petén’s Mayan Biosphere Reserve (Interview with ACOFOP’s Technical Director, August 2013).

3.5.3. Outcomes of the neoliberal onslaught on the countryside: Purge agro-capitalism

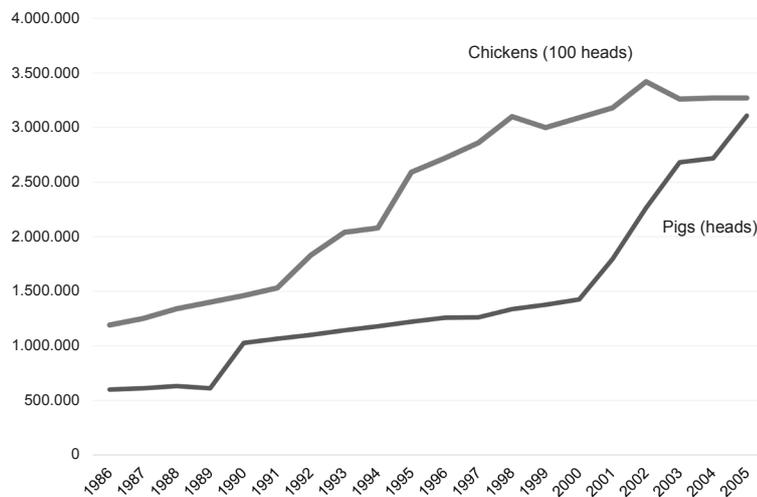
In the eyes of the Guatemalan government, while coffee growers were the victims of world coffee prices, subordinate class grain cultivators were simply backward inefficient producers. Adding to their benefits of insurances and privilege of limited liability, large coffee growers received state support in the form of subsidized credit and buyers for their old coffee haciendas at overinflated prices through the MLAR. For subordinate class grain cultivators, public support focused on a few privileged producers of non-traditional agricultural exports (NTAX). The rest were simply encouraged to exit agriculture and have faith in the promises of a soon to come messianic “new rurality”. I now turn to examine these different broad trajectories for dominant and subordinate fragmented agrarian classes.

As previously indicated, MLAR helped dominant agrarian classes squeezed by low and volatile prices during neoliberal globalization to transfer their modernization costs to (near)landless subordinate agrarian classes and the state. Nonetheless, not all dominant agrarian classes were feeling this squeeze. On the one hand, ‘export agriculture rose from 64.4% of all agricultural production in 1986 to 72.8% in 1998, or from 16% to 18% of GDP’ (Fuentes 1999, 21 in Oglesby 2004, 557). A shift away from previous cash crops occurred at this time, paving the way for flex cane and palm industries. With the fall in world cotton prices, flex cane and palm companies expanded over former cotton plantations in Guatemala’s Pacific south coast region. And after Hurricane Mitch devastated banana plantations in the north-eastern lowlands in 1998, and fears of banana plant disease spread, many banana growers moved into the palm business.²¹⁴ On the other hand, the dumping of cheap grain imports by the US flipped a switch for accumulation in agriculture, turning its emphasis from an export-oriented to an import-oriented

²¹⁴ Interview with plant Manager of AGROCARIBE flex palm agribusiness, February 2008. GIS analysis of land use change with 1982 and 2003-5 National Land Use Maps.

business model.²¹⁵ A series of powerful agro-industries emerged, consolidated and/or expanded in Guatemala part and parcel to the large inflows of cheap rice, yellow corn and wheat consistently arriving from the US. Controlled by what became the hegemonic agrarian class fraction of the period—that is, the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie—these agri-businesses included wheat and rice millers and packers, and snacks (frites), animal feed and especially eggs/poultry and pork producers. Securing import tariffs for their product and hoarding around two-thirds of all yellow corn imports from 1986-2005, the Guatemalan egg/poultry and pork complexes thrived domestically and regionally in the Central American Common Market. This growth is reflected in the soaring numbers of chicken and pigs reared for slaughter in Guatemala during the period, as figure 11 depicts.

Figure 11 Number of chicken and pigs in Guatemala. 1986-2005



Source: Author's elaboration with data from FAOSTAT

²¹⁵ In fact, import liberalization is also behind the rise of retail distributors. In 2001, Guatemalan retail company "La Fragua Group", owner of Paiz supermarket chain, formed a joint venture with Costa Rican CSU Corporation and Dutch Royal Ahold resulting in retail giant "Central American Retail Holding Company" (CARHCO). In September 2005, US Wal-Mart take over Royal Ahold share. By 2006 Wal-Mart controls 51% of CARHCO and rebrands it as Wal-Mart Central America (Wal-Mart 2016).

Options for subordinate agrarian classes during this period revolved around new rurality prescriptions for farm and non-farm income sources, particularly in non-traditional exports. These included agricultural and non-agricultural (mostly in garment industry maquiladoras) jobs. On the one side, non-traditional agricultural exports increased by 371% from 1990-2001 (Isakson 2014a, 350). However, by 2000 ‘only 23 thousand farm households (or 2,7% of a total of 849 thousand) were producing non-traditional export crops’ (Vakis 2003, 29, 77). As explained by Isakson, ‘displacement of maize agriculture in favour of non-traditional agricultural exports has benefited powerful actors in Guatemala and abroad, but it has also compromised the ecological base for agriculture²¹⁶ and undermined the foundation for a reliable, nutritious and culturally meaningful diet for a significant portion of the country’s rural poor’ (2014a, 375). Indeed, it was agro-chemical input, vegetable packaging and export companies that benefitted the most of the NTAX boom in the 1986-2005 period.²¹⁷

On the other side, the export garment maquiladoras—considered at the time to be a panacea for growth and employment—offered similar outcomes to NTAX. By 2004, or the last year of the “Multi-Fiber Arrangement” before the complete liberalization of the world trade in textiles and garments, there were 222 apparel maquiladoras in Guatemala, and 73% of them were foreign-owned (VESTEX 2005, 5-9). Employment in garment maquiladoras grew from 70 to 113 thousand employees between 1994 and the peak year of 2004. This means that the garment industry employed, on a yearly average, barely 2,31% of the economically active population in the country (Alonso-Fradejas 2005, 85). Lacking official data, Gaviola Artigas estimated the share of female employees in the garment industry to be between 70% and 85% of the total workforce in 2003 (2004, 14). In her assessment of the flexible

²¹⁶ Even for NTAX production. Hamilton and Fischer argue that in Guatemala ‘soil depletion-associated with rising land pressure in imperfect markets and with high levels of agrochemical use-limits the potential for growth in NTAX production and incomes [...] The over- use and misuse of pesticides has resulted in decreasing crop yields and product quality and U.S. rejections of produce contaminated with pesticide residues’ (2003, 85).

²¹⁷ (Robinson 2003, Alonso-Fradejas and Gauster 2006)

labor regime in garment maquiladoras, Gaviola Artigas offered a detailed record of labor rights violations of women workers.²¹⁸ Following the end of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement in 2005, and despite the US market access benefits secured through the DR-CAFTA, dozens of maquiladoras moved to China and Vietnam in search of even lower production costs.²¹⁹ Hence, as one of the most committed supporters of the new rurality perspective argued in its assessment of “poverty reduction strategies” in Guatemala during this period, ‘nontraditional exports could serve as a potential source of growth, but their reach has been limited in scope, particularly for the poor’ (World Bank 2003, 54).

However, among a sequence of failed trickle-down policy dogma and new rurality prescriptions, one managed to break course and achieve great success: the purge of “the inefficient”. Neoliberal globalization expelled more people from the countryside than genocidal violence. ‘If migrant are no longer political refugees’, Robinson explained for Central America in this period, ‘rising levels of in formalization, poverty, and unemployment generated by the neo-liberal model constitute new economic inducements to outmigration’ (2003, 275). Indeed, fleeing became the main accommodative strategy to the neoliberal economic onslaught by subordinate agrarian classes in Guatemala. Initially, migrants made their way to Guatemala City. Some 327,700 people settled there between 1986 and 1994, adding to the ranks of the 36,5% of the population already living in the some 300 informal settlements around the city by the year 2000 (Flores Alvarado 2000, 173).

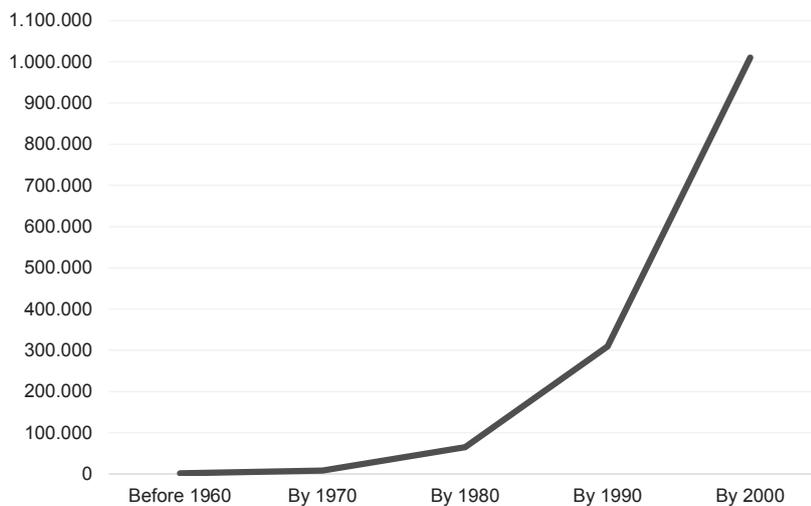
Resembling trends elsewhere in what was increasingly becoming a ‘planet of slums’ (Davis 2006), Guatemala City never stopped receiving economic and environmentally displaced persons. But an exodus to the US picked up steam from the mid-1990s on. The “International Organization for Migration” (IOM) reported less than 10 thousand Guatemalans living abroad by 1970. By 1985, that number had increased to some 150 thousand, not including the high numbers of war refugees

²¹⁸ (see also Robinson 2003, 286-287, Gaviola Artigas 2004, 41-44)

²¹⁹ By 2017, there were 290 apparel maquiladoras in Guatemala (VESTEX. 2017).

in Mexico. Just 15 years later at the turn of the century, more than one million Guatemalans were living abroad, and 98% of them were in the US (IOM 2003). Figure 12 puts the Guatemalan economic exodus during neoliberal globalization in a historical perspective.

Figure 12 Guatemalans living abroad before the 1960s and up to 2000



Source: Author elaboration with data from IOM 2003.

In 2002, 61,4% of Guatemalan migrants abroad were formerly rural residents,²²⁰ and 67% pointed to lack of employment as the main reason for migration (IOM 2003). In fact, 87,9% were part of the economically active population when they left, and 88,4% were between 15 and 39 years of age (ibid). Hence, the ‘agrarian question of labor’ (Bernstein 1996) characterizing neoliberal globalization worldwide resonated in Guatemala, where the surplus population tried find alternatives by fleeing rural pauperism in search of better livelihoods in Guatemala City or in the US. As could be expected, international remittances skyrocketed from 107 US\$ million in 1990 to almost 3 US\$ billion in

²²⁰ Main departments of origin are Guatemala (20,7%), San Marcos (10,4%), Huehuetenango (8,7%) and Quetzaltenango (6,4%) (OIM 2003). This means the northern lowlands region is not among those with higher rates of international migrants.

2005 (or 11,2% of the GDP).²²¹ A less expected outcome was the “mara” gang phenomenon. Since many Guatemalans were “unauthorized” residents in the US, these migrants were subjected to harsh lives in poor neighborhoods where they found support systems in street gangs like “Mara Salvatrucha” (MS-13) or “Mara 18” (M-18). Despite their original aims of self-protection, some maras or factions thereof gradually engaged in criminal entrepreneurial activities including kidnapping, blackmailing and dealing drugs (Berthet and Lopez 2011, 17).²²² When deported from the US, many mara members either continued criminal activities in Guatemala City or became involved in them there. As Levenson explains

‘MS-13 and M-18 consolidated in Los Angeles, but the gangs’ “foundational map” starts in Central America’s wars, zigzags through crime-ridden Mexico, and crosses the border [...] into California’s multi-national prisoner population, where gang members made important contacts. Once deported to Guatemala or El Salvador, these mareros took over local maras, which then became MS-13 or M-18 subgroups, or *clikas*. Without necessarily maintaining ties to LA, MS-13 and Mara 18 in Guatemala City carried on the legacy of deadly rivalry and, without doubt, some of their ties to the changing scene of Mexican drug lords’ (2013, 207).

In sum, during the late 1980s and early 2000s Guatemala and Central America more generally witnessed the rise of a ‘new economic model’.²²³ Food import agribusinesses, non-traditional exports and especially remittances took over coffee as economic growth powerhouses and sources foreign currency, and the isthmus’ economy and polity underwent a deep restructuring process. Nonetheless, the impact of neoliberal restructuring on the traditional structures of wealth and power distribution was arguably lower than anticipated. Unlike in El Salvador and Costa Rica, and to a lesser extent in Honduras and Nicaragua, in

²²¹ OIM (2003) and Bank of Guatemala (2016d)

²²² It is important to differentiate between mara gangs in general, and *criminal* mara gangs in particular

²²³ (Robinson 2003, Bulmer-Thomas 1996, Segovia 2004).

Guatemala power changes class but not face. Foreigners apart, the main Guatemalan actors behind the thriving financial and non-traditional export sectors in 1986-2005 were mostly linked to the traditional oligarchic bourgeoisie. This group also controlled the beef, cotton and sugar complexes that thrived from 1955-1985. Hence, it can be argued the oligarchic bourgeois extended rather than lost their grip over the Guatemalan economy and polity during this period. What the neoliberal onslaught meant, however, was the fading away of the landed seigniorial oligarchy, which persisted all through the 20th century and since colonial times. Politics behind purge agro-capitalism

This period witnessed the rise and fall of a new form of fragmented class politics in Guatemala, and it was one that played out to a good extent within multi-stakeholder governance platforms within the state. Tracing the lines of previous discussions, Guatemala willingly joined the neoliberal globalization bandwagon. This action was a vector and an expression of the thriving of the bourgeois at the expense of the seigniorial oligarchy. It was particularly true of the bourgeois classes (agrarian or otherwise), which had benefitted the most from (and pushed for) the privatization, deregulation and liberalization of the economy. These included the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie, particularly its dumping fraction behind the feed, poultry and pork complexes, and to a lesser extent, the NTAX fraction and the agro-extractivist fraction behind the sugarcane complex. In this context, instauration of bourgeois democracy from 1986 onward brought about political opportunities and threats for challengers and accommodators to the neoliberal model.

Official peace negotiations between the URNG guerrillas and the government kick-started²²⁴ in 1986, and took off especially following the 1987 “Esquipulas Agreements for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America” which was signed by the Presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica (UN

²²⁴ These resulted 12 peace agreements signed between 1991 and 1996

1987).²²⁵ Hence, the analysis of the politics behind “purge agro-capitalism” in 1986-2005 can be effectually divided between what took place throughout the peace negotiation process circa 1986-1996 and the events that occurred during the peace implementation process circa 1997-2005.

3.5.3.1. Agro-environmental politics during peace negotiations

For the first time in history, CACIF,²²⁶ CAMAGRO, ASAZGUA²²⁷ and other trade and political organizations of the Guatemalan oligarchy became involved in national politics in an overt fashion during this period. This mirrors a political agenda that gradually shifted from generalized repression under military dictatorships to “governance”, “trickle-down” and selective repression as preferred means for building the class hegemony of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie in a post-Cold War world. As the highest political body of the Guatemalan oligarchy, CACIF had been involved in official peace negotiations since the very beginning, informally at first, and then through its “Business Peace Commission” (CEPAZ) from 1994 on (Álvarez Aragón et al. 2012d). CACIF made its political agenda for the new post-conflict phase crystal clear in its 1995 positioning document on the peace negotiations. In it, CACIF argues ‘Social and economic development requires a democratic system, a market economy and the rule of law [to] guarantee the basic rights of citizens – life, liberty and respect for private property’, with private property formulated in the Lockean way, as ‘an absolute and individual right’ (CACIF 1995 in Krznaric 2003, 102).

For subordinate (agrarian) classes, the “struggle for life” during the worst times of the internal armed conflict became more of a struggle for “justice, land and freedom” when a civilian government was formally re-instituted. This opened up political space for disruptive collective action

²²⁵ The Esquipulas Agreements among Central American countries were preceded by efforts in 1983 by Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama, or the “Contadora Group”, to deal with political conflicts in Central America.

²²⁶ Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers.

²²⁷ Guatemalan Sugar Producers Association.

to regain its central position in the peasant movement's contention repertoire. CUC and CCDA re-emerged publicly to agitate, organize and mobilize plantation workers and subordinate class cultivators. They did so in order to strengthen URNG's position in the peace negotiations in particular, and to use the Peace Agreements as transformative tools more generally. Altogether, militant peasant organizations brought '60.000 [plantation] workers out on a one-week strike in January 1989, another strike at the end of the year, as well as another at the end of 1991 (Brockett 2005, 225). Additionally, Catholic Action organized a march in May 1986 of 16 thousand subordinate class cultivators from the Pacific south Coast to arrive in Guatemala City to demand land from the new civilian government (Castellanos-Cambranes 1992, 263). In February 1988, the Guatemalan Bishops' Conference released their seminal Joint Pastoral Letter, "The Cry for Land", in which they brand the skewed national agrarian structure as 'unfair and sinful' (CEG 1988, 1). A strong organization, the "Peasant Development Committee" (CODECA) was constituted in 1992 along the southern coast. And at the occasion of the fifth centenary of the Spanish invasion of the Americas that same year, a split within CUC resulted in the formation of the "National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination" (CONIC). Following the "I National Peasant Congress" that also took place in 1992, all of these peasant organizations, including CONIC, joined forces under the umbrella of the "National Coordination of Peasant Organizations" (CNOC).

Additionally, human rights organizations demanding transitional justice (such as GAM and CALDH), and representing those displaced by conflict (like CONDEG) also emerged or consolidated. Indigenous peoples' and women's movements likewise gained momentum and visibility because of the peace process. The "National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows" (CONAVIGUA) was formed in 1988 to demand justice for genocide but also to advocate for the political, cultural and economic rights of (Mayan) women.²²⁸ When CONIC emerged in 1992,

²²⁸ Interview with CONAVIGUA's founding member, August 2007.

it did so as the first openly “indigenous-peasant” organization. Some 150 Pan-Mayan movement organizations joined their efforts in 1994 under the “Coordination of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala” (COPMAGUA) (Bastos and Camus 1996). The “500 Years of Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Popular Resistance Continental Campaign” ended with the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Guatemalan Maya-K’iche’ woman and CUC member Rigoberta Menchú. And with the influx of feminist and non-feminist women’s organizations formed in the refugee camps in Mexico, a strong “Women’s Sector” emerged in Guatemala in the mid-1990s (Berger 2006). All of these movement platforms, with the exception of the business sector organized by CACIF, were part of “Civil Society Assembly” (ASC) that was formed in 1994 to influence official peace negotiations between the government and the URNG.

3.5.3.2. Agro-environmental politics during the first peace decade

Once all of the peace agreements had been signed by December 1996, the focal point of political contention gradually broadened to add the grievances associated with the unfolding neoliberal project to those that stemmed from the atrocities of the internal armed conflict. The Guatemalan oligarchy quickly positioned itself as the catalyzer for change through a discourse that called on people to leave their differences and hate behind and come together as “Guatemalans”. To make this happen, the oligarchy orchestrated a “Janus face” political agenda that was underpinned by governance and trickle-down policy dogmas. On the one side, the oligarchic-bourgeoisie would use CACIF to push for the structural and sectoral reforms discussed earlier. This was a means to make the best of the new economic opportunities of a globalizing world economy. On the other side, the oligarchic-bourgeoisie distanced itself from military authoritarianism to focus on showing off the business classes as democratic and socially responsible entrepreneurs.

Serving this purpose, the “Foundation for the Development of Guatemala” (FUNDESA) had been founded in 1984 and was erected as CACIF’s think tank to ‘contribute to the integral, sustainable and democratic development of Guatemala, in a market economy and in a State with rule of law, through the consolidation of an independent and representative organization that generates proposals with a proactive and responsible long term point of view, to fix key issues that affect the development of Guatemalans’ (FUNDESA. 2017). Similarly, the “Guatemalan Sugar Producers Association” (ASAZGUA) created its corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm in 1990 (FUNDAZUCAR). And in 2003, the CSR agenda of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie manifested its ultimate expression through CentraRSE, the Guatemalan branch of the “World Business Council for Sustainable Development” (WBCSD). In Guatemala, the CSR strategy befitted from the inflow of post-conflict rehabilitation and development cooperation funds that followed the 1996 peace agreements. FUNDESA, FUNDAZUCAR and CentraRSE were ideal candidates for the public-private partnerships in which development multilateral donor banks and official development cooperation agencies were putting much energy (Fiszbein and Lowden 1999). As Oglesby explains, however, these projects ‘did not simply emerge fully formed through tutelage from the World Bank [...] but were forged over two decades as a result of class dynamics and changing production imperatives, especially the reaction to labor conflict and the need to rework and develop ongoing strategies of labor control’ (2004, 554-555).

For subordinate (agrarian) classes and their organizations, newfound peace was marked by the rise and fall of a political agenda aimed at pushing for social change by influencing the state. In such a new terrain for advocacy politics, the protest repertoire was to be substituted by dialogue and proposal within mushrooming multi-stakeholder governance platforms—such as CONADEA and FONTIERRAS in the agrarian camp. However, the ‘peace’ thrill rippling through social justice movements experienced its first setback in 1999 when the referendum

to turn the peace agreements into national law failed.²²⁹ The struggle against neoliberal globalization was thrust to the center of social justice movements' political agenda after a decade of Washington Consensus-modeled structural and sectoral adjustment that President Arzu's 1996-2000 administration had pushed to the limits. Building on a long history of internationalist exchanges among militant cadres during the Central American Cold War conflicts, the Guatemalan peasant movement was in a position to both learn from and inform the transnationalization of agrarian movements and struggles, a process that took off in the late 1980s and early 1990s.²³⁰

Among other things, this resulted in, first, an influx of demands towards peasants' self-representation, best framed through La Vía Campesina's famous motto "not about us without us". This is not to say that the peasant movement became politically autonomous, for the influence of Marxist organic intellectuals and liberation theologians certainly remained. But the demobilization of the guerrillas, and the restructuring of productive forces in agriculture during neoliberal globalization, reshaped the configurations of social forces during the period of internal armed conflict. Second, "food sovereignty" was adopted as both contention frame and transformative project to counter food dumping, WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, and the privatization and liberalization agenda of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie that the IMF, WTO and the World Bank were avidly supporting. Food sovereignty also informed the struggles against the "Puebla to Panama Plan" (PPP), the "Free Trade Area of the Americas" (FTAA) and the free trade agreement with the US (DR-CAFTA). The "Mesa Global" was created in 2001 in order to keep track of these transnational projects, and served as a convergence space for social justice movement organizations,

²²⁹ The "no" won, with a general abstention rate of 81.45% (Macleod 2008, 115).

²³⁰ Including the ill-fated "Association of Central American Peasant Organizations for Cooperation and Development" (ASOCODE) in 1991-1998 (Edelman 2008), La Vía Campesina since 1993 and the "Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations" (CLOC), which Secretariat was based in Guatemalan CNOC during 2001-2005. See more generally Edelman and Borras (2016).

universities, independent research institutes and human rights organizations.²³¹

This period saw the emergence of hundreds of NGOs at the heat of international donor money. As is usually the case, these funds came with strings attached—even the most progressive donors leveraged on their position to influence the political agenda of their beneficiaries. Precisely because of these funding politics, and shrouded in long-standing differences between sectors of the Catholic and Protestant churches and URNG-related militant organizations, another major coalition in the agrarian justice movement was midwived in 2001. The birth of the “Agrarian Platform” (PA) brought together local and regional peasant organizations, CONIC, Catholic Land Pastorals, and human rights, displaced persons, agro-ecology, research and environmental justice organizations as a national coalition. Its purpose was to support the thousands of hacienda-tenants, plantation workers and small growers who were badly impacted when the coffee crisis exploded at the turn of the century. PA initially focused more on the domestic front than on the transnational arena of contention. Despite the frictions between the two peasant movement platforms, in 2002 PA closely collaborated with CNOC and allies through the “Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development” (ADRI). That cooperative process caused ADRI to become “the” convergence space for rural social justice movements to discuss and propose agricultural, land, and rural development policy. And it is from this space the original draft of the Comprehensive Rural Development law (initiative 4084) stemmed in 2005.²³²

International donors were also behind the rise of a small-yet-wealthy cluster of conservation NGOs, taking advantage the green enclosure policy dogma in the mid-1990s while at the same time expanding its

²³¹ Mesa Global became also involved in similar regional initiatives at the time including the “Mesoamerican Peasant Platform” (ECM), “Mesoamerican Initiative for Trade, Integration and Sustainable Development” (CID Initiative) and the “Hemispheric Social Alliance” (ASC).

²³² This was informed by two major policy proposals by the two main expressions of the national militant peasant movement: i) PA’s “Paving the Way: A Rural Development Proposal” (2002), and; ii) CNOC’s “Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Proposal” (2005).

reach. Concurrently, two radical environmental justice NGOs were formed. The “Rural Women Alliance” (AMR) was also established at this critical juncture, a result of the self-led process of women’s organization in refugee camps in Mexico mentioned earlier (Santa Cruz 2007). Paradoxically, despite the momentum gained from having received the Nobel Peace Prize and the occurrence of the UN’s first “International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples” between 1995 and 2004, the first decade of peace was one of fragmentation for the indigenous peoples’ movement in general, the Mayan one in particular. COPMAGUA fell apart in 2000 as a result of internal divisions in the pan-Mayan movement (Bastos and Camus 2003). Among other reasons, the politics behind what Hale calls ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ unfolding at the time along governance policy dogma prescriptions back-fired on many leaders of the pan-Mayan movement who chose to influence the state “from within”. In Hale’s words

‘Multicultural reforms present novel spaces for conquering rights, and demand new skills that often give indigenous struggles a sophisticated allure. The menace resides in the accompanying, unspoken parameters: *reforms have pre-determined limits*; benefits to a few indigenous actors are predicated on the exclusion of the rest; *certain rights are to be enjoyed on the implicit condition that others will not be raised*. Actual indigenous activist-intellectuals who occupy the space of the indio permitido [“authorized Indian”]²³³ rarely submit fully to these constraints. Still, it would be a mistake to equate the increasing indigenous presence in the corridors of power with indigenous empowerment’ (2004, 18 emphasis added).

It is possible to argue—using the benefit of hindsight—that the very dynamics through which the vibrant militant social justice movement coined national and international recognition starting in 1986, caused it

²³³ ‘The indio permitido has passed the test of modernity, substituted “protest” with “proposal,” and learned to be both authentic and fully conversant with the dominant milieu. Its Other (“insurrectionary Indian”) is unruly, vindictive and conflict prone [...] Governance proactively creates and rewards the indio permitido, while condemning its Other to the racialized spaces of poverty and social exclusion. Those who occupy the category of the indio permitido must prove they have risen above the racialized traits of their brethren by endorsing and reinforcing the divide’ (Hale 2004, 19).

to weaken by 2005. First, despite having achieved important victories at the transnational level, the experience of rural exodus in Guatemala during neoliberal purge agro-capitalism debilitated the movement's base both in numbers and vigor, since it was the youth who fled the countryside. Second, the shower of development cooperation funds indeed enhanced the analytical, communicational and networking abilities of social justice movements, but they also created division and "institutionalization" (or "NGOization"). Furthermore, many organizations found their abilities to act acutely, if not entirely, constrained with the fall of the progressive donors' complex that began in 2002.²³⁴ Third, and bluntly put, 'the contradiction for social organizations is that in the course of their efforts to shape the state, it often manages to shape them' (Fox 1993, 26). The advocacy politics of the time, and the massive migration of rural population to the US, drained the movement of its energy and moved resources away from agitation, organization and mobilization efforts at the grassroots, while ultimately de-radicalizing many organizations.

²³⁴ It was this year that Guatemala crossed the US\$ 2,000 per capita GDP threshold in which official donors base their categorization of "less developed countries" and "developing" countries, and hence their decisions on funds allocation (interviews with Official from the EU Delegation to Guatemala and USAID officials, November 2007 and May 2008, respectively).

Chapter 4 The “green gold” pandemic in the Guatemalan agro-ecological, social and policy structures during 2006-2014

4.1. Introduction

This chapter has two aims: to discuss the drivers and immediate effects of rise of the flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala during 2006-2014, and to analyze its relations with the agro-ecological, social and policy structures during this period. I first discuss the surge of global flex crop and commodity complexes in the convergent crises conjuncture. The demand for flex cane and palm commodities has quickly grown from a “green gold” fever to a pandemic in Guatemala. In 2006-2014, cane plantations expand at a yearly pace that is two-fold, and palm eight-fold, greater than in 1982-2005—resulting in the small Central American country being thrust into the position of a leading world producer and exporter of multiple flex crop commodities.

Involvement of foreign capital notwithstanding, the main vector of this green gold pandemic is the hegemonic fraction of the Guatemalan oligarchic bourgeoisie. Embedded within oligarchic-bourgeois family corporate groups, flex cane and palm complexes combine plantations with financial services, agro-inputs and farm machinery upstream with farming and processing, circulation and consumer goods manufacturing downstream. This corporate structure is easily prone to cartelization. Indeed, powerful trade and political organizations defend the interests and support the booming (trans)national expansion and investment strategies of the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014.

Subsequently, I discuss the impacts signals of the green gold pandemic on the agro-ecological, social, and policy structures in Guatemala in the given period. The outcomes of my GIS analysis show that new cane plantations displace staple food crops and cattle pastures to a lesser but relevant extent, giving insight into the agro-ecological structure. Palm plantations extend over forest, staple food crops, pastures and scrublands. Most distinctively, land officially categorized as “scrubland”

(chaparral) in the northern lowlands includes the fallows of (Q'eqchi') swidden cultivators and underutilized latifundia land of the landlord class. Expansion of cane and palm plantations also triggers two important indirect land use changes. First, cattle ranchers who aim to remain in business after leasing or selling their land to flex agribusinesses search for new grazing lands in and beyond the Guatemalan agrarian frontier, and even in Nicaragua. Second, expanding cane and palm plantations constrain swidden cultivators' abilities to leave land fallow and, more generally, subordinate class cultivators' chances to farm on leased hacienda land.

I analyze change and continuity in the social structure separately for fragmented dominant and subordinate agrarian classes. After presenting the dominant agrarian class structures and their features in 2006 and 2014, I identify five chief class differentiation tendencies within the contours of that time period. The first has to do with the swift rise of the agro-extractivist fraction of the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie to the hegemonic class position. The second concerns the fall of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie from its hegemonic class position. This is mainly driven by the decomposition of its formerly powerful modern fraction. A burgeoning outgrower fraction of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie, embodied in large and medium cane and palm fruit providers, emerges as the third key differentiation tendency. The fourth category involves what seems to be the end of traditional mercantilist landlords. Already weak in 2006, this class undergoes a swift decomposition process in between that time and 2014. Finally, the fifth differentiation tendency exposes the rentier fraction of the landlord class regaining its momentum at the pinnacle of flex cane and palm companies' expansion.

Four additional insights surface at the intersection of socio-cultural and economic class features and differentiation tendencies. First, power changes class but not "face". The ranks of the new agrarian class hegemon—namely, the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie—are filled with members of the traditional creole oligarchy. Second, class power remains

structured along the racialized bloodline hierarchy that has been pervasive (at least) since colonial times. Third, class power does not change face but it ages. And so many new agro-extractivist bourgeois men and women between 25 and 45 years old take over key executive positions in the family business in 2006-2014. As the leading force behind the upgrade of domestic agro-industries into trans-national agribusinesses, these “young although smartly-trained executives” (YASTEXES) are fundamental to my discussion of resource extractivism under the convergent crises conjuncture in Guatemala. And fourth and finally, there is the rise of the “narco-outgrower”. Despite a dangerous one, it is an open secret that cane and especially palm cultivation outcompete cattle ranching in 2006-2014 as preferred cover for illicit money-laundering, and palm plantations as far more convenient spaces than cattle ranches for air drug-trade operations for the cover adult palms provide..

My analysis of change and continuity in the social structure for fragmented subordinate agrarian classes starts with their empirical identification. I do so in two steps. First, I identify two broad and preliminary HH categories in my 2010 and 2014 HH survey panels to set apart HHs which rely mainly on family labor for social reproduction from those which depend on the labor market in different ways and to different extents. Second, I identify actual classes and fractions from within the previous two broad and preliminary HH categories. These include i) the proletarian class and its two farming and non-farming fractions; ii) the family farmer class and its two self-consumption oriented and market oriented fractions, and; iii) the petty capitalist farmer class and its multi-functional and specialized fractions. Having identified subordinate agrarian classes and fractions, I then turn my analysis to their class positioning features and differentiation tendencies. Five key features that are interrelated can be distilled from the 2010 and 2014 subordinate class structures. First, proletarian class HHs are a minority, and especially non-farming ones. Second, the petty capitalist farmer class accounts for more than half of all HHs. Third, functional dualist relations are vibrant—stemming from the large shares of the

farming proletarian and multi-functional petty capitalist farmer fractions within their respective classes. Fourth, the family farmer class includes around one third of all HHs. The fifth and final feature is that the majority of family farmer class HHs are part of the strictly family labor-based peasant fraction.

Likewise, I identify four chief and interrelated 2010-2014 differentiation tendencies for the subordinate agrarian classes. The first concerns the proletarianization of petty capitalist farmers. Second, there is a slight but significant increase in functional dualist relations. Third, the family farmer class endures on the shoulders of formerly proletarian and especially petty capitalist farmer HHs, suggesting a “re-peasantization” process is underway. Nonetheless, this leads to the fourth point, which is that the family farmer class experiences a heightened process of commoditization. Chayanovian demographic and cyclical tenets of subordinate agrarian class differentiation supplement and nuance Leninist materialist and permanent ones. Key insights from the intersection of class with HH size and composition attributes include: First, the tendencies for the family farmer class to keep incorporating middle-aged members, and for the petty capitalist farmer class to increase the number of members under the age of 25. The non-aging of farming classes reinforces the re-peasantization tendency. Second, in 2010 in cases where the share of consumers over workers in the HH is larger, the relevance of wage-work in the reproductive strategy becomes higher—but such a relationship no longer holds in 2014. This mirrors the functional dualist semi-proletarianization tendency. And third and finally, the larger the number of HH members between 14 and 70 years old—and especially of women—the higher the relevance of farming in the HH’s reproductive strategy (and vice-versa). This underpins both re-peasantization and functional dualist semi-proletarianization.

Finally, I examine change and continuity in the policy structure feeding into and resulting from the surging flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014, with attention to the model paradigms behind it. Neoliberal trickle-down and governance policy dogmas outlined in the genealogy

chapter continue to be general ideological compasses for state actors on the realms of economic development and government, respectively. But the former finds renewed inspiration in the World Economic Forum's "Global Redesign Initiative" (GRI), while the latter folds its original neo-classical laissez-faire into neo-institutional subsidiarity. Similarly, despite the relevant formal differences discussed in Parts II and III, the "lex-Labor, land good governance, financialization and knowledge enclosure policy dogmas of purge agro-capitalism from 1986-2005 keep informing labor, land, financial and knowledge and technology relations in 2006-2014. Conversely, the defensive green enclosure policy dogma finds a more accumulation-friendly rationale in the "green economy" model paradigm-turned-dogma. Formal differences notwithstanding, all these policy dogmas fall under the influence of neoliberal-yet-refined Global Redesign Initiative and neo-institutional model paradigms.

The Global Redesign Initiative stems from the World Economic Forum's efforts 'to formulate a new system of global governance' (Gleckman 2016, 92). This governance model paradigm takes a big leap forward and away from its UN predecessor and calls to 'redefine the international system as constituting a wider, multifaceted system of global cooperation in which intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, *but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial, component*' (WEF. 2010, 7 emphasis added). The neo-institutional paradigm assigns state powers a subsidiary role in (economic) development that is in tune with WEF's GRI governance. This grants the state active-yet-selective involvement in the reproduction of the general conditions of production, and to a lesser extent, in production's natural and personal conditions—especially, but not only for, accumulation projects pushed forward by the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. This subsidiary role impinges upon the capitalist state's contradictory tasks of facilitating accumulation (and defending it at all costs), and maintaining the highest possible degree of social legitimation. Thus, strategically selected policy discourses materialize in differentiated development policies advanced through the state's relative autonomy. I divide policy packages relevant to agro-environmental change issues in

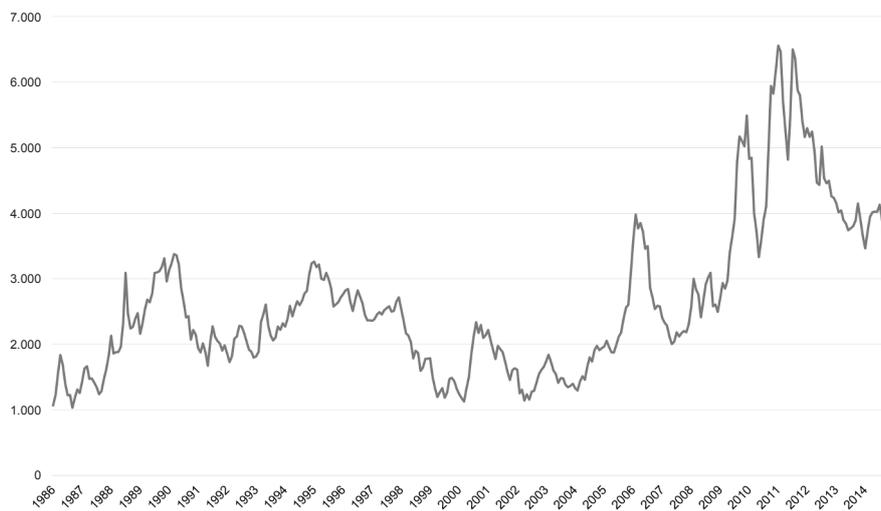
2006-2014 into those facilitating accumulation for dominant classes, and those facilitating market integration and safety nets for the under-privileged.

Regarding the policies facilitating accumulation for dominant classes, trade and investment, labor, financial, environmental, intellectual property, monetary and fiscal policies circa 2006-2014 are steered towards supporting foreign, but more importantly domestic, investments in natural resource-based accumulation projects. And in doing so, Guatemalan state actors rely heavily on their transnational peers. Following the spread of the green gold pandemic in the Guatemalan policy structure, flex cane and palm complexes are to be promoted by all means and defended at all costs. Among other things, this amounts to using public funds to pay for the rise of flex cane and palm complexes, using the narrative that doing so will benefit the Guatemalan people, the hungry masses of the world and the planet. As a result, flex cane and palm companies benefit from direct financial subsidies, tax incentives and exemptions, and more indirect subsidies to the reproduction of the general, personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. Regarding the policies facilitating market integration and safety nets for the under-privileged, three “policy packages” stand out in 2006-2014. First, is the 2009 “Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program” (PROPALMA) involving petty capitalist farmers. Second, from 2009, and especially 2012, onward there is a series of farming, rural development and land policies that target petty capitalist farmers and market-oriented family farmers as productive subjects for the first time in more than two decades. Third, two governmental conditional cash transfer programs starting in 2008 act as safety nets for the “inefficient and outcompeted”.

4.2. The rise of the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes under the convergent global crises conjuncture

Flex crops and commodities complexes have resulted in a re-centering of natural resources and agriculture in capital accumulation and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies worldwide, even if unevenly, with the convergence of multiple crises in the early 21st century. In this context, two major and traditional participants in world trade multi-commodity crops namely, cane and palm, have advanced into two leading global flex crops and commodities. This is key, in part, within the current wave of financialization sweeping over the world economy (Fine 2007). It occurs because flex production of multiple commodities from a single crop is able to ‘partly address global-market *price volatility* [by allowing for] a more diversified product portfolio, thereby enabling investors to better anticipate – and more nimbly react to – changing prices, e.g. to better *exploit price spikes or withstand price shocks*’ (Borras et al. 2016, 94 emphasis added). Indeed, figures 13 and 14 show international prices in 2006-2014 of sugar and crude palm oil, commodities of reference for flex cane and palm complexes. Not only are they higher than those in 1986-2005, but they are also more volatile (ECLAC et al. 2011).

**Figure 13 International monthly prices for cane sugar. 1986-2014
(US\$/MT)**



Source: Author elaboration from IMF (2018).

**Figure 14 International monthly prices for crude palm oil. 1986-2014
(US\$/MT)**

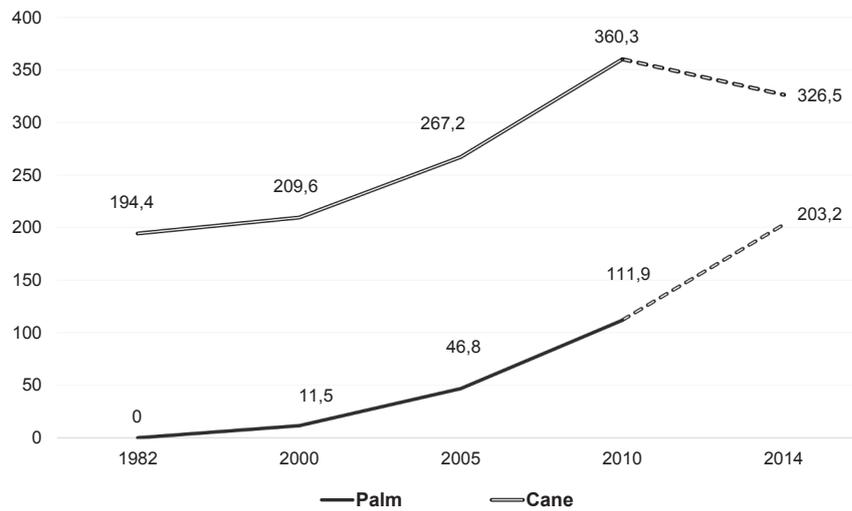


Source: Author elaboration from IMF (2018).

4.2.1. Flex cane and palm commodity fever in Guatemala in the early 21st century

Rather than a new El Dorado rush by foreign powers, the global flex crops and commodities hype spreads through Guatemala in the form of a green gold fever for cane and palm commodities that quickly becomes pandemic. I discuss the basis upon which I reached this diagnosis using two tools as follows. First, I use a “metric scale” to track soaring cane and palm hectares, and sugar and palm oil tons, around 2006-2014. Concurrently, the Government of Guatemala claims in 2008 that 1.101.604 hectares (57% of the country’s farmland) are suitable for cane and palm cultivation (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) 2008). By 2014, the area under cane and palm is already 592.612 hectares. But whereas cane cultivation figures in 2014 already amount to 84% of the total suitable land targeted by the government, palm cultivation only amounts to 28%. Put simply, there is still a large potential for palm plantations to expand in Guatemala. These striking figures point out the striking pace of expansion of cane and palm. Figure 15 shows how whereas cane plantations increased by 3.163 hectares/year on average in 1982-2005, they grow in 6.586 hectares/year in 2006-2014 (despite a downfall in 2010-2014). The case of palm is even more extreme. Whereas palm plantations increased in 2.036 hectares/ year on average in 1982-2005, they do so by 17.370 hectares/year in 2006-2014. This means cane and palm plantations in 2006-2014 expand at a yearly pace that is two- and eight-fold greater, respectively, than in 1982-2005.

Figure 15 Land under cane and palm cultivation in Guatemala. 1982-2014 (in thousand hectares)

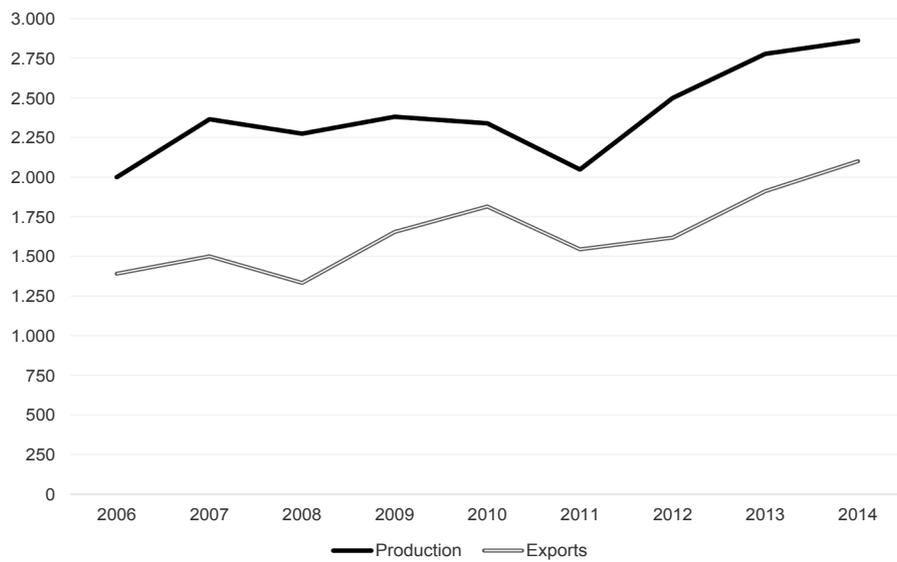


Source: Author elaboration from: i) 1982, 2000, 2005, and 2010 national land use maps (IGN 1983, MAGA 2001, 2006, and 2014), and; ii) 2014 National Agriculture Survey (INE 2014). Striped 2010-2014 trend lines show 2014 figures are from a different, less accurate-yet-official source.

At the same time, high international price variability notwithstanding figures 19 and 17 show shortly soaring production and export volumes of cane sugar and palm oil in 2006-2014.²³⁵

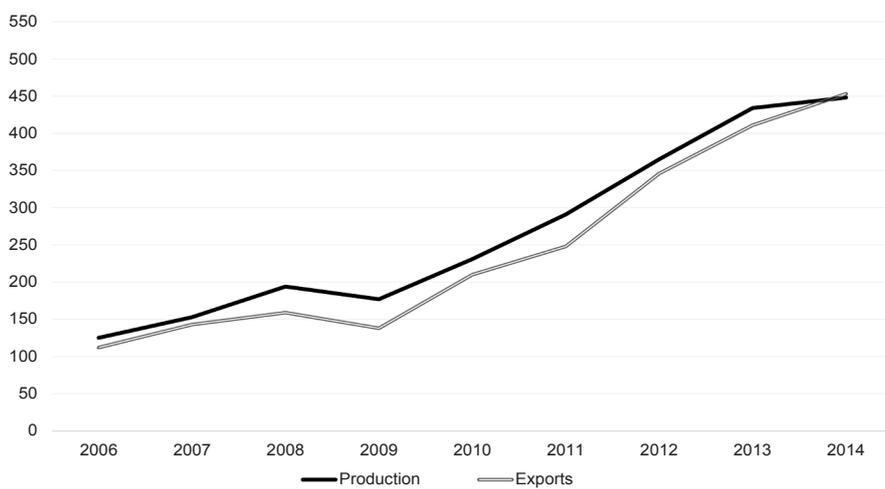
²³⁵ The multiple commodities produced and ways of flexing among competing ones are discussed in detail in the knowledge and technology relations chapter. For our purposes here external demand-driven heightened cane sugar and especially palm oil production are illustrative enough.

Figure 16 Cane sugar production and exports in Guatemala. 2006-2014 (thousands of MTs)



Source: Author elaboration from USDA 2016

Figure 17 Crude palm oil production and exports in Guatemala. 2006-2014 (thousands of MTs)



Source: Author elaboration from USDA 2016

In fact, by 2016 Guatemala will become the fourth largest Latin American palm oil producer and the tenth worldwide, as well as the largest palm oil exporter in Latin America and the fifth in the world (USDA. 2016). Furthermore, by that year Guatemalan flex palm agribusinesses will show ‘the world’s largest increase rate in palm oil exports in the last 20 years’ (GREPALMA. 2016a). Crude palm oil is basically exported to the EU, the US, Mexico and other Central American countries (Alonso-Fradejas 2012). Besides, Guatemalan flex palm companies control the domestic crude palm oil market with some 30% of their production, and they are positive that they can keep their grip on this market in years to come.²³⁶ As anticipated, this is a key difference with traditional and non-traditional export-oriented crops. Some flex palm companies are part of business complexes into palm commodity-based service provision and consumer goods manufacturing, though most just supply other consumer goods manufacturers in the country (e.g. Colgate-Palmolive, Unilever, or chips and cookies manufacturers).²³⁷

Also by 2016, Guatemala will become the third largest sugar producer in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico but ahead of Colombia, and the ninth worldwide (USDA. 2016). It will also be the second largest sugar exporter in Latin America after Brazil, and the world’s fourth (ibid.). Unlike crude palm oil exports targeting OECD and neighboring Central American countries, sugar exports include BRIC and MIC countries like Russia, South Korea, China, Malaysia and Indonesia in addition to the US and Canada (Alonso-Fradejas 2012). As with palm oil, the Guatemalan flex cane complex monopolizes the domestic sugar market with just 25% of its production (USDA 2014). Similarly too, some flex palm companies are involved in direct cane-derived service provision and consumer goods manufacturing, while others just supply industrial

²³⁶ As the CEO of a major flex palm company explains ‘the yearly per capita consumption of edible oil in the US is 34,5 kg., while in Guatemala is only 15,5 kg. We expect domestic demand to grow and we are ready to supply it’ (interview with PALIXCÁN CEO, February 2010).

²³⁷ Interview with Secretary General of the Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild in April 2009

inputs to other manufacturers (e.g. The Coca-Cola Company, Pepsico, or animal feed companies).

4.2.2. *Cane and palm as favorites of the “Almighties”*

The rise of corporate flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala cannot be explained without a proper understanding of who is behind them. Hence, the second diagnostic tool of the green gold pandemic in 2006-2014 concerns the flex cane and palm complexes’ ‘scale of capital’ (Edelman et al. 2013, Franco et al. 2013). In short, these corporate complexes are at the peak of this scale in Guatemala. Main interests behind them are those of the hegemonic fraction of the national ‘oligarchic-bourgeoisie’ (Bakunin 1871). This does not mean foreign capital is strange. Quite the contrary, I discuss the key role of transnational financiers, state actors and consumer goods manufacturers elsewhere in this research. My focus now is on the trade and political organizations through which the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeoisie defends the interests and supports the vibrant (trans)national expansion and investment strategies of domestic flex cane and palm companies in the given period.

Flex cane and palm companies are part of family “corporate groups” (*grupos empresariales*). Corporate groups include legally-independent companies over which the oligarchic-bourgeois family exerts control through participation of their members in their board of directors.²³⁸ Leading corporate groups behind the flex cane and palm complexes are also involved in other agricultural and non-agricultural businesses. The horizontally-integrated “group” business structure allows for a combination of plantations with financial services, agro-inputs and farm machinery upstream with farming and processing, circulation and consumer goods manufacturing downstream. Not surprisingly, this corporate structure is easily prone to cartelization.

²³⁸ This differs from the “business conglomerate” structure that involves legal ownership of a series of companies by a matrix

There are 12 active flex cane companies in Guatemala (ASAZGUA. 2012) owned by 10 corporate groups and under control of the same number of oligarchic-bourgeois families. Since 1957, the flex cane complex has been organized through the “Guatemalan Sugar Producers Association” (ASAZGUA). It is part of the “Chamber of Agriculture” (CAMAGRO), which is in turn a key member of the powerful trade and political organization of the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeoisie, the “Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers” (CACIF). From 2000 and especially 2004-2005, the flex cane complex undergoes a thorough restructuring process ‘to seize the unfolding business opportunities within a changing world economy’ (interview with senior manager of Madre Tierra flex cane agribusiness, January 2014). The restructuring of the flex cane complex follows the lines of what Harvey calls capital’s ‘spatio-temporal fixes’ (2003) to allow business to continue in times of over-accumulation crises.²³⁹

On the one side, flex cane companies’ “spatial fix” entails opening new and (re)adapting former areas for heightened flex cane commodity production. To avoid conflating this with a series of “fixes” in agricultural productive relations discussed in this research, I refer to Harvey’s spatial fix simply as “geographical expansion strategy”, or just “expansion strategy”. Flex cane companies’ expansion in Guatemala occurs in the southern Pacific coast region—and, for the first time ever, in the northern lowlands following the government’s identification of suitable land in that region. Whereas the northern lowlands lack the infrastructure and ‘cane culture’ that are hallmarks of the southern coast cane-haven,²⁴⁰ soaring land prices in the southern coast encouraged the owners of the Guadalupe cane mill move to the Polochic Valley sub-region of the northern lowlands in 2005 under the name of “Chabil

²³⁹ Nonetheless, I discuss in detail further on how keeping at bay ‘under-production crises’ (O’Connor 1988) is also a fundamental driver of the Guatemalan flex cane complex restructuring in the early 21st Century.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Polochic sub-region Coordinator of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, February 2006.

Utzaj”.²⁴¹ This pioneering incursion of the flex cane complex into the northern lowlands is discussed later on. It suffices to say here that the first attempt by the original Guatemalan owners, the Widdmans, and the second one by the mighty Nicaraguan Pellas Group, both result in drastic failures. Nonetheless, Guatemalan flex cane companies expand successfully beyond national borders. They lease and purchase land, mills and distilleries in the US, Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Brazil.²⁴² The transnationalization of flex cane companies (and palm ones, see below) stands out as a historical milestone for dominant agrarian classes in Guatemala. As discussed in the genealogy, prior to them only a bunch of poultry and pork companies, a fried-chicken fast food chain and a retail company expanded transnationally, though mostly confined within the Central American Common Market area.

On the other side, flex cane companies’ “temporal fix” involves deferment of their investment over time through the allocation of currently soaring revenues to large and long-term investments (e.g. land, mills, distilleries and logistical facilities). For the same reasons as the “spatial fix”, Harvey’s temporal fix is refer to here as flex cane companies’ investment strategy. This involves a series of mergers and acquisitions, paired with heavy capital investments. In 2012, the top 5 and 2 among the 10 corporate groups respectively control 79% and 46% of the flex cane complex (ASAZGUA. 2012). As a result of these expansion and investment strategies, former domestic “sugar companies” upgrade into transnational “flex cane agribusinesses”.

Five oligarchic-bourgeois corporate groups, one of which also controls a major flex cane company, control the six palm companies active in the country by 2014. There is no disaggregated information on the relative market power of each flex palm company, but those that are part of the

²⁴¹ “Fine Cane” in Q’eqchi’ language. Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer, and security manager of Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane agribusiness, February 2008.

²⁴² Interviews with owners of the Polochic flex cane agribusiness, March 2011, senior manager of Madre Tierra flex cane agribusiness, January 2014, and data from Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2008) and Solano (2010).

“HAME Group” are by far the largest (Luxner 2014). One of them was originally established in 2008 by Texan biodiesel producer “Green Earth Fuels Inc.” But Green Earth withdrew in 2011 and Guatemalan flex palm company “Naturaceites” took over its palm plantations and mill. Since 2008, flex palm companies are also organized as a business cartel through the “Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild” (GREPALMA). Despite this branding, GREPALMA includes only flex palm agribusinesses, not independent growers. GREPALMA is part of the “Chamber of Industry”, and like ASAZGUA, it is also member of CAMAGRO and CACIF. The flex palm cartel follows its cane peer and re-invests soaring revenues circa 2006-2014 for expanded reproduction purposes. By 2014, Guatemalan flex palm companies’ investments in land and processing facilities amount to US\$1.800 million (GREPALMA. 2017a).

The expansion strategy of flex palm companies in 2006-2014 renders bitter-sweet outcomes too. They have also achieved success transnationally, and by 2014 Guatemalan palm agribusinesses hold direct investments in Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama (Luxner 2014, ORBIS 2016). Domestically, flex palm companies tend to expand along the high-yielding volcanic soils of the southern coast. But as I show shortly, they basically “re-colonize” the northern lowlands in a swift and contentious fashion.²⁴³

4.3. Change and continuity in the agro-ecological structure

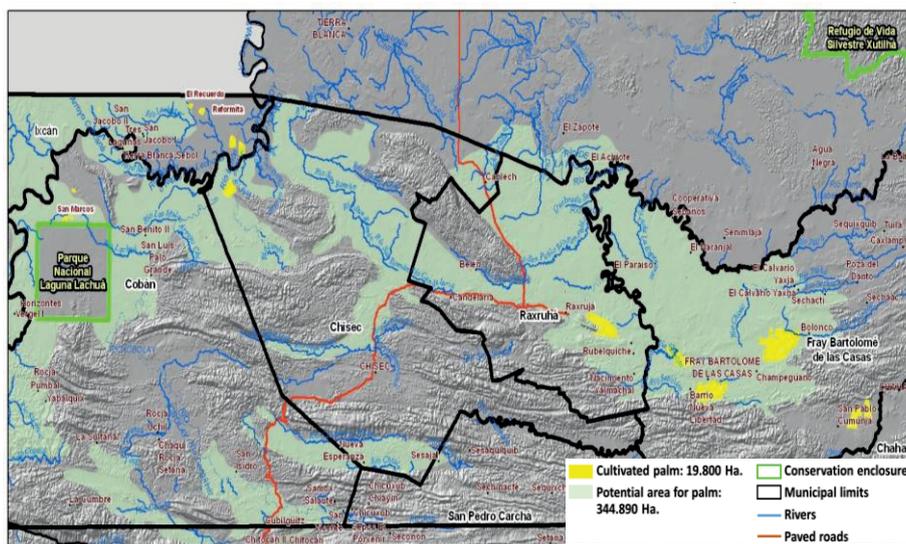
The Guatemalan northern lowlands region is therefore the main area of expansion for flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014. But whereas the Polochic sub-region is targeted by both flex cane and palm companies, the Northern Transversal Strip (Ixcán, Chisec and Fray zones) and South Petén (Sayaxché zone) sub-regions are targeted only by flex palm companies. The actual ways in which flex agribusinesses

²⁴³ For instance, it is conflict that makes US Green Earth Fuels leave the country in 2011 (GREPALMA’s Executive Director in I Latin American Palm Growers Congress, October 2013).

control land for cane and palm cultivation are unpacked in the chapter on land relations. My interest here is on a more detailed account of the ‘messy hectares’ (Edelman 2013c) involved in flex agribusinesses’ expansion. In doing so, I rely on GIS analysis to map actual and potential areas for cane and palm cultivation, and evaluate the direct and indirect land use changes associated with the expansion of these crops.

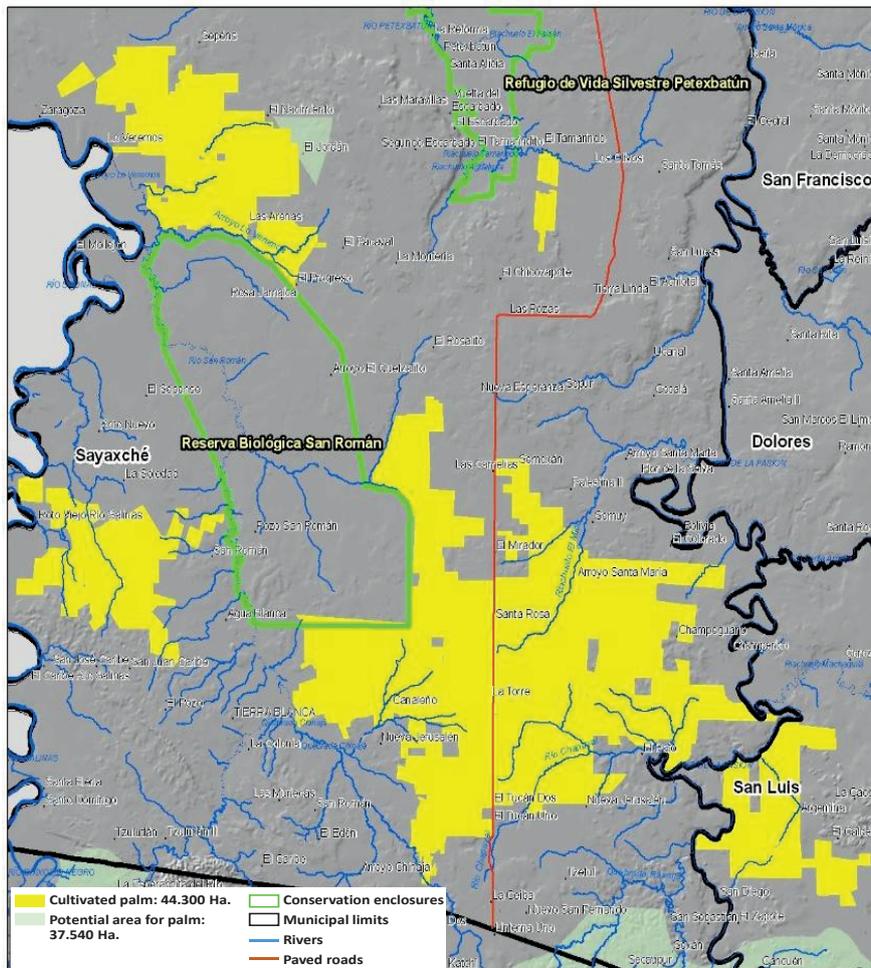
Since palm is the most ubiquitous of the two flex crops in the northern lowlands, and 2010 the latest year for which official and reliable geo-referenced land use data is available, figures 18 to 20 show actual and potential areas for palm cultivation along the northern lowlands’ three main sub-regions. These range from the relatively low expansion and high potential in the Northern Transversal Strip to a completely opposite pattern in South Petén and Polochic. Nonetheless, actual and potential areas for palm in all three sub-regions share a common proximity to freshwater sources.

Figure 18 Map of cultivated and potential land for palm in the Northern Transversal Strip. 2010.



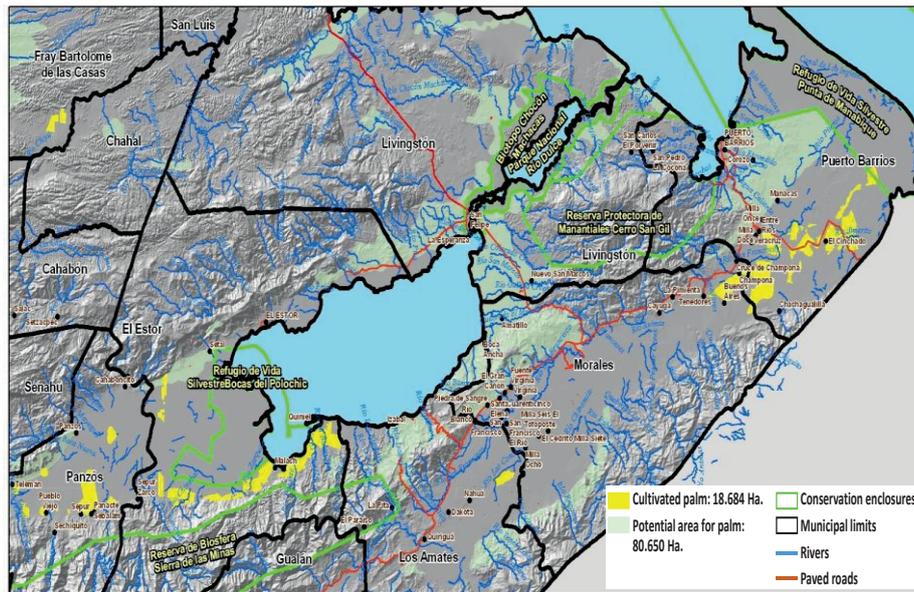
Source: Author elaboration from GIS analysis.

Figure 19 Map of cultivated and potential land for palm in South Petén.
2010



Source: Author elaboration from GIS analysis.

Figure 20 Map of cultivated and potential land for palm in Polochic. 2010



Source: Author elaboration from GIS analysis.

Only between 2005 and 2010, and in the northern lowlands, 56.522 hectares of land convert to palm plantations. The Chabil Utzaj flex cane company in the Polochic sub-region comes to control 5.400 hectares of land from 2005 forward, 3.408 of which are actually developed for cane farming by 2014. As expected, expansion of cane and palm plantations from 2005 on reshapes the agro-ecological structure of the target areas. On the one hand, table 4 shows the outcomes of my GIS analysis of direct land use changes associated with cane expansion in the Polochic sub-region and with the whole country in 2000-2010. Specifically, table 4 indicates the different land uses in the year 2000 for the 5.400 and 150.712 new hectares of land under cane plantations by 2010 in the Polochic Valley and Guatemala, respectively. In both cases, but especially in the Polochic, cane plantations displace staple food crops and cattle pastures to a lesser yet relevant extent.

Table 4 Land use in 2000 in the land converted to cane plantations between 2000 and 2010

Land use (2000)	Land use changes through cane expansion	
	Guatemala in 2000-2010	Northern lowlands (Polo chic) in 2005-2010
Forest	1%	1%
Staple food crops	44%	60%
Coffee plantations	1%	
Cultivated pastures	34%	38%
Natural grasslands	7%	
Wetlands	0,4%	
Scrublands	0,3%	0,4%
Other uses	0,4%	

Source: Author elaboration from GIS analysis

On the other hand, table 5 depicts the direct land use changes associated with palm expansion in 2005-2010 for the country and for the entirety of the northern lowlands region. In both cases, palm mainly substitutes forest, scrublands, staple food crops and pastures. Especially along the southern coast, palm displaces cane, and to a lesser extent mango, banana, rubber and coffee plantations. As in 1986-2005, palm expands over forest land. But conversion of scrubland into palm plantations is particular to the 2006-2014 timespan. This is because in that time period, the epicenter of palm expansion relocates from the southern coast to the northern lowlands, where land officially mapped as “scrubland” actually includes the fallows of (Q’eqchi’) swidden cultivators and landlords’ idle or underused latifundia land.

Table 5 Land use in 2005 in the land converted to palm plantations between 2005 and 2010

Land use (2005)	Land use changes through palm expansion in 2005-2010	
	Total Guatemala	Northern lowlands research zones
Forest	22%	29%
Staple food crops	13%	14%
Mango plantations	1%	
Banana plantations	2%	1,3%
Coffee plantations	0,7%	
Cane plantations	6%	
Rubber plantations	0,8%	0,1%
Teak plantations	0,6%	0,7%
Cultivated pastures	17%	12%
Natural grasslands	8%	8%
Wetlands	1,3%	1%
Scrubland	27%	34%

Source: Author elaboration from GIS analysis

Expansion of cane and palm plantations also triggers two important indirect land use changes. First, cattle ranchers who aim to remain in business after leasing or selling their land to flex agribusinesses search for new grazing lands in and beyond the Guatemalan agrarian frontier, even in Nicaragua.²⁴⁴ Second, through different means further explored in coming chapters, soaring cane and palm plantations constrain swidden cultivators' abilities to leave land fallow, and more generally subordinate-class cultivators' chances to farm in leased hacienda land.

4.4. Change and continuity in the social structure

Flex cane and palm complexes do not occur within a social vacuum. The genealogy chapter described the broad patterns of a social differentiation

²⁴⁴ Interviews with ex-President of the Petén Ranchers Association and Guatemalan Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, October 2011 and July 2013 respectively.

process well underway in the northern lowlands prior to the arrival of flex cane and palm companies. By 2005, many mercantilist landlords and dependent agrarian bourgeois in the areas of coffee or cattle had gone bankrupt, or almost done so. This led thousands of former hacienda-tenants to join the landless from “autonomous” villages²⁴⁵ in the search for land and/or wage-work. Although squeezed by unfavorable terms of trade in 1986-2005, petty capitalist farmers remain an important source of wage-work well into 2006-2014. And despite the many challenges they come to face, family farmers are still ubiquitous.

The discussion that follows examines key features and differentiation tendencies for fragmented dominant and subordinate agrarian classes in the northern lowlands amid the expansion of flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014. Following the rationale of my first methodological prong, agrarian social structure features and differentiation tendencies are only identified now. The productive relations and politics they reflect are analyzed in detail in Parts II and III, respectively.

4.4.1. *Dominant agrarian classes*

Table 6 summarizes main features of the 2006 and 2014 class structures, and their differentiation tendencies in 2006-2014 as they apply to dominant agrarian classes and fractions in the northern lowlands.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Meaning they are not part of hacienda settlements.

²⁴⁶ Social structure features and tendencies are identified following the categories advanced in chapter 2. Class position *features* include i) hegemonic, ii) robust; iii) weak, and iv) marginal. Class differentiation *tendencies* involve their i) burgeoning; ii) endurance or iii) decomposition. Table 6 only includes agrarian classes and fractions. Other dominant classes of relevance in agriculture, like the financial bourgeoisie, are not listed here but discussed elsewhere.

Table 6 Dominant agrarian classes and fractions: 2006 and 2014 class position features, and 2006-2014 class differentiation tendencies

Class	Class fraction	Class position features		Differentiation tendencies
		2006	2014	2006-2014
As a class		Robust	Weak	Decomposing
Landlord	<i>Rentier</i>	Marginal	Robust	Burgeoning
	<i>Mercantilist</i>	Weak	Marginal	Decomposing
As a class		Dominant	Robust	Decomposing
Dependent agrarian bourgeoisie	<i>Modern</i>	<i>Hegemonic</i>	Robust	Decomposing
	<i>Outgrower</i>	Marginal	Weak	Burgeoning
As a class		Robust	Dominant	Burgeoning
(Trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie	<i>Dumping</i>	Robust	Robust	Enduring
	<i>Agro-extractivist</i>	Weak	<i>Hegemonic</i>	Burgeoning

Source: Author elaboration

Five chief tendencies of differentiation for dominant agrarian classes and fractions in 2006-2014 can be distilled from table 6. The first one concerns the swift rise of the agro-extractivist fraction of the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie to the hegemonic class position. A vector and expression of the opportunities brought about for flex crops and commodities complexes by the convergent crises conjuncture, the spectacular rise of the agro-extractivists underpins all other chief differentiation tendencies for dominant agrarian classes and fractions in 2006-2014. The second key differentiation tendency is the fall of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie from its once hegemonic class position. This is mainly driven by the decomposition of its formerly powerful modern fraction. Many coffee, banana, cotton and rubber planters, as well as livestock breeders, become rentier landlords (the most), outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois (the least) or cane and palm agro-extractivists (a selected few). Reasons for this include: i) the utterly unfavorable terms of trade the modern Agrarian Bourgeois fraction faces with the neoliberal onslaught on food prices in 1986-2005;

ii) what cattle-breeders consider unfair-yet-unbeatable competition from the 1980s on namely, cheap beef by “narco-ranchers”,²⁴⁷ and; iii) considering the foregoing challenges, many modern dependent agrarian bourgeois try to join the flex cane and palm complexes’ bandwagon to stay afloat. A burgeoning outgrower fraction of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie, embodied in large and medium suppliers of cane and palm fruit, stands out as the third key differentiation tendency.

The fourth one involves what seems to be the end of traditional mercantilist landlords. Hegemonic in 1871-1943, and in a dominant position throughout the Cold War, this class fraction relying on immobile labor is badly hit by raising loan interest rates and heightened commoditization of land, labor and knowledge during neoliberal globalization since 1986. Outcompeted and increasingly indebted, the mercantilist landlord fraction in 2006-2014 either withers away or decomposes into (a few) outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois and (quite some) rentier landlords.²⁴⁸ The fifth and last differentiation tendency results from the combination of tendencies one, three and four. It involves the rentier landlord fraction regaining momentum (c.f. Neocosmos 1986). Rather than through share-cropping arrangements as in past times, this tendency is now driven by mid- and long-term leases of landlords’ old haciendas by flex cane and palm, and to a lesser extent, rubber and teak companies.

At the same time, four important insights stem from the intersection of economic class features and differentiation tendencies with socio-cultural class divisions concerning ethnicity, age and the extra-economic means of achieving class position. First, power changes class but not “face”. The ranks of the new agrarian class hegemon in the northern lowlands circa 2006-2014, the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie, are filled with members of formerly hegemonic modern dependent agrarian bourgeois, the still robust fraction of dumping agro-industrialists and formerly robust agro-extractivists. For instance, the family that owns

²⁴⁷ Interview with ex-President of the Petén Ranchers Association, October 2011

²⁴⁸ (see also Hurtado 2008, and Elias 2013)

Naturaceites, a leading flex palm company in the Polochic Valley, Fray and Ixcán zones, has a history as a large cattle breeder and beef exporter.²⁴⁹ The family owning a major flex cane company in the southern coast region co-owns another vibrant flex palm company located in the Sayaxché zone (Solano 2010, 48). As articulated earlier, the original owners of the Polochic flex cane company simply relocated their business from the southern coast to the northern lowlands. And finally, another telling case is that of the owners of the largest flex palm company in the country. This Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeois family had once been a leading global cotton producer and exporter before pioneering into palm in 1988 (Luxner 2014). It was also the country's largest banana producer and exporter, and an important livestock breeder (ibid). Whereas palm substituted cotton plantations, production of bananas and beef for export remain part of the family business portfolio. Furthermore, the founder of this flex palm company married a member of the family owning one of the largest Guatemalan flex cane companies producing sugar, ethanol and what is considered one of the best rums in the world. In this way, inter-marriage (Casaús Arzú 2007), or 'elite endogamy' (Edelman 1992, 24), helps creole-oligarchs reproduce their class hegemony and exclusive lineage.

Following this logic, a second insight concerns the structuring of class power along the racialized bloodline hierarchy that has been pervasive since (at least) colonial times. All of the precedent cane and palm tycoons proudly trace their lineage back to the European "adventurers and entrepreneurs" that arrived in Guatemala during colonial times or during the late 19th-century coffee boom. The first owner of the Polochic flex cane company and his son quickly bring up their German and Catalanian bloodline right after the introductions in our interview. Most rentier landlords and outgrower bourgeois are either parochial oligarchs, like those of German lineage who settled in the Polochic Valley and Highland zones in the late 19th Century, or affluent ladinos. In other words, non-indigenous, second- and third-tier rank members of

²⁴⁹ Interview with Panzós township mayor, March 2008

the modern dependent agrarian bourgeois and mercantilist landlord fractions remain in strong class positions as rentier landlords or outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois in 2006-2014. They are, nonetheless, in a lower class position vis-à-vis the agro-extractivist Bourgeois fraction embodied in *la crème de la crème* of the traditional creole seigniorial and later bourgeois oligarchy.

Third, class power does not change face but it ages. And so many agro-extractivist Bourgeois men and women between 25 and 45 years old take over key executive positions in the family business in 2006-2014. They are usually alumni of elitist, Libertarian Francisco Marroquin University in Guatemala or European and US ivy-league universities from where they often also hold post-graduate degrees in a variety of fields—ranging from agronomic and industrial engineering to law, business administration, marketing and finance.²⁵⁰ For instance, the CEO of the leading Guatemalan flex cane company holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a M.S. in Industrial Engineering from Cornell University in the US, where he studied between 1988 and 1993 (Jaramillo 2016).²⁵¹ Thus, these “young although smartly-trained executives” (YASTEXES) are paramount to my discussion of heightened resource extractivism during the convergent crises conjuncture in Guatemala. I return to them later on. For this current discussion, it suffices to flag that as the business intellectual “avant-

²⁵⁰ Interviews with the Executive Secretaries of the Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild (GREPALMA) and the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association (ACR) in April 2009 and February 2010, respectively

²⁵¹ The following bio of an Executive Director in her early thirties who straddles the flex cane and palm cartels is also enlightening: ‘Born and raised in Guatemala moved to the United States to pursue college education where she earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration and an MBA with specialization in finance at Harvard University. Worked at Safra Bank in New York for 8 months to get the flavor of the financial world and then move back to Guatemala to work in the family business. She was CFO [chief financial officer] of Agro Industrias HAME [the largest flex palm company in Guatemala] and also was a member of the board of directors of Ingenio Santa Ana [large flex cane company]. After 8 years she retired from the executive role in the company (HAME) and stay in the board of directors and she moved to work in what she called her true love, RUM!!!! She is now the first female member of the executive board of directors of Industrias Licoreras de Guatemala [part of the same family business group as Santa Ana flex cane company]. She is actively involved in Fundacion Licorera which is the social arm of the company and its main focus is to work with women, and with children’s education’ (Chopra Foundation. n.d.).

garde” of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie, the YASTEXES are the leading force behind the upgrade of domestic agro-industries into transnational agribusinesses.

This said it is also worth noting that not everyone within the burgeoning dominant classes and fractions in 2006-2014 counts on their bloodline privileges. The fourth chief insight from my socio-cultural class division analysis concerns the rise of the “narco-outgrower”. Hardly discussed in scholarly or journalistic literature for obvious reasons,²⁵² it is an open secret that cane and especially palm cultivation outcompete cattle ranching in 2006-2014 as preferred covers for illicit money-laundering, and palm plantations as far more convenient spaces than cattle ranches for air drug-trade operations for the cover adult palms provide. I was able to document some notorious cases including that of a medium cane out-grower in the Polochic Valley, a large palm outgrower in Fray, a smaller one in “Laguna Lachua National Park” (in Chisec and Ixcán) and the infamous El Naranjal village case in San Luis municipality, bordering Sayaxché in the Petén department. In 2012, four people were gunned-down in a palm plantation there. The plantation was owned by a Guatemalan man captured in Belize two years previously under charges of belonging to the mightiest (“the one that must not be named”) Mexican narco-cartel. Lacking reliable data on the extent of the “narco-outgrower” phenomenon, a political analyst and advisor to flex palm companies argues that the owner of El Naranjal palm plantation was ‘like many other narco-traffickers in the area; all pioneers in independent palm cultivation’ (quoted in Hernández 2012). Despite being an open secret, this is naturally a very delicate issue for the flex palm complex to handle. When questioned about another case of an alleged narco-outgrower years before El Naranjal massacre, the spokesperson of the palm company to which El Naranjal narco-outgrower would come to supply palm fruit later on explains: ‘regardless of our concern about the

²⁵² But see articles in “Plaza Pública”, an online media outlet

kind of outgrowers we deal with, it is impossible for us to check whether they are involved or not in illicit businesses'.²⁵³

4.4.2. *Subordinate agrarian classes*

In 2014, it is still common among state and social actors alike to depict rural (Q'eqchi') people in the northern lowlands as an undifferentiated mass of "peasants", all members of homogenous communities of family farmers. This was already not the case in 1986-2005, let alone following flex cane and palm complexes' consolidation and expansion from 2006 forward. Although changes in the subordinate agrarian class structure might be concealed under widespread impoverishment, lowlander (Q'eqchi') villages are differentiated and differentiating in 2006-2014. Deceiving looks also contribute to the erroneous categorization of subordinate agrarian classes and fractions. This happens both when 'disguised proletarians' (MacEwen-Scott 1979) are classified as "peasants", and semi-proletarians in functional dualist relations are identified as "workers". Furthermore, I flagged in chapter 2 that agricultural workers are usually considered so only when employed by a dominant class subject—when the reality is that petty capitalist farmers are also a major source of employment. This point will be expanded upon in the next chapter on labor relations.

The problem of homogenizing, and hence invisibilizing, multiple fragmented subordinate agrarian classes in the northern lowlands has already been raised by some.²⁵⁴ But the empirical investigation of fragmented agrarian class features and differentiation tendencies in lowlander villages amid expansion of flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014 remained. By giving my best to this task that I turn to shortly, I begin with empirical identification of subordinate agrarian classes and fractions, and then expand upon their features and differentiation tendencies along material and socio-cultural divisions.

²⁵³ In conflict resolution meeting at Lachua National Park, July 2009

²⁵⁴ See inter alia Hurtado (2008), Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2008, 2011), Grandia (2012) and Grünberg et al. (2012)

4.4.2.1. Empirical identification of subordinate agrarian classes and fractions

Unlike with previous periods in which this analysis was constrained by a limited availability of relevant secondary sources, in 2006-2014 I rely on first-hand empirical material collected for this purpose. This is done through individual and group interviews, participant observation and two waves of household (HH) panel survey in 2010 and in 2014. The surveys are a particularly helpful tool for the identification of class structures and their socio-cultural class divisions, and for the analysis of differentiation over time in a rigorous empirically-grounded fashion. But while allowing statistical data to “speak freely”, outcomes of statistical inference are taken as illustrative rather than definitive, and are triangulated with other sources of qualitative information and assessed against existing theory.

Following this logic, I identify the subordinate agrarian class structure in the research zones through two steps. First, I identify two broad and preliminary HH categories in my 2010 and 2014 HH survey panels to set apart HHs which rely mainly on family labor for social reproduction from those which lean on the labor market in different ways and to different extents. In so doing I employ two HH labor-related criteria. One concerns the share of hired (i.e. paid) labor over total farm labor. The other involves the share of HH labor hired-out (for a wage) for two or more months in the survey year.²⁵⁵ Table 7 shows the two broad and preliminary categories of HHs identified following the foregoing labor criteria. *Family labor-based* HHs are those that only hire up to 10% of their total farm labor requirements, and hire-out for a wage 10% or less of their total family labor-power. Conversely, *labor market-related* HHs includes those which reproductive strategy relies (fully or partly) on capitalist labor relations. These include two scenarios. On the one hand,

²⁵⁵ The cut-off point for both criteria is set at a 10% instead of 0% level to allow for extraordinary and/ or marginal hired labor requirements during peak farming times, and occasional wage-work for a short period in otherwise family labor-based HHs. Rather than as a methodological straightjacket, quantitative thresholds in the empirical identification of classes are used to account for the “exception that proves the rule”.

and as depicted in the last row in table 7, are HHs which hire-out 10% or more of their family labor-power and which, if farming, might hire for a wage 10% or less of their farm labor requirements. On the other hand, the second and third from last rows in table 7 show there are also two different types of HHs which hire more than 10% of their total farm labor requirements. One involves HHs which hire-out 10% or less of the family labor, and the other of those, which hire-out more than 10% of their family labor.

Table 7 Preliminary categories of subordinate agrarian class households following labor criteria

Preliminary HH categories	Labor criteria	
	Hired labor (for farming)	Hired-out labor (wage-work)
Family labor-based	$\leq 10\%$	$\leq 10\%$
	$> 10\%$	$\leq 10\%$
Labor market-related	$> 10\%$	$> 10\%$
	$\leq 10\%$	$> 10\%$

Source: Author elaboration

The second step involves the identification of actual classes and fractions from within the two previous broad and preliminary HH categories. Family labor-based HHs are directly classified as part of the *family farmer* class.²⁵⁶ Statistical panel data analysis is again useful to

²⁵⁶ This because all sampled HHs are located in “autonomous” villages. I did not include hacienda-tenants (*colonos*) in the HH survey for two reasons. First, this class experiences a swift decomposition process from the 1990s and especially early 2000s on. Second, there is abundant literature about this class, and much less on contemporary non estate-bounded subordinate agrarian classes. This does not mean Hacienda-tenants are irrelevant to the investigation of agro-environmental change in 2006-2014. They are, for instance, key to changing land relations and politics, as discussed further on.

identify two family farmer class fractions, namely *self-consumption oriented* and *market oriented* family farmers.²⁵⁷

Outcomes of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Cluster Analysis point to 3 different, statistically significant and meaningful HH clusters within the preliminary category of “labor market-related HHs”.²⁵⁸ One cluster includes HHs which do not hire any farm labor at all, and hire-out an important share of their family labor. Hence, they depend on wage-work for a living and are classified as *proletarian* class HHs. In order to account for functional dualist relations, I identify two proletarian class fractions on the basis of whether or not HH members combine wage-work with farming namely, *farming* and *non-farming* proletarian class HHs.

The other two clusters involve HHs which hire an important share of their farm labor requirements, and hire-out from zero to more than three quarters of their family labor. Thus, they are all classified as *petty capitalist farmer* class HHs. But since the two clusters show statistically significant differences regarding their shares of hired and hired-out labor, they are further classified as two distinctive petty capitalist farmer class fractions. One is the *multi-functional* fraction, including HHs which combine capitalist farming with wage-work in their reproductive strategy. The other is the *specialized* fraction, involving HHs fully dedicated to (petty capitalist) farming.

²⁵⁷ Of all available and theoretically relevant criteria tested through PCA, a factor composed by i) the share of marketed-produce per hectare (to account for farm produce commoditization) and ii) the amount of farm produce per-worker (or the productivity of family farm labor), shows the highest variance across all HHs in each sample year. This factor is used in cluster analysis on the 2010 and 2014 samples. In both cases, statistical inference suggests there are 2 HH clusters which are meaningful and significantly different in statistical terms (at the 5% level) for each sample year and over time. The 2 HH clusters stand for the two family farmer class fractions.

²⁵⁸ Since all of these HHs are involved in capitalist labor relations, PCA is carried out through a factor composed by the two labor criteria used to group subordinate class HHs preliminarily, i.e. the share of hired over total farm labor, and the share of family labor hired-out for a wage for two or more months in the survey year. This factor is then used in cluster analysis on the 2010 and 2014 samples. In both cases, statistical inference results in 3 HH clusters which are significantly different in statistical terms (at the 5% level) for each sample year and over time, and meaningful to relevant materialist criteria other than labor- and marketed surplus-related criteria.

Besides their statistical meaningfulness and significance, the identified subordinate agrarian classes and fractions speak strongly to the empirical dynamics observed in the northern lowlands in 2006-2014. Table 8 provides a summary of all of them.

Table 8 Subordinate agrarian classes and fractions in the northern lowlands following mixed materialist criteria

Class	Class fraction
Proletarian	<i>Farming</i>
	<i>Non-farming</i>
Family farmer	<i>Self-consumption oriented</i>
	<i>Market oriented</i>
Petty capitalist farmer	<i>Multi-functional</i>
	<i>Specialized</i>

Source: Author elaboration

4.4.2.2. Features and differentiation tendencies for subordinate agrarian classes

Like with dominant agrarian classes, class position features and differentiation tendencies are only identified now. Table 9 shows the class structure for subordinate agrarian classes and fractions in each survey year, as well as its relative change over time. Five principal and interrelated features can be distilled from the 2010 and 2014 subordinate class structures. First, proletarian class HHs are a minority, and especially non-farming ones. Second, the petty capitalist farmer class accounts for more than half of all HHs. Third, functional dualist relations are vibrant, as stems from the large shares of the farming proletarian and multi-functional petty capitalist farmer fractions within their respective classes. Fourth, the family farmer class includes around one third of all HHs. And fifth, the majority of the family farmer class HHs are part of the strictly family labor-based self-consumption

oriented fraction. Along with other issues discussed in Parts II and III, these features clearly mirror the strong agrarian character of rural lowlander villages in 2006-2014. Of all sampled households, only 1% in 2010 and 1,5% in 2014 do not farm at all.

Table 9 Share of HHs within subordinate agrarian classes and fractions in 2010 and 2014, and relative change 2014-2010

Class	Class fraction (% within class)	Year		2014-2010 Change
		2010	2014	
	Total	6,4%	11,3%	77%
Proletarian	<i>Farming</i>	85%	87%	3%
	<i>Non-farming</i>	15%	13%	-16%
	Total	33,5%	34%	1%
Family farmer	<i>Self-consumption oriented</i>	71%	61%	-14%
	<i>Market oriented</i>	29%	39%	33%
	Total	60,1%	54,7%	-9%
Petty capitalist farmer	<i>Multi-functional</i>	48%	50%	2,3%
	<i>Specialized</i>	52%	51%	-2,1%

Means differences *between* classes/fractions in 2010 and 2014, and *within* class/fraction between 2010 and 2014, are all highly significant at the 5% level, except for within the family farmer class between 2010 and 2014.

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

To better grasp class differentiation tendencies it is helpful to combine information in table 9 above on broad tendencies of change in the class structure, with that in table 10 below on HH class mobility patterns (i.e. the HH's class position in 2014 compared to that in 2010). As elaborated in chapter 2, setting the analysis of HH class mobility against the backdrop of general directions of class burgeoning, endurance or decomposition allows for a more nuanced understanding of actual tendencies of class differentiation. Hence, I identify four key and interrelated differentiation tendencies for subordinate agrarian classes.

The first concerns the proletarianization of petty capitalist farmers. Whereas it only accounts for 11% of all HHs by 2014, the proletarian class almost doubles its ranks in 2010-2014. Putting this tendency in perspective with those for other subordinate agrarian classes, I can make the argument that the proletarian class burgeons at the expense of the petty capitalist farmer (PCF) class. In fact, table 10 shows that 26% of the proletarian HHs in 2014 were family farmer HHs in 2010 (and actually 83% of them were part of the self-consumption oriented fraction). But the bulk, or 70% of proletarian HHs in 2014, belonged to PCF class HHs in 2010. Furthermore, they were mainly (69%) specialized PCFs. Put in other words, HHs engaged in reproductive strategies which did not use to lean so strongly on wage-work.

Second, there is a slight but significant increase in functional dualist relations. Table 9 (above) depicts low yet statistically-significant growth tendencies for the farming proletarian and multi-functional PCF fractions. As a result, by 2014, farming proletarians account for almost 9 out of 10 proletarian HHs, and multi-functional PCFs make up half of all PCF households. Third, the family farmer class endures on the shoulders of formerly proletarian and especially petty capitalist farmer HHs.

The third key feature in the 2010 and 2014 class structures concerned the relevance of the family farmer class in both sample years. This suggests a broad tendency of family farmer class endurance despite the lack of statistical significance of its differences over time. Besides, HH class mobility in table 10 shortly reveals 12% of family farmer HHs in 2014 were proletarian in 2010, and as much as 48% were PCFs. Furthermore, 52% of the self-consumption oriented family farmer HHs in 2014 were PCFs in 2010, 17% proletarians and 7% market oriented family farmers. This suggests that the endurance of family farmer HHS is underpinned by a “repeasantization” tendency.

However, the fourth key differentiation tendency involves the heightened commoditization of the family farmer class. Table 9 (above)

showed opposing tendencies for the self-consumption oriented and market oriented family farmer class fractions between 2010 and 2014. Whereas the former shrinks by 14%, the latter burgeons by 33%. Indeed, class mobility analysis in table 10 shortly reveals that 37% of market oriented family farmer HHs in 2014 had been self-consumption oriented HHs in 2010.

Table 10 Subordinate agrarian class HH position in the 2014 class structure according to their position in the 2010 class structure

Position in 2014 class structure	Position in 2010 class structure								
	Proletarian			Family farmer			Petty capitalist farmer		
	Total	Farming	Non-farming	Total	Self-consumption oriented	Market oriented	Total	Multi-functional	Specialized
Proletarian	4%	100%	0%	26%	83%	17%	70%	31%	69%
Farming	0%	0%	0%	30%	25%	5%	70%	25%	45%
Non-farming	33%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	67%	0%	67%
Family farmer	12%	88%	13%	41%	71%	29%	48%	61%	39%
Self-consumption oriented	17%	14%	2%	31%	24%	7%	52%	36%	17%
Market oriented	4%	4%	0%	56%	37%	19%	41%	19%	22%
Petty capitalist farmer	4%	100%	0%	31%	68%	32%	66%	47%	53%
Multi-functional	5,5%	5,5%	0%	33%	20%	13%	62%	33%	29%
Specialized	2%	2%	0%	29%	21%	7%	70%	29%	41%

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Interestingly, where flex cane and palm companies expand more vigorously, such as in Sayaxché, the aforementioned class differentiation tendencies are stronger. But where these flex crops expand less prominently, like in Chisec and Ixcán zones,²⁵⁹ the petty capitalist farmer class burgeons at the expense of former family farmers (although the proletarian class shrinks in Chisec while it grows in Ixcán). In other words, in social formations where flex agribusinesses expand to a lesser extent in 2006-2014, differentiation dynamics for subordinate agrarian

²⁵⁹ Changes in Sayaxché, Chisec and Ixcán's class structure over time are statistically significant at the 5% level.

classes resemble the classic Leninist account of economic differentiation “from below”.

As I continue to argue, a series of insights are gained if I examine class structure features and differentiation tendencies in intersection with relevant socio-cultural class divisions. For subordinate agrarian classes in the research zones in 2006-2014, HH size and demographic composition attributes are particularly meaningful. Particularly i) the age of the head-of-HH man; ii) the consumer-labor balance ratio; iii) the number of HH members; iv) the number of those of an economically active age, and; v) the sex division of the HH members of an economically active age.

First, table 11 shortly shows subordinate agrarian classes and fractions vis-à-vis the age group to which the head-of-HH man belongs. In the general context of heterosexual couples in the northern lowlands, the division of labor along gender lines and the norm of patrilineal land inheritance positions the man as the breadwinner. Thus, the age of the head-of-HH man is a better proxy than the woman’s for the analysis of the HH reproductive strategy. Also considering Q’eqchi’ and ladino men’s observed dynamics regarding their age of marriage, emancipation from parents’ HH, adulthood and advanced age, the following four age groups are identified: i) a youth group, including head-of-HH men under twenty-five (≤ 25); ii) a lower middle-aged group, including those between 25 and 45 (> 25 and ≤ 45); iii) an upper middle-aged group, involving those between 45 and 65 (> 45 and ≤ 65), and; iv) an elderly group, made up of those over sixty-five (> 65). Tracing the lines of this information, a key feature recorded registered in table 11 shortly is that most head-of-HH men from across subordinate classes and fractions in 2010 and 2014 belong to mid-range age groups. In the context of constrained access to land, a living wage-work and/or farming abilities (issues I explore further on), this generational feature mirrors both the growing challenges youth face in achieve independence from their parents’ (or in-laws’), as well as the need for elders to return to, or remain, living with their siblings.

Table 11 also presents three relevant tendencies in age class divisions in 2010-2014. First, proletarian head-of-HH men remain within the lower middle-aged group over time. Second, the family farmer class and especially its self-consumption oriented fraction head-of-HH men remain in the lower and upper middle-aged groups. On the contrary, market oriented fraction head-of-HH men grow older. This reinforces the foregoing class differentiation tendency concerning how family labor-based forms of simple reproduction do not necessarily wither away with the development of capitalist forces of production. Third and finally, despite the majority being part of the lower and upper middle-aged groups in 2010 and 2014, petty capitalist farmer (PCF) head-of-HH men are the only ones to increase their share in the extreme youth and elderly age groups. This suggests petty capitalist farming is not only appealing to or feasible for older generations, but also involves some farmers from among the youngest.

Table 11 Subordinate agrarian classes and fractions by age groups. 2010, 2014 and relative change 2014-2010.

Classes and fractions	Age groups									Significance in level of differences over time Paired-t test (5% level) *			
	≤ 25 years old			> 25 and ≤ 45 years old			> 45 and ≤ 65 years old				> 65 years old		
	2010	2014	2014-2010 Change	2010	2014	2014-2010 Change	2010	2014	2014-2010 Change		2010	2014	2014-2010 Change
Proletarians	8%	0%	-100%	69%	65%	-6%	15%	30%	97%	8%	4%	-44%	.000
Farming	0%	0%	0%	73%	65%	-11%	18%	30%	65%	9%	5%	-45%	.000
Non-farming	50%	0%	-100%	50%	67%	33%	0%	33%		0%	0%	0%	.138
Family farmers	9%	1%	-84%	43%	45%	5%	38%	44%	14%	10,3%	10,1%	-2%	.000
Self-consumption oriented	13%	2%	-81%	33%	57%	71%	42%	33%	-20%	13%	7%	-43%	.000
Market oriented	0%	0%	0%	65%	26%	-60%	30%	59%	98%	5%	15%	196%	.000
Petty capitalist farmers	5,7%	6,3%	11%	43%	34%	-20%	48%	45%	-5%	4%	14%	251%	.000
Multi-functional	5%	4%	-29%	44%	33%	-26%	48%	53%	11%	3%	11%	221%	.000
Specialized	6%	9%	41%	41%	36%	-14%	48%	38%	-21%	5%	18%	273%	.273

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically significant differences at the 5% level within a class/ fraction between 2010 and 2014

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Second, I analyze class features and differentiation tendencies for subordinate agrarian classes divided by the consumer-labor balance (C-LB) ratio²⁶⁰ through three HH categories ,namely, i) HHs in which “consumers equal laborers”; ii) HHs in which “consumers are at most the double of laborers”, and; iii) HHs in which “consumers more than double laborers”. Table 12 shows subordinate agrarian classes divided by the three C-LB ratio HH groups used previously. A significant and substantive feature is how in 2010 the more consumers over laborers, the higher the relevance of wage-work in the HH’s reproductive strategy. Nonetheless, this feature no longer holds four years later. Reasons for this are extremely relevant, and thus addressed in detail in the context of key changes in the plantation labor regime of flex palm companies from 2012 forward in the labor relations chapter.

²⁶⁰ I calculate the consumer-labor balance ratio assuming every HH member is a consumer, and only those between 14 and 70 years old are laborers. There is no discrimination about consumption levels of family members along gender or age lines (c.f. Mingorria and Gamboa 2010). This is because for us “consumption” does not involve just food. The wide range of personal consumption needs in the research zones (e.g. medicines and health services, school books, communications, clothing, transport, etc.) makes of the exercise of weighing consumption across family members a hazardous and ultimately rather meaningless one.

Table 12 Subordinate agrarian classes by consumer-labor balance ratio groups. 2010 and 2014

Class	HH Consumer-labor balance ratio group					
	Consumers equal laborers		Consumers are at most the double of laborers		Consumers more than double laborers	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Proletarian	0%	17%	39%	48%	62%	35%
Family farmer	24%	16%	54%	51%	22%	33%
Petty capitalist farmer	16%	22%	59%	52%	25%	26%
Significance in level of differences between class pairs ANOVAS (5% level)*						
Between proletarians and family farmers	<i>,035</i>	,769	<i>,035</i>	,769	<i>,035</i>	,769
Between proletarians and petty capitalist farmers	<i>,040</i>	,174	<i>,040</i>	,174	<i>,040</i>	,174
Between family farmers and petty capitalist farmers	,438	,132	,438	,132	,438	,132

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically significant differences between classes each year at the 5% level. Differences over time within each class are not statistically significant.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Third, table 13 contains important differences in HH size (or the total number of HH members) between classes and fractions—but these are only statistically significant in 2014. In this year, average HH size ranges from the 3,7 average members in non-farming proletarian HHs, to 6,9 in market oriented family farmer HHs. This suggests a feature in the subordinate agrarian class structure, which becomes clearer when I bring in the fourth class division concerning the number of HH members of an economically active age. The second column in table 13 shows how in 2010 and 2014, the fewer the number of HH members between 14 and 70 years old, the higher the HH's reliance on wage-work. And vice-versa. The larger the number of HH members of an economically active age, the higher the relevance of farming in the HH's reproductive strategy.

Table 13 Subordinate agrarian class HHs by average total members and members of an economically active age. 2010 and 2014

Subordinate agrarian classes and fractions	Total HH members		HH members of an economically active age (≥ 14 & ≤ 70 years old)	
	2010	2014	2010	2014
Proletarian	5,9	5,0	2,8	2,7
Family farmer	6,2	6,7	3,94	3,9
Petty capitalist farmer (PCF)	6,6	6,5	3,89	4,1
Significance in level of differences between class pairs ANOVAS (5% level)*				
Between proletarians and family farmers	<i>,754</i>	<i>,010</i>	<i>,005</i>	<i>,004</i>
Between proletarians and PCFs	<i>,390</i>	<i>,013</i>	<i>,025</i>	<i>,000</i>
Between family farmers and PCFs	<i>,266</i>	<i>,649</i>	<i>,837</i>	<i>,865</i>
Farming proletarians	6,1	5,3	2,9	2,8
Non-farming proletarians	5,0	3,7	2,0	2,0
Self-consumption oriented family farmers	6,0	6,5	3,7	3,4
Market oriented family farmers	6,6	6,9	4,55	4,59
Multi-functional PCFs	7,1	6,4	4,0	3,9
Specialized PCFs	6,2	6,5	3,8**	4,2**
Significance in level of differences between class fraction pairs ANOVAS (5% level)*				
Between farming and non-farming proletarians	<i>,559</i>	<i>,269</i>	n.a.	n.a.
Between self-consumption and market oriented family farmers	<i>,422</i>	<i>,579</i>	<i>,087</i>	<i>,006</i>
Between multi-functional and specialized PCFs	<i>,060</i>	<i>,838</i>	<i>,481</i>	<i>,427</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically significant differences between classes each survey year at the 5% level.

** Differences between 2010 and 2014 for “HH members of an economically active age” are only statistically significant within “specialized PCF” HHs (Paired T-test $p=0,037$).

n.a. (not applicable). Robust tests of equality of means cannot be performed for “total EAP” because at least one group has 0 variance.

All means values are higher than standard deviations.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

The latter feature is further nuanced if we consider the sex division of the HH labor force of an economically active age. Table 14 shows differences in class divisions along the average number of women and men of an economically active age. Specifically, it can be argued that both in 2010 and 2014, the lower the number of HH members of an economically active age, and especially of women, the higher the HH’s

reliance on wage-work. This also works the other way around. The larger the number of HH members between 14 and 70 years old, and especially of women, the higher the relevance of farming in the HH's reproductive strategy.

Table 14 Subordinate agrarian class HHs by average number of women and men of an economically active age. 2010 and 2014

Subordinate agrarian classes and fractions	Number of HH members of economically active age (between 14 and 70 years old)			
	Women		Men	
	2010	2014	2010	2014
Proletarian	1,2	1,3	1,5	1,5
Family farmer	1,84	1,81	2,1	2,0
Petty capitalist farmer (PCF)	1,8	1,9	2,09	2,14
Significance in level of differences between class pairs ANOVAS (5% level)*				
Between proletarians and family farmers	<i>,001</i>	<i>,002</i>	,167	,062
Between proletarians and PCFs	<i>,001</i>	<i>,000</i>	,102	<i>,017</i>
Between family farmers and PCFs	,775	,533	,947	,576
Farming proletarians	1,3	1,4	1,64	1,60
Non-farming proletarians	1	1	1	1
Self-consumption oriented family farmers	1,8	1,7	1,9	1,6
Market oriented family farmers	2,1	1,9	2,5	2,7
Multi-functional PCFs	2,0	1,7	2,0	2,2
Specialized PCFs	1,6**	2,1**	2,2	2,1
Significance in level of differences between class fractions pairs ANOVAS (5% level)*				
Between farming and non-farming proletarians	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Between self-consumption and market oriented family farmers	,322	,399	,134	<i>,000</i>
Between multi-functional and specialized PCFs	,052	<i>,024</i>	,506	,405

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically significant differences between classes during each survey year at the 5% level.

** Differences between 2010 and 2014 regarding “HH members of an economically active age” are only statistically significant for differences within the “number of women in specialized PCF” HHs (Paired T-test $p=0.033$).

N.a. (not applicable). Robust tests of equality of means cannot be performed for either “women” or “men” because at least one group has “0” variance.

All means values are higher than standard deviations.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

4.5. Change and continuity in the policy structure

My focus here is on the analysis of change and continuity in key statutory “policy packages” feeding into and coming from dynamics of agro-environmental change amid surging flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014, and the legitimating model paradigms behind them. As advanced, such paradigms are prone to dogmatization, or their making as indisputably true by state’s authority. We have seen that the oligarchic-bourgeoisie remains the general class hegemon in Guatemala circa 2006-2014. But the rise of the agro-extractivist fraction in the context of the convergent crises conjuncture changes the mechanisms and politics of class hegemony reproduction. Neoliberal governance and trickle-down policy dogmas discussed in the genealogy chapter remain general ideological compasses for state actors on the realms of government and (economic) development, respectively. But the former finds new inspiration in World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative” (GRI), and the latter wraps its original neo-classical *laissez-faire* around neo-institutional subsidiarity.

Similarly, despite the relevant formal differences discussed in Parts II and III, the flex-labor, land good governance, financialization and knowledge enclosure policy dogmas of purge agro-Capitalism in 1986-2005 continue to inform the labor, land, financial and Knowledge and technology relations in 2006-2014. Conversely, the defensive green enclosure policy dogma finds a more accumulation-friendly rationale in the green economy model paradigm-turned-dogma. Indeed, ‘an entire philosophy of nature co-produced with a new “green” economy’ (Fairhead et al. 2012, 245) gains traction under the convergent crises conjuncture. The ‘green economy’ model paradigm assumes that ‘growth in income and employment are driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services’ (UNEP 2011, 16). When the Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) introduces UNEP’s ‘green finance’ initiative a few years later, he explains that it is meant to support

the ongoing ‘quiet revolution’. The means by which it does so are ‘concepts such as natural wealth and the circular, green economy have moved from the margins to become the substance of economic strategies and policies for businesses and nations’ (in UNEP 2015, i). Formal differences notwithstanding, flex-labor, land good governance, financialization, knowledge enclosure and now green economy policy dogmas have come to be strongly influenced by a refined “Global Redesign Initiative” and neo-institutional neoliberal model paradigms.

4.5.1. *Neoliberalism 2.0: The policy structure under the Global Redesign Initiative and neo-institutional paradigms*

The “Global Redesign Initiative” stems from the World Economic Forum’s (hereafter WEF) efforts ‘to formulate a new system of global governance’ (Gleckman 2016, 92). This is advanced in a 2010 report entitled “Everybody’s Business: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World. Report of the Global Redesign Initiative” (WEF. 2010). If during the initial phase of neoliberal Globalization the “governance-for-government” model paradigm was prescribed by a commission of powerful individuals reporting to the United Nations, then under the early 21st-century convergent crises conjuncture, it is transnational corporates reporting to a private business forum that takes the lead. As the WEF explains, ‘particularly *in the wake of the global economic crisis*, we need to *rethink our values, redesign our systems and rebuild our institutions*’ (WEF. 2010 emphasis added). Likewise, the 1995 UN Commission on Global Governance, WEF’s GRI governance paradigm, calls for private actors to play a larger role in public affairs through multi-stakeholder initiatives. But WEF’s GRI governance model paradigm takes a big leap forward and away from its UN-linked predecessor, calling to ‘redefine the international system as constituting a wider, multifaceted system of global cooperation in which intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, *but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial, component*’ (WEF. 2010, 7 emphasis added). Hence, this “flexible” governance system could be used to replace governments

when a core group of MNC [Multi-National Company] executives decide they could be effective in their own terms *in addressing a global challenge*' (Gleckman 2016, 96 emphasis added). For Gleckman, there are three key aspects in the way WEF understands multi-stakeholder and "multi-stakeholderism": 'first, multi-stakeholder structures do not mean equal roles for all stakeholders; second, the corporation is at the centre of the process; and third, the list of WEF's multi-stakeholders is principally those with commercial ties to the company [...] All the others [...] are grouped together as "government and society"' (2016, 96).

In tune with WEF's GRI governance, a "second generation" of reforms, which focus on a new role of the public sector towards agriculture, [...] move away from the initial market-led development paradigm of the SAP [Structural Adjustment] policy regime that dominated the continent during part of the 1980s and the 1990s' (Spoor 2002, 398). Indeed, post-Washington Consensus economic reforms in 2006-2014 Guatemala swap out neo-classical *laissez-faire* for neo-institutional subsidiarity. Among other things, this means that early 21st-century neoliberalism is not the same as the one that occurred 30 years ago. Appendini and Nuijten (2002) best summarize this in an article for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

'With the transformation of the State and recognition of the existence of "market failures", emphasis has been laid on the *role of institutions in providing economic and social agents with access to resources and opportunities* for enhancing their *earning potential*. Thus, "*getting institutions right*" is becoming a *dominant policy-making paradigm* in the international development agenda. As a result of structural adjustment and economic reform, interventionist policies are giving way to policies that focus on "*enabling*" and *devolving power to populations that are to become active partners in development efforts*. With this "*bottom up*" approach, *local institutions* have been assigned a central role in the task of *helping people cope* with the impact of macroeconomic changes and finding *new ways to improve their livelihoods* through access to employment and resources' (2002, 70 emphasis added).

The subsidiary role that Guatemalan state powers embrace in 2006-2014 is neither akin to 1955-1985 “interventionism” nor to 1986-2005 “laissez-faire”. Quite the contrary, the subsidiary role of the state translates in its active-yet-selective involvement in the reproduction of the general, and to a lesser extent natural and personal, conditions of production, especially but not only for the accumulation projects of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. This subsidiary role impinges upon capitalist state’s contradictory tasks of facilitating accumulation, and defending it at all costs, while keeping the highest degree possible of social legitimation.²⁶¹ Thus, strategically selected policy discourses materialize in differentiated development policies advanced through the state’s relative autonomy. For explanatory purposes I divide policy packages of relevance to main trajectories of agro-environmental change during 2006-2014 into those facilitating accumulation for dominant agrarian classes, and market integration and safety nets for subordinate ones.

4.5.2. *Accumulation for dominant agrarian classes*

The 1986-2005 neoliberal trickle-down dogma policies focusing on attracting foreign direct investments, the selective liberalization of imports and the facilitation of markets for exports all continue and bear fruits in 2006-2014. The Guatemalan Congress ratifies the “Association Agreement” with the European Union in June 2013. Indeed, the myriad of free trade agreements and bilateral investment protection treaties in force circa 2006-2014 pave the way for commodities and finance—but not labor—to flow freely in and out the country.

It is in this political context and time period that trade and investment, labor, financial, environmental, intellectual property, monetary and fiscal policies are steered towards supporting investments in natural resource-based accumulation projects. This happens for foreign investment, but

²⁶¹ In so doing, Guatemalan state powers rely on ‘strategic selectivity’ in the Poulantzean sense. This meaning ‘the State does not produce a unified discourse, but several discourses that are adapted to the various classes and differentially incarnated in its apparatuses according to their class destination. Or, to put it in another way, it produces *a discourse that is broken into segments and fragments according to lines intersecting the strategy of power*’ (Poulantzas, 32 emphasis added).

even more so for investment on the domestic front. To make this happen, Guatemalan state actors rely heavily on their trans-national peers. Most distinctively, the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) praise the economic growth virtues of the ‘commodity super-cycle’, and encourage ‘resource-rich and finance-poor’ countries like Guatemala to seize the opportunity.²⁶² In addition to giving advice, trans-national state actors also offer financial, technical and political support. I discuss this further on in this section and in more detail in Part II. Here, it is worth flagging the role played by the World Bank in mapping and rendering land “apt” for cane and palm cultivation, and by the IDB in advancing the biofuels agenda in Guatemala. At one end of the spectrum, the World Bank endorses the claim that ‘46% of the world’s potential area of non-forested, non-protected land, close to market and most suitable for rainfed palm cultivation is in Latin America’ (Fisher and Shah 2010 in Deininger and Byerlee 2011, 80). Specifically, Guatemala and other Central American countries, fall under the category of ‘Little Land Available & High Yield Gap’ (Deininger and Byerlee 2011, 89, 184). It is of little surprise that the Guatemalan government had identified 57% of the country’s farmland as suitable for cane and palm cultivation.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, ECLAC and especially the IDB provide key technical support to resuscitate a biofuels law that has been dormant in Guatemala since 1985 (Head of State 1985). Part and parcel to the “biofuels madness” taking place during the convergent crises conjuncture, ECLAC had already offered a thorough study in 2004 on ‘Perspectives for a Biofuels Programme in Central America’ (Horta Nogueira 2004). In 2007, Guatemala becomes a third party partner in the “US-Brazil Biofuels Alliance” (OAS. 2012). That year, in an effort to assert its position as leading palm oil biodiesel producer in the region, Colombia donates a \$US 1 million biodiesel processing plant to

²⁶² See, inter alia, World Bank (2007), IDB (2009), Deininger and Byerlee (2011) and ECLAC (2011).

Guatemala, and signs a cooperation agreement to develop ‘agro-energy which respects food security’.²⁶³ And following the 2008 upgrade of the “Puebla to Panama Plan” into the “Mesoamerican Development Plan”, the IDB funds the “The Mesoamerican Network for Research and Development of Biofuels”.²⁶⁴ As a result, the IDB publishes a report on the ‘Productive Potential of Cane Ethanol in Central America and Dominican Republic’ (2008), and grants US\$ 400 thousand to support biofuels development in Guatemala (2008b). Nonetheless, despite these efforts and the development of two new biofuels law drafts in 2007 and 2014, legal mandates to blend fossil and agro-fuels fail in 2006-2014 due to frontal opposition by petrol and diesel importers and distributors.²⁶⁵

Following the spread of the green gold pandemic throughout the Guatemalan policy structure, flex cane and palm complexes are considered to be of great ‘national interest’.²⁶⁶ This indicates that, first, flex cane and palm complexes are to be promoted by all means and defended at all costs. Second is the justification of the use of public funds to support the rise of flex cane and palm complexes ‘for the sake of all Guatemalans, the hungry masses of the world and the planet’. Nonetheless, the Guatemalan Director of the International Sugar Organization argues ‘there are no subsidies to sugar in Central America; they are neither wanted nor claimed [...] if we have achieved a high level of competitiveness is because we do not ask for “petty gifts” (regalitos) but just for the *conditions* that enable us to keep growing’ (interview by Bollman 2014, emphasis added). These conditions, however, are anything but “petty”. They involve the appropriation of a series of ‘institutional rents’ by flex agribusinesses (de Janvry 1981, 155) through direct financial subsidies, tax incentives and exemptions, and more

²⁶³ Interviews with Director of Agribusiness, Colombian Corporation for Agricultural Research (CORPOICA) and Head of Biofuels, Colombian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) in Bogota, July 2008.

²⁶⁴ Interview with IDB Official responsible for developing IDB’s “Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard”, December 2008

²⁶⁵ Interview with Executive Secretary of the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association (ACR), February 2010

²⁶⁶ Minister of Economy in “X National Businessmen Conference” (ENADE), September 2013, and Guatemalan President in “I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers”, October 2013

indirect subsidies to the reproduction of the general, personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production.

More indirectly, the government's 2005-2015 and 2012-2021 "National Competitiveness Agendas" (PRONACOM 2005, PRONACOM 2012), "Territorial Development Plans" (SEGEPLAN 2011) and "General Policy Framework for the Promotion of Private Investment in Rural Territories" (Government of Guatemala 2012) include a series of energy and communications infrastructure development mega-projects.

Examples are i) hydropower plants and the associated river, dams and electrical grid network that are part of the "Central American Electrical Interconnection System" (SIEPAC); ii) roads and highways, like those that had been planned for a considerable length of time, but only developed in 2006-2014 in the Northern Transversal Strip and Polochic²⁶⁷ sub-regions, and; iii) deep-water sea ports and export facilities, especially the upgrade of old "Santo Tomás Castilla" port on the northern Caribbean coast to fully exploit Guatemala's access to the Atlantic. Most of these development mega-projects are part of the "Mesoamerican Development Plan" and carried out through "public-private-partnerships" funded through preferential loans from foreign national (e.g. Brazil, Taiwan, Spain or Netherlands) and transnational (e.g. IDB, CABI) development banks (PRONACOM 2005, PRONACOM 2012).

More directly, flex cane and palm companies bear the fruits of business-friendly tax reforms in 1986-2005 and benefit from a series of financial subsidies, tax incentives and exemptions for flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014. Altogether, they minimally enjoy i) the Value Added Tax (VAT) return for exporters in force since 1992; ii) the subsidies included in the 2003 "Renewable Energy Projects Development Incentives Law"; iii) the reduction of the Corporate Tax

²⁶⁷ The Polochic road project changed plans (and budget) in 2006 to accommodate the needs of heavy cane trucks (interview with Head of International Cooperation of the Roads Department, Ministry of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing (MICIVI), November 2006). Curiously enough, the Polochic flex cane company owner at the time is the brother in law of the Guatemalan President.

rate from 31% to 25% following tax reforms in 2009 and 2012, and; iv) different “Payments for Environmental Services”, including compliance and voluntary carbon offset mechanisms, a point that is further expanded upon in the chapter on financial relations. Nonetheless, in addition to the potential double-accounting practices to reduce payments for Corporate Tax which I do not delve into here, and company registration in tax-havens like Panama that I discuss in the financial relations chapter, the discussion here should include two notorious cases of tax benefits abuse in the given time period.

First, is the case of the Soil Tax—the only tax municipal governments receive in full. This is calculated at 0,009% of the land price in the Property Registry. Nonetheless, many companies “negotiate” with municipal mayors to pay a lower tax. In Panzós, Polochic Valley zone, the Chabil Utzaj flex cane company applies the Soil Tax rate to an estimated land price of US\$ 1.300 per hectare, when the actual price ranged from US\$ 15.500 to US\$ 22.200 per hectare.²⁶⁸ Similar cases are reported elsewhere in the northern lowlands.²⁶⁹ But, even more cases are known in which flex cane and palm companies simply do not pay any Soil Tax at all.²⁷⁰ Second, recall from the genealogy chapter that Guatemala passed laws on “Free-Trade” and “Export Processing and Maquila” zones in 1989. The latter offers import, VAT and Corporate Tax exemptions to exporters ‘manufacturing and/ or assembling goods which include a minimum of 51% of foreign parts’ (Reynolds 2012). It specifically excludes flex cane companies (art. 2 Guatemalan Congress 1989). Nonetheless, two flex cane and four flex palm companies are illegally registered as “maquilas” in 2006-2014 (Olmstead 2015). According to Reynolds (2012), tax exemptions for flex agribusinesses and other companies in “Free-Trade” and “Export Processing and Maquila” Zones ‘double the budget for social grants [see below], are five

²⁶⁸ Interview with Panzós mayor, March 2008

²⁶⁹ Interviews with mayors from Fray, Sayaxché and Raxruha in October 2009, July 2012 and August 2013

²⁷⁰ Interviews with Heads of Soil Tax Offices of Chisec, Sayaxché and El Estor municipalities, all in August 2011

times the budget for high school education and almost equals the budget of the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance' in 2012.

Not surprisingly, ECLAC argues that in Guatemala 'tax reductions and exemption for privileged sectors between 2009 and 2013 amount to 5,7% of the GDP [and] the Soil Tax amounts to less than 0,1% of the GDP whereas the average in Latin America stands around 1%' (Castaneda Ancheta et al. 2016, 41). As a result, Guatemalan fiscal revenues are among the lowest in Latin America in 2006-2014 (ECLAC 2015, 87), amounting to '10,9% and 11,6% of the GDP in 2011 and 2014, respectively' (Villatoro García 2015). In fact, the latter figures match those of international migrant remittances' contribution to GDP during those years (Pew Research Center. 2013). As in 1986-2005, and despite their lower growth rate due to financial crisis and tightened migrant policy in the US, migrant remittances in 2006-2014 remain vital for the social reproduction of the underclasses. But as I discuss in the next chapter, their uneven distribution among ethnic groups and regions means northern lowlander Q'eqchi'es barely receive any international remittances.

Thus, short of fiscal revenue, Guatemalan state actors recur to debt as a more politically feasible alternative to fund the national budget,²⁷¹ including social grants. I discuss this further in the financial relations chapter. For our purposes here, it suffices to point out that the IDB reports public debt payments soar 'from 11,3% of GDP in 2008 to 13,2% in 2010 and 15% in 2011. Debt payment in 2010 matches public expense on road infrastructure and is higher than that on health and social assistance' (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 14).

4.5.3. Integration and safety nets for subordinate agrarian classes

Like during purge agro-capitalism in 1986-2005, "market integration" for subordinate class cultivators in 2006-2014 means embracing the

²⁷¹ As the IDB explains 'tax reform remains the macro-economic Achilles Heel in Guatemala' (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 6). I discuss this further in Part III.

production of export cash-crops through contract-farming with agribusinesses. But in a context of heightened “watch-dogging” of transnational commodity chains, growing unrest at the grassroots with flex cane and palm companies from 2008, and especially from 2012, clearly indicate changes in business-as-usual trickle-down dogma market integration policies. Among these shifts, three are highly relevant for the main trajectories of agro-environmental change in 2006-2014.

First, in 2009 the government of Guatemala launches the “Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program” (PROPALMA). This is a US\$ 1,5 million pilot program aiming to ‘turn 4.200 hectares of marginal and low-yield peasant farmland into lucrative palm farms’.²⁷² PROPALMA involves just one flex palm company (PALIXCÁN) and 311 petty capitalist farmers from Chisec and Ixcán zones represented through the “Farmers Association for the Comprehensive Development of the Northern Basin of the Chixoy River” (ADINC). Contract-farmers²⁷³ must be part of an association to be eligible for the US\$ 528 one-time subsidy per hectare of palm. After signing a 25 year contract, the government transfers the funds to the association (ADINC), which in turn transfers them to the flex palm company (PALIXCÁN) in payment for seedlings and agronomic services. Petty capitalist contract-farmers organized through ADINC are obliged to sell their palm production exclusively to PALIXCÁN, with that company agreeing to buy it as long as it meets the quality standards it has established regarding weight, size and color of the palm fruit. Per-ton prices of palm fruit are calculated at a variable rate of 14% of the CIF Rotterdam price for palm oil.²⁷⁴

Second, the Fertilizer Distribution Program (PROFER) that was inaugurated in the year 2000 persists in 2006-2014. On average, between

²⁷² Interview with Head of the government’s PROPALMA September 2009. Curiously enough, PROPALMA’s Head is a former PALIXCÁN flex palm company engineer, and PROPALMA is included in the “Maize Programme” of the government’s “2009-2012 Strategic Plan on Food Security and Nutrition”.

²⁷³ I brand petty capitalist farmer suppliers as “contract-farmers” to avoid conflation with dependent agrarian bourgeois “outgrowers”.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Board Members of ADINC farmers’ association, October 2009

2006 and 2012 PROFER accounts for 26% of the entire Ministry of Agriculture's budget, or US\$ 32 million per year (Gálvez et al. 2013, 74). PROFER's outreach grows from 400.000 beneficiaries in 2000 to almost a million in 2012, while the number of fertilizer bags provided shrinks from 4 to 2 over the same time period. Outcomes of PROFER's 2012 impact evaluation shows that i) bean and maize yields [goals stated by PROFER] did not increase for beneficiaries; ii) only 25% of the beneficiaries received technical assistance, and; iii) PROFER had no effect (positive or negative) on per capita income or food security levels of the beneficiaries (Gálvez et al. 2013, 114).

In addition to PROFER, from 2009 and especially from 2012 on there are a series of farming, rural development and land policies which—for the first time in more than two decades—target petty capitalist farmers and market oriented family farmers as productive subjects. Farming and rural development policies include, on the one side, the 2009 “Comprehensive Rural Development Policy” (PNDRI). An outcome of the “National Dialogue for Comprehensive Rural Development and Agrarian, Environmental, and Labor Conflict Settlement” convened by President Colom in 2008, the PNDRI targets

‘poor and extremely poor rural dwellers, with an emphasis on landless, land-scarce, or owners of unyielding land indigenous and peasant peoples and communities; indigenous and peasant women; temporal or permanent wage-workers; artisans; small rural producers, and; micro and small rural entrepreneurs. The indigenous and peasant rural economy is placed at the core which through State's support, as responsible for and promotor of comprehensive rural development, will become a key rural development actor’ (Government of Guatemala 2009, 14).

Furthermore, PNDRI aims to, first, ‘reform and democratize the land access, use, tenure, and ownership regime, discouraging its concentration so the prioritized subject in this policy has access to land and other means of production’ (ibid, 11). And second, it claims to ‘protect, promote and strengthen *food sovereignty* and food and nutritional

security through support to national food production and supply in domestic markets, especially by small and medium rural economies' (ibid, emphasis added). Curiously enough, food sovereignty is also considered a 'guiding principle' (Government of Guatemala 2009, 12), although it is understood from a state-centric perspective, and in a way that resonates more with the problems associated with trade liberalization during neoliberal purge agro-capitalism from 1986-2005 than with the early 21st-century world-historic conjuncture of convergent crises.²⁷⁵

On the other side, the 2012 "PNDRI Activation and Adjustment Plan" aims to "pull" (under)subsistence cultivators to produce a surplus, and "push" surplus producers into markets so they can prosper as much as their abilities and wishes allow them to' (Government of Guatemala 2012b, 11). In so doing, the "Family Farming Program for the Strengthening of Peasant Economy" (PAFFEC) seeks to 'contribute to the upward mobility of peasant families from subsistence to surplus food producers, access to value chains and enhanced income' (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) 2012, 34). The PAFFEC brings back a "National System of Agricultural Extension" (SNEA), and the "Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology" (ICTA) as a public plant-breeding services provider (ibid.).

Subordinate agrarian class-oriented land policies include the 2009 "Specific Regulation for the Recognition and Declaration of Communal Lands" by the Cadastral Information Registry,²⁷⁶ the Land Fund's (FONTIERRAS) land leasing program and communal land titling

²⁷⁵ Considering the first PNDRI draft was elaborated between 2002 and 2005 by social actors part of the "Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development" (ADRI), in the 2009 approved version of the PNDRI food sovereignty is understood as follows: 'The Guatemalan *state* sovereignly decides the modality, season, type and quality of food produce, in a sustained way and at the lowest cost and environmental risk, and protects the food and nutritional security of the Guatemala population while promoting national food production, proving access to means of production for indigenous people and peasants, and protecting national food production from *dumping* and any other form of unfair competition' (Government of Guatemala 2009, 12 emphasis added).

²⁷⁶ More generally, the cadastral registration process is funded in 2008-2013 with a US\$ 62 million loan by the World Bank (LAP-II) (Grünberg et al. 2012).

option from 2012 on, and especially the 2014 “Land Policy” by the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs. I discuss these policies further on, but for the purposes of this chapter it is adequate to point out that in the “Land Policy” government allies itself with FAO in 2014. This is done to develop a new land policy consistent with the 2009 “Comprehensive Rural Development Policy” (PNDRI) and the ‘Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security’ (hereafter TGs) approved in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). As a result, the 2014 Land Policy targets the same groups advanced earlier by the PNDRI and is structured like the TGs (Government of Guatemala 2014, see Tramel and Caal Hub 2016 for a review).

Finally, a series of governmental conditional cash transfer programs perform from 2008 as safety nets for the “inefficient and outcompeted”. Branded as “My Family Makes Progress” (Mi Familia Progresada) and “My Secure Bond” (Mi Bono Seguro) under Colom’s 2008-2011 and General Pérez Molina’s 2012-2015 administrations, respectively, conditional cash transfer programs include two grant types. The first is the ‘Schooling Grant’ for ‘poor families with children between 6 and 15 years old’ (ECLAC. 2016, 2016b). The second is the ‘Health Grant’ to which ‘poor families with children between 0 and 15 years old and/or pregnant and lactating women’ (ibid) are eligible. Each grant entails a monthly transfer of US\$ 19 per-household on the condition that children attend 80% of classes, and children and pregnant and lactating women go for regular health checks. On a yearly average between 2008 and 2014, these social grants amount to 0,2% of the GDP, and involve 653.860 HHs which comprise 28% of the population, and receive a maximum monthly payment of US\$ 38 regardless of the size (author calculations based on ECLAC. 2016, 2016b). Not surprisingly, the IDB argues that ‘social spending in Guatemala is one of the lowest in Latin America despite significant social rifts’ (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 10). However, it is very difficult for a government to withdraw social grants once they are in place. In fact, whereas the “Social Cohesion Council” manages these

funds from 2008-2011, by 2012 they become the impetus behind the creation of the “Ministry of Social Development” (MIDES).

PART II Interactive analysis of productive relations in Guatemalan agriculture under converging global crises

Chapter 5 Labor relations

5.1. Introduction

The Guatemalan rural labor market and broader dynamics of agro-environmental change shaped international migration from 1986-2005, especially migration to the US. Specifically, this was the main strategy that the surplus population followed to stay afloat. Even if seriously constrained by heightened policing of Mexican, and even more so US, borders by official and paramilitary forces following the 2007-8 financial crisis in the US, international migration is still a preferred coping strategy for thousands of Guatemalans in 2006-2014 (Ratha et al. 2016). Nonetheless, lowlander Q'eqchies' figure much less prominently in the statistics of the Guatemalan diaspora living in the US. Participants in a group interview in the Polochic Valley zone in December 2007 explain that 'only those who are educated migrate to the US'. This is not to suggest the Q'eqchi' are particularly uneducated, let alone sedentary peoples. In fact, the opposite is true. I advanced their long history of rural-rural and rural-urban migration in Guatemala, as well as within and to neighboring Belize. Labor relations, amid rising flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014, have added a new chapter to this story.

Labor relations are cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes shaping the ways: i) labor-power is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) agro-commodity value is divided between labor-power's value and surplus value; iii) ownership over the fruits of labor is politically sanctioned —as expressed in the division of value between labor-power value and surplus value, and; iv) labor-power value and surplus value are appropriated by different production agents and used

for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. In exploring labor relations, I focus on labor markets and regimes in the new and main frontier for flex cane and palm complexes' expansion—the northern lowlands. There, predominant labor regimes include those in family labor farms, petty capitalist farms and other capital-labor regimes, especially in flex cane and palm commodity production. Despite a persistence of non-capitalist labor relations (i.e. hacienda-tenants and debt peonage), and the fact that family labor households into simple reproduction continue to include around one third of total households in 2006-2014, analytical emphasis is given to change and continuity in capitalist labor markets and the role of non-commodified family labor in agrarian accumulation.

Still by 2010, petty capitalist farmers and flex palm companies share top, and similar, positions as employers. By 2014, however, wage work in corporate palm plantations becomes the main job source in the research zones. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand, there is a large increase in flex palm companies' labor demand. Thousands of hectares of new palm plantations established from 2006 on gradually come into production after 2010. On the other hand, social unrest on the ground and pressure from watchdog organizations of different kinds make (trans)national agro-extractivist bourgeoisie change their productive practices to soften the blow on people and the environment. The politics behind such changes are discussed in Part III. Here, it suffices to say that they are a vector and an expression of the labor regime fix by flex agribusinesses from late 2012 forward.

This labor regime fix involves the two main forms of incorporation into the corporate palm labor regime, namely as plantation workers and palm fruit or cane suppliers. For workers in corporate palm plantations, the labor regime fix means swapping better wages, and to a lesser extent labor conditions, for heightened absolute and relative rates of exploitation and flexibility in the labor relation. Rather than changing terms of incorporation, implications of the labor regime fix by flex palm companies for independent palm fruit suppliers have to do with the

increase and diversification of their ranks. As discussed in the chapter on land relations, in 2006-2014 there is a growing number of large palm fruit suppliers, part of the outgrower fraction of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie. Besides, petty capitalist farmer palm fruit suppliers are incorporated from 2009 on through the government's palm contract-farming programme (PROPALMA).

Palm fruit suppliers are included in the analysis of labor relations because, as a result of the conditions established through different supply arrangements, they surrender control over surplus value (i.e. the surplus labor of the workers they hire for palm farming) to the flex palm companies. In this way, palm fruit suppliers morph from dependent agrarian bourgeois and petty capitalist farmers into a sort of "rentier-proletariat". As land-owners, they retain the ability to appropriate farmland's ground-rent. But squeezed by multiple and increasing production costs, price penalties for palm fruit below companies' standards and variable pricing more generally, they (especially petty capitalist farmers) are often at pains to appropriate even a fraction of the surplus value generated in the production of palm fruit—or that beyond the one amounting to the value of their own labor-power (i.e. their wage).

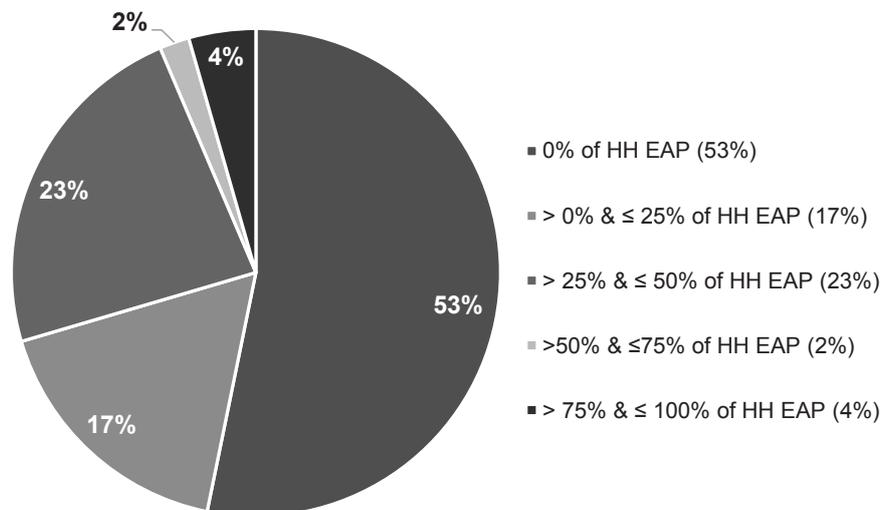
Therefore, the bulk of this chapter explores the ways in which the flex palm companies' labor regime fix works out for plantation workers, palm fruit suppliers and other labor regimes in farming, including in petty capitalist farming, and the family labor regime for all subordinate agrarian classes more generally. Regarding the latter, I am concerned with the analysis of how can longer working days in palm plantations and petty capitalist farms, and extended working periods in the latter case, allow for the vibrant functional dualist relations identified in the previous chapter. In short, there are two dynamics behind thriving functional dualism in 2006-2014. First, labor exchange relations among village cultivators regain momentum. But this labor de-commodification mechanism underpins not only repeasantization, but also the functional dualist semi-proletarianization tendency identified in chapter 4. In other

words, besides supplying a labor-force at zero cost during peak farming times, labor exchanges allow villagers to seize wage-work opportunities in corporate palm plantations. Secondly, functional dualism persists through women’s heightened involvement in farming, and worsening terms for unpaid family labor supporting male wage-earners.

5.2. Labor and labor market

Family labor-based social reproduction strategies—especially family farming—continue to be paramount in the northern lowlands circa 2006-2014. Figure 21 shows that more than half of the HHs surveyed in 2010 and 2014 do not have any members between the ages of 14 and 70 working for a wage for at least two months in those years.²⁷⁷

Figure 21 Households according to members of an economically active age employed for at least two months in the year (in %). 2010 and 2014.*



* There are not statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014.

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey.

²⁷⁷ This share drops to 38% if we consider at least one month. But two months is a preferred bottom-line to avoid considering a HH as wage-labor-based when this is the case just occasionally (i.e. during peak farming periods like harvest).

However, 47% of HH members of an economically active age do work for a wage during two or more months a year. Table 15 shows their main job sources in 2010 and 2014, as well as the changing relevance of these sources over time. Subsequently, table 16 displays job sources by the age group to which the head-of-HH-man belongs.

Table 15 Job sources for two to twelve months a year. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (in %)

Job source	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Petty capitalist farmer	<i>40%</i>	<i>5%</i>	-86%
Flex palm company	<i>37%</i>	<i>58%</i>	57%
Other agricultural company	4%	5%	30%
Estate (hacienda/ ranch)	1%	0%	-100%
Private security company	3%	5%	116%
Other non-agricultural company	3%	9%	170%
Civil service	3%	3%	8%
The military	5%	4%	-28%
NGO	0,8%	0,9%	8%
Others	3%	9%	170%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences over time at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,044$ for petty capitalist farmer, and ,021 for palm company)

Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Table 16 Job sources for two to twelve months by age group of the head-of-HH man. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (in %)

Job source	≤ 25		2014-2010 Change	> 25 & ≤ 45		2014-2010 Change	> 45 & ≤ 65		2014-2010 Change	> 65		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014		2010	2014		2010	2014		2010	2014	
Petty capitalist farmer	33%	0%	-100%	34%*	3%	-90%**	52%*	9%	-83%	0%	0%	0%
Flex palm company	50%*	50%	0%	45%*	73%	64%	14%*	36%	155%	0%	100%	n.a.
Other agricultural company	17%	0%	-100%	8%	10%	27%	0%	18%	n.a.	0%	0%	0%
Hacienda/ ranch	0%	0%	0%	2,6%	3,3%	27%	10%	9%	-5%	0%	0%	0%
Private security company	0%	0%	0%	2,6%	3,3%	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other non-agricultural company	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	-100%	0%	0%	0%
Civil service	0%	0%	n.a.	3%	0%	-100%	5%	18%	282%	0%	0%	0%
The military	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
NGO	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	-100%	0%	0%	0%
Others	0%	50%	n.a.	5%	7%	27%	10%	9%	-5%	0%	0%	0%

* Statistically-significant differences at the 5% level in 2010 only between head-of-HH-men working for: i) a petty capitalist farmer in the > 25 & ≤ 45 age group and those in the > 45 & ≤ 65 group (χ^2 test p=,036); ii) a flex palm company in the ≤ 25 group and those in the >45 & ≤65 group (χ^2 test p=,021), and; iii) a flex palm company in the > 25 & ≤ 45 age group and those in the >45 & ≤65 group (χ^2 test p=,050)

** Statistically-significant differences at the 5% level between 2010 and 2014 for head-of-HH-men working for a petty capitalist farmer and part of the > 25 & ≤ 45 age group (McNemar test p=,043)

Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

If we cross the data in tables 15 and 16 above with information gathered through (group) interviews and participant observation in the research zones, age divisions and change over time stand out as two key features of the 2010 and 2014 job structures. First, the few jobs available are mostly in agriculture.²⁷⁸ All other non-agricultural jobs never include more than 10% of the total work force. The military, private security and non-agricultural firms recruit mainly young men living with their elders. Civil service (predominately in primary and secondary education)

²⁷⁸ The small shares of jobs under “other agricultural company” refer basically to cane and rubber plantations, since most coffee haciendas in the northern lowlands collapsed at the beginning of the 21st Century and cattle ranches hardly employ labor.

and NGO positions are usually held by head-of-HH men in the between 45 and 65 mid-upper age group, and to a lesser extent by young women living with their parents (or in-laws). “Other non-agricultural companies” and “others” include a broad range of informal and occasional jobs, most often for men, as drivers, porters, builders and related trades, corn-tortilla makers (women), among a few others. Two of these scenarios stand out for the youngest age group. One is domestic and care-work in the city, involving young women between 16 and 20 years old under precarious and highly exploitative labor arrangements. For wages between US\$ 50 and 75 per month, these women are subject to long workdays and often experience racial and sexual harassment as well. Afraid of losing their sole source of income, they cope in silence with hyper-exploitation, abuse and mistreatment.²⁷⁹ The other scenario is the open secret unrecorded in official labor statistics that I discuss in detail in Part III. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to define this as including the jobs Q’eqchi’ and ladino men, usually with limited abilities for farming and/ or other job opportunities, carry out as “private security” agents. Such jobs are done for ranchers, mining or flex cane and palm companies, and as thugs for hire in criminal organizations (i.e. narco-cartels and criminal urban “mara” gangs). Second, flex palm companies and petty capitalist farmers account for approximately two thirds of all jobs. Even so, the share of petty capitalist farmers shrinks while that of flex palm companies soars between 2010 and 2014. New employment opportunities in palm plantations after 2010 are significantly seized by head of HH men in the between 25 and 45 and between 45 and 65 age groups, though they remain the most important ones for the 25 years old and younger group.

The aforementioned features and trends in the northern lowlands’ job structure are shaped by flex agribusinesses expansion and consolidation. The second point especially stems from the labor regime fix flex palm companies implement from 2012 onward. Reasons for this are discussed in detail in Part III within the contours of the politics of agro-

²⁷⁹ Group interview with women from Adelina Caal Maquin Association, October 2009.

environmental change. Considering that flex palm companies become the main wage-work source by 2014, I now turn my gaze upon the ways in which the particular labor regime fix they have implemented works out for plantation workers, palm fruit suppliers and competing labor regimes in farming.

5.3. Flex palm companies' labor regime fix and plantation workers

Labor requirements in flex cane and palm commodity production concentrate on farming operations. Employment opportunities for industrial workers, accountants, drivers, industrial engineers, lab technicians, public relations, security guards and so on are much more constrained. For instance, NaturAceites' palm oil mill in the Polochic Valley employs 75 workers, while 'several hundred are employed in field operations'.²⁸⁰ Similarly, the largest flex palm company in Petén (HAME groups' REPSA) employs just 18 palm oil mill workers (Luxner 2014). White and blue collar workers in processing plants are directly and formally hired by companies. Because of this, they enjoy a labor regime very different from that of plantation workers. My discussion, therefore, on flex palm companies' labor regime fix refers to workers on plantations unless otherwise indicated.²⁸¹

Flex palm companies' labor regime fix changes the terms of incorporation for plantation workers in many ways, including forms of recruitment and hiring, wages and labor benefits and working conditions. The bulk of palm (and cane) plantation workers in the northern lowlands come from the Alta and Baja Verapaz, Quiché, Izabal and Petén departments. Others come from elsewhere in the country, and still others from as far as Nicaragua.²⁸² However, the presence of foreign workers is more common among the white-collar labor force—

²⁸⁰ Interview with NaturAceites Polochic head industrial engineer, March 2008

²⁸¹ Also unless stated otherwise, I build on information gathered in interviews with labor contractors in Fray and Sayaxché zones, and with plantation (ex)workers and villagers across the northern lowlands (see Annex 1 for a comprehensive list).

²⁸² Interviews with sex workers in Polochic valley zone (April 2008), Sayaxché (June 2011), Chisec (October 2013) and Fray (October 2013). See also Hurtado and Sánchez (2011).

many agronomic and industrial engineers, for instance, are originally Colombian or Costa Rican.²⁸³ But whereas these white-collar workers are “head-hunted” by flex palm companies, foreign and national plantation workers are usually recruited via labor contractors. In fact, if flex palm companies sign labor (outsourcing) contracts at all, it occurs mainly through this channel. Contractors routinely recruit plantation workers in their own villages and elsewhere through radio ads, and brief them about wages and conditions, while corporate field supervisors and plantation overseers later instruct the workers on matters that concern their actual daily tasks. Labor contractors collect wages from the company and pay the workers they recruit. In many cases, although not so often as in the past, contractors also advance cash payments to be later deducted from the worker’s wage. The persistence of debt-peonage casts doubt on the “free laboriness” of Guatemalan flex palm (and cane) complexes in 2006-2014. Hurtado and Sánchez explain that contractors or companies often withhold workers’ national identity cards for as long as 8 days after the start of employment to discourage workers from breaching the contract (2011, 28-29).

One of the most—if not *the* most—welcomed changes in the terms of incorporation for plantation workers is the increase in wages the labor regime fix brought about. The average daily wage for plantation workers, in various tasks and under different labor relations, grows by 46% (nominally) between 2010 and 2014, that is, from US\$ 6,7 to 9,7.²⁸⁴ As figure 22 shows, this means the average wage for palm plantation workers matches the legal minimum wage for the very first time in late 2012 or shortly thereafter. At least until 2011, it was common for labor contractors and flex palm companies to register below-minimum wages in a parallel payslip, just as it historically took place in coffee haciendas.²⁸⁵ But this also indicates that below average wages remain

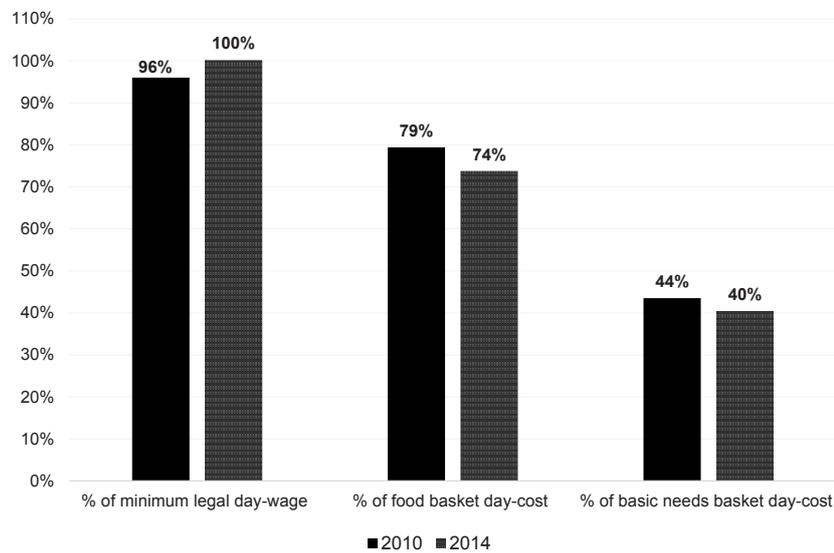
²⁸³ Interviews with flex palm companies’ managers and white-collar workers, and Secretary General of the Colombian Federation of Palm Growers (FEDEPALMA), September 2013.

²⁸⁴ Differences in the average daily wage in palm plantations between 2010 and 2014 are statistically-significant at the 5% level (paired t-test $p=,018$).

²⁸⁵ The double wage accounting system was generalized across zones and the cane and palm sectors. Besides in group interviews with workers, this is raised by the Head of Legal Affairs of

under the legal minimum. Moreover, figure 22 additionally shows the average wage for palm plantation workers in 2010 and 2014 falls short of covering the cost of Food and Basic Needs Baskets. In fact, notwithstanding the increase from 2012 on, the average wage in palm plantations covers less and less of these imperative baskets' cost over time.

Figure 22 Average wage for palm plantation workers as a share of the legal minimum and the daily cost of the Food and Basic Needs Baskets. 2010 and 2014 (%).



Source: Author calculations with data from INE (2016), MINTRAB (2016), BANGUAT (2016) and 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

In the face of these unappealing wage facts, it is important to put the appeal of a job in corporate palm plantations in perspective with the general wage context in Guatemala. For instance in 2012, less than 6% of temporary farm-workers earn the legal minimum daily wage of US\$ 8,70 and 70% of them actually earn less than US\$ 4,2 a day. As a result,

“Defensoría Q’eqchi’”, and of the Centre for Labor Rights of the Catholic Vicariate in Izabal Department, interviewed in April 2008 and July 2009 respectively.

less than 4% of temporary farm-workers in 2012 can cover the cost of the Food Basket, and less than 3% can afford the Basic Needs Basket.²⁸⁶

Another welcome change in the labor regime for palm plantation workers is the growing formalization of employment. Table 17 shows that the share of workers who receive employment benefits increases more than two-fold between 2010 and 2014. Whereas 52% of the workforce remains informally employed by 2014, this is much lower than the 74,5% informality rate in Guatemala during those years (National Statistics Institute (INE). 2012).

Table 17 Employment and fringe benefits for palm plantation workers. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (%)

Extra-wage benefits	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Employment benefits	<i>21%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>126%</i>
Food	<i>0%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
Transport	0%	2%	n.a.
Lodging	2%	0%	-100%
Food, transport and lodging	0%	2%	n.a.
Others	2%	0%	-100%
None	<i>74%</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>-36%</i>
All	0%	0%	0%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,021; ,000$ and $,000$ respectively for “employment benefits”, “food” and “none”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

As a result of the improvement in the terms of incorporation of plantation workers from late 2012 on, table 18 shows that the share of proletarian class workers (i.e. relying mainly on wage-work for a living) grows between 2010 and 2014.

²⁸⁶ ASIES (2012, 35), Ministry of Labor (2016) and Bank of Guatemala (2017).

Table 18 Palm plantation workers by class. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (in %)

Class	Flex palm company wage-work		Change 2014 vs 2010	Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)
	2010	2014		
Proletarian	11%	21%	82%	<i>,044</i>
Petty capitalist farmer	89%	79%	-10%	<i>,021</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

However, the labor regime fix in palm plantations comes at a cost for workers. First, higher wages entail the extension and intensification of the working day. This is achieved by the generalization of piecemeal work from late 2012 forward. As a result, there is a surge in both the absolute and relative rates of labor exploitation in palm plantations. The relative rate of exploitations soars because workers need to intensify their work-pace to achieve a minimum-equivalent wage. And as table 19 shows, the increase in the absolute level of exploitation results in the extension of the working day.

Table 19 Work-day duration in corporate palm plantations. 2010, 2014, and change 2014-2010

Work-day	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Less than 8 hours	16%	0%	<i>-100%</i>
8 hours	56%	50%	<i>-10%</i>
More than 8 hours	28%	50%	79%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,000$; and $,020$ respectively for “less than 8 hours” and “8 hours”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

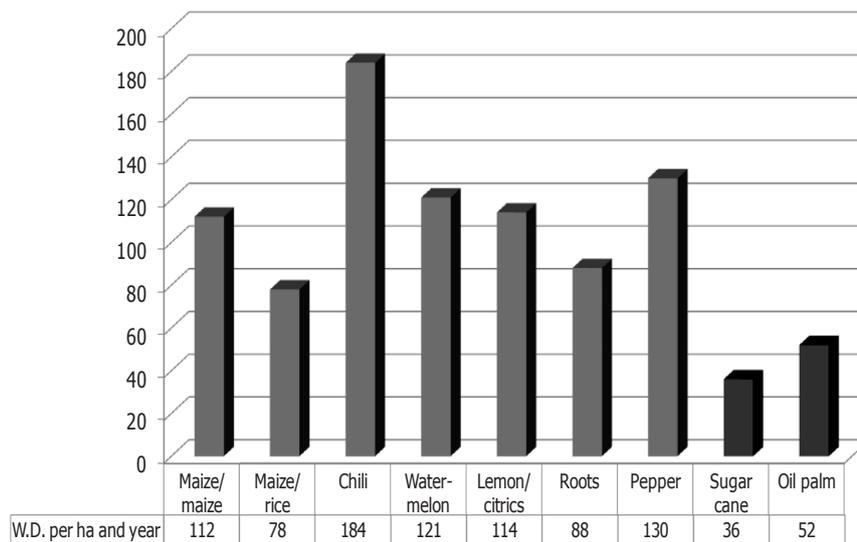
Piecemeal work in cane and palm plantations is nothing new. Flex cane companies have relied on piecemeal wage systems to increase the productivity of cane cutters since the mid-1990s (Oglesby 2004). According to the Head of Human Resources of a large Guatemalan flex cane company, ‘the most skilled of our cane cutters can harvest as many as 15 tonnes of cane a day! These are well above world average figures of 2 or 3 tonnes, and the secret behind this has been *to link wages to performance*’.²⁸⁷ Higher labor productivity means fewer cane cutters are needed. Accordingly, the number of cane cutters shrinks from 65.000 in 1990 to 35.000 in 2012 despite the observed expansion of cane plantations.²⁸⁸ As expected, increasing labor productivity results in a growing ‘reserve army of labor [that is] a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus population’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 438). The heightened labor productivity of plantation workers couples with the fact that cane and palm are far less labor-intensive than the crops commonly farmed by subordinate agrarian classes. By this rationale, flex cane and palm companies’ expansion is a job-destroying phenomenon. Figure 23 reveals that even before the productivity gains derived from the labor regime fix from late 2012 on, cane and palm require just 36 and 52 working days per hectare/year, respectively, whereas maize demands 112 and chili 184 working days per hectare/year.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Interview in January 2014.

²⁸⁸ Caballeros and Lorenzana (2006) ASAZGUA (2012)

²⁸⁹ Based on research on agricultural commodity chains in the northern lowlands by the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR) and the German Development Service (DED). Research outcomes build on analysis by Dürr of empirical material gathered in 2008 and 2009 by a team including the author.

Figure 23 Working-days per hectare/year in cane, palm and common subordinate class cultivator crops. 2009



Source: Author elaboration based on Dürr (2015).

Second, improvements in job formality come in exchange for heightened labor flexibility. Plantation workers are employed for variable periods at the company's or the contractor's will. To minimize the liabilities associated with employment benefits, table 20 shows that employment periods shrink between 2010 and 2014. Even some of those directly hired by the companies, such as palm nursery workers, are replaced every 6 or 8 months to avoid paying for holidays.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Interview with NaturAccites flex palm company's nursery foreman in Fray, June 2009

Table 20 Months of employment in corporate palm plantations. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (in %)

Employment months	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Two	<i>14%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>15%</i>
Three	<i>20%</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>99%</i>
Six	27%	6%	-77%
Twelve	39%	38%	-3%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,044$; and $,013$ respectively for “two” and “three”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Third and finally, health and safety conditions in and around the labor process in palm plantations are neglected as part of the labor regime fix, especially for the majority of sub-contracted, temporary migrant workers. Labor contractors transport those commuting from afar from and to their villages (or an agreed-upon meeting point). And more often than not this involved cramming as many workers as possible in cattle or goods carrier trucks. For instance, when asked the maximum number of people his truck could transport, a labor contractor grinned and answered ‘always one more!’²⁹¹ In February 2012, a truck crashes into another one carrying 105 standing palm plantation workers in Sayaxché. Two workers die and fifty-four (including ten children) are severely injured. Even worse, thirty-six plantation workers are killed in January 2009 by a landslide that buries the open trailer-truck in which they are traveling (Reynolds 2012b). From late 2012 on, migrant plantation workers are transported in buses more often, especially for their daily trip back and forth from the company barracks where they are lodged to the plantation. The barracks are located in compounds surrounded by barbed wire, where the youngest and most energetic plantation workers play football at dusk. Barracks lack running water, drinking water

²⁹¹ Interview in Fray, February 2014

sources, mattresses or essential mosquito nets.²⁹² For every 100 migrant workers, 8 women are hired to cook (Hurtado and Sánchez 2011). Nonetheless, lodging and food costs are most often deducted from one's wages. While subsidized by the companies, the US\$ 2,33 subtracted daily for food and lodging (Verité 2014, 57) painfully cuts into the already meager wages of migrant plantation workers. Similarly, protective glasses, paper masks, and rubber boots became a must after 2012, although their cost is also routinely deducted from wages in the case of sub-contracted workers. While still low, 27% of surveyed plantation workers report the use of protective gear when applying agrochemicals in 2014, compared to just 17% in 2010.²⁹³

However, protective gear is insufficient armor to protect against risky, backbreaking and unhealthy labor conditions in the plantations—especially when wages are tied to working more and faster.²⁹⁴ Palm harvesting entails chopping down palm fruit branches that weigh up to 40 kilograms and letting them free fall from 15 to 25 meters. Reports of workers hit by falling palm fruit bunches are common. Fruit bunches are then loaded into water-buffalo carts and transported to the roads where trucks heading for the mill await. Truck can carry about 3.000 fruit bunches that need to be uploaded manually from the water-buffalo carts. Bruises and sprains are routine injuries for those charged with this task. In other cases, workers are asked to apply between 15 and 20 sacks of fertilizer, each one weighing around 50 kilos. Even the most experienced workers report eye and respiratory disorders and skin rashes following fertilizer application. In addition to physical exhaustion from lifting heavy fruit bunches or fertilizer bags under demanding tropical

²⁹² Interview with labor contractor in Sayaxché, February 2014

²⁹³ Differences between 2010 and 2014 are statistically-significant at the 5% level.

²⁹⁴ In 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Guatemala 'observed the practice of conditioning salaries on reaching productivity goals imposed unilaterally by the companies. As a result, overtime is not remunerated and *workers' physical integrity and health have been affected*' (UN Human Rights Council 2015, 16 emphasis added). In 2013, a labor court from Brazil banned a sugarcane company from paying piecework wages arguing it adversely affects the health and safety of cane cutters (Schiavoni 2013).

conditions marked by heat and humidity,²⁹⁵ there are the risks of cuts from thorny fronds, as well as snake-bites while walking around in the underbrush on the plantations. Dehydration-related disorders are also reported by palm plantation workers, though these seem to be less severe than those affecting cane cutters. Initially documented in Nicaragua, a fatal dehydration-related chronic kidney disease (“Mesoamerican Nephropathy”) is killing cane cutters by the hundreds in Central America (Elinder, et al. 2016).

Furthermore, effects of heightened production of flex cane and palm commodities on health and safety conditions go well beyond plantation workers and labor process. They adversely affect those dwelling in nearby—and sometimes faraway—communities. Health issues are compounded by the consumption of increasing amounts of sugar and palm oil, problems that this research does not elaborate on. Adding to this, on one side, there are the illnesses associated with polluted aquifers, the plague of flies triggered by palm fronds and fruit bunches left to rot in the plantations after the kernel is extracted, and in the case of cane plantations, the aerial spraying of agro-chemicals and smoke from burning cane fields during harvest.²⁹⁶ On the other side, morbidity rates of sexually transmitted diseases skyrocket. As argued in June 2009 by the Head Nurse of Panzós’ Public Clinic, in the Polochic valley zone, ‘since the cane company settled, brothels mushroom together with the incidence rates of sexually transmitted diseases workers’ wives receive at home “for free” [...] we are even witnessing the first HIV cases in the zone affecting migrant farm-workers’. A group of women sex-workers from Fray zone explains how “before just the few “bares” [brothels] and “chicas” [women sex-workers] around were enough. With palm’s arrival business is booming! Not only more “bares” opened, but also full buses of reinforcement “chicas” arrive every fifteenth of the month when the

²⁹⁵ Harsh work characterizes cane harvesting too. ‘A worker cutting 6 tonnes of cane a day in a 200 by 6 metres area walks approximately for 4,4 kilometres and requires of around 66,666 machete hits and body flexions’ (Alves 2006, 94-95).

²⁹⁶ Interview with Head Physician of Telemán’s Public Clinic in Polochic valley zone, June 2009

palm lads get their wages”.²⁹⁷ Indeed, nightlife burgeons on pay days, not least with drunk fights and shootings. Alcohol abuse during “payment celebrations” leads to, or worsens, domestic violence against women and children. In the words of Q’eqchi’ women from Polochic highland and valley zones: ‘most of our men working for the cane or the palm get drunk every 15th, and we receive them at home expecting for the worse to happen’.²⁹⁸

5.4. Flex palm companies’ labor regime fix and palm fruit suppliers

Rather than with changing terms of incorporation, implications of the labor regime fix by flex palm companies for independent palm fruit suppliers have to do with the increase and diversification of their ranks. Unlike in major palm producing countries in Southeast Asia (McCarthy 2010), and to a lesser extent other countries in Latin America,²⁹⁹ palm in Guatemala is mostly produced directly by flex palm companies. Nonetheless, following the 2012 labor regime fix there are a couple of exceptions worth discussing here.

First, the previous chapter has advanced that a dependent agrarian bourgeois fraction of large cane and palm outgrowers burgeons in the research period. In the case of palm, a large outgrower from Fray zone producing for NaturAceites said that the company provided him with technical and financial support to establish a 450-hectare plantation. In 2008, he signed a contract for exclusive sales in which a variable price of 14% the CIF Rotterdam price for palm oil was agreed for each tonne of palm fruit delivered. The quality of the fruit is assessed by the company and subject to a bonus or a penalty for qualities above/below set standards. The contract also states that at least 7% of the palm kernels

²⁹⁷ Interview in October 2013. Similar accounts are offered by women sex-workers interviewed in Panzós (April 2008), Sayaxché (June 2011) and Chisec (October 2013).

²⁹⁸ Group interview in March 2008. Similar issues are reported by women in group interviews in Ixcán (June 2011), Chisec (December 2009 and June 2011) and Sayaxché (June 2011).

²⁹⁹ Secretary Generals of the Honduran National Federation of Palm Growers (FENAPALMH), Colombian Federation of Palm Growers (FEDEPALMA) and Ecuadorian National Association of Palm Growers (ANCUPA) in I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, November 2013.

should be delivered off the bunch. This amounts to an extra task for farm-workers: picking up the palm kernels scattered all around after the chopped palm fruit hits the ground.³⁰⁰ This outgrower (the largest for NaturAceites) makes a positive yet critical reflection on his relationship with the company. He claims to do better with palm than he had previously done with cattle ranching. Cattle ranching was too dangerous and beef prices so low, that he could barely pay his three cowboys and one manager to work for their work on the ranch (recall my discussion on “narco-ranchers”). Nonetheless, palm profits have never been as high as NaturAceites’ engineers originally said they were. All production risks fall on the outgrower’s shoulders, and production comes at a high cost. He claims that ‘after discounting the payments with agro-chemical suppliers, workers, bankers, goods carriers and taxes I can be happy if I earn what a company foreman does’ (ibid). So he attempts to reduce production costs which means, as it often does, shrinking labor costs. This partly explains why the 210 workers he employs earn a fixed daily wage of US\$ 5,6 per day when the average daily piecemeal wage in corporate plantations is US\$ 9,71. Of the 210 workers, 30 are permanent and 180 temporary. This also explains the relatively lower salaries—according to the outgrower, most workers would rather work on a temporary basis and under fixed daily-wages than for longer periods in piecemeal fashion to be able to continue farming.

The second exception is the government’s small-scale palm contract-farming programme (PROPALMA) mentioned in the previous chapter. Launched in 2009, PROPALMA faces serious challenges by 2014. Many contract-farmers are squeezed between high production costs, low yields and price penalties at the mill for delivering sub-quality palm fruit, precisely for their low investment in fertilizers and other agro-chemicals prescribed by the companies’ agronomic engineers.³⁰¹ As a palm contract-farmer with 20 hectares explains

³⁰⁰ Interview, December 2013

³⁰¹ Interview with President and Secretary of ADINC farmers’ association, July 2013.

‘we expected fertilizers to be subsidized all through the duration of the contract, but this has not been the case. So if I want to achieve worthy yields and meet quality standards I need to spend US\$ 2.672 per hectare/ year in fertilizers, pay daily wages of around US\$ 9 plus US\$ 50 to bring my harvest across the river to the mill, not to talk about mine and my two son’s labor for which we are happy if we can make as much as any of our workers... [sigh] not the kind of deal we were presented by the engineer before signing!’ (Interview, July 2013).

Facing price penalties, many contract-farmers associated through ADINC find it more convenient to sell their palm fruit to the Mexican government-backed palm companies only a few kilometers away across the border in Chiapas. This entails a breach of contract for PALIXCÁN, and border army patrols ban Guatemalan palm fruit from crossing the border.³⁰² All these problems lead to the collapse of ADINC. By 2013, 268 out of the original 311 contract-farmers have left ADINC and joined forces through the “Ixcán Union of Independent Palm Growers” (interview with palm contract-farmer from Ixcán, July 2013).

5.5. Flex palm companies’ labor regime fix and other labor regimes in farming

The labor regime fix in corporate palm plantations adversely affects the labor regime in petty capitalist farming, and more generally, the family labor farm regime for all subordinate agrarian classes. Changes in the terms of incorporation for farm-workers in petty capitalist farming follow those observed for workers in corporate palm plantations. As the high school Director, community development council President and petty capitalist farmer from an Ixcán village explains

“yes, you only make some US\$ 4,45 a day without employment benefits if you work for me, but you also work much less than for a [flex palm] company! Say you have to apply one or two sacks of fertilizer. This you can do easily in 2 or 3 hours, and then you are free

³⁰² Ibid. See Castellanos-Navarrete and Jansen (2015) about state-sponsored oil palm contract-farming in neighboring Chiapas, Mexico.

to work in your farm. But for a palm company you have to apply 12 to 15 sacks for just around double the wage, three times the working time and often also without benefits' (interview in July 2013)

Higher wages in corporate palm (and cane) plantations trigger a significant³⁰³ rise of 77% (nominally) in the average daily wage in petty capitalist farming—that is, from US\$ 4,6 in 2010 to 8,1 in 2014. Besides, following flex palm companies' labor regime fix, fringe benefits in petty capitalist farming are increasingly monetized. This reflects in the trade-off between (in-kind) lunch provision and paid transport between 2010 and 2014, depicted in table 21. Furthermore, this traditionally informal job source shows a formalization tendency, with 17% of workers in petty capitalist farming receiving employment benefits in 2014.

Table 21 Employment and fringe benefits for workers in petty capitalist farming. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (%)

Extra-wage benefits	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Employment benefits	<i>0%</i>	<i>17%</i>	n.a.
Food	<i>46%</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>-64%</i>
Transport	0%	33%	n.a.
Lodging	0%	0%	0%
Food, transport and lodging	0%	0%	n.a.
Others	0%	0%	0%
None	<i>54%</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>-38%</i>
All	0%	0%	0%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,000$; $,021$ and $,000$ respectively for “employment benefits”, “food” and “none”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

But as with corporate palm plantation workers, the counterpart to increased wages and benefits for workers in petty capitalist farming is an

³⁰³ Paired t-test $p=,018$.

extension of the working day. Table 22 shows half of these workers work for less than 8 hours a day in 2010. Conversely, by 2014 half of them work for 8 hours a day and the other half even longer.

Table 22 Work-day duration in petty capitalist farming. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (%)

Work-day	Year		2014-2010
	2010	2014	Change
Less than 8 hours	<i>50%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>-100%</i>
8 hours	<i>38%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>33%</i>
More than 8 hours	13%	50%	300%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,000$; and $,020$ respectively for “less than 8 hours” and “8 hours”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Unlike in corporate plantations, wages in petty capitalist farming are calculated by a daily rate. Wages vary substantially depending on the socio-agroecological zone and “who” hires “whom” and for what purpose. As a rule of thumb, the larger the surplus population (i.e. Polochic and Fray zones) the lower the wages, and the further into the agrarian frontier (i.e. Sayaxché and Ixcán zones) the higher the wages. Mainly but not only among the Q’eqchi’, wages change following ethnic and kinship bonds. In line with traditional moral economy relations of reciprocity, farm-workers tend to accept lower wages for staples (e.g. maize) than for cash crops (e.g. palm) farms, unless employed for maize cultivation by palm contract-farmers. For regardless of whether this is actually the case or not, the latter are considered to make more money than average maize and beans cultivators and should therefore pay higher wages.³⁰⁴ Hence, whereas longer working days raise the absolute rate of labor exploitation in petty capitalist farming, the relative rate of exploitation is maintained, lessened or even canceled out through market and moral economic mechanisms levelling out surplus

³⁰⁴ Interview with President and Secretary of ADINC farmers’ association, July 2013.

appropriation in the community. Furthermore, and also unlike in corporate palm plantations, the labor regime in petty capitalist farming becomes less flexible over time. Table 23 shows how in 2014 workers are hired for at least 3 months, and up to 50% are employed throughout the year.

Table 23 Number of working months in petty capitalist farming. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (%)

Number of working months	Year		2014-2010 Change
	2010	2014	
Two	<i>17%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>-100%</i>
Three	<i>21%</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>60%</i>
Six	25%	17%	-33%
Twelve	38%	50%	33%

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,044$; and $,013$ respectively for “two” and “three”).

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Longer working days in palm plantations and petty capitalist farms, and extended working periods in the latter, appear to clash with the vibrant functional dualist relations identified in the previous chapter. There is, however, more than meets the (strictly materialist) eye in the 2006-2014 northern lowlands’ labor market. Contributing to and resulting from the generalized Q’eqchi’ understanding of self-reproduction (traditionally through farming) as a condition for “adulthood”, and if need be, preference for employment with a fellow Q’eqchi’ (see also Grandia 2012, 213), there are two socio-cultural dynamics underpinning functional dualism in 2006-2014. The first one unfolds at a village level and the second at a household level, but both are linked to the implications of the labor regime fix in flex palm companies for the family labor farm regime across subordinate agrarian classes.

First, labor exchanges are “back in town”. As advanced in the genealogy chapter, these were common in traditional lowlander Q’eqchi’ practices

of swidden cultivation in family-farmed plots part of communally owned and governed land (Schwartz 1990). Labor exchanges lose momentum in 1986-2005 amid heightened labor and land commoditization and ownership individualization across subordinate classes, as further explained in the next chapter. But unpaid farm-labor exchanges among Q'eqchi' cultivators from the same village regain momentum in all research zones amid flex cane and palm companies' expansion. In the previous chapter, I explained that most proletarian class HHs subsidize their main wage-work-based reproductive strategy with family farmed food production (i.e. functional dualist semi-proletarianization). The fact is, that whereas farming proletarian HHs do not hire any wage-labor, they increasingly rely on exchanged farm-labor. Table 24 shows the share of labor-exchanging farming proletarian HHs over total farming HHs grows from 1% in 2010 to 5% in 2014. Furthermore, the majority of labor-exchanging farming proletarian HHs have at least one member working in corporate palm plantations. Hence, it can be argued that farm labor de-commoditization among villagers allows them to seize wage-work opportunities in corporate palm plantations. In other words, labor exchanges predicate the increased relevance of corporate palm plantations as a job source by 2014. In the face of higher-yet-insufficient wages and shortening employment periods, most palm plantation laborers still rely on family farming to make ends meet.

However, farm-labor exchanges underpin not only functional-dualist semi-proletarianization but also repeasantization. Table 24 indicates how the share of labor-exchanging family farmer class HHs over total farming HHs grows from 1% to 6% between 2010 and 2014.

Table 24 Farm labor-exchanging HHs over total farming HHs by subordinate class position. 2010, 2014 & 2014-2010 change (%)

Labor-exchanging HHs by class position	Total farming HHs		2014-2010 Change	Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)
	2010	2014		
Farming proletarian fraction	1%	5%	403%	<i>,021</i>
Family farmer class	1%	6%	503%	<i>,007</i>
Self-consumption oriented fraction (% within family farmers)	100%	92%	-8%	<i>,012</i>
Market oriented fraction (% within family farmers)	0%	8%	n.a	,319
Farm labor exchanging HHs over total HHs	2%	11%	453%	<i>,001</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed cells account for statistically-significant differences between 2010 and 2014 at the 5% level

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Pushed and pulled by relevant-yet-insufficient improvements in the labor regime in corporate palm plantations, and the challenges these bring about for petty capitalist farming, many petty capitalist farmers turn into labor-exchanging farming proletarians or family farmers. Table 25 shows 60% of labor-exchanging farming proletarians and 33% of labor-exchanging family farmers in 2014 have a petty capitalist farmer class-background in 2010. Similarly, many family farmers would remain so or turn into farming proletarians—exchanging labor in any case.

Table 25 Farm labor-exchanging HHs in 2014 by their class position in 2010

Labor-exchanging HHs by class position in 2014	2010 class position of labor-exchanging HHs in 2014								
	Proletarian			Family farmer			Petty capitalist farmer		
	Total	Farming	Non-farming	Total	Self-consumption oriented	Market oriented	Total	Multi-functional	Specialized
Farming proletarian fraction	0%	0%	0%	40%	30%	10%	60%	20%	40%
Family farmer class	17%	17%	0%	50%	42%	8%	33%	8%	25%
Self-consumption oriented	18%	18%	0%	55%	46%	9%	27%	9%	18%
Market oriented	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

The second chief socio-cultural dynamic underpinning functional dualism in 2006-2014 is in fact twofold. It involves the feminization of family farming, and worsening terms for unpaid family labor supporting male wage-earners. Regarding the former, in HHs whose male members migrate for wage-work or stay but are involved in wage-work relations demanding long working-days, women have taken over farming tasks and responsibilities. As advanced, the larger the number of HH members between 14 and 70 years old, and above all of women, the higher the relevance of farming in the HH's reproductive strategy. For many women, the feminization of family farming means having to extend already overloaded working-days. When asked about women's work-days in the village, a Q'eqchi' woman in her late fifties glanced up from her knitting work, grinned and exclaimed "“ayyy Diosito!” [ohhh my God!] There is no day of rest for us!"³⁰⁵

Women and children often act as unpaid “assistants” to wage-earning adult men. This is nothing new to the sexual and generational divisions

³⁰⁵ Group interview with leaders of women's organizations from three Polochic Valley zone villages, June 2007. Mingorría and Gamboa (2010, 58) report that Q'eqchi' women in the Polochic sub-region spend between 10% and 15% less time on “them” in a day than men (including sleeping, eating, bathing and so on). ‘Households working in oil palm plantations’, Mingorría et al. explain, ‘and particularly women, have no time for community activities, personal care, or resting, even when they desire so, since they prefer saturating their time than abandoning or significantly reducing maize cultivation’ (2014, 964).

of labor in the northern lowlands (Grandia 2012), clearly visible at least since times of agro-extractive mercantilism. But there are meaningful differences with respect to previous times and between job sources. For instance, unpaid family labor would traditionally support wage-earning men to finish their daily job assignments faster so they could dedicate the remaining part of the work-day to the family farm. Children's labor would usually perform as a reinforcement once school is out, and women's labor would be devoted to reproductive tasks (often including taking care of a home orchard). In plantation work under piecemeal wage systems, unpaid family labor becomes essential for many men to achieve the equivalent of legal minimum wages. The ten minors injured in the road accident involving a truck packed with plantation workers in Sayaxché in 2012 were not on a "school trip". They were traveling with their elders to help them collect the palm kernels that scatter widely after severed palm fruit bunches hit the ground. Was it not for the support of their children, wage-workers would have either had to allocate extra time for this task or hire an assistant. This is why many children quit school during the periods their fathers work for flex palm companies.³⁰⁶

Finally, the reproductive workload of children, elders and women of all ages is becoming increasingly heavy. Children wake up at 4 a.m. to fetch water and collect firewood so women can prepare coffee and warm-up tortillas on the "comal" before men head to the plantation by 5 a.m. Oftentimes, women join plantation workers' gangs to cook for them, receiving no other payment aside from their own food. And especially when head-of-HH women need to take over farming responsibilities, family elders keep working until their last breath in a diversity of (re)productive tasks like water and firewood collection, cooking, livestock breeding, shelling maize cob kernels, fishing, stitching and weaving, trash burning, cleaning and taking care of children and/or the sick/ injured.

³⁰⁶ Interview with high school Director, Community Development Council President and petty capitalist farmer from Ixcán, July 2013, and participant observation in palm plantations across the research zones.

Chapter 6 Land relations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter delves into the analysis of land relations between, across and within fragmented agrarian classes amid rising flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014. Land relations involve cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes behind the ways: i) land is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the ground-rent portion of agro-commodity value distributed; iii) land ownership and entitlements to ground-rent are politically sanctioned, and; iv) ground-rent is used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants. I explore these land relations through both strict “rights” and broader “access” lenses.

In the northern lowlands circa 2006-2014, flex cane and palm companies rely on four main land control mechanisms, i) conversion of previously-owned land into cane or palm; ii) outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements; iii) long-term land leases, and; iv) land purchases. Mechanisms 2 and 3 mirror a significant fix towards exclusively freehold ownership-based land control mechanisms by dominant agrarian classes in Guatemala. Nonetheless, land purchases continue to be predominant, followed by long-term land leases. These involve dealing in freehold and leasehold land property rights, respectively. But only owners of land freehold property rights are entitled to land’s ground-rent. Land deals carried out by flex cane and palm companies with landlord and dependent agrarian bourgeois classes fuel re-concentration of landed property into fewer hands. These are deals to which both parties usually consent. However, there are also cases in which dominant agrarian classes, usually involved in cattle ranching, are subject to distressed and even forced sales. These are all cases related somehow to drug-trafficking money laundering. Flex palm companies in particular are also behind a land concentration dynamic through their land deals with agrarian subordinate class “petty land owners” (of 64 hectares

maximum). These land deals are recorded as voluntary market transactions. Most land bids, and ultimately all purchases, by flex cane and palm companies, involve privately titled land—especially through individual titles, but not only. Rather than taking this at face value as an indicator of the allocative efficiency of the Guatemalan land market under land good governance dogma policies, I discuss the intricacies of to whom, how, why (and why not) fragmented subordinate classes sell their land.

The main bidders and buyers of petty land owners' land include, in order of relevance, corporate coyotes, flex palm companies, landless or land-scarce fellow subordinate class cultivators and ranchers. Land sales mostly occur after purchase bids, but the bids are refused more often than not. The main reasons for rejecting a land bid revolve around the Q'eqchi' people's simultaneous understanding of land as means of production, soil and territory. Rejecting a bid can be treacherous though: 4 out of 10 land deals involving agrarian subordinate classes are forced. In the best of cases, these forced transfers involve trickery or intimidation. In the worst, threats are fulfilled. Subordinate class petty land owners sell land to fellow cultivators and non-fellow outsiders. In the former case, 7% are "purely commercial", voluntary and willful deals, and another 7% are "distressed", voluntary-yet-unwillful land sales. Willful or not, voluntary land sales to fellows are vectors and expressions of agrarian differentiation from below. But the remaining 86% "moral economy" sales push completely in the opposite direction, that is, to counter or keep economic differentiation at bay. In the latter case of land deals with non-fellow outsiders, 50% are "forced" land deals. The remaining 39% "distressed" and 11% "unyielding land" sales are "voluntary-yet-unwillful" deals which can hardly be considered win-win market land reallocations from less to more efficient producers.

I then discuss the implications of land control mechanisms by flex cane and palm companies on land "access-beyond-property" relations. Land (re)concentration in the hands of flex agribusinesses in 2006-2014 overlaps with formerly skewed land ownership structures and green

enclosures to result in soaring land prices. This adversely affects the abilities to gain, regain and expand land access through the market of all fragmented agrarian classes, including the agro-extractivists themselves. But subordinate agrarian classes are the most adversely affected of all, often regardless of whether they are located on the buyer's or the seller's end of the deal. The land ownership structure in 2010 and 2014 for subordinate agrarian class petty land owners, reveals, first, a two-fold increase in the number of landless HHs between 2010 and 2014. Second, and in a related manner, the landed outnumber the landless. And third, is the concentration of over half of all landed HHs in the categories of small and medium petty land owners. Other interesting features and tendencies stem from the analysis of land ownership structures following age and class divisions. On the one hand, landlessness grows for all age groups with the exception of the youngest one of 25 years old and younger. This age group basically includes the third generation of the original beneficiaries of agrarian colonization from the 1960s on, meaning especially the second generation is mostly selling land. On the other hand, while proletarians show the highest rate of landlessness, this also takes place within landless and land-scarce family farmers and petty capitalist farmers. In fact, whereas landlessness increases over time for the latter two, it decreases for the proletarian class. This and the fact that medium and large groups of petty land owners grow within the farming proletarian fraction, suggest that proletarianization proceeds without land dispossession. This further supports the thesis that functional dualist relations underpin the plantation labor regime of flex cane and palm companies.

Following these lines, the lack of land ownership does not preclude subordinate agrarian classes from accessing land on a leasehold basis. While soaring land prices mean higher leasing costs for everyone, 2 out of 10 land leases from/to subordinate agrarian classes take place for free. As with labor exchanges and moral economy land sales, this land de-commoditization mechanism allows for both repeasantization and functional dualist semi-proletarianization.

The high costs and difficulties of recovering soils after decades of intensive cane and palm farming, climate or human-led crop disruptions and the economic challenges outgrowers face, all compromise the abilities of rentier landlords and outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois to maintain and control their land access. Also, despite the availability of subsidized land leasing loans through FONTIERRAS, conversion of haciendas and ranches into cane and palm plantations constrains the abilities of the landless and land-scarce from across subordinate classes to lease even a patch of land for seasonal farming. Indeed, many subordinate class subjects (and some dominant ones) see their abilities to benefit from land constrained by all four mechanisms of land control by flex cane and palm companies. Hence, I argue flex agribusinesses' expansion in 2006-2014 is indicative of land control-grabbing (Borras et al. 2012).

The increasing perceptions of land scarcity that stem from flex agribusinesses' land control grabs trigger two important dynamics. First, (Q'eqchi') communities turn to regulate land deals in a restrictive fashion. Second, fearing dispossession, thousands of (Q'eqchi') petty land owners without land titles try to boost their abilities to maintain and control land ownership by jumping onto the land good governance bandwagon. Seeking to regularize their land ownership once and for all, villagers seek legal support from a wide range of social actors. In particular, young and committed lawyers, or even law students, offer legal extension services. These "activist-lawyers", together with other allies showing a variety of journalistic, artistic, agronomic and research skills are behind the group I call "young although smartly-trained activists" (YASTACS).

But as is often the case, the mushrooming of individual freehold land title deeds transforms property rights formalization into a double-edged sword for two reasons. First, individualization of the power to decide on the use and transfer of land property rights enables land dispossession through perfectly legal means. Second, individual freehold land ownership does away with traditional swidden farming systems based on

the communal government of village land under a farmland-fallows-forest land use logic. In the quest for alternatives, the (private) communal form of land ownership is gradually resignified. Proletarians and family farmers show significant increases in the share of communally titled land ownership over time. But there are also cases in which the (re)communalization drive goes beyond the title to inform the community's understanding and governance of land. In such cases, land is understood as means of production, soil and territory at once. Accordingly, village land is governed by community institutions following the fallows-farms-forest land use logic of swidden cultivation rather than the all-in-one fixed family plot logic of the land good governance policy dogma.

6.2. Land control mechanisms by flex cane and palm companies

Throughout 2006-2014, flex cane and palm companies in the northern lowlands use four main mechanisms to control land for cultivation purposes:³⁰⁷ i) conversion of previously-owned land into cane or palm; ii) outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements; iii) long term land leases, and; iv) land purchases.

The first mechanism concerns agro-extractivist bourgeois who were formerly modern dependent agrarian bourgeois in cattle, coffee or banana production, and moved into the palm business.³⁰⁸ The second involves dependent agrarian bourgeois and petty capitalist farmers who become cane and palm outgrowers and palm contract-farmers, respectively. In both of these formulations, land use changes occur without any changes in ownership. The third mechanism hinges on 25-year land leases issued by the landlord and dependent agrarian bourgeois for corporate flex cane and palm use. In this case, the right to use the land for cane and palm cultivation is transferred in exchange for an

³⁰⁷ Or “practices that fix or consolidate forms of access and exclusion for some time” (Peluso and Lund 2011, 668).

³⁰⁸ Since the owners of the Polochic flex cane company held their former cane fields in the southern coast, this land control mechanism concerns only to palm agro-extractivists who are former land-owners in the northern lowlands.

annual rental payment. This means that there are no changes regarding who appropriates a now monetarized land's ground-rent, but there are changes in land relations of production and property. The fourth mechanism is land purchases by flex agribusinesses from dominant and subordinate landed classes—involving changes in land production, distribution and property relations.

Outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements and long term land leases, or flex agribusinesses' land control mechanisms two and three, are highly influenced by the YASTEXES (“young although smartly-trained executives”). Compared to their elders, the YASTEXES understand land as a means of production (with extraordinary financial attributes) rather than as territory. For the old guard of the Guatemalan seigniorial and bourgeois oligarchs, usually born in haciendas and later educated in the city, land is very special indeed. In addition to ground-rent, land is seen as a bloodline bridging generations, status and political power, and thereby land is understood and protected as a means of production and territory. For the urbanite offspring, however, the “hacienda” is basically a rural location for the family business, or simply a destination for weekend visits to the grandparents. For the YASTEXES, revenues, bloodline, status and power no longer have the same ties to land that they did for their elders. It is in this light that such a perspective on land leads the YASTEXES to explore non-freehold property-based mechanisms of land control for cane and palm cultivation. Along with this comes an interest in reproducing the personal conditions of flex crop commodity production and countering political opposition—key points that are explored in Part III of this research.

Despite the fix in land relations brought about by the third and fourth mechanisms, land purchases remain integral to the expansion of corporate cane and palm plantations in 2006-2014, as do long-term land leases. Land purchases and long-term leases involve market deals of freehold and leasehold land property rights, respectively. But while both allow for benefits from land as means of production, soil and territory,

only owners of land with freehold property rights are entitled to land's ground-rent. I now explore how these property rights-based mechanisms of land control unfold and work for fragmented dominant and subordinate agrarian classes.

6.2.1. Land deals by flex cane and palm companies with dominant agrarian classes

When flex cane and palm companies acquire haciendas and ranches, either by purchase or long-term lease, a land ownership reconcentration tendency is unleashed via market transactions to which both parties usually consent. Selling landlords and dependent agrarian bourgeois reap a hefty “retirement fund” from their land in the cases where they are not drowning in outstanding debt.³⁰⁹ And rentier landlords are able to enjoy their land's ground-rent in cash through rental payments by flex companies. While land brokers often till the soil for the deal, it is the cane and palm companies that sanction it directly. This acts as a stamp of formality and transparency in the eyes of the state and the market.

There are, however, cases in which dominant agrarian classes, usually in the business of cattle ranching, are subject to distressed or even forced sales. Regarding forced sales, I have explained that cattle ranching has become both a cover for drug-trafficking operations and a means of money-laundering since the 1980s—making cattle breeders susceptible to purchase bids by “narco-ranchers” which does not often end well.³¹⁰ Ranchers also employ armed thugs, and so responses to narcos range from consent to bloodshed. With the rise of flex cane and palm complexes, some genuine cattle breeders find that converting their ranches into more visible and intensively farmed cane or palm plantations is an effective means of countering narco pressure to sell. But also many a drug-trafficker finds a better cover and means of money laundering in palm production than in cattle. As found previously, and discussed in more detail later, many “narco-ranchers” who used to

³⁰⁹ Interview with well-established cattle rancher from Fray, October 2013

³¹⁰ Interview with President of the Raxruha Cattle Breeders Association, October 2013

launder money through the purchase of (relatively) cheap estates and cattle herds in 1986-2005 become “narco-outgrowers” in 2006-2014. Such a change is chosen to carry out air drug-trade operations and launder money under the cover of growing palm, which is relatively more capital-intensive. Hence, land is a means of production for narco-outgrowers—at least in economic terms as a means of money laundering—as well as territory.

Regarding dominant class distressed land sales, beef prices plummet as a result of narco-ranchers flooding the market with cheap meat starting in the mid-1990s. According to the ex-President of Petén’s Cattle Ranchers Association, this unfair competition has driven many genuine cattle breeders out of business.³¹¹ Some became cane or palm outgrowers just to keep their land, but many others opted to sell their ranches. Among those who sold, a few turned over their lands to the same narco-ranchers who had outcompeted them. Some others sold to their hacienda tenants (*colonos*) through Market-Assisted Land Reform, and a handful of others to rubber and industrial tree plantations companies. But the majority sold or leased their ranches to flex cane and palm companies.

6.2.2. *Land deals by flex cane and palm companies with subordinate agrarian classes*

Flex companies, in particular those dealing with palm, also purchase land from agrarian subordinate class “petty land owners” (that is, owners of 64 hectares maximum). These transactions are all ultimately registered as voluntary market deals in state official land records (Property and Cadastral Registries). I could simply conclude from this that ‘there is no land grabbing’ in Guatemala, as the FAO does in its study of land market dynamics in 17 Latin American countries (FAO 2012, 560). But I argue that this should not be taken in a straightforward way as an indicator of the allocative market efficiency under land good

³¹¹ Interview, October 2011

governance dogma policies in Guatemala. Rather, I turn to further question to whom, how, why (and why not) fragmented subordinate classes sell their land.

HH panel survey data analysis shows that 12% of all (i.e. landed or otherwise) subordinate agrarian class HHs in the research zones are implicated in land sales. Even though the Q'eqchi' are wary to make land deals with non-fellow village outsiders, this figure is not meant to be taken at face value. The many testimonies gathered over the course of this research suggest that a 12% rate largely underestimates actual land sales by subordinate agrarian classes. In the Sayaxché zone alone, government figures show the 'displacement' of 7,947 people from 27 villages after 40,590 hectares were turned into palm plantations by 2007 (CONAP et al. 2008). In fact, the 12% sales rate accounts only for those who did not leave the village after selling their land, thus being in a position to respond to the survey there. But the reality is that many leave after selling their land. I will return to the fate of land sellers further on. My intent here is understanding to whom, how, why (and why not) fragmented subordinate class petty land owners sell their land. To do so, I begin by setting actual land sales against the backdrop of purchase bids. Table 26 shows that 89% of land sellers received a purchase bid, but only 27% of those bids came through. This demonstrates that land sales usually take place following a purchase bid, but the bid is turned down more often than not.

Table 26 Land sales following purchase bids and land purchase bids according to their success. 2010 and 2014 (%)

Land purchase bid	Land sale		Land sale	Offering	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Yes	27%	73%	Yes	89%	11%
No	1,5%	98,5%	No	17%	83%

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey. There are not statistically significant differences between 2010 and 2014.

Figure 24 shows main land bidders including, in order of relevance, land brokers, flex palm companies, landless or land-scarce fellow subordinate class cultivators and ranchers. Even though flex palm companies also hire real estate firms and make direct purchase bids, land brokers are their main real estate task force. Land brokers are commonly known as “corporate coyotes”, or just “coyotes”.³¹² They are well-known, charismatic and respected subjects in their locales, among them preachers, teachers, community leaders, local radio announcers, NGO staff, “patrones”, ranchers, traders, usurers, and even civil servants and elected politicians. This signifies that they hold economic, political and/or symbolic power to entice people to willingly sell their land for their own sake and for the common good. Land coyotes search for land for speculation, regardless if it is owned by dominant or subordinate agrarian classes. Those with financial means work individually, buying land on the cheap and later selling it to companies at a higher price. Other times, agribusinesses hire them to directly deal with owners of land they are interested in acquiring, but who refuse to sell.³¹³ Another major group of land bidders includes fellow land-scarce subordinate

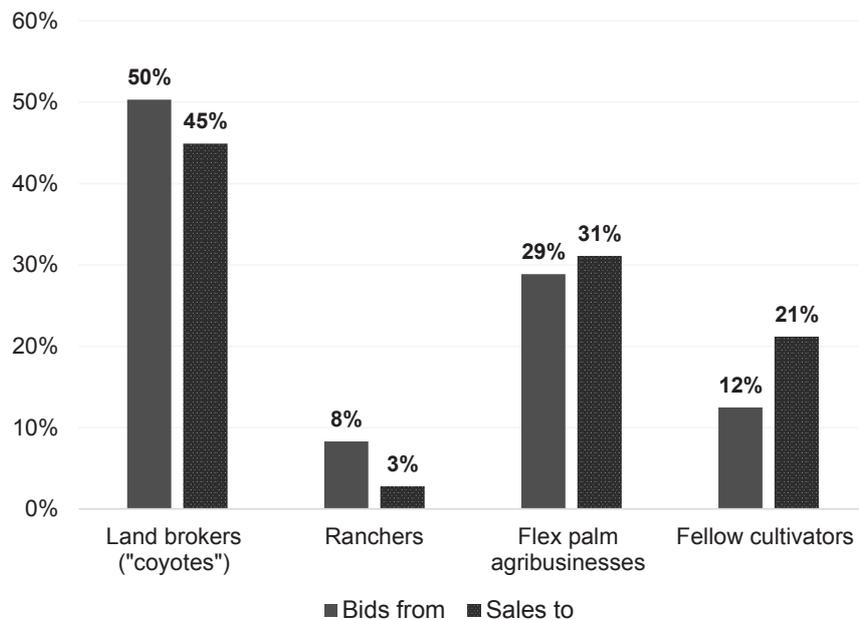
³¹² This term often refers to human smugglers. But in the northern lowlands it is also employed for maize and cattle middlemen, and for land brokers more recently.

³¹³ Interview with high school Director, Community Development Council President, and petty capitalist farmer from an Ixcán village, July 2013. Group interviews with representatives from different villages from district V and the Catholic Pastoral in Ixcán, December 2009, and villagers from Fray (December 2009), Chisec (April 2010) and Sayaxché (May 2010).

class cultivators. And finally, ranchers also routinely keep an eye out for land to buy, either for cattle ranching or speculative purposes. As explained in a meeting with villagers from Sayaxché zone, ‘the petty rich [i.e. ranchers] are hoarding our land to later sell it to the big rich [i.e. palm companies]’ (in May 2010).

Regarding actual land sales, figure 24 additionally reveals that petty land owners sold mainly, and in order of importance, to corporate coyotes, flex palm companies, land-scarce fellows and ranchers. As it has been advanced, the effectiveness of land bids vary across bidders. Whereas flex palm companies and fellow cultivators’ bids represent 29% and 12% of the total, respectively, sales to flex palm companies and fellow cultivators account for 31% and 21%, respectively, of the total land sales by petty land owners. But considering that land purchased by coyotes ends up in the hands of flex palm companies, it can be argued that flex palm companies are the recipients of 76% of the land sales by subordinate classes. Hence, while land deals between flex agribusinesses and fellow dominant agrarian classes unleash a land reconcentration dynamic, those involving subordinate classes entail a land concentration dynamic.

Figure 24 Bidders and buyers of petty land owners' land according to their relevance. 2010 and 2014 (%)



Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey. Differences over time are not statistically significant.

Land deals involving subordinate agrarian classes contribute to and are informed by land good governance dogma policies, something that has been taking place since the 1990s. Table 27 shows that some 8 out of 10 land purchase bids in 2010 and 2014 target “regularized” land, that is, land in which ownership has been “formalized” through state-endorsed private property title deeds registered in the National Property Register. FONTIERRAS’ (land fund) employees from all over the northern lowlands explain that flex agribusinesses and land coyotes often inquire about the progress of the regularization process in the area.³¹⁴ And

³¹⁴ Interviews with FONTIERRAS officials in Cobán (for Alta Verapaz department), Santa Elena (for Petén) and Ixcán, in August 2009, November 2010, and October 2009, respectively.

indeed, 55% of subordinate class land sales in 2010, and 78% in 2014, involve titled land.³¹⁵

Nonetheless, neither land bids nor sales are limited to titled land. Table 27 clarifies that some 20% of bids in both 2010 and 2014, as well as 45% of land sales in 2010 and 22% in 2014, involve non-titled land. This does not mean flex palm companies purchase land “informally”. The deal might be agreed upon beforehand, but coyotes and companies alike make sure the land is titled when the deal is finished. As FONTIERRAS officials explain, these regularization cases are politically expedited among the myriad of long pending others. Certainly, land titles are a must for flex palm (and cane) companies to prove the “transparency” of their land deals (also for funding purposes, as discussed in the financial relations chapter). Furthermore, table 27 reveals that when land ownership is formalized in a title deed, land bids and sales mainly target individually-titled land. But whereas purchase bids involve land under other institutional forms of private property (i.e. collective or communal), sales include either just land categorized as individual property (in 2010), or in some cases land categorized as collective private property (7% in 2014). Regarding the latter, several cases are known in which villages have been reduced to mere residential areas, and at least four cases in which even the houses, school, football yard and churches were devoured by palm plantations. Most distinctively, the 2010 and 2014 survey panels do not report any land sales of communal private property. This does not mean communal land sales are strange occurrences. They do happen when communal rights to land are not formally registered, or ownership is registered as municipal land managed by municipal rather than village authorities.³¹⁶ Nonetheless, and as further argued here and in Part III, since the communal form of property regains momentum among subordinate agrarian classes as a

³¹⁵ As it is discussed further on, the fact that purchases of regularized land rise between 2010 and 2014 has to do less with a shift in buyers’ preferences than with the increase in titled land among subordinate classes.

³¹⁶ Interview with Head of Research of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA), January 2007

means to maintain and control land access, communally titled land is hardly a target of purchase bids, let alone of sales.

Table 27 Land purchase bids and sales of titled land by type of title deed. 2010 and 2014 (%)

	Land title deed owner		Type of land title deed					
			Individual		Collective		Communal	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Land purchase bid	78%	77%	91%	92%	0%	5%	9%	3%
Land sale	55%	78%	100%	93%	0%	7%	0%	0%
Significance in level of differences χ^2 tests (5% level)*								
Between getting a bid & holding a title/ type of title	<i>,000</i>	,165	<i>,006</i>	<i>,000</i>	<i>,013</i>	<i>,000</i>	,225	<i>,001</i>
Between selling land & holding a title/ type of title	,718	,308	<i>,048</i>	<i>,003</i>	,145	,115	,329	<i>,049</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences each year at the 5% level. Differences over time are not statistically significant.

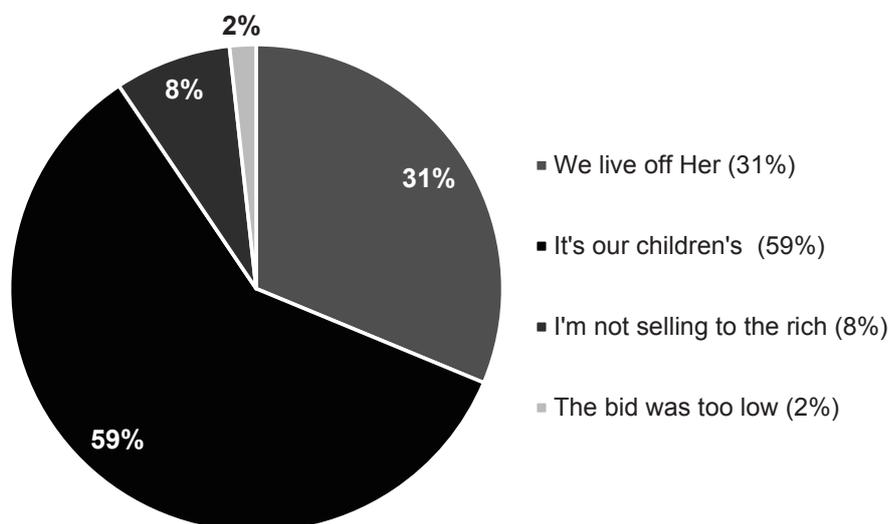
Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Recall from earlier that most land bids fail. Figure 25 presents the main reasons for this, and they revolve around the Q'eqchi' people's simultaneous understanding of land as means of production, soil and territory. The Q'eqchi' refer to land in Spanish as "trabajadero" (meaning "work-place") and in their language as "li ch'och" (the Earth). Traditionally, the Q'eqchi' Maya understand land as a living and life-giving entity that must be cared for and respected by them, *Her* children, the "R'al Ch'och" (Children of the Land).³¹⁷ Life, human and otherwise,

³¹⁷ Q'eqchi' is in fact the term the *R'al Ch'och* use for their language. Interviews with 77 and 74 year old Q'eqchi' men from Polochic Highland zone. February and July 2007, respectively.

is guarded by the “Tzuultaq’as” (the “Mountain-Valley” spirits).³¹⁸ As elsewhere, this traditional understanding of land in Guatemala, and associated land governance practices, change for many reasons, not least because of heightened commoditization and state simplification (Scott 1998). But as it is discussed further on, many among the Q’eqchi’ subordinate classes reify a comprehensive understanding of land as means of production, soil and territory in response to flex agribusinesses’ expansion in 2006-2014.

Figure 25 Reasons for rejecting land purchase bids. 2010 and 2014 (%)



Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey. Differences over time are not statistically significant.

³¹⁸ Grandin explains they ‘provide Q’eqchi’es with a hierarchical and interlocking set of geographic and moral coordinates. Each community is thought owned by a specific Tzuultaq’a, while thirteen more potent mountain spirits surround the Q’eqchi’ linguistic area. For traditionalists, these mountain spirits regulate the sexual and agricultural reproduction or the entirety of Q’eqchi’ life and are believed to be easily offended [...]. They also insist on a life lived in harmony with neighbours, the fulfillment of expected obligations to spouse, family and community, the granting of respect and deference to male heads of households and community elders, and the containment of individual ambitions and the excessive accumulation of wealth in an increasingly commodified and commercial world’ (2011, 292-3).

Rejecting a land bid can be quite precarious despite this. Whereas all land deals by subordinate agrarian classes with fellow cultivators are voluntary, around half of those with coyotes, flex palm companies and ranchers are forced deals.³¹⁹ This translates to 4 out of 10 land deals involving agrarian subordinate classes being forced deals. In the best of cases, forced land deals involve trickery or intimidation. In the worst, threats are fulfilled and many are harassed, abused, disappeared or killed after refusing to sell. Exact figures are difficult to obtain because political violence is usually recorded as just another criminal case. But between 2004 and 2009 in the Petén department alone, the Catholic Pastoral counts the number of killings following the rejection of a land bid, or organizing for agrarian justice more broadly, by the dozen³²⁰ (workshop in Petén, November 2009). Trickery includes false (or embellished) employment promises in palm plantations, and warnings to sell land before it is swallowed by mushrooming conservation enclosures or adversely affected by energy and infrastructure mega-projects. As villagers from the Sayaxché zone explain, after selling their entire village that would subsequently be buried beneath a palm plantation, “You better sell your land before it is flooded by the dams of the Puebla to Panama Plan”, they told us. “The palm companies will give you work later”, they also said. Now our land is indeed swamped, but with palm! And those who cheated us were not company lawyers or engineers; they were our very own brothers!³²¹

I have identified five main ways of intimidating villagers to sell their land. First, companies hire thugs to burn down palms and then accuse the villagers of arson. Flex companies value each palm at US\$ 1,875, and sue villagers, who are then obliged to pay for the burned palms. With no other safety net, villagers often have to arrange land sales or direct in-

³¹⁹ Differences in the forced or voluntary character of land deals between all three non-fellow buyers and fellow ones in 2014 are statistically significant at the 5% level (χ^2 test $p=,040$).

³²⁰ Often times, intimidation or violence against subordinate agrarian classes is not to force a deal but to get rid of a competing bidder or annoying grassroots organizers. This is further discussed in chapter 10.

³²¹ Group interview with representatives from different Sayaxché villages, May 2010

kind payments using their land.³²² Second, maize and beans are either seized or burned by hired thugs in plots coveted by palm companies.³²³ Third, flex palm companies enclose villagers' farms within palm plantations and ban or complicate their right of way. Fourth, employees of flex cane and palm companies, including security guards but also foremen and engineers, go around showing their guns. And fifth, intimidation occurs through direct death threats. One such example 'either you sell at this set price or we come back to bargain with the widow' was reportedly made by a "man with a strange Spanish accent".³²⁴ To my surprise while conducting fieldwork in Colombia a few months later, I learned that narco-paramilitaries use the very same words to force land sales in the Choco and Magdalena departments.³²⁵ Hence, the claim that Guatemalan flex palm companies recruit other "staff" besides engineers from Colombia may amount to more than sheer speculation.

Conversely, 6 out of 10 land deals involving subordinate agrarian classes are voluntary. There is a temptation to simply take this at face value and brand these land deals as "win-win" market transactions. However, I instead choose to dig deeper into the actual reasons behind voluntary land deals. In doing so, I examine the reasons behind land sales to fellow subordinate class cultivators and non-fellow outsiders. I have pointed out that all land sales to fellow cultivators are voluntary. 70% of these are pure business deals, with underlying reasoning including a desire to move out of farming, and to a lesser extent, the "thrill" of conspicuous consumption.³²⁶ Another 70% are distressed sales, with the logic to sale stemming from issues like escalating challenges in farming,³²⁷ urgent

³²² Interview with representatives from different villages from Tierra Blanca district in Sayaxché, July 2010. As discussed in chapter 12, this is a controversial issue because arsons are also part of villagers' responses to flex cane and palm companies' expansion.

³²³ group meetings Sayaxché, Ixcán, Chisec

³²⁴ Testimony in meeting organized by the Catholic Pastoral in Petén, March 2008.

³²⁵ Interview with executive board member of the Colombian "National Agrarian Council" (CAN), July 2008. On contemporary violent forms of land control in Colombia see Grajales (2011).

³²⁶ As one survey respondent argues in a tormented way 'I sold my land for sheer greed'.

³²⁷ Discussed in the next section and the knowledge and technology relations chapter

cash needs (e.g. for medical expenses), and linked to the previous two, indebtedness. In the remaining 86% of the cases, reasons to sell land to a fellow cultivator are imbued with characteristics of moral economy. These involve a sense of duty and reciprocity among those bonded by class, ethnicity or kinship—but who are located along various points of the land ownership spectrum. Nonetheless, for these type of land sales to happen, the buyer needs to proof her moral eligibility. Morally compelling land bids by fellow cultivators include those by Hacienda-tenants, landless village youth, victims of forced land deals, and to a lesser extent cases involving distressed sales (i.e. when indebtedness was not due to morally-sanctioned behaviours like gambling, drinking or conspicuous consumption).

Regarding voluntary land deals with non-fellow outsiders (i.e. corporate coyotes, flex palm companies and ranchers), 22,5% are reported as sales of unyielding land (e.g. exhausted or flooding soils). The rest are reported as distressed sales for similar reasons to those described earlier. Most strikingly, “pure business deal” was not reported as a reason to sell land to non-fellow outsiders in any of the two HH survey panels. Whether or not it is actually the case, the common practice of justifying voluntary land deals with non-fellow outsiders as “unavoidable sales” is very telling of both the meaning of land among Q’eqchi’ lowlanders and the ways they govern property relations. Furthermore, whereas all head of HH women agree to sell land to fellow cultivators, 4 out of 10 openly disagree to deal with non-fellow outsiders in matters related to land.³²⁸ Once again, this result appears to underestimate the actual number of Q’eqchi’ women who feel uneasy with selling land to non-fellow outsiders. Rather than individually (as in the one-to-one survey), Q’eqchi’ women oppose these land deals collectively as part of women’s grassroots groups or organizations. I return to this in Part III, but it suffices to say here that men make decisions related to land sales,

³²⁸ Differences between fellow cultivator and non-fellow outsider buyers and head of HH women consenting or not to the deal in 2014 are statistically significant at the 5% level (χ^2 test $p=,047$)

despite man and woman head of HH (when this is the case) being registered as co-owners in individual land title deeds.

In sum, there is more than meets the eye with land deals involving (Q'eqchi') petty land-owners in 2006-2014. Flex agribusinesses argue their land deals are consent-based and transparent market transactions that abide by the law,³²⁹ but evidence shows this is not always and necessarily so. Table 28 categorizes land sales by petty land owners according to their character and the buyer's scale of capital. Considering just the character of the deal (final column in table 28), we can see that 20% of them are "voluntary and willful", 40% "voluntary-yet-unwillful" and yet another 40% "forced". If we consider the buyer's scale of capital, land sales are divided between sales to fellow cultivators, and to non-fellow village outsiders. Within the former, the 7% "purely commercial" and 7% "distressed" sales are vectors and expressions of agrarian class differentiation from below. But the remaining 86% "moral economy" sales push in the total opposite direction, that is, they perform as levelling mechanisms to counter or keep economic differentiation at bay. Within the latter land deals with non-fellow village outsiders, 50% are "forced" land deals. But the remaining 39% "distressed" and 11% "unyielding land" sales are "voluntary-yet-unwillful" deals which can hardly be considered deliberate market reallocations of land from less to more efficient producers (Deininger 2003, World Bank 2007).

³²⁹ Interview with Owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj cane company, February 2008, and GREPALMA's President in I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, November 2013.

Table 28 Character of land deals involving agrarian subordinate classes, in general and by buyer's scale of capital

Character of the deal			Buyers by "scale of capital"		All buyers
			Fellow cultivators	Palm companies, coyotes and ranchers	
Voluntary deals	Willful deals	Purely commercial	7%	0%	2%
		Moral economy	86%	0%	18%
	Unwillful deals	Distressed	7%	39%	31%
		Unyielding land	0%	11%	9%
Forced deals			0%	50%	40%

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey.

6.3. Implications of land control mechanisms by flex cane and palm companies on land relations

I have advanced that the first and second mechanisms of controlling land for corporate cane and palm plantations, or conversion of previously owned land and outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements, do not entail land ownership changes. But these as well as the other two land control mechanisms involving long term land leases and land purchases have implications on the abilities of dominant and subordinate fragmented agrarian classes to gain, regain, expand, maintain and control access to land (Ribot and Peluso 2003). In other words, all four land control mechanisms used by flex agribusinesses have implication on land “access-beyond-property” relations. I first discuss the implications on the abilities of fragmented agrarian classes to gain, regain and expand land access, and then on their abilities to maintain and control land access.

6.3.1. Implications for fragmented agrarian classes to gain, regain and expand land access

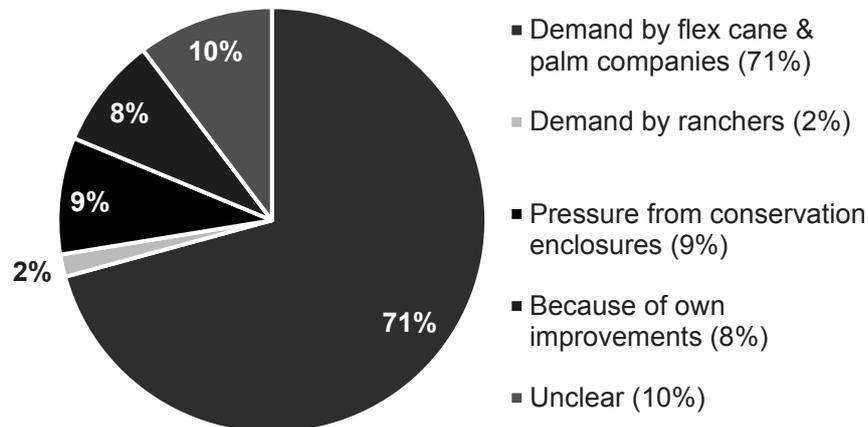
Land (re)concentration in the hands of flex agribusinesses in 2006-2014 overlaps with formerly skewed land ownership structures and green enclosures, resulting in soaring land prices. When the Chabil Utzaj flex cane company bought old haciendas in the Polochic Valley around 2005, the price per hectare averaged US\$ 2,400.³³⁰ When Chabil Utzaj goes bankrupt in 2010 and creditors auction the land that has yet to be fully developed, the opening bid is US\$ 6,000 per hectare.³³¹ Similarly, Sayaxché villagers report that before flex palm companies arrived in 2004, the price of a hectare of land located near the national road averaged US\$ 300. In 2010, coyotes and flex palm companies offer between US\$ 900 and US\$ 1,500 for a hectare of land away from the national road.³³² Not surprisingly, Figure 26 shows 7 out of 10 survey participants from across all class, age, sex and geographical divisions have the subjective impression that land (re)concentration in the hands of flex cane and palm companies the main reason behind soaring land prices.

³³⁰ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008

³³¹ Group interview with Operations Manager and lawyers from the Central American Bank of Economic Integration (CABEI), March 2011

³³² Group interview, May 2010.

Figure 26 Reasons behind increased land prices. 2010 and 2014 (in %)



Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey. Differences over time are not statistically significant.

The land price boom adversely affects the abilities to gain, regain and expand land access through the market. This is true for all fragmented agrarian classes, including the agro-extractivists themselves. But subordinate agrarian classes are the most adversely affected of all, and often regardless of whether they are located at the buyer's or the seller's end of the deal. When on the buyer's end, they are usually out-competed by dominant class bidders. This is the case when subordinate class landless and land-scarce people target estates of interest for flex agribusinesses. Probably the most clear such case in 2006-2014 is that of the Polochic Valley. The genealogy chapter explained how many an hacienda there went bankrupt at the turn of the 21st century. Some hacienda-tenants seize this as an opportunity to take over the land they till and inhabit by claiming land as in-kind payment for decades of bonded-labor with low or no wages and without labor benefits. Others join forces with landless and land-scarce villagers from neighbouring communities to negotiate the purchase of haciendas with their former patrones, using FONTIERRAS market-led agrarian reform. Negotiations drag on, slowed down by FONTIERRAS' bureaucratic procedures and issues like the fact that many hacienda-tenants lack

national identity cards. But then the negotiations shut down altogether when Chabil Utzaj flex cane company arrived in 2005 and offered a higher price in US dollars, to be paid on the spot. For the deal to come through, the company demanded the estates to be properly recorded in the National Property Registry, and that all labor liabilities be settled. As a result, hacienda-tenants were expelled from the land they had been bound to through “perfectly legal” means.

Even when at the seller’s end, subordinate agrarian classes face great challenges to reap the benefits of land’s appreciation. Those involved in forced or distressed land deals usually receive payments below market-price. And even those who are part of voluntary deals find it hard to use whatever money they receive from their land in a productive ways.

When a surplus remains after dealing with the debt or cash needs that prompted the sale, many try to kick-start off- or non-farm livelihoods. In the northern lowlands, this means either looking for a job, usually as farm-workers, or starting a business, most often in trade. The previous chapter discussed the intricacies of farm labor in palm plantations being the main source of employment in the research zones by 2014.

Regarding trade entrepreneurs, very few dare to venture into the city where competition is harsh, entry and living expenses higher, and risks of ending up blackmailed by a criminal mara gang are perhaps even higher. Thus, many stay in the countryside. Some open a shop. But there are only so many shops a village of poor people can handle. Others try their luck as intermediaries in the maize trading business, and use their land revenue to buy a sturdy 1980s pick-up truck. But yet again, there are only so many intermediaries speculative maize trading can make use of, and newcomers are usually swiftly out-competed by well-established maize traders.

Hence, many of those who sell their land and do not flee to the city right away end up struggling for land repossession, or they attempt to do before giving up and leaving for urban centers. Some regain ownership of lesser or lower quality land, though most fail to do so and keep

adding to the swelling ranks of landless and land-scarce. Table 29 shows the land ownership structure in 2010 and 2014 for subordinate agrarian class petty land owner HHs, namely those owning a maximum of 64 hectares of land.³³³ Table 29 first reveals a two-fold increase in the number of landless HHs between 2010 and 2014 where it includes 18% of all HHs by the latter year. A second and related finding is that the landed outnumber the landless. And third, the concentration of over half of all landed HHs falls in the categories of small and medium petty land owners.

Table 29 Subordinate agrarian class land ownership structure. 2010, 2014 and 2014-2010 change (%)³³⁴

Petty land owners' groups	Year		Change 2014-2010	Significance in level of differences over time McNemar test (5% level)*
	2010	2014		
Landless (= 0 Has.)	9%	18%	88%	,000
Petty land owners (> 0 and ≤ 64 Has.)	91%	82%	-9%	,000
<i>Micro (>0 & ≤1 Has)</i>	16%	6%	-59%	,001
<i>Small (>1 & ≤4 Has)</i>	31%	30%	-3%	,764
<i>Medium (>4 & ≤16 Has)</i>	21%	26%	26%	,109
<i>Large (>16 & ≤ 64 Has)</i>	23%	20%	-15%	,179

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences over time at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

³³³ Land ownership categories stem from the size of the land plots originally assigned during agrarian colonization of the Northern Transversal Strip and south Petén, and their subsequent fractioning.

³³⁴ Land distribution in Guatemala is officially assessed through “National Agricultural Censuses”, and the last one dates back to 2002 (National Statistics Institute (INE) 2003). A new Census is carried out in 2013, but outcomes have not been released by the time of writing. According to the FAO official supporting the 2013 Census, ‘outcomes are extremely sensitive and the government is taking its time to process them’ (personal communication, February 2014). Hence, I rely on my own HH panel survey data.

Other interesting features and tendencies stem from the analysis of land ownership structures following age and class divisions. Regarding the former, an expected feature in both 2010 and 2014 is the younger the head of HH man, the smaller the amount land owned, and vice-versa. As pointed out in the social structure discussion in chapter 4, this mirrors the growing challenges for the youth to emancipate from their parents' (or in-laws'), and the needs for the elder to live with their siblings, following constrained access to a living wage, land or any other livelihood. Table 30 shows landlessness grows for all age groups with the exception of the youngest one of 25 years old and younger. This age group basically includes the third generation of the original beneficiaries of agrarian colonization from the 1960s on, meaning it is especially the second generation, between 30 and 50 years old in 2006-2014, which mostly sells land. Conversely, it is the grandchildren of the original settlers who seem to be clinging more strongly to their land.

Table 30 Head of HH man's age groups by land ownership groups. 2010 and 2014 (%)

Land ownership groups	Age groups							
	≤ 25		> 25 and ≤ 45		> 45 and ≤ 65		> 65	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Landless (=0 Has)	14%	13%	14%	27%	5%	13%	0%	4%
Micro (>0 & ≤1 Has)	29%	25%	21%	8%	11%	5%	0%	0%
Small (>1 & ≤4 Has)	43%	25%	36%	43%	24%	22%	31%	17%
Medium (>4 & ≤16 Has)	14%	25%	16%	18%	23%	28%	46%	50%
Large (>16 & ≤ 64 Has)	0%	13%	13%	4%	37%	33%	23%	29%

*Significance in level of differences in land property group belongingness between age group pairs in 2010 & 2014 McNemar tests (5% level)**

Age group pairs	2010	2014
≤ 25 & > 25 and ≤ 45	,415	,402
≤ 25 & > 45 and ≤ 65	,004	,367
≤ 25 & > 65	,005	,089
> 25 and ≤ 45 & > 45 and ≤ 65	,000	,000
> 25 & ≤ 45 and > 65	,009	,000
> 45 and ≤ 65 & > 65	,168	,167

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences within each year at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Table 31 expands the data by depicting two main features of the class division of land ownership. Interestingly, while proletarians show the highest rate of landlessness, there are also landless and land-scarce family farmers and petty capitalist farmers. Conversely, market oriented family farmers and specialized petty capitalist farmers are the largest land owners. The general tendency of increasing landlessness is significantly driven by the family farmer class. The fact that the share of landless HHs grows while that of large petty land owners shrinks suggests land sales mainly involve family farmers, and especially the self-consumption oriented fraction. Curiously enough, landlessness decreases over time for the proletarian class. Furthermore, driven by its Farming fraction, the proletarian class shows a large increase of medium petty land owners, and even a small but significant growth in the category of large petty land owners. This suggests proletarianization proceeds without land dispossession.³³⁵ In other words, these findings further support the thesis that the plantation labor regime of flex cane and palm companies is underpinned by functional dualist relations. This is largely explained by the 2012 labor regime fix by flex palm companies attracting former family farmers and petty capitalist farmers who managed to keep their land after plantation wage-work became their main reproductive strategy.

³³⁵ This meaning they maintain ownership over their main farming plot and not only over a food garden as in Lenin's account of allotment holding proletarianization (1982 [1899])

Table 31 Classes and fractions by land ownership categories. 2010 and 2014 (%).

Land ownership groups	Class						Class fractions											
	Proletarians		Family farmers		Petty capitalist farmers		Proletarian		Family farmers		Petty capitalist farmers							
	Farming	Non-farming	Self-consumption oriented	Market oriented	Multi-functional	Specialized	Farming	Non-farming	Self-consumption oriented	Market oriented	Multi-functional	Specialized						
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014				
Landless (=0 Has)	39%	35%	2%	16%	11%	15%	27%	25%	100%	100%	0%	17%	5%	15%	19%	20%	3%	11%
Micro (>0 & ≤1 Has)	8%	9%	13%	10%	18%	4%	9%	10%	0%	0%	19%	12%	0%	7%	17%	6%	19%	2%
Small (>1 & ≤4 Has)	39%	22%	37%	29%	27%	32%	46%	25%	0%	0%	42%	41%	25%	11%	29%	33%	25%	32%
Medium (>4 & ≤16 Has)	8%	26%	22%	32%	21%	23%	9%	30%	0%	0%	13%	24%	45%	44%	19%	22%	24%	23%
Large (>16 & ≤64 Has)	8%	9%	27%	13%	23%	26%	9%	10%	0%	0%	27%	7%	25%	22%	17%	20%	29%	32%

Significance in level of differences in land property group belongingness between classes and fractions in 2010 & 2014

*McNemar tests (5% level)**

Between classes	2010	2014	Between class fractions	2010	2014
Proletarian & family farmer	<i>.002</i>	<i>.474</i>	Farming & non-farming proletarians	<i>.351</i>	<i>.124</i>
Proletarian & petty capitalist farmer	<i>.033</i>	<i>.085</i>	Self-consumption & market oriented family farmers	<i>.003</i>	<i>.028</i>
Family farmer & petty capitalist farmer	<i>.126</i>	<i>.090</i>	Multi-functional & specialized petty capitalist farmers	<i>.056</i>	<i>.381</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences within each year at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Following these lines, the lack of land ownership does not preclude subordinate agrarian classes from accessing land on a leasehold basis. In 2010 and 2014, 12% of all HHs, and 91% of the landless HHs, farm on leased land. In 2006-2014 land tenancy relations become more of a business between “fellow classes”. We learned that long term leases from rentier landlords are a key land control mechanism used by agro-extractivists to expand cane and palm plantations. Similarly, the landless and land-scarce within subordinate agrarian classes lease land mainly from subordinate class petty land owners in 2010 (85% of leases) and 2014 (80% of leases). Nonetheless, land leases by rentier landlords to subordinate classes also increase significantly³³⁶ between 2010 and 2014,

³³⁶ McNemar test p=,023

from 15% to 20% respectively. Reasons for this have to do with the upgrade of FONTIERRAS' land lease program in 2012 following partly pressure "from below", and also partly because of lack of funding for FONTIERRAS' land purchase program. For rentier landlords, land leases through FONTIERRAS are more advantageous. Rental payment is guaranteed by the state and termination of the agreement legally binding, while the purchase option after 4 years of lease can be either seized or easily circumvented by changing leasees or simply refusing to sell.³³⁷

Land lease prices vary following location (i.e. climate, slope, rainfall, market access, etc.), soil quality (i.e. the differential ground-rent in the Marxian sense) and who the tenant is. But the farmland price boom raises leasing costs for everyone. Between 2010 and 2014 alone, the price paid by subordinate agrarian classes for leasing land from landed fellows and rentier landlords increases significantly,³³⁸ from an average of US\$ 30 to US\$ 49 per hectare/year.³³⁹ Most distinctively, though, 2 out of 10 land leases from/to agrarian subordinate classes are for free in 2010 and 2014. As with labor exchanges and moral economy land sales, this land de-commoditization mechanism allows for both repeasantization and functional dualist semi-proletarianization.

Therefore, lacking the ability to appropriate farmland's ground-rent does not always and necessarily entail the inability to benefit from land as means of production, even if most often at a cost. First, table 32 shows that farming happens across all petty land ownership categories, including the landless and land-scarce. The Q'eqchi' "will to farm" finds symbolic legitimation in a shared understanding of farming as a sign of

³³⁷ Interview with well-established cattle rancher from Fray, October 2013

³³⁸ Paired-t test $p=,013$

³³⁹ The leasing price charged by rentier landlords to flex palm companies triples that paid by subordinate classes, and averages US\$140-150 per hectare/ year (interviews with well-established cattle rancher from Fray zone, October 2013, rancher from Raxruha, Rancher from Petén, and large palm out-grower from Fray). This is but one example of the "price" agro-extractivists need to pay for not abiding by traditional moral economy arrangements of inter-class reciprocity. Something I discuss further on Part III.

adulthood/manhood, and material resonance in the need to make ends meet. This means that either wage-work subsidizes farming (i.e. repeasantization) or farming subsidizes wage-work (i.e. functional dualist semi-proletarianization). Second, the larger the amount of land owned, the larger the cultivated area. And third, there is a significant tendency for the landless and small and large size petty land-owners to increase their cultivated area. Nonetheless, as it is further discussed here and in the chapter on knowledge and technology relations, rather than improved farming abilities this phenomenon mirrors growing difficulties for shifting cultivation.

Table 32 Average cultivated land by petty land ownership categories. 2010 and 2014 (has.) and 2014-2010 change (%)

Petty land owners' groups	Average cultivated land			Significance in level of differences over time McNemar & Paired-t tests (5% level)*
	2010	2014	Change 2014-2010	
Landless (= 0 Has.)	2,38	2,40	1%	,043
Petty land owners (> 0 and ≤ 64 Has.)	4,15	4,75	14%	,009
<i>Micro (>0 & ≤1 Has)</i>	2,61	2*	-23%	,314
<i>Small (>1 & ≤4 Has)</i>	3,27	3,79	16%	,001
<i>Medium (>4 & ≤16 Has)</i>	5,95	5,00	-16%	,891
<i>Large (>16 & < 65 Has)</i>	4,75	6,77	43%	,037
<i>Significance in level of differences in cultivated land between land ownership groups in 2010 & 2014 ANOVA tests (5% level)*</i>				
Between landless & petty land owners	,013	,000		
Between micro & small petty land owners	,108	,005		
Between micro & medium petty land owners	,000	,003		
Between micro & large petty land owners	,000	,000		n.a.
Between small & medium petty land owners	,000	,016		
Between small & large petty land owners	,004	,000		
Between medium & large petty land owners	,107	,034		

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences within each year and over time at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

6.3.2. Implications for fragmented agrarian classes to maintain and control land access

It is common for flex agribusinesses to control the right of way in pathways and roads running through or next to plantations. There are cases in which a toll is charged for vehicles using formerly public roads that companies claim to maintain. This control over the right of way adversely affects all fragmented agrarian classes. We have seen it used as a means of forcing land deals with subordinate agrarian classes. But also ranchers and other dominant class subjects are particularly upset with the nuisance and costs of gates and road tolls.³⁴⁰

Even though they keep land ownership unchanged, land leases and outgrowing arrangements can still compromise the abilities of rentier landlords and outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois to maintain and control their land access. Most distinctively, none of the leasing or outgrowing (and contract-farming) arrangements known consider the costs of “disinvestment”. These are the (high) costs of recovering soils’ fertility after decades of intensive farming, and in the case of palm plantations, of uprooting ever-growing and intertwining primary palm roots (Broschat 1998), an issue that is further discussed in the chapter on ecological relations. Additionally, and on one side, whereas rentier landlords do not assume any production risk, climate- or human-led crop disruptions can adversely affect the continuity of the leasing arrangement. And on the other side, squeezed by their inability to capitalize on the economies of scale of large monoculture farming, some outgrowers (and many small contract-farmers) are at pains to keep their land access, as advanced in the labor relations chapter.

Long-term land leases and outgrowing arrangements—as well as land purchases and conversion to cane and palm of previously owned land—adversely affect the abilities of subordinate agrarian classes to maintain

³⁴⁰ Interviews with President of the Raxruha Cattle Breeders Association, and well-established cattle rancher from Fray, October 2013.

access to land either on freehold or leasehold basis. Before flex cane and palm companies hoarded ranches and haciendas in the Polochic, Fray and Sayaxché zones, many landless and land-scarce cultivators used to lease patches of estate land to grow maize, beans, chili and other food crops. Similarly, hacienda-tenants enjoyed use rights over a small plot in the landlord's hacienda to farm staples. Conversion of hacienda and ranch land into intensive cane and palm plantations compromises this form of land access for subordinate class cultivators. In the case of semi-permanent cane plantations, and following pressure from below, the Polochic flex cane company agreed to lease some patches of land in between the harvest and planting of cane to “well-behaved” plantation workers at first, and then later to avoid squatters. Farming in the cane plantations is limited to beans. This is because pulses help fix nitrogen in the soil to improve canes' growth. Farming maize, Guatemala's quintessential crop, is banned because it competes with cane for soil's nitrogen. Palm, however, is a permanently farmed crop and there is not a single inch of unutilized land in mature plantations.

Indeed, many subordinate class subjects (and some dominant ones) see their abilities to benefit from land constrained by all four mechanisms of land control by flex cane and palm companies. Hence, contrary to what the FAO concludes in its 2012 study on land market dynamics, we can conclude that in 2006-2014, flex cane and palm companies' expansion is underpinned by land resource control-grabbing.³⁴¹ The closure of the foregoing leasehold-based land access mechanisms, and the challenges to (re)gain and expand access to land on a freehold basis exacerbate perceptions of land scarcity—especially among fragmented subordinate agrarian classes. 8 out of 10 men and women from across age and

³⁴¹ “The capturing of control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms and forms that involve large-scale capital that often shifts resource use orientation into extractive character, whether for international or domestic purposes, as capital's response to the convergence of food, energy and financial crises, climate change mitigation imperatives, and demands for resources from newer hubs of global capital” (Borras et al. 2012, 851). Similarly, for Mehta et al. ‘resource grabbing refers to appropriation of natural resource including land and water and the *control* of their associated uses and benefits *with or without transfer of ownership*’ (2012, 195 emphasis added).

subordinate class divides claim there is not enough land for their children, and 9 out of 10 say that there is not enough land for everyone in the village. This adds fuel to the fire of shrinking abilities to (re)gain, expand, maintain and control land access through the market, and triggers two dynamics.

First, I have discussed that subordinate class land bidders, including life-long hacienda-tenants, are outcompeted by flex agribusinesses in their efforts to buy land from landlord and dependent agrarian bourgeois classes. But the situation becomes further complicated when they try to buy land from fellow subordinate classes. Notions of land scarcity feed into and result from current negative experiences with land deals and shape the way land is governed, and ultimately understood, in subordinate agrarian class villages. This is further explored in Part III. For the purposes of the current discussion, it is enough to point out that there is a trend across subordinate agrarian classes and forms of private property (individual, collective and communal) to regulate village land deals in a restrictive fashion. Such is especially so regarding land deals with non-fellow outsiders. But land sales and leases are also banned with fellow (Q'eqchi') cultivators known to have sold their land previously, even if exceptions are made in cases of forced and voluntary-yet-unwillful sales. Nonetheless, for those who are "eligible", buying and leasing land from landed fellows are the main mechanisms of gaining land access via the market in 2006-2014.

Second, fear of dispossession among the thousands of (Q'eqchi') petty land owners whose land title deeds were never issued by state agrarian colonization agencies (INTA and FYDEP) peaks with expanding flex agribusinesses in 2006-2014. Therefore, many try to upgrade their abilities to maintain and control land ownership by jumping onto the land good governance bandwagon. In doing so, they aim to expedite the regularization of their land ownership with FONTIERRAS once and for all. But this is not an automatic process. I pinpointed in the genealogy chapter how the children of the original settlers inherit their parents'

land without registering their names in the provisional land title deeds, and the same applies to third and fourth generation heirs. Individual ownership rights to untitled land are transacted informally. There are also many cases in which formally-registered collective land (i.e. cooperatives and collective agrarian patrimonies) has been “divided” among families in the village, and further transacted without registering ownership changes in the collective title deed. These are all informal land market deals, at times endorsed by the signatures of both parties in the back of a packet of cigarettes. Nonetheless, they are legitimate deals in the eyes of the community. At the same time, not only does the cadastral registration seemingly drag on for ages, but it is also a bureaucratic nightmare for those intending to regularize land in their names.

Therefore legal advice becomes paramount, and paralegals and especially lawyers come to enjoy the highest status (“Don Licenciado”). Most lawyers’ fees are far from affordable for most villagers. And it is common for many to be fooled by opportunistic crooks that request cash advances for legal services never to show up again, let alone deliver. Besides, in a judicial system lacking an agrarian jurisdiction, not every civil lawyer is in a position—based on knowledge or political competence—to effectively expedite land regularization with FONTIERRAS. Hence, thousands of villagers seek legal support to regularize their land with a wide range of social actors including peasant, indigenous people and women’s movements organizations, university legal clinics, (inter)national NGOs of different breeds and the Catholic Pastoral. Young and committed lawyers, or sometimes law students, offer “legal extension” services. They additionally help out in cases such as those involving the criminalization of protest, attacks on human rights defenders and violent evictions. These “activist-lawyers”, together with other allies showing a variety of journalistic, artistic, agronomic and research skills are behind the group I call “young although smartly-trained activists” (YASTACS).

All in all, FONTIERRAS has endorsed thousands of land title deeds in the northern lowlands since the early 2000s. From 2010 to 2014 alone, the share of subordinate class petty land owner HHs with a land title deed significantly³⁴² increases from 49% to 67% in the research zones. Following predicaments of the land good governance policy dogma, most of these title deeds are issued for individual land freehold property.³⁴³ There is nothing “new” about the individualization of land ownership. I have detailed that the distribution of collectively-owned land among families for cultivation had been a conventional mechanism of land individualization for several decades prior to the 2006-2014 period. But as it often goes, individual title deeds are a double-edged sword for subordinate classes to maintain and control land access.

On the one hand, individual freehold land title deeds endow proprietors with almost unlimited power in deciding the use and alienation of their land. They also help to formalize land ownership in the eyes of the state and other village “outsiders”, and do so as well as in the eyes of “insiders” in cases of land conflicts among community members that are not dealt with through communal institutions. One such meaningful case is the complaint that Q’eqchi’ women from 20 villages, and members of women’s grassroots organization *Q’ana Tzuultaq’a* (Lady Mountain-Valley), filed with FONTIERRAS for only handing out individual title deeds to their male partners. When relevant, individual land title deeds include both wife and husband as co-owners. As a result and a win for the women, FONTIERRAS had to repeat the official public ceremony and hand the title deeds to all women co-owners.³⁴⁴

On the other hand, however, individualization of the power to decide about the use and alienation of land has unexpected outcomes as well.

³⁴² Differences over time (2014-2010) are statistically significant at the 5% level (McNemar test $p=,000$). There are not significant differences in 2010 or 2014 between pairs of classes, class fractions, or age groups.

³⁴³ Interviews with Heads of FONTIERRAS in Alta Verapaz and Petén departments, August 2009 and November 2010, respectively

³⁴⁴ Meeting with members of Q’ana Tzuultaq’a women’s association board in Chisec, December 2009. See also Hurtado (2008) and Castillo Huertas (2015)

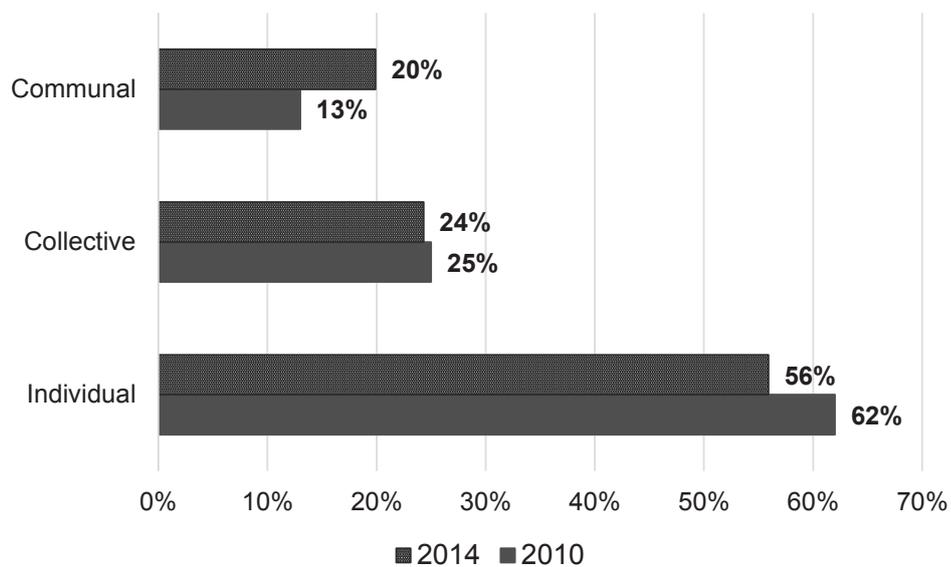
Two key outcomes surface. First, land individual freehold title deeds allow for dispossession through “perfectly legal” means, and second, individual freehold land ownership erodes traditional swidden farming systems. These are based on the communal government of village land following a farmland-fallows-forest land use logic, in which farming plots are distributed among families in the community according to their demographic requirements and labor capacities. Individual land ownership compelling cultivators to farm the very same plot year after year, however, does away with fallowing practices.³⁴⁵

Therefore, older paternalistic forms of collective land ownership sponsored by the military and individual land freehold promoted since the 1990s through land good governance dogma policies both fail to strengthen the abilities of fragmented subordinate classes to maintain and control land access amid flex agribusinesses’ expansion. The gradual realization of this, and the continuous need for alternatives, are behind the resignification of the communal form of private land ownership in 2006-2014. Figure 27 shows, first, that the share of individual land title deeds drops significantly³⁴⁶ in favor of non-individual ones, from 62% in 2010 to 56% in 2014. And second, within the latter the share of HHs with communal land title deeds, it increases from 13% in 2010 to 20% in 2014.

³⁴⁵ This often happens gradually in the northern lowlands, especially for the groups of medium and large petty land owners. Initially, formalization of individual land ownership triggers the fragmentation of land uses in the family farm trying to mirror the farmland-fallows-forest land use logic at the scale of the individual land plot. To this follows the surrendering of the forest area for the sake of keeping up with rotational cultivation. And finally (or since the very beginning for micro and small petty land owners), the fallows area is sacrificed in trying to maintain land yields by means of increasing the land cultivated. I come back to this in the chapter on knowledge and technology relations.

³⁴⁶ McNemar test $p=,032$

Figure 27 HHs with state-endorsed land ownership by type of land title deed. 2010 and 2014 (%)



Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

If we examine the age divisions of the different types of land title deeds in table 33, we are able to gather that HHs whose head man is between 25 and 45 years old by 2014 have significantly less individual titles than those in which he is part of the eldest and youngest age groups. Particularly, HHs part of this age group show the highest share of collective land title deeds in 2014, most likely because they are still waiting for the state to regularize their de facto individualization of collective land. Head of HH men in the 25 years old and younger, and the between 25 and 45 age groups show higher rates of communal title deeds over time (see final column). Since differences with other age groups are not statistically significant, I can only conclude the (re)communalization drive shows no particular age division.

Table 33 Type of land title deed by head of HH man's age group. 2010 and 2014 (%)

Age groups	Type of land title deed					
	Individual		Collective		Communal	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
≤ 25	25%	50%	75%	17%	0%	33%
> 25 and ≤ 45	55%	36%	35%	38%	10%	26%
> 45 and ≤ 65	68%	68%	16%	18%	16%	14%
> 65	80%	80%	0%	7%	20%	13%
Significance in level of differences between age group pairs χ^2 test (5% level)*						
Between ≤ 25 & > 25 and ≤ 45	,335	,661	,282	,407	1,000	,658
Between ≤ 25 & > 45 and ≤ 65	,114	,399	,022	1,000	1,000	,232
Between ≤ 25 & > 65	,206	,291	,048	,500	1,000	,544
Between > 25 and ≤ 45 & > 45 and ≤ 65	,182	,001	,033	,016	,426	,112
Between > 25 & ≤ 45 and > 65	,378	,002	,305	,021	,461	,292
Between > 45 and ≤ 65 & > 65	1,000	,352	1,000	,289	1,000	,906

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences within each year at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey.

However, the (re)communalization drive shows meaningful class differences. Table 34 indicates that all three subordinate agrarian classes, but especially proletarians and family farmers, show significant increases in the share of communally titled land ownership over time. Thus, as with the class dynamics behind moral economy land sales, and free land leases and labor exchanges, the (re)communalization tendency underpins broader differentiation tendencies behind repeasantization and functional-dualist proletarianization.

Table 34 Type of land title deed by class and class fraction. 2010 and 2014 (%)

Agrarian subordinate classes and fractions*	Type of land title deed					
	Individual		Collective		Communal	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Proletarian	50%	43%	50%	21%	0%	36%
Family farmer	51%	55%	26%	16%	23%	29%
Petty capitalist farmer	68%	59%	24%	30%	8%	11%
Significance in level of differences between class pairs χ^2 test (5% level)**						
Betw een proletarians and family farmers	1,000	,418	,473	,657	1,000	,608
Betw een proletarians and petty capitalist farmers	,545	,267	,435	,510	1,000	,017
Betw een family farmers and petty capitalist farmers	1,000	,677	,834	,082	,037	,013
Self-consumption oriented family farmers	39%	37%	35%	15%	26%	48%
Market oriented family farmers	75%	77%	8%	18%	17%	4,5%
Multi-functional petty capitalist farmers	43,5%	48,5%	43,5%	36%	13%	15%
Specialized petty capitalist farmers	82,5%	67,5%	12,5%	25%	5%	7,5%
Significance in level of differences between class fractions pairs χ^2 test (5% level)**						
Betw een self-consumption and market oriented family farmers	,044	,005	,089	1,000	,529	,001
Betw een multi-functional and specialized petty capitalist farmers	,001	,100	,005	,292	,345	,455

* Proletarian fractions are not included because one of the two fractions (i.e. non-farming proletarians) does not own land either in 2010 or 2014

** Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences within each year at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

Still a minority in 2014, the growing share of communal land title deeds mirrors the resignification of the communal form of land ownership. Communal land title deeds can enhance the abilities of landed subordinate classes to control land by deterring illegal seizures, land purchase bids and individual land sales. In this regard, they are no different from previous forms of collective property (i.e. cooperatives and collective agrarian patrimonies). Nonetheless, there are cases in which the (re)communalization drive goes beyond the title deed to inform the community's understanding and governance of land. In such cases, communal land ownership is resignified not only in economic and socio-cultural terms, but also politically. I further explore this in Part III. Here, it is worth highlighting that in such cases land is simultaneously

understood as means of production, soil and territory. Accordingly, village land is governed by community institutions following the fallows-farms-forest land use logic of swidden cultivation—rather than the all-in-one fixed family plot logic of the land good governance policy dogma.

Chapter 7 Financial relations

7.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the financial relations behind heightened resource extractivism during convergent global crises in Guatemala. Financial relations are the cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented class creditors and debtors, which inform the ways: i) money-capital is organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the interest portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) ownership of money-capital and entitlements to interest are politically sanctioned, and; iv) interest is used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants.

In doing so, I first analyze the broad contours of a “financialization 3.0” wave in the Guatemalan economy during this period, where private markets and financiers move into the spotlight of both public and private financial realms. Regarding the former, and on one side, the role of the state as creditor is limited to the exchange rate and monetary policies managed by the Guatemalan Central Bank (BANGUAT). Most distinctively, BANGUAT’S supply of loanable money, especially to private domestic financiers, rises steeply. On the other side, public debt finds a higher new ceiling. Whereas loans from international financial institutions (IFIs) remain the largest source of external public debt, state bonds become increasingly relevant. Conversely, internal sovereign debt is totally contracted in bonds, the majority of which are held by domestic private banks. For the banks as a private financial realm, financialization 3.0 means elevated concentration, growth and profits. Guatemalan financiers increasingly focus on public debt and money market investments—and trade and consumption credits—rather than on investment loans to firms. Transnational financiers are increasingly in charge of investment loans, resulting in credit foreignization. Hence, the growing demand for credit and enhanced access to cheaper loanable money(-capital), makes lending a very lucrative business throughout

2006-2014. And this has far-reaching implications for expanded and simple reproduction in agriculture.

Contributing to the financialization 3.0 wave, and benefiting from it, flex cane and palm companies restructure their funding mechanisms. This “financial fix” brings the agro-extractivists into a brokering position vis-à-vis (trans)national financiers that seek a surplus-value share in flex cane and palm commodity production, and/or to speculate on land. More directly, though less often, agro-extractivists act as advisors and managers for foreign direct investors. More indirectly, and often and effectively, Guatemalan agro-extractivists involve (trans)national financiers in their flex cane and palm complexes through heightened and diversified demand for money-capital. Furthermore, the range of financial tools expands well beyond bank credit. As Fine explains ‘in qualitative terms, finance is different today because of the proliferation of both purely financial markets and instruments and the corresponding ranges of fictitious capitals that bridge these to real activities’ (2007, 8). Table 35 puts a historical perspective on the ways agro-commodity value portions, associated with long-standing and more recently commoditized forces of production, are rendered fictitious capital in Guatemala.

Table 35 Agro-commodity value portions rendered fictitious capital during main financialization waves of the Guatemalan economy (1871-2014)

	Fictively commoditized productive forces	(Agro-)commodity value portions	Long-standing fictitious capital (financialization 1.0 & 2.0 waves)	Recent fictitious capital (financialization 3.0 wave)
Long-standing	Labor power	Wage	Wage advances	Securitization of workers' (wage) savings, including pension funds
	Land	Ground-rent	Mortgages	Securitization of ground-rent in money form
	Money	Interest	Money derivative and futures markets	New types of derivatives (e.g. credit default swaps and collateralized debt obligations)
Recent	Knowledge	Intellectual property rights' royalties		Securitization of intellectual property rights
	Environmental goods and bads	Payments for Environmental Services (PES)	Securitization of compliance "Carbon Emission Reduction" certificates (CERs)	Securitization of PES and voluntary "Verified Emissions Reduction" certificates (VERs)

Source: Author elaboration

The expansion on the range of financial tools in the flex cane and palm complexes includes the securitization of land's ground-rent in money form, and of new revenue streams associated with what seems to be an endlessly growing range of measures for appropriating external nature. Securitizing land's ground-rent works just like any other securitization operation. Productive and real estate management operations are split into independent firms within the family business group controlled by Board interlocks. The former exploits land as a means of flex cane and palm commodity production. The latter makes land's ground-rent a financial asset that is "generated" in the productive process. To make this happen, the real estate management company serves as a "special purpose vehicle" for land securitization. The cost of securitization is reduced through the off-shoring of the "special purpose vehicle" firm in tax havens (most often Panama). Following the green economy policy dogma, green finance allows for the realization of all "hidden revenues" in commoditized environmental resources and services—and their consequences, namely pollutants and waste. So flex cane and palm companies rely on carbon compliance offset mechanisms, while flex palm companies additionally raise funds through a sector-specific

voluntary carbon offset mechanism. In both instances, carbon offset certificates can be negotiated on the spot in financial markets, or as it is most often the case, securitized and negotiated in futures markets. And emissions reduction projects usually cut production costs as well.

Therefore, the financial fix of flex cane and palm companies ‘combines a renewed interest in productive, real assets with an underlying adherence to the logic of financialization’ (Fairbairn 2014, 779). It contributes to distancing in the world agro-commodity system in the two ways put forth by Clapp, increasing ‘the number of actors involved in global agrifood commodity chains and [...] abstract[ing] food from its physical form into highly complex agricultural commodity derivatives [and others] that are difficult to understand for all but seasoned financial traders’ (2014, 798).

Despite the continuation of wage advances to force plantation workers into debt-peonage, and the emergence of a lucrative yet limited REDD+ project involving subordinate agrarian class beneficiaries, credit remains the most general form of funding and indebtedness for the underprivileged. For subordinate agrarian classes in the main expansion frontier for flex cane and palm companies—that is, in the northern lowlands—the key feature regarding credit indebtedness in 2006-2014 is its low diffusion, even though it grows during this period. Micro-finance organizations are the main creditors, followed by far by commercial banks and even further by the state, money-lenders and family and friends. The underprivileged fundamentally use their credit to finance simple reproduction through farming.

Additional features and tendencies in credit relations are revealed when HHs are grouped along class fractions and land tenure attributes. On the one hand, the fact that specialized petty capitalist farmers receive the most public funding speaks volumes about those that the government targets through its agricultural policy for subordinate agrarian classes during this period. On the other hand, and first, there are no significant differences between the landed and the landless, or across different

groups of petty land owners, regarding their abilities to access to credit. Second, whereas the average credit amount for the landed does not change over time, its increase nearly doubles for the landless. Third, land owners holding a title deed in 2010 have an average credit debt for an amount that is not much larger but significantly different from those who do not hold a title. For the former, credit debt does not change over time, but for the latter it increases substantially. Fourth and finally, there are no significant differences in credit debt among land owners holding different type of title deeds (i.e. individual, collective or communal). It would then appear to be that “capitalism fails” for subordinate agrarian class lowlanders for reasons other than the lack of formalization of private property rights (de Soto 2000). When backed by a title deed, land is the preferred form of collateral for creditors. All creditors, but especially banks, prefer individual land titles over groups ones. But when land is not titled, or in the absence of land, subordinate agrarian classes are still able to access credit through micro-finance organizations by using their other assets or wages as collateral.

All in all, credit indebtedness continues to trigger class differentiation in 2006-2014 as a vector and expression of the process of competition and concentration of capital (Marx 1887 [1867], 435) for dominant agrarian classes, and of ‘capitalism from below’³⁴⁷ for subordinate ones. Hence, ‘as a mechanism of exploitation, social differentiation, labor control and dispossession, debt continues to be a defining feature of rural lives’ (Fairbairn et al. 2014, 655).

7.2. The “financialization 3.0” wave of the Guatemalan economy

Guatemalan financial markets and financier classes thrive like never before in the 2006-2014 period. The burst of the financial bubble in the US around 2007-8 casts a shadow on its southern neighbors. However, this does not last long, nor does it put the brakes on the runaway financial locomotive in Guatemala. Quite the contrary, financiers who still have an excess of liquidity in this economic context—not least

³⁴⁷ Byres (1996), but see also Kautsky (1988 [1899]) and Lenin (1982 [1899])

through public bailouts—look for new financial horizons, including in Guatemala. As a result, domestic financiers consolidate old and explore new ways of profiting from finance at once. By doing so, they feed into and take from the conditions of the “financialization 3.0” wave in the Guatemalan economy. There is far more concerning the drivers, expressions and relations behind the financialization 3.0 wave than is feasible to discuss here. But since my primary interest on finance and financiers in agriculture, the analysis to follow focuses on tracing just the main contours of the financialization 3.0 wave in the public and private financial realms.

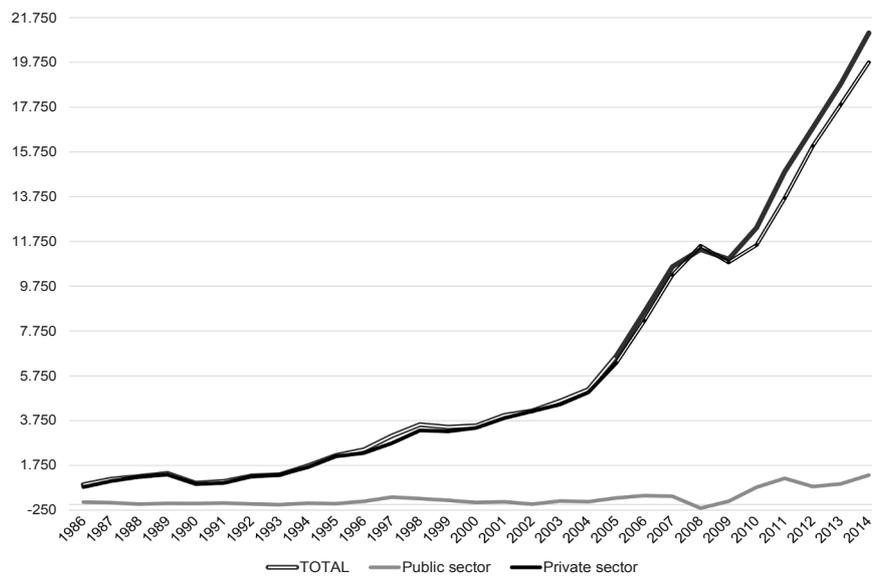
7.2.1. The state as creditor and debtor

The financial operations of the Guatemalan state increase in breadth and depth in the 2006-2014 period. Indeed, private financiers are at the heart of the state’s lending and borrowing policies. The role of the state as creditor is largely limited during this period to setting the exchange rate and monetary policies managed by the Guatemalan Central Bank (BANGUAT).³⁴⁸ Figure 28 shows the sensational increase in BANGUAT’S supply of loanable money during this period, especially to private domestic financiers.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ There is still one fully-public commercial bank, the National Bank of Mortgage Credit (CHN) created during the financialization 1.0 wave in the 1930s, and two private banks in which the state is a minor shareholder (BANRURAL and BANTRAB) (Guatemalan Banking Authority, personal communication March 2017). These are part and parcel of Guatemala’s financial boom during this period. But considering CHN is one of the smallest commercial banks and the minor shareholding of the state in BANRURAL and BANTRAB, the analysis of the Guatemalan state as a creditor focuses on the role of BANGUAT.

³⁴⁹ While loans to the private sector constrain during the US financial crack, loans to the public sector increase. This mirrors the counter-cyclical monetary policies of the Guatemalan state to soften the crisis’ blow.

Figure 28 Loanable money supply by the Guatemalan Central Bank: Total and by public/ private sector. 1986-2014 (US\$ million)



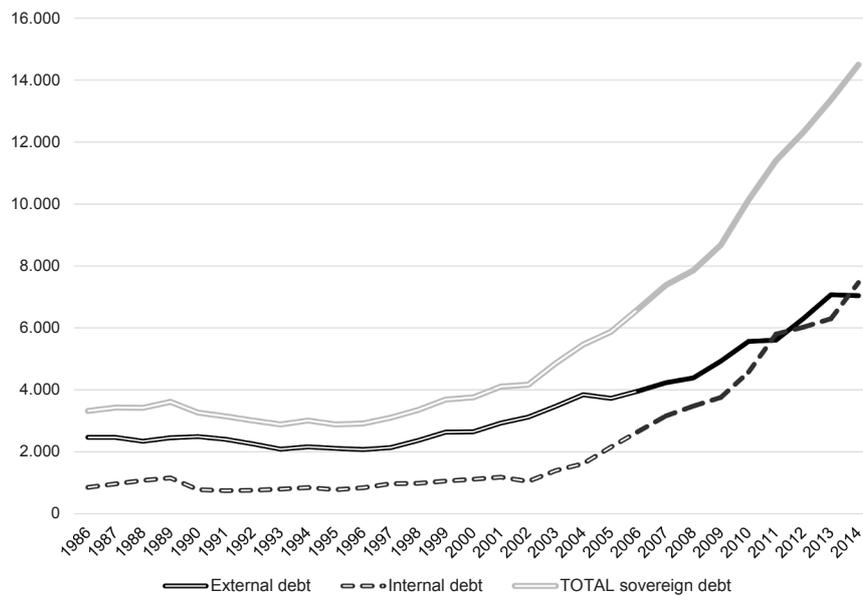
Source: Author elaboration with data from Guatemalan Central Bank (2017b).

With its hands tied by a chronic inability to tax the wealthy or squeeze more fiscal revenues out of the underprivileged, the state goes into increasing debt to finance the national budget. Following the trickle-down policy dogma by the book, and hence keeping inflation at bay while honoring debt interest payment, the Guatemalan state enjoys a favorable reputation within circles of (trans)national financiers.³⁵⁰ Figure 29 shows that sovereign debt first increased after financialization 2.0 wave financial reforms in 1997 and 2002, and soared in 2006-2014. As a result, state indebtedness amounts to 18,4%, 21,7% and 24,3% of the GDP in 2002, 2006 and 2014, respectively.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ In fact, Guatemala boasts sovereign credit risk ratings similar to other developing countries with higher per-capita income (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 6)

³⁵¹ This means every Guatemalan is born to a public debt which increases from US\$ 342 in 2002, to US\$ 400 in 2006 and US\$ 670 in 2014 (author calculations with data from Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT). 2017)

Figure 29 Guatemala's sovereign debt: Total, external and domestic. 1986-2014 (US\$ million)



Source: Author elaboration with data from BANGUAT (2017b).

Figure 29 (above) additionally indicates that while foreign creditors lending funds to the state dominate in general, the gap between foreign and domestic creditors shrinks in 2006-2014, and it is the domestic ones who are the main financiers of public debt in 2011 and 2014. Most external debt is negotiated via multilateral and bilateral financial institutions (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 15), but state bonds gain relevance as an external debt asset. Whereas 7% of public debt was contracted usually through bonds during 1986-2005, this share climbs to 22% in 2006-2014.³⁵² Regardless of whether through loans or through bonds, almost 95% of external debt in 2006-2014 is contracted in US\$ (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 15). Contrariwise, internal sovereign debt is completely contracted in bonds. In 2006-2014, private banks hold 65% of internal debt, while the public Guatemalan Social Security

³⁵² Author calculations with data from BANGUAT (2017b)

Institute (IGSS) holds the rest. 91% of the internal debt is calculated in Guatemalan Quetzales and the rest in US\$ (Armendáriz and Schaeffer 2012, 15).

7.2.2. *Private finance and financiers*

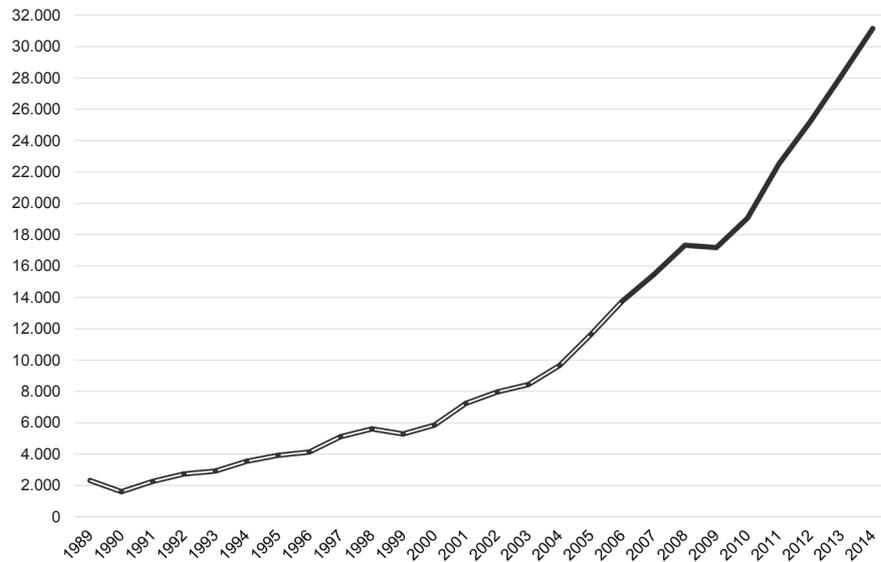
By 2012, Guatemalan private banks outcompete those of the highly capitalized Costa Rican state to become the largest in Central America (Siglo21 2012). Two main reasons are behind this. First, the decentralization tendency of 1986-2005 is rolled back in 2006-2014 following a wave of mergers and acquisitions in the banking system.³⁵³ The number of banks drops from 38 in 1999 to 18 in 2014.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, reconcentration fuses with formidable growth and profits. Figure 30 shows how, despite the US financial crisis (or as a result of it), financial assets controlled by Guatemalan banks soar from US\$ 2.317 million in 1989, to US\$ 13.763 in 2006, and then to US\$ 31.154 in 2014.³⁵⁵ Following, figure 31 shows even more spectacular net profit growth rates in the banking system, especially in the 2006-2014 period.

³⁵³ I advanced the state owns one of the system's banks (CHN), and is a shareholder in two more (BANRURAL and BANTRAB). Since CHN is significantly small and also involves private financiers and shareholders, and state shareholding in BANRURAL and BANTRAB is a minor one, I do not exclude these three banks from my analysis of the private banking system.

³⁵⁴ Guatemalan Banking Authority, personal communication March 2017

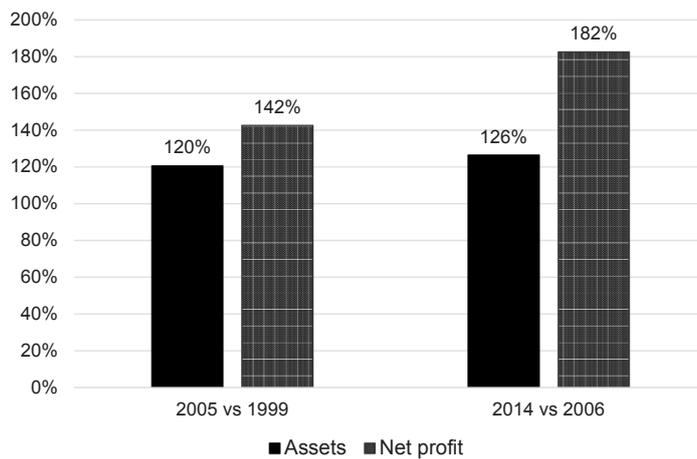
³⁵⁵ Similarly, assets of Guatemalan private insurance companies increase double-fold in 2006-2014, from US\$ 434 million to US\$ 949 million between those years (Guatemalan Banking Authority (SIB) 2015).

Figure 30 Assets of the Guatemalan banking system. 1989-2014 (real US\$ million)



Source: Author elaboration with data from Guatemalan Banking Authority (2015).

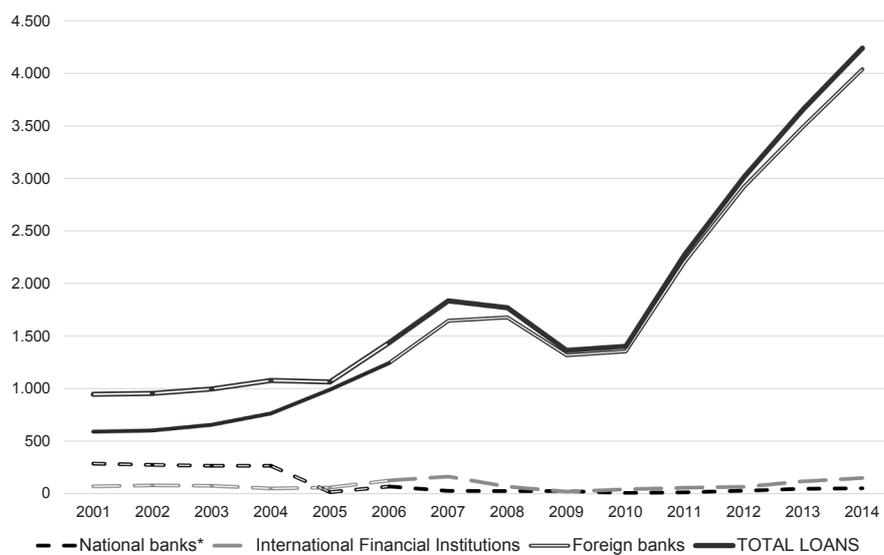
Figure 31 Real growth rates of assets and profits in the Guatemalan banking system. 1999-2005 and 2006-2014 (%)



Source: Author elaboration with data from Guatemalan Banking Authority (2015)

Second, since 2001 but especially from 2006 forward, transnational financiers—especially private ones—play an increasingly relevant role as creditors in Guatemala. On the one side, figure 32 shows that money-capital loans³⁵⁶ (hereafter investment loans) from foreign to Guatemalan banks increased by an average of 68% during 2001-2005 (from US\$ 589 million to US\$ 990 million). During 2006-2014, foreign investment loans increase more than two-fold (from US\$ 1.438 million to US\$ 4.039 million).³⁵⁷ As a result, foreign investment loans in the Guatemalan banking system increase from 71% of the total in 2001-2005 to 94% in 2006-2014.

Figure 32 Investment loans in Guatemala. Total, by domestic private banks, by foreign private banks, and by international financial institutions. 2001-2014 (US\$ million)



* Including loans from the Guatemalan Central Bank until 2004

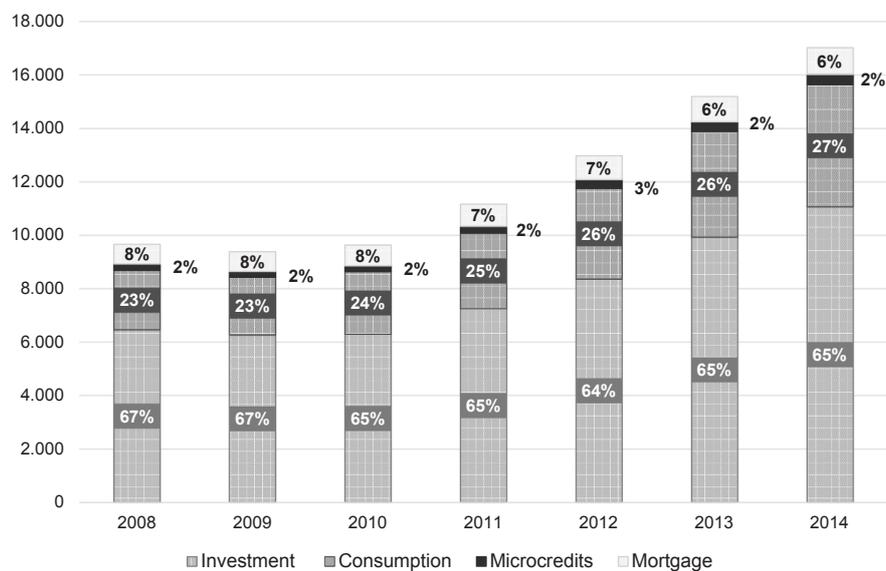
Source: Author elaboration with data from Guatemalan Banking Authority (2015)

³⁵⁶ Meaning for investment (expanded reproduction), not for trade or consumption purposes.

³⁵⁷ Foreign investment loans constrain during the explosion of the financial bubble in the US only to soar afterwards.

On the other side, as explained by an associate of a well-known financial consultancy firm in Guatemala, domestic banks focus on trade and consumption loans, and they invest in state bonds and the money market (interview in Prensa Libre 2011a). Figure 33 shows consumption loans by Guatemalan banks increased from 23% of the total money loaned in 2008 to 27% in 2014. Conversely, when considered together, mortgage and investment loans fall from 8% and 67%, respectively, in 2008 to 6% and 65% in 2014.

Figure 33 Credit in the Guatemalan banking system: Total and by purpose. 2008-2014 (US\$ and %)



Source: Author elaboration with data from Guatemalan Banking Authority (2017)

Therefore, Guatemalan financiers increasingly focus their energy on public debt and money market investments, and trade and consumption credits, rather than on investment loans to firms. Transnational financiers increasingly offer investment loans to firms, resulting in a tendency of credit foreignization. According to the President of the

Guatemalan Banking Association,³⁵⁸ between 2010 and 2011 alone, Colombian banks finance Guatemalan companies with more than US\$ two thousand million. Among them, only one bank (Bancolombia) is involved in syndicated loans for more than US\$ one thousand million. In 2012, Bancolombia took over 40% of the shares of Panama-registered “Grupo Agromercantil Holding” for US\$ 217 million. This corporate holding owns Guatemalan financial giant “Banco Agromercantil” (BAM), offshore firm “Mercom Bank Ltd.” and “Seguros Agromercantil” insurance company (El colombiano.com 2012, El país.com.co 2013).

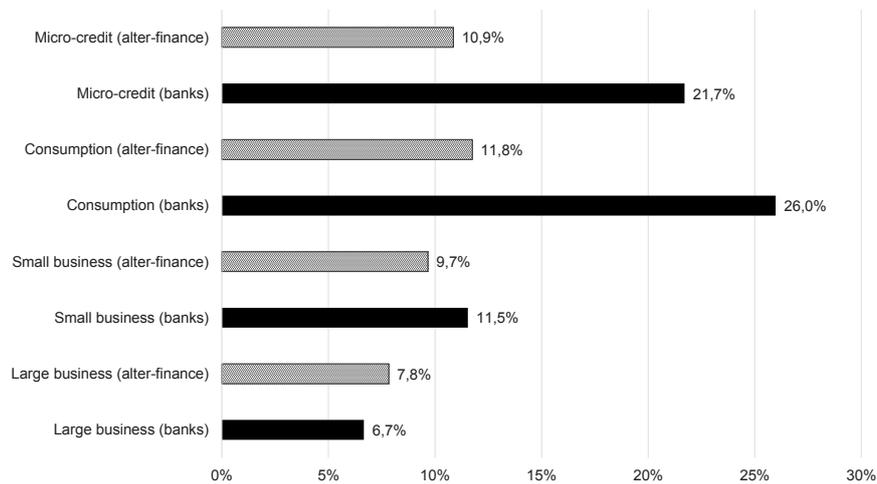
As the previously mentioned former financial consultancy firm associate continues to argue, Guatemalan firms prefer foreign financiers (simply) ‘because of their lower interest rates’ (interview in Prensa Libre 2011a). Similarly, the Chair of the Guatemalan Banking Authority claims that foreign banks, particularly those from the US and South America, are expanding operations in Guatemala due to ‘favorable interest rates’ (i.e. high) in the country (Paredes 2014). Indeed, even if below the 18,3% average annual active interest rate charged by Guatemalan banks in 1986-2005, the 13,4% rate of 2006-2014 remains relatively high (Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT). 2016b, and 2016c).³⁵⁹ Nonetheless, these average figures conceal important differences in the interest rates applied to different credit uses by different types of creditors. Taking the year 2013 as an example,³⁶⁰ figure 34 shows that commercial banks charge much higher interest rates than alternative financial actors for all purposes with the exception of large business operations.

³⁵⁸ (interview in elperiódico 2012)

³⁵⁹ This rate is much lower for loans in US\$. It was of 7,4% in 1986-2005 and of 7% in 2006-2014 (ibid.)

³⁶⁰ For the same applies to all years for which information is available (i.e. 2008 to 2014).

Figure 34 Interest rates *by* private banks and alternative financial actors, by credit use. 2013 (%)



Source: Author elaboration with data from the Guatemalan Banking Authority (2017)

Therefore, the skyrocketing profits of Guatemalan banks can be explained in relatively simple terms by putting together three facts. First, the number of loans increases in absolute terms. Second, domestic banks focus more and more on consumption credit, or that with a higher interest rate (see figure 33 above). And third, the “leader interest rate”, or that which financial actors pay to borrow money from the Guatemalan Central Bank, amounts to 3,5% on average in 2006-2014³⁶¹ (vs. the 13,4% average annual active interest rate charged by private banks). In short, a growing demand for credit (regardless of its purpose) and enhanced access to cheaper loanable money(-capital), makes loaning a very lucrative business in Guatemala circa 2006-2014. This has far-reaching implications for expanded and simple reproduction in agriculture, and I now turn to detailing them.

³⁶¹ author calculations with data from BANGUAT (2017)

7.3. Financialization 3.0 in the flex cane and palm complexes

Dominant agrarian classes continue to engage in a variety of financial relations in 2006-2014. Remaining mercantilist landlords borrow money for conspicuous consumption, and sometimes lend money to their hacienda-tenants. The dumping fraction of the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie keeps its privileged access to money-capital from the banks as part of their family corporate groups. My particular concern here, however, is how the agro-extractivists play out in the financialization 3.0 wave of the Guatemalan economy, since flex cane and palm companies simultaneously provide financial services and increase and diversify their funding sources in 2006-2014.

Guatemalan flex agribusinesses play an important but limited role as financiers. Recall my discussion on wage advances to plantation workers (or labor contractors) and the financing of large cane and palm outgrowers. As with dumping agro-industrialists, the oligarchic family business groups to which the agro-extractivists belong include all major Guatemalan banks.³⁶² These financial relations find their roots in the “financialization 2.0” dynamics of concentration in the banking system that began in 1997, even though wage advancements to plantation workers date back to the “financialization 1.0” times of late 19th Century. However, the debt relations in which flex cane and palm companies engage in 2006-2014 show key differences from those occurring in earlier times. As a vector and an expression of the financialization 3.0 wave, and led by the YASTEXES, flex cane and palm companies restructure their funding mechanisms. This “financial fix” moves the agro-extractivists into a brokering position vis-à-vis (trans)national financiers seeking a surplus-value share, and/or looking to speculate in land, in the flex cane and palm complexes. Through this brokerage, agro-extractivist and financial bourgeois change their non-antagonistic contradictions into complementary relations of mutualistic (win-win)

³⁶² See Segovia (2005), Solis and Solano (2006), Torres-Rivas (2007), Solano (2011) and Bull et al. (2014)

character. And this is something they achieve through direct, but even more so indirect, means.

More directly, though less often, agro-extractivists act as advisors and managers for foreign direct investors.³⁶³ Nonetheless, the two only cases of foreign direct investment in the cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014 failed despite the brokerage of the agro-extractivists. Green Earth Fuels, the US biodiesel firm owned by Riverstone Holdings and controlled by Goldman Sachs and The Carlyle Group, invested in land and a palm oil mill in the Ixcán and Sayaxché zones in 2008. A Guatemalan oligarchic family that owned another flex palm company (AGROCARIBE-AGROAMERICA) managed Green Earth Fuels' operations. As put forward in chapter 4, transnational financiers considered their investment to be too risky and withdrew in 2011. That year the powerful Nicaraguan Pellas family business group took over the Chabil Utzaj flex cane company in the Polochic zone. But the former owners, the Guatemalan Widdman family, remained in managerial positions, and as with Green Earth Fuels, the Pellas Group withdrew from the investment in 2014 due to land conflict.

More indirectly, and often and effectively, Guatemalan agro-extractivists involve (trans)national financiers in their flex cane and palm complexes because of their heightened and diversified demand for money-capital. Since this leads flex cane and palm companies to access more and more favorable sources of funding, it is possible to argue that there is no such brokering role involved. However, being that flex agribusinesses' thirst for funds involves new and enhances old financial tools, (trans)national financiers improve their abilities to appropriate a (larger) share of flex cane and palm commodity value, and/or of the financial revenue derived from land's appreciation. In other words, the financial fix by flex cane and palm companies also appeals to (trans)national financiers. Hence, it is through transnational finance rather than productive investments that the "foreignization" trend in agriculture observed

³⁶³ Interview with Ex-Director of the Government's Foreign Investment Promotion Agency "Invest in Guatemala", January 2011

elsewhere in the region (Borras et al. 2012) plays out in Guatemala during the convergent crises conjuncture.

7.3.1. Financial fix upgrading old financial tools: Heightened and diversified bank loans

Whereas domestic financiers still get the lion's share of the money-capital borrowed by flex cane and palm companies, the share of transnational financiers ascends in 2006-2014. (Older) Presidents and (YASTEXE) CEOs of leading flex cane and palm companies all point to the growing relevance of transnational finance in their growth strategies.³⁶⁴ For instance, the previously mentioned Colombian banking giant Bancolombia is among the several European, North American, Central American and Brazilian banks involved in giving syndicated credit to Guatemalan flex cane company "Magdalena" in 2013. The credit is purposed for expanding Magdalena's farming and processing capacities, and amounts to US\$ 125 million after the initial call for US\$ 100 million was oversubscribed (Foreign Trade Bank of Latin America (Bladex) Panama 2013). Furthermore, Bancolombia is also involved in the Guatemalan flex palm complex through a US\$ 8 million land mortgage credit to Naturaceites flex palm company.³⁶⁵

Access to the credit portfolio of international financial institutions (IFIs) involves public financiers following the credit foreignization trend. IFIs' lending to flex cane and palm companies works bilaterally or via partnership with other public or private financiers. One iconic bilateral case had to do with loans for more than US\$ 186 million by the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) to flex cane giant Pantaleon Sugar Holdings to finance its transnational expansion (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2008, 57). And another involved the US\$ 26

³⁶⁴ Interviews with plant manager of AGROCARIBE flex palm company, February 2008; head industrial engineer of NaturAceites Polochic flex palm company, March 2008; CEO of PALIXCÁN flex palm Company, February 2010; owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008; CEO of Pantaleon Sugar Holdings (in *Estrategia&Negocios* 2016), and; CEO of Magdalena flex cane company (in Jaramillo 2016).

³⁶⁵ Interview with labor contractor in Fray, February 2014

million loan by the Central American Bank of Economic Integration (CABEI) to move the Widdman family cane mill from the southern coast to the Polochic Valley.³⁶⁶ The partnership scenario works through private-public-partnerships known as “mezzanine loans”.³⁶⁷ A good example is the US\$ 150 million credit facility³⁶⁸ established in 2009 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), LACFIN Holdings (a company of Reservoir Capital Group) and Latin American Capital Management LLC (LACAM).³⁶⁹ The IDB contributes US\$ 75 million, and LACFIN Holdings another US\$ 75 million, for LACAM to provide loans for replanting sugarcane fields, building drip irrigation systems, upgrading sugar mills and ethanol distilleries and increasing their energy efficiency through bagasse-burning co-generation power plants [especially in] Guatemala, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and northeastern Brazil’ (IDB. 2009).

7.3.2. *Financial fix through new financial tools: Securitization*

Flex cane and palm companies expand the range of financial tools at their disposal in 2006-2014. This fundamentally means achieving the securitization of land’s ground-rent, and of new revenue streams associated with the appropriation of external nature.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer and security manager of Polochic Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008

³⁶⁷ ‘Mezzanine debt capital generally refers to that layer of financing between a company’s senior debt and equity, filling the gap between the two. Structurally, it is subordinate in priority of payment to senior debt, but senior in rank to common stock or equity. [It] may take the form of convertible debt, senior subordinated debt or private “mezzanine” securities (debt with warrants or preferred equity)’ (Silbernagel and Vaitkunas 2006, 2).

³⁶⁸ Which ‘depending on future market conditions [...] may be expanded to \$250 million, with additional loans from commercial banks and further capital contributions from LACFIN’ (IDB. 2009).

³⁶⁹ ‘Reservoir Capital is a New York City-based investment firm that manages funds for university endowments and individual investors. The New Jersey-based LACAM specializes in structuring and originating commodity financing’ (IDB. 2009).

³⁷⁰ It is unclear whether flex agribusinesses’ financial fix includes the financialization of knowledge. For sure, outcomes of R+I+D efforts in the flex cane and palm complexes are protected through intellectual property rights (IPRs, see next chapter. What is unclear is if the royalties from these IPRs are securitized (i.e. rendered fictitious capital) to raise funds. While burgeoning in the early 21st Century, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization

On the one hand, a feature of the financialization of the world economy since the 1970s,³⁷¹ land securitization, fulfills Engels' premonition of a time 'when England's and France's land will also be in the hands of the stock exchange'.³⁷² In Guatemala, speculation in land and its use as a savings deposit hedged against inflation date back to at least colonial times. Mortgaging land remains a key funding tool for flex cane and palm companies in 2006-2014. The financialization 2.0 wave allowed for new legal ways of rendering land's ground-rent fictitious capital for funding purposes which come to fruition in the 2006-2014 period. Among these new ways, the securitization of anticipated revenue flows from land's ground-rent is striking. Land securitization is favored by flex cane and palm companies because it not only provides a source of funding, but also allows for soaring land prices to turn from threat to opportunity. The securitization of land's ground-rent works in the same way as any other securitization operation. Productive and real estate management operations are split into independent firms within a family business group controlled through Board interlocks. The former exploits land as a means of flex cane and palm commodity production. The latter makes the land's ground-rent "generated" in the productive process a financial asset. To do this, the real estate management company serves as a "special purpose vehicle" in land securitization. This means it is the actor that raises funds in financial markets through the issuance of debt securities or shares backed by securitized land rental payments.

A recent example of land securitization involves the Guatemalan flex cane company "Corporación San Diego y Trinidad" (CSDT). In 2014, "Servicios Agropecuarios San Diego" (SASD) is created as a property management firm under the umbrella of the Panamanian-registered (but Guatemalan-owned) "Santa Luisa International Group Inc." (Servicios Agropecuarios San Diego 2015, 23). The same family that controls

(WIPO. 2017), it seems there is still a long way for this market to realize its full potential (Solomon and Bitton 2014, 179).

³⁷¹ Fairbairn (2014), Isakson (2014b)

³⁷² (in his supplement to Volume III of Capital, Marx N.D. [1894], 622)

“Santa Luisa International Group Inc.” owns CSDT. Effective control is assured through the appointment of the CSDT flex cane company Financial Director as Vice-President of the SASD real estate management firm (ibid, 29). Of the 14.000 hectares of cane plantations controlled by CSDT, SASD is allocated 951 hectares of land free from financial, fiscal or labor liabilities (ibid, 13, 8). The 951 hectares are worth US\$ 10,85 million, and expectations are for this price to increase over time. Besides, they render annual rental payments of nearly US\$ 600 thousand (including VAT), plus a potential variable rent.³⁷³ The anticipated rental payments by the CSDT flex cane company to real estate management firm SASD for the use of 951 hectares in cane cultivation are used to back the issuance of preference shares by SASD amounting to US\$ 3,84 million in the Guatemalan stock market. Since both companies are part of the same family business group, these funds can be easily transferred from one to the other. Furthermore, the cost of this funding operation is lowered even further because the real estate management firm performing as the “special purpose vehicle” (SASD) is registered in the tax haven of Panama.

Indeed, fundraising operations by flex cane and palm companies strongly rely on off-shore financial firms that are part of the same family business group, and thus controlled through corporate board interlocks rather than by the way of direct ownership. Figure 35 reveals how this works for two leading Guatemalan flex agribusinesses.

³⁷³ Calculated according to average international price for sugar stemming from Contract 11 of the Intercontinental Exchange Futures U.S. Inc. (Servicios Agropecuarios San Diego 2015, 14)

Figure 35 Board interlocks of Guatemalan flex agribusinesses with off-shore financial companies

**Pantaleon Sugar Holdings
(Pantaleon Group Inc.)**



-  Banco Agromercantil (BAM)
Financial Corporation (Panama)
-  Dimension Capital Management LLC
(Panama)
-  Dimension Capital Management
Partners (US)

**AGROCARIBE flex palm company
(Agroamerica Group Inc.)**



-  One Banana Europe (Netherlands)
-  Agrofruit (Netherlands)
-  Agroamerica Holding Coöperatief U.A.
(Netherlands)

Source: Author elaboration with data from Orbis Corporate Database (2016)

On the other hand, the securitization net is also cast over environmental goods and bads.³⁷⁴ As a vector and an expression of the heightened commoditization of external nature along green economy policy dogma lines, green finance allows for the realization of all “hidden revenues” in commoditized environmental resources and services and their consequences of pollutants and waste. Flex cane and palm companies therefore take advantage of previously and more recently developed green finance tools. They particularly rely on compliance carbon offset mechanisms, even though flex palm companies also raise funds through a sector-specific voluntary carbon offset mechanism. In both cases, nonetheless, carbon offset certificates can be negotiated in spot financial markets, or as it is most often the case, securitized and negotiated in futures markets (World Bank 2014, GreenPalm. 2016).

The 2013 “Framework law to regulate vulnerability reduction, obligatory adaptation to the effects of climate change and the mitigation of

³⁷⁴ As advanced, ecological relations of appropriation and use of the value portion associated to external nature in flex cane and palm commodity production are discussed here rather than in the ecological relations chapter.

greenhouse gases” states that ‘legal owners of land or goods on which emission offset projects develop are the owners of the emission reduction certificates’ (Guatemalan Congress 2013, art. 22). Biofuels and energy generation through superfluous cane and palm biomass are among the multiple uses developed by flex cane and palm companies in Guatemala, as detailed in the knowledge and technology relations chapter. Cane and palm’s high material flexibility makes them natural candidates for trading crops in carbon offset markets. Among all the compliance carbon offset mechanisms developed by the UNFCCC,³⁷⁵ Guatemalan flex cane and palm companies zero in on Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in 2006-2014. With the end of Kyoto Protocol’s first commitment period in 2012,³⁷⁶ spot market price for Carbon Emission Reduction certificates (CERs) plummeted to an average of US\$ 0,57/CER in 2013 (World Bank 2014, 39). But “early-bird” CER securitizers, like Guatemalan flex agribusinesses, benefit from appealing prices for CER futures averaging US\$ 13,3/CER in 2006-2014 (Investing.com. 2017). Table 36 presents the revenues pocketed by Guatemalan flex agribusinesses through CDM projects. It also shows how in addition to funding, emissions reduction projects usually cut production costs, and in some cases are already profitable even without CERs’ subsidy.

³⁷⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

³⁷⁶ A second commitment period for Kyoto Protocol was agreed between 2013 and 2020 when the new binding agreement adopted in the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015 kicks off. However, by December 2014 only 23 countries had ratified the Doha Amendment containing this second commitment period. Among them, Guatemalan and main polluters from industrialized economies were absent (UN 2012)

Table 36 Flex cane and palm companies Clean Development Mechanism projects and CERs

Project ID and name	Company	Project components	CO2 MTs equivalent per annum	Crediting period	Total net revenue (US\$ millions)		Internal rate of return (IRR)	
					Without CDM benefits	With CDM benefits	Without CDM benefits	With CDM benefits
9389: Biogas Project, Olmecca I, Santa Rosa	HAME Group (oil palm)	1) Methane recovery in wastewater treatment; 2) Electricity generation by the user	55.338	2013-2023	6,10	12,54	8,91%	20,82%
2667: Biogas Project, Olmecca III, Tecún Uman	HAME Group (oil palm)	1) Methane recovery in wastewater treatment; 2) Electricity generation by the user	37.377	2009-2016 renewable	3,85	12,11	4,88%	25,27%
2527: Co-composting of EFB and POME project	NaturAceites (oil palm)	Avoidance of methane production from decay of biomass through composting	22.940	2009 -2016 renewable	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
2180: Bioenergy Anaerobic Digestion and Biogas Generation Project	Magdalena Cane Mill	1) Avoided Wastewater; 2) On-site Energy Use Emissions in the Industrial Sector	100.000	2010 -2016 renewable	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1509: Biogas energy plant from palm oil mill effluent	Agrocaribe/ Agroamerica (oil palm)	1) Grid connected renewable electricity generation; 2) Electricity generation by the user; 3) Methane recovery in wastewater treatment	30.333	2008-2015 renewable	n.a.	2,97	n.a.	8,30%

Source: Author elaboration with data from UNFCCC-CDM database (2016)

The other green finance tool is specific to the flex palm complex. It works through a voluntary carbon offset market accredited by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). In 2006, the RSPO created a “sustainability certificate trading programme” which

‘allows manufacturers and retailers to purchase GreenPalm certificates from an RSPO certified palm oil grower to offset each tonne of palm oil, or palm kernel oil they use. RSPO certified palm oil growers can convert their certified tonnage into certificates, each tonne converts to one GreenPalm certificate. Palm oil, palm kernel oil and palm kernel expeller certificates are available. This means there is no guarantee that the end product contains certified sustainable palm oil, but this option directly supports RSPO certified growers’ (GreenPalm. 2016).

“GreenPalm” certificates work like any other carbon offset mechanism, although the particular aim in this case is to offset “unsustainably

produced” palm oil rather than just carbon dioxide emissions. GreenPalm certificates’ market is open to every manufacturer or retailer of commodities containing palm oil or any of its derivatives, though RSPO members are exempted from the one-off membership fee ranging between US\$ 250-500 depending on the number of certificates required per year (GreenPalm. 2016). There are four flex palm companies funded through GreenPalm certificates trading schemes in Guatemala (GreenPalm. 2016c). GreenPalm annual certificate sales grow from 7.972 certificates (i.e. tons) in 2008, to 1,93 million in 2011, and then to 3,42 million in 2014. This means that the cumulative certificate premiums for RSPO-affiliated palm growers increases from US\$ 264.330 in 2008, to US\$ 20,51 million in 2011, and reaches US\$ 87,23 million in 2014 (GreenPalm. 2016b). As I later discuss, despite not involving outstandingly large sums, revenues from GreenPalm certificates can at least subsidize the costs of reproducing the ‘natural conditions of production’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 30) of multiple palm commodities.

7.4. Financialization 3.0 for subordinate agrarian classes

Money-lending among friends and family notwithstanding, subordinate agrarian classes continue to play the part of borrowers—or debtors—in financial relations from 2006-2014. While these practices have become less common, I have explained that wage advances are still used by labor contractors and flex agribusinesses to force plantation workers into debt-peonage. In 2005, Guatemala became eligible for UNFCCC’s REDD+ carbon offset scheme. Of the 5 REDD+ projects in Guatemala in 2006-2014, four of them are in the northern lowlands, three of which are under the control of large (inter)national conservation NGOs and/or Guatemalan government agencies acting as main proponents and credit recipients. Only the “GuateCarbon” REDD+ project involves the government’s National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), and ten forest concessionaire communities in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve are organized through Petén’s Forest Communities Association (ACOFOP). GuateCarbon launches in 2012 and over the

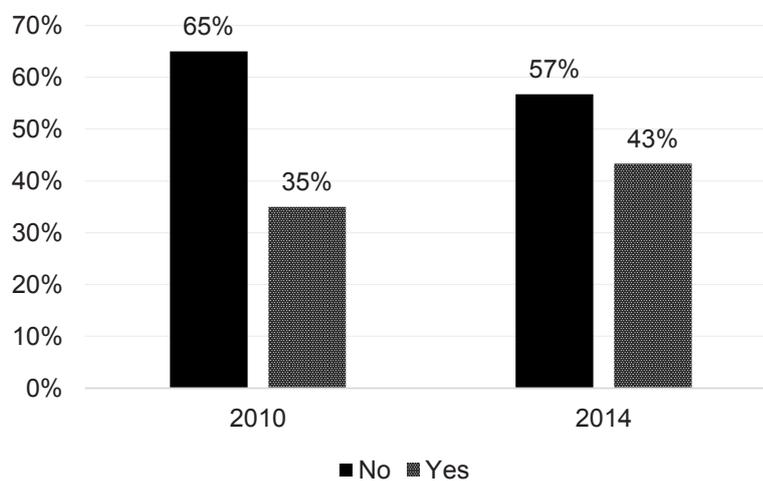
course of its 30-year contract is expected to reduce the staggering number of 37 million tons of CO₂ (CONAP-ACOFOP. 2014). But whereas GuateCarbon includes a large number of CERs, its impact as a funding tool for subordinate agrarian classes is obviously limited to the members of the 10 forest communities directly involved.

Therefore, for the underdogs of the financialization 3.0 wave, credit remains the most general form of funding and indebtedness. And I thus turn to discuss the credit relations that subordinate agrarian classes become involved in from 2006-2014 in the northern lowlands

7.4.1. *Credit relations of fragmented subordinate agrarian classes in the northern lowlands*

Figure 36 shows that the key feature regarding credit indebtedness in 2010 and in 2014 is precisely its low diffusion. Even so, credit debt grows significantly between these two years,³⁷⁷ by 23%.

Figure 36 Credit debt in 2010 and 2014 for fragmented subordinate agrarian classes in the research zones.



Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

³⁷⁷ Dependent t-test $p = .043$

Average credit debt in 2010 and 2014 amounts to US\$ 537 (within a US \$100 to US\$ 4.000 range), without significant differences over time. Micro-finance organizations are the main creditors in this period, granting 64% of the total amount of credit. They are followed at a distance by commercial banks (26%) and at an even greater distance by the state (4%), money-lenders (3%) and other sources (3%) including family and friends. Figure 37 shows that credits are basically used to finance simple reproduction through farming in 2010 and 2014, and increasingly so between the two years.

Figure 37 Credit use among subordinate agrarian class lowlanders. 2010, 2014 and 2014-2010 change (%)

Credit use	Year		Change (2014vs2010)	Significance in level of differences over time Paired-t test (5% level)*
	2010	2014		
Farming	70%	81%	15%	,012
Housing	1%	6%	303%	,045
Education and/ or health	3%	5%	61%	,416
Consumption	4%	1%	-73%	,319
Trade	4%	6%	34%	,180
Other uses	17%	2%	-86%	,002

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

An important and significant tendency stems from “other uses” of credit debt. For some 9 out of 10 HHs in 2010, “other uses” refer to land purchases³⁷⁸ via the government’s Land Fund. In 2011, 40,5% of FONTIERRAS land purchase loans fall under the status of critical payment default (FONTIERRAS 2011a). Following the agreements between the government and national peasant organizations behind the 2012 “Popular, Peasant, Women and Indigenous March”, to which I will later return, the overrated land debt of thousands of families is reduced

³⁷⁸ Credit debt to lease land is included under the “farming” category of credit use in figure 34.

from US\$ 28,3 million to US\$ 5,3 million (Hernández 2015).³⁷⁹ Being that the northern lowlands is a hot spot for market-led agrarian reform, the condonation of debt with FONTIERRAS reflects in my survey in the decreasing relevance of “other uses” of credit from 17% in 2010 to 2% in 2014.

Land debt also explains in part the relatively small but consistent role of banks as creditors for subordinate agrarian classes. FONTIERRAS’ land credit portfolio (for purchases and leases) is managed by BANRURAL, one of the two private banks the state holds shares in. Tellingly, the majority of bank credit debt by HH survey respondents in 2010 and 2014 is contracted with BANRURAL, and the renegotiation of land debt in 2012 results in less land purchase credits with the banking giant. But as observed in the previous chapter, FONTIERRAS also upgrades and expands its land lease credit program through BANRURAL after 2012. Thus, the share of banks as subordinate class creditors does not change significantly between 2010 and 2014.

Additional features and tendencies in credit relations are revealed when HHs are grouped along class fractions and land tenure attributes. On the one hand, there are significant differences in 2014³⁸⁰ regarding the type of creditor targeting multi-functional and specialized petty capitalist farmers (PCFs). The multi-functional PCFs get 85% of their credits from micro-financiers, half of the remainder from the state and the other half from moneylenders. This indicates that they have no credit debt with banks whatsoever. The specialized PCFs also largely borrow from micro-financiers (67%) but to a lesser extent than their multi-functional class peers, since they borrow more from the state (13%), banks (13%) and money-lenders (7%). The fact that specialized PCFs receive the most public funding speaks volumes about where the

³⁷⁹ Following FONTIERRAS’ reassessment of land purchase prices according to land’s quality rather than extension (interview with indigenous people organizations’ representative in FONTIERRAS Executive Board, July 2013).

³⁸⁰ χ^2 test $p = ,010$

government prioritizes its agricultural policy regarding subordinate agrarian classes during this period.³⁸¹

On the other hand, and first and interestingly enough, there are no significant differences either between the landed and the landless, or across different groups of petty land owners, when it comes to their abilities to access credit. Second, whereas the average credit amount for the landed does not change over time, it does increase nearly twofold for the landless between 2010 (US\$ 477) and 2014 (US\$928).³⁸² Third, land owners holding a title deed in 2010 have an average credit debt for a not much larger but significantly³⁸³ different amount (US\$ 498) than those without a title (US\$ 412). But whereas for the former credit debt does not change over time, for the latter it increases significantly³⁸⁴ and substantively, from US\$ 432 in 2010 to US\$ 760 in 2014. Fourth and finally, it is also quite telling that there are no significant differences in credit debt among land owners holding different types of title deeds (i.e. individual, collective or communal).

It therefore seems that “capitalism fails” for subordinate agrarian class lowlanders for reasons other than a lack of formalization of private property rights (de Soto 2000). When backed by a title deed, land is the preferred collateral for creditors. All creditors—and especially banks—prefer individual land titles over group ones, but even so group titles are not dismissed entirely. In 2010, land owning debtors with individual land title deeds contract exactly as much credit debt with banks as they do with micro-finance organizations (45,5% in both cases). But land owning debtors with collective or communal land title deeds contract debt to a much larger extent with micro-finance organizations (87,5%) than with banks (12,5%). Most distinctively, this significant³⁸⁵ difference in 2010 no longer holds in 2014. Rather than having to do with the

³⁸¹ Mainly through the “Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program” (PROPALMA) and the “Family Farming Program for the Strengthening of Peasant Economy” (PAFFEC).

³⁸² Dependent t-test $p=,041$

³⁸³ ANOVA test $p=,011$

³⁸⁴ Dependent t-test $p=,008$

³⁸⁵ χ^2 test $p=,016$

preference of banks for non-individual land title deeds as collateral, this has to do with that fact that only 14% of petty land owners with and individual property title have a bank credit in 2014. In fact, whereas for the latter credit debt does not change over time, petty and owners with non-individual land titles significantly³⁸⁶ increase their credit debt from an average of US\$ 317 in 2010 to US\$ 389 in 2014.

However, when land is not titled, or when there is no land, assets or salary to use as collateral, subordinate agrarian classes still manage to access credit through micro-finance organizations. We have seen that the interest rates stipulated by micro-financiers are lower than those by the banks—but this is not to say that they are “low”. Rather than having to do with better financial terms, then, the preference for micro-finance over bank credit is motivated by other factors. More specifically, it is connected to micro-financiers’ more sophisticated outreach, willingness to assume a higher default risk, and the fact that sometimes subordinate agrarian classes are themselves involved in micro-finance organizations (e.g. credit associations and cooperatives).³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Dependent t-test $p=,024$

³⁸⁷ For an informed and critical review of micro-finance and micro-financiers in rural development see Bateman and Chang (2012). On the “market disciplining” effects of credit indebtedness see Gerber (2014).

Chapter 8 Knowledge and technology relations

8.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses main directions in knowledge and technology relations in Guatemalan agriculture amid rising flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. These are cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes shaping the ways: i) knowledge and technology are organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities; ii) the intellectual property right (IPR) royalty portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) knowledge and technology ownership, and entitlements to IPR's royalties, are politically sanctioned, and; iv) royalties are used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after taxes and grants.

Through the strategic vision of the YASTEXES,³⁸⁸ headhunting of foreign talent and technology and intra-sectoral cooperation on research, innovation and development (hereafter R+I+D), flex agribusinesses fix the way knowledge and technology are organized into cane and palm farming and commodity production. On the one side, flex agribusinesses achieve yields above world average and higher resilience to climate and environmental disruptions through cutting-edge, hybrid farming breakthrough technologies. These luxuries are, however, far from the financial reach of cane and palm outgrowers, let alone small palm contract-farmers. Independent cane and palm suppliers receive technical advice, and financial support in the case of outgrowers, from flex agribusinesses. But even for the most established among cane and palm suppliers, the farming practices flex cane and palm companies implement in their own plantations are outside of the reach of their financial possibilities and know-how. On the other side, flex agribusinesses enhance their abilities to produce an increasing number of cane and palm commodities in a way that is highly adaptable. In the case of non-competing cane and palm crop and commodity uses, choices are about whether or not to exploit a particular use rather than

³⁸⁸ Young although smartly-trained executives.

exploiting one in the place of another. Conversely, competing crop or commodity uses are the subject matter of flex production. And this is something happening in ‘real’ or ‘anticipated’ (Borras et al. 2016) ways in Guatemala.

Increased cane and palm processing capacity (mills and distilleries) and productivity in 2006-2014 expand and diversify the pool of available crop and commodity uses, competing or otherwise, for real or anticipated flexing among competing uses. There are four possibilities for flex production in the Guatemalan cane complex. First, sugar can be produced in raw form for industrial use or refined for direct consumption. Second, as a by-product of sugar production, molasses can be sold unprocessed for animal feed or distilled into ethanol. Third, ethanol can be produced in hydrated or de-hydrated forms. And fourth, cane biomass not used for crushing can be left in the field as organic manure, or used as feed-stock for electricity production in mills and distilleries for own-use and/or sale to the national grid. In the palm complex, flex production takes place within three productive clusters. The first is flexing among competing uses of crude palm fruit/kernel oil. The second involves flexing among competing uses for the by-products generated during palm fruit/kernel oil extraction and processing. Finally, the third has to do with the use of palm fruit bunch rachis as organic manure in plantations or energy feedstock in mills.

Whereas cane and palm companies take a big technological leap forward during this period, subordinate class cultivators, and particularly swidden cultivators, take one step forward and two steps back in addressing their “knowledge rift” concerning farming intensification. In so doing, they lean on four main farming intensification strategies. These include expanding cultivated areas, multi-cropping, using more agro-chemical inputs and increasing the amount of labor in farming (including family, exchanged and hired labor-power). The adoption and outcomes of these farming intensification strategies vary over time and among fragmented agrarian subordinate classes in key ways. Those who are increasing the cultivated area, number of crops, and/or the amount of labor in farming

are able to keep shrinking land productivity at bay. Conversely, land yields decline for those who prioritize using more agrochemical inputs.

The majority of subordinate class cultivators who do not receive any kind of public or private support must find their own ways to intensify their farms. In so doing, they follow the intensification strategies mentioned previously along two competing paths, either, the “high external input agriculture (HEIA)/agro-synthetic path”, or the “low external-input agriculture (LEIA)/agro-ecological path”. The former relies on scientific knowledges and technologies protected by intellectual property rights following the “Knowledge Enclosure” policy dogma. The HEIA/agro-synthetic path entails three key challenges. First, increasing agro-chemical inputs do not always and necessarily translate into higher yields. Second, many (Q’eqchi’) subordinate class cultivators find agro-chemicals morally unacceptable. And third, high production costs either completely deter cultivators from this path, or lead to partial or wrong adoption.

The latter and competing path relies on hybrid knowledges and technologies including traditional, local and scientific knowledges of both common and private ownership. Five key challenges are associated with it. First, whereas LEIA/agro-ecological knowledges may be of common ownership, the underlying technologies are not always and necessarily so. Second, the hybrid knowledges behind this path are simultaneously (and necessarily) old and continuously under development. More specifically, they need to adjust to rapidly changing conditions of production across various agro-ecosystems—and the climatic and ecological conditions of the tropical lowlands raise difficult technical challenges. Third, agro-ecological transitions require time for trial-and-error experimentation and soil and crops’ adaptation, and are quite labor intensive. Fourth, whereas it is unacceptable for many, others consent to the HEIA/agro-synthetic path and the knowledge authority of *Don Ingeniero*, especially since alternatives can be limited or even nonexistent. And fifth, the individualization of farming following the individualization of land ownership constrains farming knowledge and

skills exchange among village cultivators, even despite growing labor exchanges. Together with a farmer-to-farmer movement struggling to rise from the ashes, these factors make the diffusion of the LEIA/agro-ecological path highly dependent on the (shrinking) moneys and diverse political agendas of international development cooperation.

8.2. Knowledge and technology relations in the flex cane and palm complexes

The rise of flex agribusinesses is also a vector and an expression of the big leap forward in the technologies of cane and palm farming and processing. Such is the outcome of longstanding and systematic R+I+D efforts by Guatemalan flex cane and palm companies. R+I+D efforts, combined with elevated financial means in the early 21st century conjuncture of expanding market opportunities, lead flex agribusinesses to fix the way knowledge and technology are organized into cane and palm farming and commodity production. This “knowledge fix” is enabled and advanced by three mutually reinforcing relations.

First and foremost, cane and palm companies receive a unique influx of knowledge, skills and strategic vision through the YASTEXES. This group of executives challenges traditional and more recent center-periphery divisions in different ways, including their trust on technological innovation for heightened competitiveness. Second, where there is a knowledge or technological gap, solutions are searched for—worldwide. For instance, on the one hand, Brazilian, Colombian and Malaysian engineering companies and equipment are used to upgrade cane and palm processing plants and processes.³⁸⁹ On the other hand, foreign experts are hired on consultant or more permanent terms. Most distinctively, Colombian and Costa Rican agronomic and industrial engineers work in abundance in the greener Guatemalan flex palm complex.³⁹⁰ And third, despite competing for land, labor, finance and

³⁸⁹ Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2008), Solano (2010).

³⁹⁰ Interview with Head Industrial Engineer of NaturAceites Polochic flex palm company, March 2008, participant observation in I Latin American Palm Growers Congress, October 2013, and Luxner (2014)

markets, flex cane and palm companies cooperate with one other on R+I+D. In the case of the flex cane complex, the “Guatemalan Sugarcane Research and Training Center” (CENGICANÑA) was created in 1992 ‘to support the technological advance of the sugar agroindustry with the goal to improve production and productivity of cane and its fractions’ (CENGICANÑA. 2017). Through plant breeding biotechnologies, CENGICANÑA develops and patents new cane varieties to fit into different agro-ecosystems and changing climate conditions (CENGICANÑA. 2017c).³⁹¹ The Guatemalan flex cane complex additionally collaborates in R+I+D efforts with its peers from elsewhere, including the “Central American Sugar Association” (AICA), the “Sugar Technicians Association of Latin America and the Caribbean” (ATALAC) and the “International Sugar Organization” (ISO) that has been under the leadership of a Guatemalan Executive Director since January 2014.

Despite lagging behind the flex cane complex, the Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild considers R+I+D efforts core to its mission (GREPALMA. 2017b). Whereas R+I+D efforts are carried out individually, GREPALMA supports knowledge exchanges and technology transfers among its members through congresses, seminars and field trips. It also publishes a monthly “Palm Technical Bulletin” and a newsletter (“The Palma Times”). Besides, GREPALMA keeps on excellent terms with its Ecuadorian and Colombian peers (ANCUPA and FEDEPALMA), including their “Oil Palm Research Center” (CIPAL) in Ecuador and “Center for Oil Palm Research” (CENIPALMA) in Colombia.³⁹² Following the lead of Colombian FEDEPALMA’s multi-annual “International Oil Palm Conferences” that have been taking place since 1978, the relatively young Latin American flex palm complexes have found more recent venues to strengthen their ties with one another. Two stand out: the annual

³⁹¹ It is funded by flex cane companies with a ‘contribution proportional to their sugar production’ (ibid).

³⁹² Interview with Secretary General of the Colombian FEDEPALMA in Bogota, September 2013, and I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers in Guatemala, October 2013.

conferences of the Latin American chapter of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (since 2009), and the Congress of Latin American palm growers (once every 3 years since 2013).

8.2.1. Knowledge and technology relations in cane and palm farming

Flex agribusinesses increasingly rely on cutting-edge, hybrid farming knowledge and technologies. Remote sensing methods and climate, water and soil analysis are used to identify the best land for cane and palm farming. Suitable land is then “developed” with heavy machinery and state-of-the-art soil and water engineering services (i.e. for irrigation and/or drainage systems). Certified, high-yield seeds are either developed on-site (e.g. by CENGICANA for cane) or imported from the US and Brazil (cane) and Costa Rica, Colombia and Malaysia (palm).³⁹³ Cane and palm farming is streamlined through precision agriculture and site-specific management.³⁹⁴ Remote sensing, soil analysis, leaf diagnoses and similar mechanisms maximize the crops’ intake of nutrients from within the agroecosystem as well as those which are externally supplemented. These are combined with integrated and biological pest controls, terracing and other soil conservation practices. Crop yields increase as a result, and plantations also become more resilient to climatic and environmental disruptions.³⁹⁵

Cane and palm farming is as mechanized as it can be given the nature of the crops and the socio-ecological context. Light aircrafts and tractors regularly spray fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and ripeners across cane fields. Cane harvest can be also mechanized, but so far manual harvest is more profitable due to low labor costs and the better

³⁹³ (GREPALMA's President in I Latin American Oil Palm Growers Congress, October 2013, and USDA 2014)

³⁹⁴ A telling anecdote in this regard is that stemming from a conversation between two agronomic engineers while waiting for coffee at a recess during the I Latin American Palm Growers Congress. One was telling the other the key limitation to implement precision agriculture technologies in palm farming is the risk of putting such delicate equipment in the hands of a bunch of ‘ignorant Indians’.

³⁹⁵ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer, and security manager of the Polochic Chabil Utzaj cane company, February 2008, and presentation by NaturAceites agronomic engineer in I Latin American Palm Growers Congress, October 2013.

use of cane's fructose when it is properly cut by experienced workers after the fields are burned.³⁹⁶ Since palm is a sparsely farmed crop with thick fronds covering the soil, aerial application of agro-chemicals is useless. Fruits from different palms ripen at different paces, and the need to adapt the chopping of fruit bunches to varying heights and locations within and across different palms make palm harvest mechanization largely unfeasible.³⁹⁷ Hence, flex agribusinesses increasingly rely on cutting-edge, hybrid farming knowledges and technologies to achieve yields above world averages and higher resilience to climate and environmental disruptions.³⁹⁸ Nonetheless, these practices are beyond the reach of cane and palm outgrowers, let alone feasible for small palm contract-farmers. Independent cane and palm suppliers receive technical advice, and financial support in the case of outgrowers, from flex agribusinesses. But even for the more capitalized among cane and palm suppliers, the farming practices that flex cane and palm companies implement in their own plantations are far from their financial possibilities and know-how.³⁹⁹

8.2.2. *The Knowledge fix in flex cane and palm commodity production*

Through their knowledge fix in 2006-2014, cane and palm, or parts thereof, are prone to be used or processed into multiple commodities for different uses. Using plants for a variety of purposes is arguably as old as humankind. But the possibilities that biotechnology opened for improved processing and fractioning of biomass raw materials from the 1970s forward (Goodman et al. 1987), increased crops' possible end- and intermediate-uses far beyond traditional food, fiber and fuel uses.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ Interview with original owner and CEO of Polochic Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, March 2011

³⁹⁷ Interview with CEO of PALIXCÁN flex Palm Company, February 2010

³⁹⁸ USDA (2014), GREPALMA (2016b)

³⁹⁹ Interviews with small palm contract-farmer from Ixcán, and large out-grower from Fray, July and December 2013.

⁴⁰⁰ For a recent account of this phenomenon from an agrarian political economy perspective see the 2016 "Special Forum on Flex Crops and Commodities" in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* (43:1).

I have advanced Borrás et al.'s notion of flex crops and commodities that rests on the notions of crop 'multiple-ness, or the different uses of a crop or its derived commodities' (2016, 96), and 'flexible-ness or the degree of technical ease and profitability with which 'a crop or commodity use can be switched from one specific purpose to another' (ibid, 98). Crop "multiple-ness" can be traced back to the idea of 'substitutionism' in the bioindustrialization of agricultural commodities developed in 1987 by Goodman, Sorj and Wilkinson. They examined how 'the new biotechnologies will enhance the efficiency with which all forms of biomass, whether field crops, crop residues, wood or organic waste, are converted in *all uses*, not only into food products but also fuel and chemical' (1987, 136 emphasis in original). Improved crop fractioning through industrial microbiology allows agribusiness to 'transform [the agricultural] product, whether food or non-food, into basic chemical constituents or intermediates with *multiple competing uses*' (Goodman et al. 1987, 141 emphasis added). Rexen and Munck add another twist to the notion of substitutionism, rendering it closer to Borrás et al.'s understanding of "flexible-ness". They argue that 'the proportions between the different streams [of fragmented biomass] can easily be changed *according to actual demand and price relationships* in the market' (Rexen and Munck 1984, in Goodman et al. 1987, 182 emphasis added).

Following this logic, a fruitful approach to the discussion of flex cane and palm commodity production involves the identification of competing and non-competing multiple uses of cane, palm and their derived commodities. Obviously, there is no need to choose from different non-competing uses—for they do not rule one another out. Multiple non-competing uses can be derived from different crop parts (e.g. palm's fruit bunches and fronds) or processing by-products and residues (e.g. cane vinasses in sugar production). Thus, choices are about whether or not to exploit a particular use rather than exploiting one in the place of another.

Conversely, competing crop or commodity uses are the subject matter of “flex production”. Assuming that the minimum necessary conditions for flexing among competing uses⁴⁰¹ are always readily available, it is important to pin down what the actual possibilities for flexing are in a particular context. If at all, flexing among competing uses can occur at one or several links of the global commodity chain. For my purposes here, flexing is examined for those within the Guatemalan borders.⁴⁰² In this case, instances are of both ‘real’ and ‘anticipated’ flexing among competing uses of cane, palm and derived commodities.⁴⁰³ ‘Real’ flexing takes place when ‘there is a material and logical basis for flexing’ (Borras et al. 2016, 105). Flexing is ‘anticipated’ when ‘no flexing happens, but there is significant anticipation of or speculation about such activities based on a clear material and logical basis’ (ibid, 106).

The distinctions between competing and non-competing uses, and real and anticipated flexing, are very helpful to probe the “whether, who, when and how” of flex production. As I next discuss, not every cane company produces commodities for sale other than sugar, and not every palm company sales commodities other than palm oil. Indeed, multiple and flex cane and palm commodity production is strongly shaped by the technological configuration of the flex cane and palm complexes. Lacking cutting-edge biomass-refineries, the knowledge fix in the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014 is technologically determined by the mix of uses and flexing possibilities offered by mills and distilleries.

8.2.2.1. Flex cane commodity production

Increased cane processing capacity (mills and distilleries) and productivity in 2006-2014 expand and diversify the pool of available

⁴⁰¹ Namely material basis, technological capacity and profitability (Borras et al. 2016).

⁴⁰² For a discussion on global flex cane and palm commodity production see McKay et al. (2016) and Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2016), respectively.

⁴⁰³ Borras et al. also consider ‘imagined flexing’ to mean ‘flexing that is not real, not actually happening and has no material or logical basis, yet it is invoked for some reason’ (2016, 106). This is not a type of flexing invoked by agro-extractivists or anyone else in Guatemala during the research time span.

uses for real or anticipated flexing among competing ones. The Guatemalan flex cane giant “Pantaleon Sugar Holdings crushes cane exclusively for ethanol production in its plantation-mill-distillery complex in Brazil.⁴⁰⁴ But as figure 38 will show, cane in Guatemala is primarily crushed for sugar.⁴⁰⁵ Ethanol is produced from the molasses obtained as a by-product in raw and refined sugar production. But as I explained, Guatemala earns a place among the world top sugar producers in 2006-2014,⁴⁰⁶ and this makes ethanol production also soar.⁴⁰⁷ Three key aspects of the “knowledge fix” by flex cane companies are behind this. First, daily milling capacity increases almost three-fold between 1985 and 2012.⁴⁰⁸ Second, with yields of 12,2 tons of sugar per cane hectare in 2013, Guatemala secures the third position in the world’s productivity ranking, behind Colombia and Swaziland (USDA 2014). Finally, the EXPOGRANEL port export terminal built in this period results in the Guatemalan flex cane complex being the most efficient at port loading globally (ibid).

Figure 38 shows the mix of cane uses and flexing possibilities among competing uses (F_x) in the Guatemalan flex cane complex in 2006-2014. First (F_1), sugar can be produced in raw form for industrial uses, or refined for direct consumption. In the domestic market, this amounts to 27% for industrial use and 71% for direct human consumption. The soft drink industry [i.e. PepsiCo and The Coca Cola Company] is the major industrial consumer of sugar, followed by confectioneries, bakeries, juice makers, dairy producers and pharmaceutical companies’ (USDA 2014). When it comes to the export market, the trend in 2006-2014 is to increase refined sugar exports up to 32% of the total in 2013

⁴⁰⁴ Pantaleon Sugar Holdings’ CEO interviewed by Estrategia & Negocios (2016).

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with senior manager of Madre Tierra flex cane agribusiness in Dominican Republic, January 2014

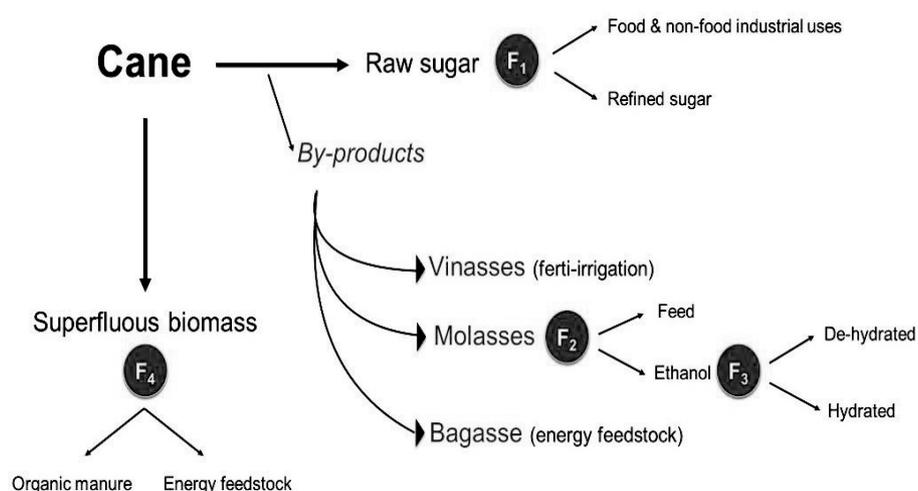
⁴⁰⁶ In this period, the Guatemalan “Magdalena Group” becomes the second world largest sugar producer after Sao Martinho mill in Brazil (Magdalena Group CEO interviewed by Jaramillo 2016).

⁴⁰⁷ E.g. 269 million liters in 2013 (USDA 2014)

⁴⁰⁸ From 53.093 to 151.673 tons/day (ASAZGUA Executive Director interviewed by Luxner 2013).

(USDA 2014).⁴⁰⁹ Second (F_2), as a by-product of sugar production, sugar molasses can be sold unprocessed for animal feed or distilled into ethanol. Third (F_3), ethanol can be produced in hydrated or de-hydrated forms, according to customer preference (mainly) in the European Union.⁴¹⁰ And fourth (F_4), cane biomass which is not used for crushing (i.e. leafs and the bottom and upper parts of the stalk) can be left in the field as organic manure or used as feed-stock for electricity production in mills and distilleries for one's own-use and/or sale to the national grid.⁴¹¹ In 2013, flex cane companies in Guatemala jointly generated an average of 408 megawatts (USDA 2014), or 16% of the national electricity supply (Servicios Agropecuarios San Diego 2015, 15).

Figure 38 Multiple-ness and flexible-ness of the Guatemalan flex cane complex in 2014.



Source: Author elaboration

⁴⁰⁹ In fact, “Magdalena Group” is since this year the largest Latin American producer and exporter of refined sugar ‘because sugar mills in Brazil are not focused on this type of sugar production’ (Magdalena Group CEO interviewed by Jaramillo 2016).

⁴¹⁰ Guatemala was in 2014 the leading ethanol exporter to the EU under preferential trade concessions (GSP and GSP+) (USDA 2015)

⁴¹¹ The Inter-American Development Bank anticipated in 2008 another possible use among which to flex “superfluous” cane biomass namely, second-generation cellulosic ethanol (IDB 2008). Nonetheless, this type of ethanol production has not yet come through in Guatemala

8.2.2.2. Flex palm commodity production

Ever since the mid-2000s, but especially after the “I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers” in Guatemala in October 2013, flex palm companies become very devoted to promoting palm as a multi-purpose crop. A leading Guatemalan flex palm company advertises the slogan ‘one seed, thousands of uses’ (NaturAceites. 2017) on the welcome page of its website. Similarly zeroing in on palm oil’s multiple-ness, the Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild (GREPALMA) explains on its website that ‘everyday, in everything you do, palm oil is with you’ (GREPALMA. 2016c). As figure 39 will demonstrate, the main palm uses in 2006-2014 involve those linked to either palm’s oilseeds or biomass. Palm biomass (fronds) in the plantation, or resulting as a palm fruit crushing by-product (empty fruit bunches, fibers, kernel shells), is prone to food, feed and energy uses.

Nonetheless, most palm uses stem from the kernel and fruit oils in this period.⁴¹² As with cane sugar, increased milling capacity is connected to heightened mill productivity to allow for soaring palm oil production. Despite the fact that 11 out of the 14 palm oil mills in 2014 were only established from 2005 on,⁴¹³ Guatemala holds the world record in palm oil productivity since 2011 on with 7 tons/hectare vs. 4 tons/hectare world average (GREPALMA. 2016b). As previously established, most palm oil is exported in crude form. As per the 30% that stays in Guatemala, some flex palm companies refine, bleach and deodorize it for food uses (cooking oil, edible fats, margarines, etc.). Others use crude palm oil for non-food consumer goods manufacturing (such as soaps, cosmetics and candles). And companies that are only focused in the crushing business simply sell their product to food and non-food consumer goods manufacturers. Among them, Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive and Nestlé stand out as the largest palm oil buyers in the country (Solano 2010). It is then up to these transnational consumer

⁴¹² Interview with GREPALMA Executive Secretary, April 2009

⁴¹³ Solano (2011), GREPALMA (2016b).

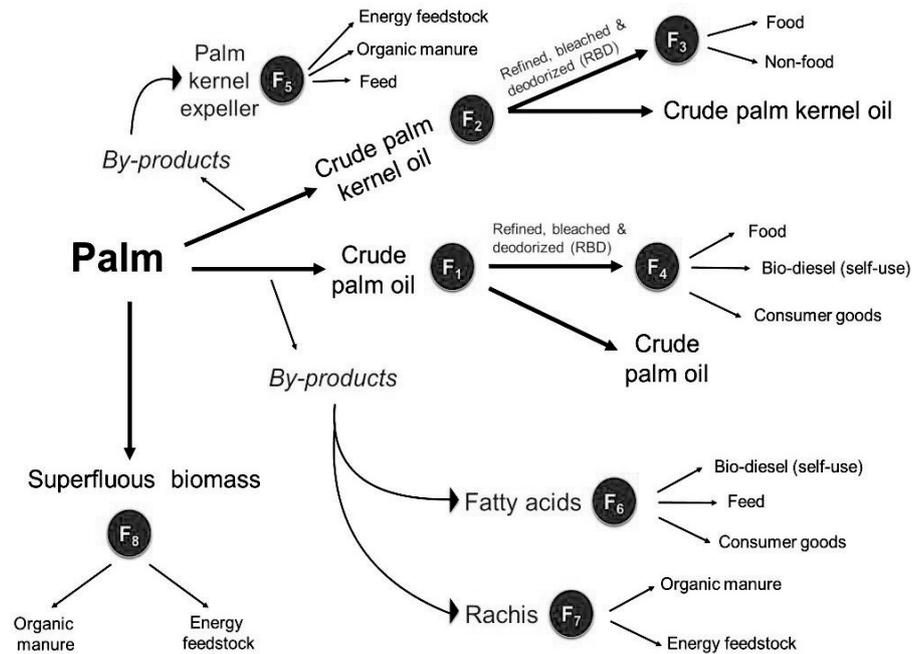
goods manufacturers to flex among competing end-uses of the crude palm oil they acquire.

As figure 39 indicates, flex production for palm and derived commodities' competing uses in Guatemala unfolds along three productive clusters. The first concerns flexing among competing uses of crude palm fruit/kernel oil. This includes, on the one side, the decision regarding how much crude palm fruit/kernel oil is to be refined, bleached and deodorized (RBD), and how much is to be marketed in crude form (F_1 and F_2). On the other side is the decision regarding different potential food and non-food uses of RBD palm fruit/kernel oils (F_3 and F_4), which in turn informs how much of which oil is to be further processed and how (i.e. through fractionation, interesterification, hydrogenation, glycerolysis or distillation). The second cluster involves flexing among competing uses for the by-products generated during palm fruit/kernel oil extraction and processing. One flexing option is the use of palm kernel expeller (the crushed shells of the palm kernel) as organic manure in plantations, electricity feedstock in the mills or animal feed (F_5). Another is the use of palm fatty acid distillate for bio-diesel for the company's transport fleet,⁴¹⁴ soaps and detergents or animal feed (F_6). And a third option is the use of palm fruit bunch rachis as organic manure in plantations or energy feedstock in mills (F_7). Similarly, the third flex productive cluster includes the use of palm biomass (e.g. fronds) as organic manure in plantations or energy feedstock in the mills (F_8).⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ In 2006-2014 palm oil bio-diesel is produced only for corporate automotive fleets' use.

⁴¹⁵ Interviews with Head Industrial Engineer of NaturAceites Polochic flex palm company (March 2008), the Executive Secretaries of GREPALMA and the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association (ACR) (April 2009 and February 2010, respectively), Secretary General of the Colombian Federation of Palm Growers (FEDEPALMA) (Bogota, September 2013), and presentations at the I Latin American Palm Growers Congress (October 2013).

Figure 39 Multiple-ness and flexible-ness of the Guatemalan flex palm complex in 2014.



Source: Author elaboration

8.3. Knowledge and technology relations in subordinate agrarian class farming

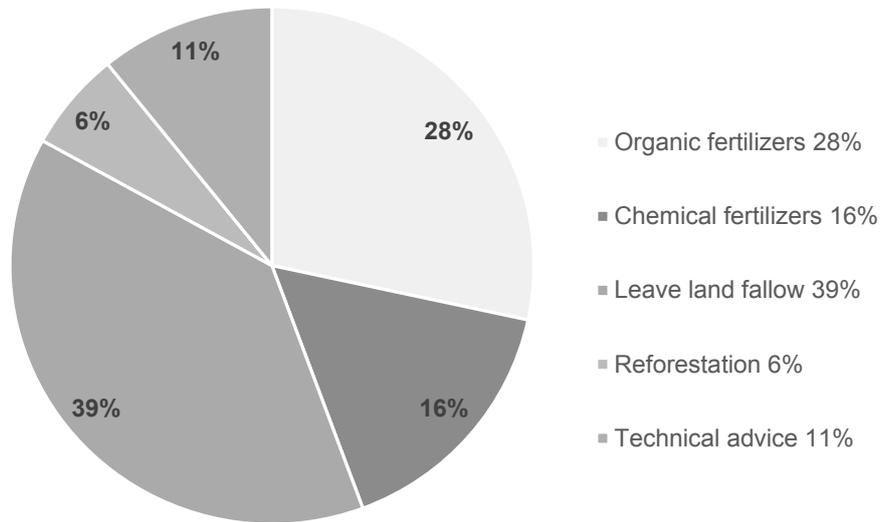
Farming technologies remain relatively unchanged among subordinate class cultivators in 2006-2014. There is no tilling and besides pump-up sprayers, hoes, axes and machetes continue to be the main farming tools. In the research zones, 6 out of 10 subordinate class cultivators do not use any type of fertilizer, but 9 out of 10 users rely on chemical rather than organic fertilizers. Also, 9 out of 10 cultivators do not buy seeds but keep harvest grain as seed-stock for the next season.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ These figures should not be read as indicators of an active and conscious commitment by subordinate class cultivators with low external input farming. Whereas this is the case for some, many others simply cannot afford to pay for agro-chemical inputs and seeds.

Nonetheless, I have established that subordinate class cultivators face growing challenges to leave land fallow in 2006-2014. As a result, lowlander swidden cultivators see their farming abilities increasingly constrained. The straightforward response is to intensify farming practices. What is not so obvious is how to do so, and ideal possibilities do not always match actual practices on the ground. Figure 40 shows how by 2014, 39% of subordinate class cultivators still believe leaving land fallow is the best the way to improve land yields. Other ideas taken into account in figure 40 might be more or less pertinent, feasible or affordable. But insisting on fallowing land amid increasing bio-physical limits signals either disconformity with current directions of agro-environmental change, a “knowledge rift” towards farming intensification, or both. Interestingly enough, there is a significant⁴¹⁷ difference regarding the relevance given to land fallowing between head of HH men born in haciendas and in villages. 48% of the former argue for fallowing land as the way to keep or restore land yields in comparison with 31% of the latter. Considering the loss of indigenous and local (farming) knowledges resulting from decades of hacienda tenancy relations (Grandia 2012), these competing perspectives on how to improve land yields support the farming intensification knowledge rift thesis.

⁴¹⁷ Pearson chi-square 5% level $p = ,018$

Figure 40 Lowlander cultivators' ideas on how to improve land yields. 2014



Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Several main farming intensification strategies stand out, notwithstanding what are seen as ideal ways to improve yields. These include increasing cultivated areas, multi-cropping, using more agro-chemical inputs and increasing the amount of labor in farming (including family, exchanged and hired sources). Adoption and outcomes of these farming intensification strategies vary over time and among fragmented agrarian subordinate classes in four statistically significant ways.

First, the petty capitalist farmer class is the only one that shows a significant⁴¹⁸ increase in the cultivated area, from an average of 4,2 hectares in 2010 to 5 hectares in 2014. Second, there is a slight but significant⁴¹⁹ increase in the average number of farmed crops from 2,8 in 2010 to 3,1 in 2014. Whereas this is the case for all agrarian subordinate classes, multi-cropping is more common among the most market-

⁴¹⁸ Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,033$

⁴¹⁹ Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,015$

oriented producers, namely the market oriented fraction of family farmers and the petty capitalist farmer class.⁴²⁰ Third, the expense of agro-inputs (fertilizers and seeds) does not change significantly for farming proletarians between 2010 and 2014, but it does increase significantly for self-consumption oriented family farmers and decrease for petty capitalist farmers.⁴²¹ If we take into account that the price of chemical fertilizers in Guatemala shrinks by 33% between 2009 and 2013 (Gálvez et al. 2013, 80), then farming proletarians and petty capitalist farmers used relatively less fertilizers, and self-consumption oriented family farmers more. In the research zones, fertilizer use is strongly shaped by cultivators' abilities to benefit from the government's "Fertilizer Distribution Program" (PROFER) (see Gálvez et al. 2013, 96-97). Fourth and finally, subordinate class cultivators more than double the average number of workdays in farming between 2010 and 2014 from 59 to 140 workdays/hectare, respectively.⁴²² This tendency is stronger for petty capitalist farmers and market oriented family farmers.⁴²³

Furthermore, outcomes of these four farming intensification strategies also vary across fragmented subordinate classes. Those experiencing increases in the cultivated area, number of crops and/or the amount of labor in farming show similar land yields in 2010 and 2014. In other words, they are able to keep shrinking land productivity at bay. Conversely, land yields decline for those who only focused on using more agrochemical inputs, as in the case of self-consumption oriented family farmers.⁴²⁴ The higher effectiveness of farming intensification by means other than increased use of agro-chemical inputs is a subject to which I return in the ecological relations chapter.

⁴²⁰ Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,003$ and $p = ,015$ respectively

⁴²¹ Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,012$ and $p = ,000$ respectively

⁴²² Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,007$

⁴²³ Dependent t-tests 5% level $p = ,036$ and $,035$ respectively

⁴²⁴ Specifically, their average yearly harvest reduces in 14% (from 1,97 to 1,71 tons/ hectare) between 2010 and 2014 (Dependent t-test 5% level $p = ,012$), regardless of their significant increase in agrochemical input expense (from a median of 0 in 2010 to an average of 36 US\$/ hectare in 2014)

Finally, whereas the YASTEXES play a successful role in keeping up with advanced cane and palm farming and processing technologies, subordinate class cultivators and allies (e.g. the YASTACS) working to bridge the knowledge rift in farming intensification face many challenges. In general, the dismantling of public agricultural research and extension services in 1986-2005 and its subsequent privatization means support for farming intensification is to be sought out in the business world. This is something the YASTACS and other progressive actors in the government are aware of when they push for the “National Agricultural Extension System” (SNEA) and the return of the “Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology” (ICTA) as a public plant-breeding services provider within the “Family Farming Program for the Strengthening of Peasant Economy” (PAFFEC). But following funding constraints and a prioritization of petty capitalist farmers and market oriented family farmers, PAFFEC’s impact during the period is symbolic at best. In 2012, the outreach of agricultural extension services remains limited to the 3% of rural HHs observed almost a decade earlier (Gutiérrez 2013, 12). Therefore, the majority of subordinate class cultivators who do not count on support from NGOs, social organizations or the Catholic Pastoral need to find their own ways to intensify their farms. In so doing, they follow the intensification strategies expanded upon previously along two competing paths, the “high external input agriculture (HEIA)/ agro-synthetic path” or the “low external-input agriculture (LEIA)/ agro-ecological path”. As the discussion will show, none of them are free from challenges.

The (HEIA)/ agro-synthetic path relies on scientific knowledges and technologies protected by intellectual property rights following the “Knowledge Enclosure” policy dogma. It is underpinned by green revolution technologies of which (usually non-indigenous, male) agronomic engineers are the ultimate authority (*Don Ingeniero*). Farming intensification via this path entails at least three key challenges of agro-ecological, cultural and productive character. First, as I have emphasized, increasing agro-chemical inputs do not always and necessarily translate into higher yields. Second, many (Q’eqchi’)

subordinate class cultivators find agro-chemicals morally unacceptable. Indeed, even those who use them refer to synthetic agro-inputs as “poison” (*veneno*). And third, high production costs (e.g. inputs, IPRs’ royalties, extension services, etc.) either completely deter cultivators from this path, or lead to partial or wrong adoption. In the case of misuse, decisions regarding which agro-chemical inputs to select and how to use them are often made on the basis of the availability of free or subsidized seed and fertilizer than on agronomic prescriptions. The price of agro-chemicals follows that of oil, and the price of seeds is set by transnational seed giant Monsanto following its acquisition of Semillas Cristiani Burkard (SCB). In addition to ‘the largest maize seed company in the Latin American tropics’ (Klepek 2012, 310) SCB owned the intellectual property rights over the rich germplasm bank of the Guatemalan “Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology” (ICTA). As a result, Monsanto becomes ‘the leading corn seed provider in the Latin and Central American regions’ (Monsanto. 2008).⁴²⁵

The competing “LEIA/agro-ecological path” to farming intensification relies on hybrid knowledges and technologies including traditional, local and scientific knowledges (Altieri 1987), of both common and private ownership. I have highlighted that the farmer-to-farmer movement originating in the Guatemalan highlands in the 1970s is a pioneering experience of LEIA/agro-ecological farming knowledges and technologies’ co-production and dissemination (Holt-Gimenez 2006).⁴²⁶ The farmer-to-famer movement suffered from military scorched-earth violence in the 1980s and the purge of rural population purge during the 1990s. With this came the erosion of communal institutions and life projects, which unfolded hand in glove with neoliberal globalization and its associated policy dogmas. Nonetheless, the LEIA/agro-ecological

⁴²⁵ In fact, Monsanto’s control of Guatemalan seed markets goes beyond grain seeds to include vegetables seeds too. To identify the gene that helps improve resistance to moisture and heat, in 2011 Monsanto invested US\$ 2,5 million in a molecular markers unit for its vegetables research station in Baja Verapaz department (Prensa Libre 2011b).

⁴²⁶ But see Jansen’s precautionary argument regarding how ‘as with science in general, there is nothing inherent in farmer knowledge and local farming practices which makes them *a priori and in a generalized way* ecological’ (2015, 226 emphasis added).

path regains momentum in Latin America amid convergent world crises, and Guatemala is a hotspot (Altieri and Toledo 2011). A favorite of both the YASTACS and the eldest among subordinate class cultivators, the LEIA/agro-ecological path is praised by grassroots organizations, peasant, environmental and indigenous peoples' organizations, (trans)national NGOs, (activist)scholars, Catholic Pastorals and some (inter)national state actors alike. But well-intended and neatly framed discourses and projects do not easily translate into changing farming practices among subordinate class cultivators. For this to happen—or to happen more widely—there are at least five key challenges of agro-ecological, cultural and productive character.

First, whereas LEIA/agro-ecological knowledges may be of common ownership, such is not necessarily the case with the underlying technologies. A “knowledge enclosure” similar to that in the HEIA/agro-synthetic path emerges with the rise of “corpo-organics” at the turn of the 21st century (Jaffee and Howard 2010). Second, the hybrid knowledges behind this path are simultaneously (and necessarily) old and with room for growth. Hence, they need to adjust to rapidly changing conditions of production across various agro-ecosystems, and the climatic and ecological conditions of the tropical lowlands raise difficult technical challenges. Among these, extreme weather events and effective pest control stand out.⁴²⁷ Third, and building on the first two challenges, agro-ecological transitions and intensification in general require time for trial and error experimentation and soil and crop adaptation.⁴²⁸ Moreover, they are usually very labor intensive.⁴²⁹ Fourth, whereas it is unacceptable for many, others consent to the HEIA/agro-synthetic path and the authority of *Don Ingeniero*, especially in the face of

⁴²⁷ Interview with *Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* representative in Chisec, November 2011

⁴²⁸ Novo, Jansen and Slingerland find ‘circulation of knowledge, the search for innovation by recombining apparently simple and known technologies, the use of experiments on the farm and the adaptation of the rhythm of innovation to the specific situation of the farm as the critical issues to achieve sustainable production systems’ (2015, 135).

⁴²⁹ Group interviews with village representatives from Chisec (April 2010), Fray (April 2010), and Sayaxché (May 2010). See Mingorría et al. (2014) for the Polochic case, and Jansen (2000) for a similar argument in Europe.

lacking or limited alternatives. This not only adversely affects community consensus on LEIA/agro-ecological production, but also its conditions of possibility with HEIA/agro-synthetic farms close to LEIA/agro-ecological ones.⁴³⁰ And fifth and finally, despite growing labor exchanges, individualization of farming following land ownership individualization constrains farming knowledge and skills exchange among village cultivators. This, together with a farmer-to-farmer movement struggling to shake off its chains, makes diffusion of the LEIA/ agro-ecological path highly dependent on the (shrinking) moneys and diverse political agendas of international development cooperation.

⁴³⁰ Through cross-pollination and agro-chemical run-offs.

Chapter 9 Ecological relations

9.1. Introduction

Land use change to cane and palm plantations overhauls natural ecosystems, including those formerly used in agriculture (i.e. agroecosystems). Cane and palm farming and transformation into multiple commodities involve appropriating and using environmental resources and services, as well as dealing with the waste and pollutants generated through the land use change, cultivation and transformation processes. The biophysical exchange of environmental “goods and bads” in these processes stands for the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production. And this exchange of energy and materials to, from and within (agro)ecosystems for the purpose of cane and palm commodity production hinges on a series of ecological relations.⁴³¹ These are understood here as the cooperative and contradictory social relations between, across and within fragmented classes which inform the ways: i) environmental goods (i.e. resources and services) and bads (i.e. pollutants and waste) are organized in the transformation of nature into agro-commodities, and environmental bads are transferred during or as a result of the productive process; ii) the payment for environmental services (PES) portion of agro-commodity value is distributed; iii) ownership of environmental goods and bads, and entitlements to PES, are politically sanctioned, and; iv) PES are used for consumption, simple and/or expanded reproduction purposes, after grants and taxes.

This chapter builds on the above by first describing the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production in Guatemala, and then analyzing the ecological relations behind it. To see the former task through, I treat the appropriation and use of environmental goods

⁴³¹ The complete social metabolism of a cane or palm commodity also includes the exchanges of energy and materials involved in the circulation and consumption processes. Nonetheless, I am concerned here with the analysis of the social metabolism and ecological relations behind the processes of land use change, cane and palm cultivation, and transformation into multiple commodities.

separately from the disposal of bads. On the one hand, flex agribusinesses' transformation of nature into cane and palm commodities requires large amounts of energy and materials from within and outside the agroecosystem. Land use changes associated with a total clearing of land for the manufacturing of cane and palm agroecosystems necessitates a major appropriation of environmental resources and services. Cane and palm farming and transformation similarly require extremely large quantities of soil and water nutrients. Hence, in addition to stockpiling those nutrients that exist in a plantation's agro-ecosystem, chemical fertilizers are applied to the soil and rivers, while diverting streams and pumping underground water into cane and palm fields.

On the other hand, pollutants and waste are a serious consequence of the appropriation and use of environmental resources and services for flex crop commodity production. Most often, land use change to cane and palm plantations impinges upon the capacity of agro-ecosystems to perform as carbon sinks, and leads to higher carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. Cane and palm farming and transformation into different commodities are also pollutant- and waste-heavy processes. The soil itself serves as a dumping site, and among the many forms of waste and pollutants it absorbs, those resulting from external agro-chemical input use for cane and palm cultivation are striking. Cane leaves and stems, and palm fronds, are increasingly left in the soil after harvest or pruning for fertilization purposes. And the trade-off is clear: if excessive materials are used as feedstock for energy production in transformation plants, then there is an obvious need to increase the use of external fertilizers in plantations. Freshwater bodies likewise act as carriers and depositories of pollutants and waste when cane and palm are farmed and processed. Outcomes of my water analysis, carried out in freshwater bodies flowing through plantations and wastewater from palm oil mills, clearly show low levels of water oxygen and oxidation-reduction potential, and high levels of water's PH acidity and temperature.

Flex agribusinesses' appropriation, use and transfer of environmental "goods and bads" are vectors and expressions of power-ridden ecological distribution relations. These are divided into two types for analytical purposes here. The first type includes ecological relations between and across agro-extractivist bourgeois owners of flex cane and palm companies, and other dominant and subordinate agrarian classes. This analysis is organized into the relations of access to environmental resources and services, and the relations of pollutants and waste transfer.

Regarding access to environmental resources and services, and on the one hand, are the ecological relations of land use change to cane and palm cultivation. Land clearing, peat draining and diversion of water bodies for cane and palm cultivation constrains the abilities to appropriate or use forests', wetlands' and water bodies' resources and services of those formerly entitled to them. On the other hand, are the environmental resource and service access relations in and around cane and palm farming and processing. Once again, these can be differentiated for soil and water nutrients and services. Among the former, what I term "scale" and "peak soil" relations stand out. Soil "scale" relations have to do with lower abilities of dominant class cane and palm outgrowers, and subordinate class palm contract-farmers, to ensure effective nutrient management compared to flex agribusinesses. "Peak soil" ecological relations stem from the fact that expansion of cane and palm intensive agroecosystems requires a contraction of extensive agroecosystems such as those upon which cattle ranchers and swidden cultivators depend. Regarding the ecological relations of access to water nutrients and services, those shaping physical access to sufficient volumes of rainfall and freshwater for productive and reproductive purposes are prominent.

Relations of pollutants and waste transfer are approached here as cost-shifting ecological distribution relations, following Martínez-Alier and O'Connor (1999). The climate disruption effects of constrained (agro)ecosystem capacities for carbon sequestration following land use change to cane and palm, and larger CO₂ emissions due to heightened

use of synthetic fertilizers, unfold on a relatively long temporal scale. Conversely, the effects of waste and pollutants generated during cane and palm farming and processing damage human and environmental health as soon as operations hit the ground. On the one side, there are four environmental cost-shifting relations associated with four separate mechanisms of pollutants and waste dumping into the soil: First, aerial spraying of agro-chemicals over cane plantations in the Polochic Valley adversely affects people, crops, livestock and forests. Second, the use of glyphosate-based herbicide is already negatively impacting the health of nearby rural dwellers, as well as of the non-human agro-ecosystem as a broad spectrum pesticide, and this is expected to worsen. Third, non-agro-synthetic farming practices by flex agribusinesses, like biological pest control and the use of superfluous crop biomass and mill residues for soil fertilization, still bring about the transfer of environmental burdens. And fourth, the environmental divestment costs of rehabilitating soil nutrients after years of intensive cane and palm agro-industrial production are very high, and fall exclusively on the shoulders of outgrowers and (palm) contract-farmers. On the other side, “grey water” flowing through cane and palm plantations and from mills filters into underground aquifers and is released into rivers and streams, unleashing two interrelated environmental cost-shifting relations. The first one concerns the adverse implications on aquatic life and biodiversity, and hence on their use of water for (re)productive purposes. The second is the negative implications of polluted water on human health.

The second type of ecological relations concerns those that occur within the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie. This analysis hinges on the measures taken by some flex cane and palm companies to reduce their social metabolism in order to “acclimatize” flex cane and palm commodity production. Consumers’ increasing preference for ethical and sustainable brands, and companies’ realization of the need to take their natural (and personal) conditions of production seriously, is the drive behind this “ecological fix”. Additionally, corporations search for ways to see this through that cut production cost and increase resilience to climate

variability and extreme weather events and thereby will allow them to stay in business and be successful at it. Acclimatization of the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production involves the adoption of new “climate-smart” farming and processing practices, and recasting existing ones in those terms. Regardless of what may be positive or negative outcomes in terms of ecological distribution relations, flex agribusinesses reap important material and political benefits from these configurations of “climate-smart” production practices.

9.2. Social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production

Appropriation and use of environmental resources and services for cane and palm farming and processing results in pollutants and waste generation. In describing rather than analyzing core biophysical aspects of the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production, appropriation and use of environmental resources and services (in-flows) and disposal of pollutant and waste (out-flows) are treated separately here.

9.2.1. Appropriation and use of environmental goods

Together with the use of solar energy and the nutrients stored in the atmosphere (e.g. carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen), the production of cane, palm and their multiple commodities relies on the appropriation of energy and nutrients for which the soil and water act as reservoirs in the (agro)ecosystem. As is often the case in agro-industrial intensive farming practices that rely on green revolution knowledge and technologies, energy and nutrients flows in the agroecosystem are supplemented with external inputs. For heuristic purposes, appropriation and use of energy and nutrients are discussed separately for the process of land use change into cane and palm cultivation, and the processes of cane and palm farming and transformation.

Regarding the former process, the chapter on knowledge and technology relations explained that agribusinesses use remote sensing technologies, as well as climate, soil and water analysis to identify suitable areas for cultivation. Farmland in these areas is then “developed” for cane and palm cultivation by means of heavy machinery and cutting-edge soil and water engineering services (i.e. for irrigation and/or drainage systems). GIS analysis shows that land transformed to for cane production between 2005 and 2010 in the Polochic area had been dedicated to staple food crops and cultivated pastures in 2000, a point that was detailed in the agroecological structure discussion in chapter 4. New palm plantations between 2005 and 2010 substitute forest, staple food crops and “scrubland”, including swidden cultivators’ fallows and landlord’s underutilized latifundia land. These land use changes—associated with a total clearing of land for the manufacturing of cane and palm agroecosystems—entail a major appropriation and use of environmental resources and services.⁴³² Some are appropriated for profit, like timber, but others are deemed “useless” such as the carbon sink, hydrological cycle-balancing and biodiversity haven services of forests, wetlands, grasslands and fallows.

In fact, cane and palm plantations are quite often next to, or even inside, buffer zones—and even well into the core zones of conservation enclosures that make up the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas (SIGAP). Telling examples include cane and palm plantations in the Polochic Valley within the Ramsar wetland buffer zone “Bocas del Polochic Wildlife Refuge”, and adjacent to “Sierra de las Minas biosphere reserve”. Palm plantations can also be found within the buffer zone of “Lachua Ecoregion” Ramsar wetland in Ixcán and Chisec zones, and in the core of the “San Roman Biological Reserve” in the Sayaxché.⁴³³ The land relations chapter further clarified that indirect land use changes to cane and palm include encroachment of cattle ranchers

⁴³² According to FAO’s State of the World’s Forests 2016 report, agribusiness-led ‘commercial agriculture accounted for almost 70 percent of the deforestation in Latin America in the period 2000–2010’ (FAO 2016, 20).

⁴³³ CONAP et al (2008) and Hurtado (2008).

and landless subordinate class cultivators into the Mayan Biosphere Reserve in the north of Petén department. Paradoxically, the largest flex palm company in this sub-region chose to brand itself as “Petén’s Reforesting Company” (REPSA).

In describing appropriation and use of environmental resources and services within the processes of cane and palm farming and transformation into different commodities, it is necessary to further differentiate between soil and water resources and services. On the one hand, cane and palm crops demand very large quantities of nutrients.⁴³⁴ Particularly in the Guatemalan northern lowlands, leaching and run-off due to land clearing and floods or heavy rains (especially in compacted soils after decades of cattle grazing), and nitrogen volatilization due to the high temperatures, adversely affect the stock of nutrients available in the soil.⁴³⁵ As a result, and regardless of the larger or smaller nutrient stocks found in different types of soils (and over different time periods) on which cane and palm plantations are developed, there is the need for a large input of mineral fertilizers. Average fertilizer use across crops and forms of farming in Guatemala increased from 100 to 151 Kg/hectare/year between 2002 and 2010 (IARNA 2014, 155). But these figures conceal important differences that vary according to types of cultivators and forms of farming. The chapter on knowledge and technology relations established that 6 out of 10 subordinate class cultivators do not use any type of fertilizer, even though 9 out of 10 users rely on chemical rather than organic fertilizer. Cane and palm cultivation in the karstic soils of the northern lowlands depends heavily on chemical fertilizers. Even in the fertile alluvial soils of the Polochic Valley, cane production demands ‘large amounts of fertilizer and other agro-chemicals’.⁴³⁶ The palm company in there applies as much as 429 kg/hectare/year of NPK fertilizer and 34,3 Kg of boron.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ YARA (2017), Comte et al. (2012).

⁴³⁵ Larios 1997, Ronzón y Tillie, 2004

⁴³⁶ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008

⁴³⁷ Interview with Head Engineer of NaturAceites Polochic Palm Oil mill, March 2008

On the other hand, cane and palm crops, and their many multiple commodities, demand large quantities of water. Not surprisingly, cane and palm plantations expand along the basins of major rivers in the northern lowlands, like Polochic, Pasion and Usumacinta (see, for instance, figures in chapter 4 mapping areas of potential and actual palm expansion). The concept of ‘water footprint’ (Hoekstra 2003) is very useful for assessing the volume of freshwater appropriated by flex agribusinesses in their production processes, as well as the overall production purposes freshwater serves. A commodity’s water footprint includes the total volume of freshwater used to produce it (Hoekstra et al. 2009). Globally, the average total water footprints for cane and palm crops between 1996 and 2005 are respectively estimated to be 1.666 and 1.098 m³/tons (Mekonnen and Hoekstra 2010, 17, 20). But even larger volumes of freshwater are appropriated for the processing of cane stalks and palm fruit in mills and distilleries (e.g. for crop washing and fractioning, cooling purposes, materials transformation to liquid state, etc.). The world average of total water footprints amounts to 1.782 m³/ton for refined sugar, 2.670 m³/ton for cane ethanol, 4.971 m³/ton for refined palm oil and 5.166 m³/ton for palm oil biodiesel (ibid, 17, 18, 21).

Reliable data on the volume of freshwater appropriated by flex cane and palm companies specific to Guatemala is only available for crop irrigation purposes, and only for the years 2003 and 2010. Table 37 presents these water appropriation volumes in comparison to other irrigated crops.⁴³⁸ Already by 2003, that is, even before the tremendous expansion of cane and especially palm from 2006 on, cane was the largest user of irrigation water and palm the third largest. Together, they accounted for 56% of the total irrigation water in 2003. By 2010, that is halfway the 2006-2014 period, cane remains the top user of irrigation water and palm use expands more than two-fold—reaching second

⁴³⁸ With the exceptions of contract-farmed palm, part of the plantain production and the non-traditional agricultural exports and other vegetables included within “all other crops”, all crops in figure 38 are farmed in Guatemala by dominant agrarian classes.

place. By 2010, the two flex crops hoard 61% of all of Guatemala's irrigation water (IARNA-URL 2014, 159).

Table 37 Irrigation water use by main irrigated crops in Guatemala. 2003 and 2010 (millions of m³), and 2010-2003 change (%)

Irrigated crops	Year		Change 2010-2003
	2003	2010	
Cane	1.637	2.113	29%
Palm	469	1.514	223%
Banana	517	898	74%
Melon	126	223	76%
Plaintain	193,9	194,5	0,3%
All other crops	831	1.016	22%

Source: Author elaboration with data from the Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environment of Rafael Landivar University in Guatemala (IARNA URL 2014).

Rivers and streams are diverted and underground water is pumped into cane and palm fields. In the opposite way, flooded grounds must be drained of excessive water during the rainy season. Drainages are built within cane and palm plantations and dikes raised alongside riverbanks to manage such floods in plantations.

9.2.2. Pollutants and waste in flex cane and palm commodity production

Pollutants and waste are a serious consequence of the appropriation and use of environmental resources and services for cane and palm commodity production. The discussion on pollutants and waste generation is approached in the same way as the preceding one concerning the appropriation and use of energy and nutrients. This means I broadly differentiate between pollutants and waste generated in the process of land use change to cane and palm plantations, as well as in the processes of cane and palm farming and transformation into different commodities.

Most often, land use change to cane and palm plantations constrains the capacity of agro-ecosystems to perform as carbon sinks, and leads to higher carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (Stern 2006). The cases of land use change for cane in Brazil and palm in Indonesia are used for illustrative and comparative purposes, as this kind of data for Guatemala is not yet available. Recall that my GIS analysis found that land dedicated to staple crops and cultivated pastures in the Polochic sub-region in 2000 changes use into cane between 2005 and 2010. Mello et al. examine ‘the effects of land-use change on soil carbon (C) balance [...] for sugar-cane expansion [...] from: native vegetation, pastures and annual cropland’ (2014, 605).⁴³⁹ They conclude that in Brazil conversion from native vegetation⁴⁴⁰ and pastures to cane plantations leads to soil carbon losses, while conversion of annual crops increases soil carbon accumulation (ibid, 607). But in the latter case, they find ‘this could be due to annual tillage for croplands, resulting in greater carbon losses, as observed in studies evaluating agricultural intensification’ (ibid). But neither swidden nor intensive cultivators from agrarian subordinate classes plow land in Guatemala, a factor that was advanced in the knowledge and technology relations chapter. So while the cases of land use change from native vegetation and pastures in Brazil are relatively good proxies, the case of annually tilled cropland substitution speaks less to the Guatemalan case.

Regarding land conversion to palm, GIS analysis shows new palm plantations between 2005 and 2010 substitute mainly forest, staple food crops and “scrubland”, including swidden cultivators’ fallows and underutilized latifundia land. In a 2015 article, researchers from World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)/CGIAR (World Bank) and Wageningen University Netherlands analyze ‘carbon stocks in oil palm plantations and the threshold for carbon-neutral vegetation conversion on mineral

⁴³⁹ They sampled ‘135 study sites, forming 75 comparison pairs (CP), and around 6.000 soil samples in south-central Brazil’ (ibid).

⁴⁴⁰ From the Cerrado ecoregion of Brazil, resembling to a large extent the tropical savannah south of the Petén sub-region in the Guatemalan northern lowlands.

soils' in Indonesia. Claiming to rely on the broadest empirically-based data-set to date (Khasanah et al. 2015), authors conclude

‘the types of vegetation that can be converted debt-free to oil palm include grasslands and shrub, but not monocultural rubber plantations, rubber agroforest and similar secondary or *logged-over forests* [i.e. for swidden farming]. Establishing oil palm plantations in areas with higher preceding carbon stock [...] will lead to net release of carbon to the atmosphere, with changes in soil pools [and] recurrent emissions due to fertilization as other emission factors’ (ibid, 15 emphasis added).

Indeed, cane and palm farming and transformation into different commodities are pollutant- and waste-heavy processes. As with the appropriation and use of environmental resources and services, it is useful to further differentiate between what it involves to use either soil from the (agro)ecosystem or freshwater bodies as dumping sites. Both of these serve as spillways for pollutants and waste from cane and palm farming and processing. On the one hand, then, the soil itself acts as a dumping site, and among the many forms of waste and pollutants it absorbs, those resulting from external agro-chemical input use for cane and palm cultivation stand out. Together with mineral fertilizers, flex cane and palm companies apply fungicides, pesticides and herbicides. And at least in Fray, Polochic Valley, Ixcán and Sayaxché zones, flex palm companies use (Monsanto’s “Roundup”) glyphosate-based herbicide. Some flex agribusinesses include biological pest control among their strategies to contain the common “pests” in tropical monocrop plantations. They let snakes loose in plantations to feast on the rodents that are a main threat to cane and palm, especially in early growth stages. Agro-chemicals are applied manually, except for cane in which some of them (e.g. ripeners) are sprayed from crop dusting planes.⁴⁴¹ Volumes of these agro-chemicals, not synthesized by canes and palms, end-up either as volatilized nitrogen into the atmosphere, as “grey

⁴⁴¹ Interviews with owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, Naturaceites flex palm company’ nursery foreman in Fray, and CEO of PALIXCÁN flex Palm Company in February 2008, June 2009 and February 2010, respectively.

water” stored underground the highly porous karstic soils, or flow into the Caribbean or Pacific via freshwater currents.

Cane leaves and stems, and palm fronds, are increasingly left in the soil after harvest or pruning for soil fertilization purposes. In previous chapters, I put forth the ways in which many superfluous materials generated during cane and palm farming and processing are increasingly put into productive use. But there is a clear trade-off: if excessive materials are used as energy-feedstock in transformation plants, then there is an obvious need to increase the use of external fertilizers in the plantations. “Residual” by-products (e.g. cane vinasses and palm oil mill effluent) and “waste” biomass (e.g. cane bagasse, palm empty fruit bunches, and palm kernel shells) are used in flexible ways for multiple energy purposes in plantations (i.e. fertilization) or processing plants (i.e. electricity generation), as I flagged out in the previous chapter. They often serve the additional purpose of financial tools in carbon offset markets. Nonetheless, the substitution effects of superfluous materials are limited. For instance, ‘mulched EFB [empty fruit bunches] can reduce the need for chemical fertilizers by more than 50% in immature stands and by 5% in mature stands’ (Comte et al. 2012, 92).

On the other hand, freshwater bodies likewise act as carriers and depositories of pollutants and waste when cane and palm are farmed and processed. The sheer use of irrigation water in plantations adds to the grey water volumes that were explored in more depth previously. Three sources are employed in this current context to assess water quality in and around cane and palm plantations and mills. First, in 2006-7 “Fundacion Defensores de la Naturaleza”⁴⁴² and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) assessed the impacts that mining and cane and palm farming and processing have on the water quality of Lake Izabal in the Polochic area. They conclude the lake

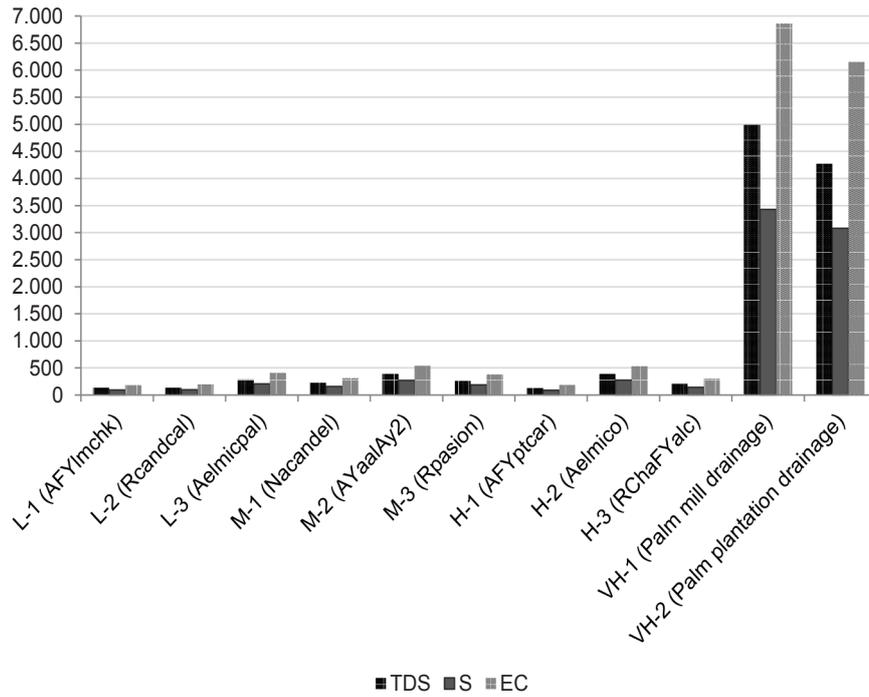
⁴⁴² The Guatemalan section of the “International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” (IUCN).

suffers from an eutrophication process⁴⁴³ due to high concentration of nitrites generally, as well as more nitrates specifically during the rainy season when sediments in agro-industrial plantations enter freshwater resources and contaminate them. There is high concentration of nitrates and orthophosphates south and south-west of Lake Izabal, where palm plantations stand, and of ammonium next to cane plantations (Barrientos and Gonzalo 2007). Second, research conducted by the Guatemalan National University (USAC) during 2013-14 found that “grey water” from palm plantations and mills in Izabal department (Polochic Valley zone) is released into water bodies without further treatment (Herrera and Silva Gavarrete 2014, 10).

And third, outcomes of my own 2013 water quality assessment in the other two main research areas in the northern lowlands for which there was no previous data (i.e. the Northern Transversal Strip and South Petén) indicate similar realities. Figure 41 depicts how levels of total dissolved solids, salinity and electrical conductivity in water samples increase where there is a higher probability of palm commodity production-related pollution. Samples from palm plantations and mill drainages show levels well above the thresholds FAO recommends for irrigation water, as well as those limits stipulated safe for drinking water by Guatemalan law.

⁴⁴³ ‘By which water bodies are made more eutrophic through an increase in their nutrient supply’ (Smith et al. 1999, 181).

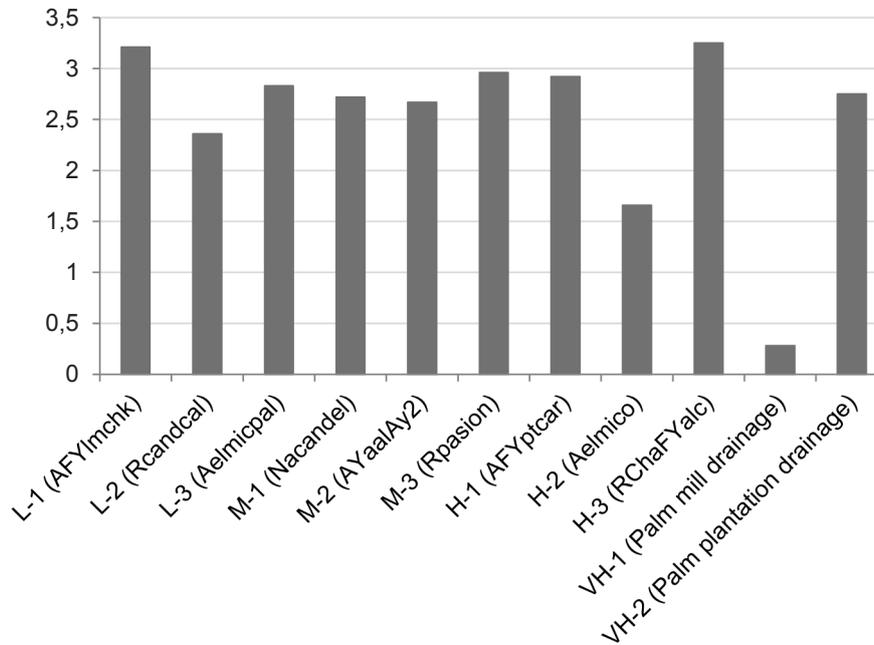
Figure 41 Total dissolved solids (TDS) in milligrams/liter, salinity (S) in grams/kilogram and electrical conductivity (EC) in microsiemens/centimeter of water samples



Source: IDEAR & IHH-CEMA 2013

In general, all water samples show relatively low levels of dissolved oxygen, putting aquatic life and water quality at risk. Nonetheless, figure 42 shows that samples from the palm oil mill drainage (VH-1) and El Mico stream after flowing through palm plantations (H-2), hold critically low levels of dissolved oxygen.

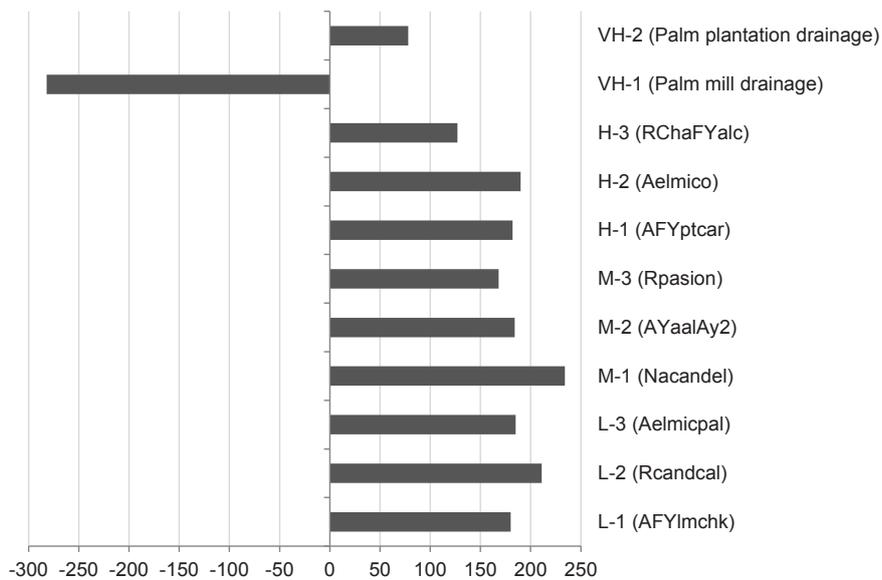
Figure 42 Dissolved oxygen (O₂) in water samples (in milligrams/liter)



Source: IDEAR & IHH-CEMA 2013.

Water's oxidation-reduction potential (ORP) is another common indicator of water quality. My water analysis outcomes in figure 43 show the ORP level is low in samples from the palm plantation drainage (VH-2) and Chajmaic River after flowing through palm plantations (H-3), and largely negative for the sample from the palm oil mill drainage (VH-1). Large negative ORP values are related to the presence of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), and the latter has been associated with palm oil mill effluent. According to Malaysian palm industry sources, 'the generation of H₂S from the palm oil mill effluent (under anaerobic conditions) is mainly due to the presence of sulfur in the fruit bunch of palm oil. Therefore, the refining process of crude palm oil will cause the wastewater to contain sulfur component which later will be used by microorganisms to produce H₂S' (Lau. 2014).

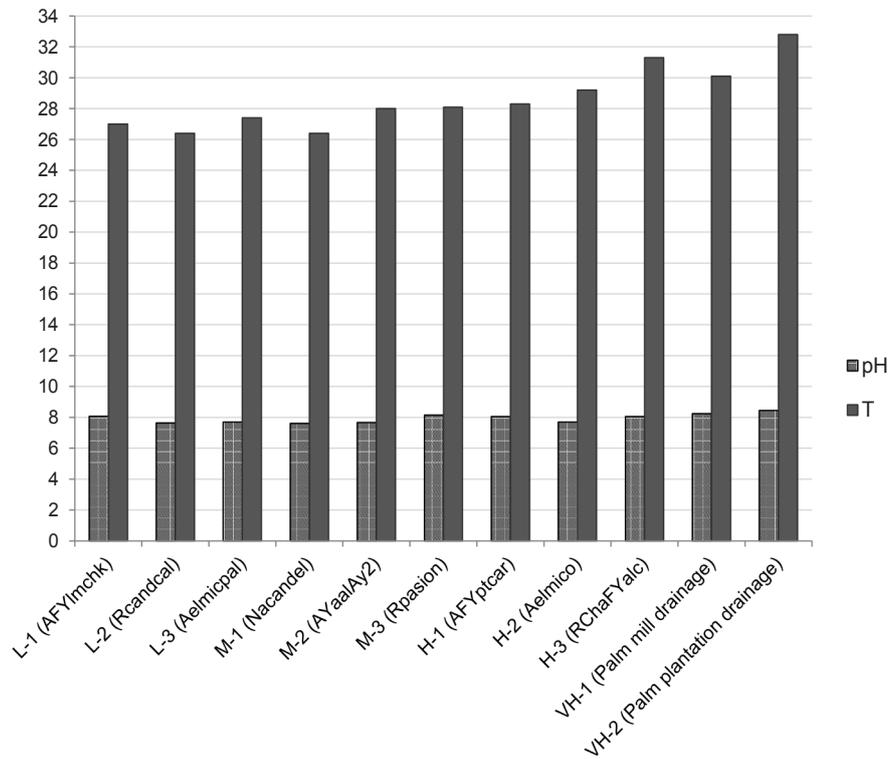
Figure 43 Oxidation-reduction potential (ORP) of water samples (in millivolts)



Source: IDEAR & IHH-CEMA 2013.

Finally, figure 44 next shows water pH levels, accounting for water acidity or alkalinity, are consistent for samples from low probability of palm commodity production-related pollution (L-1, 2, 3). Levels increase slightly for medium and high probability samples, especially for the sample from Chajmaic River after flowing through palm plantations (H-3). Higher pH levels are once again found in the sample from the palm plantation drainage (VH-2). Water temperature patterns follow the same distribution as pH, substantially increasing with the probability of the existence of palm commodity production-related pollution.

Figure 44 PH and temperature (°C) of water samples



Source: IDEAR & IHH-CEMA 2013.

9.3. Ecological relations in flex cane and palm commodity production

Appropriation, use and transfer of environmental “goods and bads” by flex agribusinesses are vectors and expressions of power-ridden ecological distribution relations. These are divided in two types for analytical purposes here. The first type includes ecological relations between and across agro-extractivist bourgeois owners of flex cane and palm companies, and other dominant and subordinate agrarian classes. This analysis is organized into the relations of access to environmental resources and services, on the one side, and the relations of pollutants and waste transfer, on the other side. The second type concerns

ecological relations within the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie. In particular, this analysis hinges on the measures taken by some flex cane and palm companies to reduce their social metabolism in order to “acclimatize” flex cane and palm commodity production.

9.3.1. Ecological relations of access to environmental goods

These relations between and across dominant and subordinate fragmented agrarian classes can be better analyzed following the clear division between the process of land use change to cane and palm, and subsequent measures taken for cane and palm farming and processing. On the one hand, then, are the ecological relations of land use change to cane and palm cultivation. For all fragmented agrarian classes, but especially for (Q’eqchi’) subordinate ones, access to the environmental resources and services of forests, wetlands and freshwater bodies is central to their reproductive strategies. Among countless other benefits, they provide subordinate class villagers with freshwater for productive and reproductive purposes, energy (firewood), building materials (timber, leafs), fibers for a variety of uses, medicinal and edible fruits and plants to use or sell, hunting and fishing, nutrients for rotating farming fallows to regenerate, the balancing of hydrological cycles and thus of rain patterns, ceremonial and sacred spaces, community-based tourism, payments for environmental services, and recreation, including a unique playground for children and youth.

As expected, land clearing, peat draining and diversion of water bodies for cane and palm cultivation constrains the abilities to appropriate or use forests’, wetlands’ and water bodies’ resources and services of those formerly entitled to them. This was a recurrent issue raised by across all research zones. As a Q’eqchi’ man in his early fifties explains during a meeting in a Sayaxché village in May 2010: ‘there was a lot of wealth in the “montaña” [forest] but the palm companies arrived and destroyed it, and so we are all very poor now’. Cases are also known in which access to these resources is instead constrained by arbitrary allowance or outright denial of physical access to forest “pockets” enclosed in palm

plantations.⁴⁴⁴ The burden of having to pay for formerly “free” environmental resources and services (e.g. building materials, medicinal plants, etc.) is shared among villagers across economic and socio-cultural divisions. But women and children in charge of fetching firewood and water on a daily basis need to over-stretch their workday to collect these vital resources from afar or less readily accessible places.⁴⁴⁵ Significant differences regarding the ability of fragmented agrarian subordinate classes to access forest resources and services are also found between petty land owners with individual and non-individual title deeds. Whereas some 9 out of 10 of those with non-individual title deeds have access to forest,⁴⁴⁶ just around half of those with individual land title deeds do.

On the other hand are the environmental resource and service access relations in and around cane and palm farming and processing. Once again, these can be differentiated for soil and water nutrients and services. Among the former, what I term “scale” and “peak soil” relations stand out. Soil “scale” relations have to do with lower abilities of dominant class cane and palm outgrowers, and subordinate class palm contract-farmers, to ensure effective nutrient management compared to flex agribusinesses. Non-corporate cane and palm producers lack the access flex agribusinesses have to sophisticated farming technologies that are used to maximize crop nutrient absorption in the agroecosystem, a point that was expanded on in the knowledge and technology relations chapter. It is also common—especially for financially constrained contract-farmers—to use an inadequate or unbalanced mix of agro-chemicals, and to default on costly/labor-intensive soil conservation practices (e.g. organic manure application or

⁴⁴⁴ Suggested by villagers (forest users) as well as by the Technical Director of the National Forest Institute (INAB) in Petén (interview in October 2011).

⁴⁴⁵ Interviews with leaders of grassroots women organizations from three Polochic Valley zone villages (June 2007), President and Executive Secretary of Mama Maquin women organization in Fray (October 2009), and Executive Secretary of the “Ixcán Women Organizations Network” (February 2010).

⁴⁴⁶ Differences in 2010 and 2014 between forest access and type of title are statistically significant at the 5% level (χ^2 tests $p=,001$ and $,000$ respectively)

frequent crop terracing). Hence, although the Government planned to only target relatively unyielding land for its small-scale palm contract-farming program,⁴⁴⁷ many contract-farmers are using their best alluvial farmland to secure palms' nutritional requirements.⁴⁴⁸ These are all matters reported by outgrowers and contract-farmers in Guatemala,⁴⁴⁹ which resonate with those documented by Comte et al. (2012) in the case of Indonesian palm contract-farming.

“Peak soil” ecological relations stem from the fact that expansion of cane and palm intensive agroecosystems entails contraction of extensive agroecosystems such as those upon which cattle ranchers and swidden cultivators depend. In a tone that is partially nostalgic and partially resentful, some cattle ranchers argue that gone are the days in which adding cattle heads to one's herd was as simple as accumulating additional cheap farmland. Today, those willing to remain in business are compelled to invest in the intensification of their ranches (e.g. improved pastures, supplementary feedstock, etc.) to cope with increasing (and unfair) competition.⁴⁵⁰ In the socio-economic conditions of the northern lowlands, subordinate class cultivators' shrinking abilities to leave land fallow raises pressure on their very own reproduction. Fallow periods are traditionally used by (Q'eqchi') swidden cultivators to keep soil's nutrient losses at bay.⁴⁵¹ In the research zones, 82% of subordinate class cultivators claim land yields to be lower every year, 10% say that they remain the same and 8% think yields to be higher. Figure 45 presents the main reasons subordinate class cultivators give for decreasing land yields, in their own words. Not leaving land

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Head of PROPALMA, September 2009.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with local PROPALMA official in Ixcán, December 2010

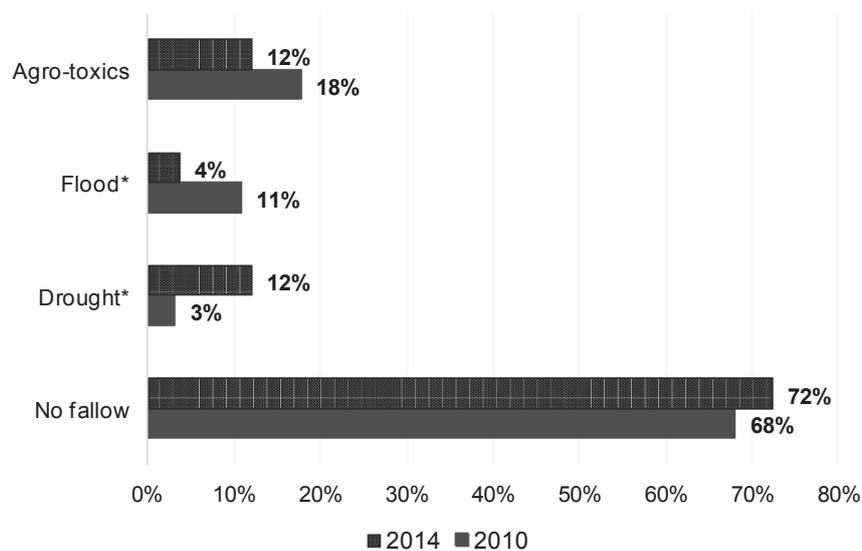
⁴⁴⁹ interviews with President and Secretary of ADINC farmers association, and large outgrower from Fray zone, in July and December 2013, respectively

⁴⁵⁰ Interviews with Ex-President of Petén Cattle Breeders Association (October 2011), Head of the Livestock Directorate of Petén's Vice-Ministry of Agriculture (October 2011), large cattle rancher from Fray (October 2013) and President of the Raxruha Cattle Breeders Association, October 2013.

⁴⁵¹ “The benefits of leaving land fallow for extended periods include rebalancing soil nutrients, reestablishing soil biota, breaking crop pest and disease cycles, and providing a haven for wildlife” (Hamer 2008).

fallow is the main reason by a large margin, followed by the use of “agro-toxics” (i.e. agro-chemical inputs). Differences are not statistically significant between 2010 and 2014 when it comes to these two reasons. Varied relevance of floods and droughts in 2010 and 2014, however, are statistically significant. There are two plausible explanations for this which are relevant to our discussion here. One is that many petty land owners did away with their land prone to flooding by 2014 (i.e. reported within “unproductive” land sales in land relations chapter). The other reason, which will be further discussed shortly, has to do with irrigation management systems in cane and palm plantations—either by draining land or changing the course of waterways. Similarly, the relevance of drought for lower land yields increases between 2010 and 2014. A plausible reason for this will be explored within this discussion.

Figure 45 Reasons for decreasing land yields by subordinate class cultivators. 2010 and 2014 (%)



* Statistically significant differences over time at the 5% level for “floods” and “droughts” (McNemar test $p=,003$ and $,025$ respectively)

Source: Author calculations from 2010&2014 panel household survey

I found that land yields decline for those concentrating their farm intensification strategy exclusively on heightened use of agro-chemical inputs, which was advanced in the chapter on knowledge and technology. This is further supported by outcomes of my 2009 soil analysis. My findings rest on the fact that soil's productivity is 'very closely linked to the rates at which nutrients are able to be recycled' (Gliessman 1997). Thus, 'if too much of a nutrient is lost or removed from a particular system, it can become limiting for further growth and development' (ibid.). Soil samples from subordinate class maize farms subject to heavy agro-chemical use in a Polochic Valley village show average volumes of nitrogen at 22,5kg/hectare before planting. As argued previously, a large volume of agro-chemical inputs is lost through leaching and volatilization in exposed soil, and "soil scale" relations often result in ineffective nutrient management. Conversely, soil samples from a maize farm in a village in Ixcán zone that relies exclusively on organic fertilizer and soil conservation practices show soil nitrogen volumes of 100 kg/hectare. Average maize yields were six times higher in this farm than those where agro-chemicals are heavily used. Even so, the "low external-input agriculture (LEIA)/agro-ecological path" to farming intensification is highly labor intensive. Subordinate class cultivators who claim their land yields to be growing devote significantly more labor than others to farming. In 2014, the median work-days per hectare/year in maize farming for these cultivators is 392, compared to 113 for those who report decreasing land yields, and 163 for those who claim no change in land yields.⁴⁵²

Regarding the ecological relations of access to water nutrients and services, those shaping physical access to sufficient volumes of rainfall and freshwater for productive and reproductive purposes stand out. Land use change to cane and palm plantations is expected to have an impact on the hydrological cycle, and thus on rainfall patterns (Inman-Bamber and Smith 2005). Whether and to what extent different land use

⁴⁵² 2014 Differences between perspectives on land yields and number of work-days per hectare/year are statistically significant at the 5% level (ANOVA tests $p=,034$).

changes to cane and palm constrain evapotranspiration processes,⁴⁵³ where, and when are subject to much debate. A proper review of this debate goes beyond the scope in this research.⁴⁵⁴ What I offer here, however, is the reoccurring themes in interviews and meetings in Fray, Sayaxché and Polochic zones of “hotter weather”, “drought” and “more extreme rainfall patterns” following land use changes to cane and palm plantations. Other usual observations noted by research subjects across the northern lowlands is the “drying” and “disappearance” (i.e. diversion) of wells, ponds, streams and rivers following the establishment of a cane or palm plantation.⁴⁵⁵ This has obvious implications on the abilities of all other fragmented agrarian classes to access to water for productive purposes (i.e. irrigation, herd watering and fishing). But drought associated with land clearing for plantations, as well as appropriation and pollution of freshwater sources by flex agribusinesses adversely affects the abilities of subordinate class villagers to access to freshwater for reproductive purposes. Figure 46 shows that 6 out of 10 subordinate class HHs in 2014 depend on wells, rivers and rainfall to access to freshwater.⁴⁵⁶

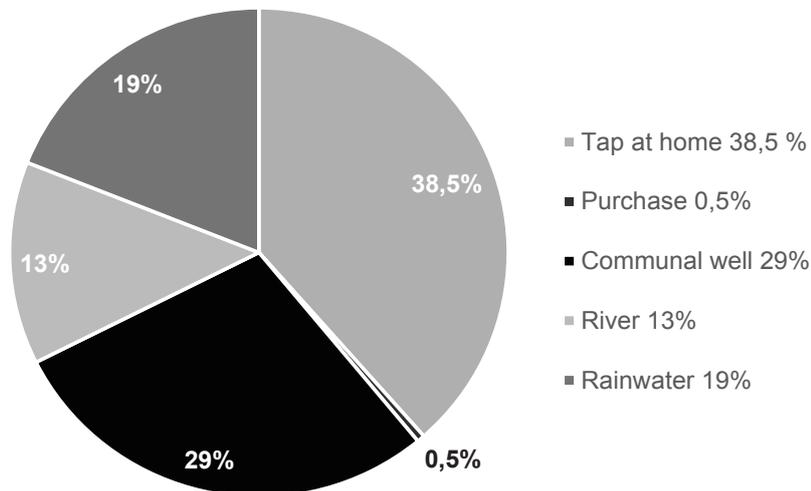
⁴⁵³ That is the ‘combination of two separate processes whereby water is lost on the one hand from the soil surface by evaporation and on the other hand from the crop by transpiration’ (Allen et al. 1998, 2).

⁴⁵⁴ For informed reviews see Inman-Bamber and Smith (2005) on cane, and Comte et al. (2012) on palm.

⁴⁵⁵ Similar grassroots observations are documented by Herrera and Silva Gavarrete (2014) in Izabal department and Paredes (2014) in the south coast region.

⁴⁵⁶ Questions on water sources and access were included only in the 2014 HH survey panel

Figure 46 Household freshwater sources. 2014



Source: Author calculations from 2014 panel household survey.

After the arrival of flex cane and palm companies, 6 out of 10 head-of-HH-women in 2014 argue that their physical access to clean water worsened, and 7 out of 10 claim to have access to lower quantities of clean water. These statements also mirror formerly addressed burdens of constrained access to environmental resources and services following land use change to cane and palm.

9.3.2. Ecological relations of pollutants and waste transfer

Relations of environmental “bads” transfer across and between fragmented agrarian classes are approached here as cost-shifting ecological distribution relations, following Martínez-Alier and O’Connor (1999). Again, cost-shifting relations are discussed separately for pollutants and waste generated in the process of land use change to cane and palm, from those caused by cane and palm farming and processing into multiple commodities

The climate disruption effects of constrained (agro)ecosystem capacities for carbon sequestration following land use change to cane and palm, and larger CO₂ emissions due to heightened use of synthetic fertilizers,

unfold on a relatively long temporal scale. In general, this tends to make higher net production of CO₂ less of a burden in the short-term than it is with other pollutants and waste transferred by other means. Still, as stated, it is common for villagers to associate higher temperatures and more extreme rainfall patterns with land use changes into cane and palm plantations. Whether, and the extent to which this is the case is less relevant here than the fact that many rural dwellers across fragmented class divides do actually attribute climate disruptions to land use change into cane and palm. Conversely, the effects of waste and pollutants generated during cane and palm farming and processing damage human and environmental health as soon as operations hit the ground. Against the previously described atmospheric backdrop, soil and freshwater bodies serve as the main stage upon which environmental cost-shifting relations play out in these cases.

On the one side, there are four environmental cost-shifting relations associated with four separate mechanisms of pollutants and waste dumping into the soil: First, aerial spraying of agro-chemicals over cane plantations in the Polochic Valley adversely affects people, crops, livestock and forests in the area.⁴⁵⁷ Second, the use of glyphosate-based herbicide is already negatively impacting the health of nearby rural dwellers, and this is expected to worsen.⁴⁵⁸ Third, non-agro-synthetic farming practices by flex agribusinesses, like biological pest control and the use of superfluous crop biomass and mill residues for soil fertilization, still entail the transfer of environmental burdens. Snakes released in plantations to deal with rodents reproduce widely. While not poisonous, they still bother plantation workers, scare livestock in nearby

⁴⁵⁷ Interviews with Community Development Council of village from Polochic valley zone, (October 2007), Panzós mayor (Polochic zones, March 2008), Head Nurse of Panzós government clinic (June 2009) and head of Polochic branch of “Defensores de la Naturaleza” (IUCN Guatemala, June 2009).

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with head Physician of the Teleman government clinic (Polochic valley zone, June 2009). Samsel and Seneff identify a series of pathologies to which glyphosate ‘could plausibly contribute, through its known biosemiotic effects, include[ing] inflammatory bowel disease, obesity, depression, ADHD, autism, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, ALS, multiple sclerosis, cancer, cachexia, infertility, and developmental malformations’ (Samsel and Seneff 2013, 1444-5)

ranches and communities and are considered a threat to babies and small kids (through bites and asphyxia).⁴⁵⁹ Additionally, piles of decomposing cane bagasse, palm fronds, empty palm fruit bunches and kernel shells attract flies. While flies are an irritation for all in the area, cattle ranchers have been particularly vocal about the matter. A rancher with a large herd from Fray zone claims ‘cattle is stressed by the plague of flies brought by palm fruit bunches left to rot in plantations, and because of this it is not fattening! I’m spending lots of money to spray my cattle...I have never seen anything like this in my 52 years in the business!’⁴⁶⁰ And fourth, the environmental divestment costs of rehabilitating soil nutrients after years of intensive cane and palm agro-industrial production are very high. Rentier landlords, outgrowers and (palm) contract-farmers alike bear the burden of these costs. In the case of palm plantations, divestment costs include the uprooting of grown palms. Even when injected with pesticide to kill them from the inside, palms need to be bulldozed out of the ground. This is no easy task—let alone a cheap one—considering that palm roots grow deep in the soil and intertwine with each other in a compact web.⁴⁶¹ As the well-established cattle rancher from Fray zone who complained about the issue of flies argues in this regard, ‘many of my peers envisage revenues from land leases to palm companies as their retirement fund, but they do not realize they will have to expend large sums to recover the soil fertility after the palms sucked all its nutrients’.⁴⁶²

On the other side, outcomes of my water analysis show low levels of water oxygen and oxidation-reduction potential, and high levels of water’s PH acidity and temperature in freshwater bodies flowing through cane and palm plantations and wastewater from palm oil mills. This “grey water” filters into underground aquifers and is released into rivers and streams, unleashing two interrelated environmental cost-

⁴⁵⁹ Interviews with Head Nurse of Panzós government clinic (June 2009), and four board members of Adelina Caal Maquin women’s association in Fray (October 2009).

⁴⁶⁰ Interview, October 2013

⁴⁶¹ (Broschat 1998, Corley and Tinker 2003)

⁴⁶² Interview, October 2013

shifting relations. The first one concerns the adverse implications on aquatic life and biodiversity, and hence on their use for (re)productive purposes. Informants from all research zones report dead fishes and new predatory species after cane and palm mills came into operation. Researchers from the Guatemalan National University (USAC) in Izabal department concluded similar findings (Herrera and Silva Gavarrete 2014, 108) to those of my own water quality assessment in the Northern Transversal Strip and South Petén. Indeed, hydrogen sulfide in palm oil mill effluent leading to water's low oxidation-reduction potential is lethal for fish and water invertebrates (Smith Jr. et al. 1976). Many interviewees feel uneasy using water and fishing in these areas, anticipating what the UN brands an "ecocide" (OHCHR 2015b).⁴⁶³

The second involves the negative implications of polluted water on human health. 63% of head of HH women report in the 2014 panel of HH survey that water quality worsened after the arrival of flex cane and palm companies. Herrera and Silva Gavarrete found that 2.100 villagers from Izabal department living 'enclosed by banana and palm plantations do not have access to clean drinking water [...] partly due to agro-chemicals infiltrating underground wells' (2014, 110). And villagers from Sayaxché zone complain that water in wells and streams became foul smelling after palm oil mills settled in the area.⁴⁶⁴ Finally, Herrera and Silva Gavarrete also report a higher incidence of gastrointestinal pathologies, hair loss, skin rashes and eye disorders for Izabal department villagers after land use changed to palm and banana plantations (2014, 13).

⁴⁶³ In June 2015, millions of fishes and other aquatic and amphibious animals floated dead through 150 kilometers of La Pasion River flowing through Guatemala and Mexico. They suffocated due to "malathion", a chemical component used in palm oil mill effluent oxidation lagoons which spilled over into plantation drainages and the river due to intense rains (CMI 2015, Escalón 2015).

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with representatives from different Sayaxché villages, May 2010. According to the World Health Organization's assessment, hydrogen sulphide has 'a characteristic odour of rotten eggs [with] reported health effects in humans following exposure to hydrogen sulfide include death and respiratory, ocular, neurological, cardiovascular, metabolic, and reproductive effects' (Chou 2003, 4, 5)

9.3.3. *“Acclimatization” of flex cane and palm commodity production*

In the 2006-2014 period, flex cane and palm complexes publicly voice that adapting to and fighting climate change should be a top governance priority in Guatemala, Latin America and elsewhere, and that their businesses are fit and ready to face these challenges.⁴⁶⁵ These statements translate in the labor, land and knowledge fixes discussed earlier, as well as in an ecological fix to “acclimatize” the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production. Possible selfless motivations to save the planet notwithstanding, this ecological fix is driven by supply and demand. On the one hand, heightened consumers’ preference for ethical and sustainable brands flow upstream the commodity chain to restructure the cane and palm production and transformation processes. On the other hand, facing land availability constraints, extreme weather events, social unrest and heightened global competition, flex agribusinesses recognize that they need to take the reproduction of their natural (and personal) conditions of production seriously. They realize that they must do so in ways that cut production costs and increase resilience to climate variability and extreme weather events, if they want to stay and be successful in business. The social relations behind this ecological fix vary between flex cane and palm complexes, and across companies. But they all share two fundamental aspects: the YASTEXES play a leading role, and the business cartels through which the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes are organized and represented amplify and facilitate the “acclimatization” of their social metabolism.

As expanded upon in the knowledge and technology relations chapter, since 1992 the “Guatemalan Sugarcane Research and Training Center” (CENGICANÑA) has been ‘the organization of the Sugar Industry responsible for generating, adapting and transferring technology for profitable and sustainable development’

⁴⁶⁵ President of Guatemala’s Palm Growers Guild GREPALMA in I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, October 2013, and Guatemalan President of the International Sugar Organization (interview by Bollman 2014).

(CENGICAÑA. 2017b). CENGICAÑA has played a leading role in research and diffusion of ways to use superfluous cane biomass and mill and distillery by-products and residues to increase land yields while at the same time reducing production costs (e.g. through fertilization and ferti-irrigation). Leading up to the 2006-2014 super-cycle, four flex cane companies implemented cane dry wash systems with support from CENGICAÑA. Cane dry washing does ‘not use water and *avoids pollution* of water bodies’ (ASAZGUA 2007, 29 emphasis added). CENGICAÑA has also promoted reforestation with fast-growing trees around watersheds and in landslide-prone hill slopes that can potentially affect cane fields. Besides mitigating the effects of climate change, these tree plantations (commonly of “Gmelina arborea”) are argued to serve as biological corridors, cutting through cane plantations while providing cane mills with renewable biomass energy sources.⁴⁶⁶

Adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects on the flex cane complex is a task that ASAZGUA’s “Private Institute for Climate Change Research (ICC)” takes to heart from 2010 on. According to the Executive Director of the International Sugar Organization, ‘Guatemala is the only country in the world with an institution aimed at investigating climate change and its effects on cane production’^{467, 468}. In order to strengthen resilience of the flex cane complex to weather and other climate change-related environmental disruptions, the ICC works on a comprehensive set of areas including ‘1) hydro-meteorological information, 2) flood research and management, 3) greenhouse gases, 4) environmental management, 5) protection and restoration of forests and soil, 6) integrated water management, 7) adaptation practices, and 8) capacity building’ (ICC. 2016). CENGICAÑA and ICC are built on two key institutional pillars on which ASAZGUA leans to acclimatize the social metabolism of flex cane commodity production. Thus far, the

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008.

⁴⁶⁷ Note he does not state the inverse relation, namely the effects of cane production *on* climate change.

⁴⁶⁸ Interview by Bollman, 2014

Guatemalan flex cane complex has not relied much on international sustainability certification bodies and standards. By the end of 2014, only two flex cane companies, Pantaleon Sugar Holdings and Magdalena, are members of the BONSUCRO Production Standard⁴⁶⁹, that is, ‘the first global sugarcane standard’ (BONSUCRO. 2016).

ASAZGUA’s ICC also collaborates with the Guatemalan Palm Growers Guild on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies (GREPALMA. 2017c). But in pursuing the acclimatization of flex palm commodity production, GREPALMA primarily places its bets on international certification bodies. By 2014, four major flex palm companies have obtained individual certification through the Rainforest Alliance, a large international conservation NGO (i.e. “The Rainforest Seal”) (Rainforest Alliance. 2017). Nonetheless, GREPALMA’s main target is getting the whole Guatemalan palm complex certified under the world leading standard, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). To do so, GREPALMA, the Guatemalan Business Council for Sustainable Development (*CentraRSE*), and large international conservation NGOs and RSPO-members, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Proforest, come together in 2014 under the “Guatemalan Sustainable Palm Oil Value Chain Project”.⁴⁶⁹ The project runs for 3 years and is funded by Solidaridad, an international development NGO and RSPO-member too (Solidaridad. 2014). It aims to ‘build capacity to implement the international RSPO Principles and Criteria in Guatemala [...] providing a series of workshops and training courses, supporting companies to work towards achieving RSPO certification, and facilitating a RSPO national interpretation process’ (Proforest. 2014).

Acclimatization of the social metabolism of flex cane and palm commodity production involves adoption of new “climate-smart” farming and processing practices (e.g. “high conservation value areas” in palm plantations or cane dry wash systems), and recasting existing practices in those terms (e.g. economically efficient use of superfluous

⁴⁶⁹ In workshop on the Guatemalan flex palm complex RSPO certification process, February 2014.

materials as renewable sources of energy and nutrients). Those companies which gradually (and unevenly) adopt “climate-smart” production practices have the expected positive outcomes in terms of the reduction of GHG emissions, and enhanced resilience to weather and other environmental disruptions resulting from global warming. As GREPALMA puts it, they ‘have reduced vulnerability to natural disasters and avoided soil erosion due to floods’ (April 2012).

However, “climate-smart” production practices also bring about unexpected negative outcomes in ecological distribution relations. As with conservation enclosures more generally, access to environmental resources and services of forests and wetlands enclosed within palm plantations is denied, with those landscapes categorized as “high value conservation areas” following RSPO certification requirements. I found that “climate-smart” production practices such as fertilization with superfluous crop biomass, ferti-irrigation with vinasses and POME, biological pest control, and energy conversion of POME through anaerobic decomposition lagoons do involve new environmental cost-shifting relations.

Flex cane and palm companies reap important material and political benefits from these configurations of “climate-smart” production practices, regardless of what may be positive or negative outcomes in terms of ecological distribution relations. On the one hand, climate-purposed practices push down production costs and contribute to reproduce the most immediate natural conditions of production, while increasing productivity and opening up opportunities for commodity flexing and green finance (i.e. through the carbon offset mechanisms described in the financial relations chapter). On the other hand, the agro-extractivists have much to gain in political terms from the acclimatization of their businesses’ social metabolism—in ways that do not compromise their advantageous position related to environmental goods and bads distribution.

Chapter 10 The agro-extractive capitalist project

10.1. Introduction

The five previous chapters have discussed labor, land, financial, knowledge and technology and ecological relations amid rising flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. My aim here, then, is to examine the ways in which all of these particular productive relations interact with one another to shape and express the socio-economic dimension of the dominant mode/form of production in agriculture in 2006-2014, as well as whether, how and to what extent this is different from previous times. In a nutshell, I argue that despite—and as a result of—key historical traits, productive relations in Guatemalan agriculture in the 2006-2014 period are distinctive. I term this particular form of organizing labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature into flex cane and palm commodity production as the *agro-extractive capitalist project*. This is certainly not to say that instances of agro-extractive capitalist relations appear for the first time in 2006-2014, or that this is a phenomenon particular to Guatemala. On the one hand, I have detailed how agro-extractive relations of capitalist nature in Guatemala date back to flex cane commodity production from the 1970s onward, with a dramatic upswing taking place from the 1990s forward. But those relations were shaped by the particular conjuncture of neoliberal globalization, and were not hegemonic in the Guatemalan countryside. On the other hand, it is safe to say that agro-extractive capitalist relations are also at stake elsewhere in Latin America and beyond during the convergent crises conjuncture, regardless of whether they are labeled as such or not.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ Though in different terms, and through different methodologies, Gudynas, Acosta and Svampa (2010, 2013, 2013 respectively) have argued about extractivism in agriculture; Veltmeyer and Petras about ‘extractive imperialism’ (2014), and especially McKay about ‘agrarian extractivism’ (2017) in Bolivia. Elsewhere than in Latin America, see papers delivered at the 4th and 5th International Conferences of the BRICS and Agrarian Studies Initiative (BICAS) in 2016 and 2017 (<https://www.iss.nl/en/research/networks/brics-initiatives-critical-agrarian-studies-bicas>)

Notwithstanding, my concern here is with the analysis of dominant productive relations in the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes in the early 21st century. This is done in two steps. First, I explore the inherited traits and distinctive features in the policy structure and agro-extractive capitalist productive relations in 2006-2014 versus previous dominant modes/forms of production since the late 19th century. Second, I discuss the nature and character of these relations in 2006-2014, which in my case means delving into the ‘capitalisticness’⁴⁷¹ and “extractiveness” of agro-extractive capitalist relations.

Regarding the first step and the historical traits in the agro-extractive capitalist project from former periods, I argue that the active involvement of the state with subordinate agrarian classes as productive agents that characterized the Cold War period in Guatemala finds little resonance today. Some progressive state actors from 2006-2014 fail, or are only partially successful, in their efforts to implement social-democratic reforms modeled after those of the Revolutionary Spring. Constrained in their transformational potential, social-democratic reforms end up acting as public safety nets, and this mirrors the subsidiary role of the state during the bullets and beans agro-capitalism of the 1955-1985 period. Even if for different reasons, state subsidiarity in 2006-2014 is aimed at legitimating its skewed power and wealth distribution priorities, just as it was in the decades of “bullets and beans”.

Therefore, it is in agro-extractive mercantilist and purge agro-capitalist policy structures and agricultural relations of production that the agro-extractive capitalist project finds more resonance. Specifically, agro-extractive capitalist productive relations resemble those behind agro-extractive mercantilism from 1871-1943 in five ways. First, a similarity arises in the persistence of immobile labor and functional dualism. Second, there is a common class fraction of landed proprietors producing nothing and living off ground-rent (i.e. rentier landlords) in

⁴⁷¹ To use Erik Olin Wright’s (2010) neologism referring to the degree to which some capitalist social formations are more or less capitalist than others.

the two periods. Land property remains a means of prestige and wealth for some dominant class subjects, and continues to be treated as a natural and absolute right, while petty land owners' dispossession is still underpinned by force. Third, is the key role foreign finance and financiers play in the provision of mortgage and investments loans to flex agribusinesses, amid a limited domestic credit supply that is more costly to access. Fourth is the specialized knowledges and costly technologies cane and palm commodity production relies on,. And fifth, many environmental goods continue to be appropriated at zero cost for flex cane and palm commodity production purposes.

I argue that productive relations in agriculture during purge agro-capitalism inform those prevailing during the agro-extractive capitalist project in six ways. First is the generalization of capitalist labor relations and a flexible labor regime shouldered by unpaid family labor assisting adult male wage-earners in plantation work. Additionally, arrangements introduced in 1986-2005 are found within the flex cane and palm complexes of 2006-2014. In the earlier period, cane companies instituted outgrowing farming, and non-traditional agro-exports generated contract farming. Second, land relations continue to hinge on land good governance policy dogma prescriptions. Third, as part of oligarchic family business groups that also include banks, flex cane and palm companies enjoy preferential access to money-capital from domestic financiers. Fourth, knowledges and technologies "enclosed" through intellectual property rights keep acting as major indicators of business competitiveness and entry barriers into the flex cane and palm complexes. Fifth, pollutants and waste from cane and palm commodity production are "socialized" at zero cost. Sixth and finally, flex cane and palm companies follow and expand the transnationalization trend that poultry and pork companies, together with a few flex cane companies, inaugurated in the late 1990s. In light of these traits, the most fundamental continuity of purge agro-capitalism in 2006-2014 is the "purge of the inefficient", instigating the increase of the rural surplus population to unprecedented levels.

The historical distinctiveness of the agro-extractive capitalist project in 2006-2014 shapes and expresses a broader context in which two extra-economic factors stand out. On the one side, the main accommodative strategy of the growing masses of purged “inefficient” producers—that is, fleeing—is increasingly constrained. On the other side, the rise of the YASTEXES as the executive avant-garde of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie brings important changes to the ways flex cane and palm companies do business, and to the policy structure behind the agro-extractive capitalist project. As a vector and an expression of these extra-economic factors, the historical distinctiveness of the productive relations behind the agro-extractive capitalist project stems from the following five dynamics.

First, there are changes concerning whose, how and to what extent labor is exploited. Second, there are key differences on main land relations trajectories. Third, flex agribusinesses’ knowledge and technology fix heightens land and labor productivity, and enhances “multiple-ness” and “flexible-ness” in cane and palm commodity production, while increasing the resilience of monocrop plantations to climate and environmental disruptions. Conversely, swidden cultivators are trapped in a knowledge rift between traditional and familiar extensive farming practices, and recent and stranger intensive ones. Fourth, main forms of appropriating and using different portions of the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production contribute to, and take from, the “financialization 3.0 wave” of the Guatemalan economy. Fifth, de-commoditization among subordinate agrarian classes contributes to accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes.

My second step in the analysis of dominant productive relations in the Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes during 2006-2014 involves discussing why, how and to what extent the agro-extractive capitalist project is simultaneously capitalist and extractivist. In short, I argue that agro-extractive capitalist project productive relations are capitalist in nature, extractivist in character, and highly contentious. Regarding the first claim, I argue that, debt-peonage remnants apart, value in flex cane and palm commodity production is generated through the exploitation of mostly free labor in a capital intensive productive process. But in the

largely job-scarce Guatemalan context of the early 21st century, the expansion of cane and palm plantations which results in job losses rather than gains, and heightened labor productivity in cane and palm plantations and processing plants, are behind the burgeoning of rural surplus population. Furthermore, during neoliberal globalization between 1986 and 2005 in Guatemala, many rural dwellers were pushed into the *latent* section of surplus population. The agro-extractive capitalist project from 2005 onward, however, downgrades many subordinate class villagers from the latent to the *stagnant* section of surplus population ‘with extremely irregular employment [and] characterised by maximum of working-time, and minimum of wages’ (Marx 1887 [1867], 444). Hence, the agro-extractive capitalist project is fundamentally capitalist in that it not only enlarges the “reserve army of labor”, but also pushes surplus population to the limits of subsistence.

Regarding the second claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project is extractive in character for three main reasons. First, flex cane and palm commodity production is underpinned by the extraction and appropriation of increasingly diverse commodity value portions and state revenues. As a result, flex agribusinesses can either limit or do away with external claims over the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production, such as ground-rent from landlords or interests from financiers, and reap super-profits in return. In addition, appropriated cane and palm commodity value portions and state revenues are increasingly financialized, and thus realized in money form to fund accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes. Second, flex cane and palm commodity production involves the appropriation of productive and reproductive labor of the plantation workers’ families for free, as well as the stockpiling of natural goods and disposal of waste and pollutants at zero cost. Third, hyper-intensive production of flex cane and palm commodities damages workers’ health and vitality, and exhausts external nature’s energy and materials, in ways that compromise the very production of cane and palm commodities from the cost side. Moreover, it weakens ‘the viability of the social and “natural” environment as a means of life’ (O’Connor 1988, 34).

Finally, regarding the third claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project shapes and expresses a new politics of racialized class domination which I term authoritarian corporate populism, or authoritarian corporatism in short. To pave the way for a comprehensive examination of the politics of agro-environmental change in the early 21st century, three main competing political standpoints among fragmented (agrarian) classes faced with the agro-extractive capitalist project are introduced. These are the “supportive”, “challenging” and “accommodative” stances.

10.2. Agro-extractive capitalist productive relations in historical perspective

I am concerned here with change and continuity in the ways labor-power, land, money-capital, knowledge and technology and external nature are mobilized into agro-commodity production in the 2006-2014 period—especially by the agro-extractivist bourgeois. To make these connections, I focus on exploring inherited traits and distinctive features in the policy structure and productive relations in Guatemalan agriculture from 2006-2014.⁴⁷²

10.2.1. Historical traits

The politics behind the agro-extractive capitalist project are rife with reminiscences of the Revolutionary Spring, as well as the military dictatorships that ensued and bred counter-insurgent repression and the genocide of rural Mayans. But the active involvement of the state with subordinate agrarian classes as productive agents that characterized the Cold War period in Guatemala—albeit for opposite reasons and with different outcomes during the two periods into which I divided it—finds little resonance in the agro-extractive capitalist project. Some progressive state actors in 2006-2014 fail, or are only partially successful, in their efforts to implement social democratic reforms in the ways that Arévalo and Árbenz did in 1944-1954. I return to these issues in Part III.

⁴⁷² I leave the comparison of the world-historic conjuncture of convergent crises with those from preceding times to world-system scholars. See, inter alia and especially, Friedmann (2016) and Moore (2016).

For the purposes of the current discussion, it suffices to say that these state actors are the ones behind the series of farming, rural development and land policies, which from 2009 on, and especially after 2012, target subordinate agrarian classes as productive subjects. Whereas the “hope” and “two door policy” groups of state officials succeed in passing these policies, frontal opposition from oligarchic-bourgeois’ CACIF and allies within the state complicates policy implementation. Constrained in their transformational potential, social-democratic reforms end up functioning as public safety nets mirroring the subsidiary role of the state during the Bullets and Beans Agro-capitalism from 1955-1985. Just as it was in that earlier time, state subsidiarity in 2006-2014 is aimed at legitimizing skewed power and wealth distribution. During Bullets and Beans Agro-capitalism, such state efforts were basically aimed to validate counter-insurgent repression, which also served the interests of the oligarchy. Under the agro-extractive capitalist project, nonetheless, state legitimation efforts primarily align behind the accumulation efforts of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie—a process that involves countering critique and challengers by all means, including through the state’s repressive apparatus.

Therefore, it is with agro-extractive mercantilist and purge agro-capitalist policy structures and agrarian relations of production that the agro-extractive capitalist project most resonates. Specifically, agro-extractive capitalist project productive relations resemble those behind agro-extractive mercantilism from 1871-1943 in five prominent ways. First, whereas most hacienda tenants “wither away” with conversion of mercantilist landlords’ latifundia into intensively-farmed cane and palm plantations, flex agribusinesses continue to rely on debt-peonage to some extent. Additionally, most plantation workers remain temporarily employed and farm to subsidize their wage income (i.e. functional dualist semi-proletarianization). Second, there is also a group of landed proprietors producing nothing and living off ground-rent (i.e. rentier landlords), only that now ground-rent is realized in money form through land leases to flex cane and palm companies. Land remains a means of status and wealth for the remnants of the parochial landed upper classes

and the elders of the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie. Property remains a natural right *de jure* and *de facto*, subject only to very loose external limits (i.e. affecting other's private property). And force keeps underpinning petty land owners' dispossession. Third, transnational finance and financiers also play a key role in the provision of mortgage and investment loans to flex agribusinesses amid a limited domestic credit supply that is more costly to access. Fourth, as with coffee growing and processing, flex cane and palm commodity production relies on specialized knowledges and expensive technologies protected through intellectual property rights. And fifth, flex agribusinesses appropriate and use environmental resources and services, and dispose of waste and pollutants, at zero cost.

The agro-extractive capitalist project also shows key historical traits inherited from purge agro-capitalism during 1986-2005. Neoliberal governance and trickle-down policy dogmas continue to serve as general ideological compasses for state actors in the realms of governance and economic development. Similarly, the flex-labor, land good governance, financialization and knowledge enclosure policy dogmas keep on informing labor, land, financial and knowledge and technology policies and productive relations. Furthermore, the fact that the green economy policy dogma is not anymore the hegemonic paradigm behind the organization of external nature into (agro)commodity production does not mean that green enclosures and conservation policies are rolled back. They linger into the 2006-2014 period, and are in fact enforced more strongly than before by state authority.

Shaping and expressing these historical traits in the policy structure, productive relations in agriculture from the purge agro-capitalism era inform those prevailing throughout the agro-extractive capitalist project in six fundamental ways. First, is the generalization of capitalist labor relations, and a flexible labor regime on the shoulders of unpaid family labor assisting male adult wage-earners in plantation work. Exceptional features of the flexible plantation labor regime inaugurated by flex cane companies in the 1990s become common currency, namely the flexible

organization of labor in time and space, and piecemeal wage systems. Additionally, the large cane and palm outgrowers and small palm contract-farmers within the flex cane and palm complexes of 2006-2014 are reminiscent of the external suppliers of cane, non-traditional export crops, pigs and chickens integral to nascent or consolidating agro-industries from 1986-2005. Second, land relations continue to be underpinned by land good governance policy dogma prescriptions, especially the formalization of individual land property rights and a reliance on the market as the most important mechanism for accessing land on freehold or leasehold terms. Third, the agro-extractivists enjoy preferential access to money-capital from domestic financiers, just as the dumping agro-industrial bourgeois did for their poultry and pork agro-industries. This is especially apparent when flex agribusinesses form part of oligarchic family business groups that also include banks. Fourth, knowledges and technologies “enclosed” through intellectual property rights continue to function as major indicators of business competitiveness and entry barriers into the flex crop complexes. Fifth, as was the case with pig and chicken industrial feedlots and earlier cane companies, pollutants and waste from flex cane and palm mills and plantations are dumped or released into the atmosphere, the soil and freshwater bodies at zero cost. Sixth and finally, flex cane and palm companies follow and expand the transnationalization trend ascribed to by poultry and pork companies, as well as fledging cane companies, in the late 1990s.

However, the most fundamental continuity of purge agro-capitalism reinforced under agro-extractive capitalism, is the “purge of the inefficient”—causing the increase of rural surplus population to hit unprecedented levels in 2006-2014.

10.2.2. Historical distinctiveness

The productive relations behind the agro-extractive capitalist project differ from those under different forms and modes of agricultural production in the history of Guatemala since its liberal revolution of

1871. The historical distinctiveness of the agro-extractive capitalist project from 2006-2014 shapes and expresses a broader context. In it, two extra-economic factors become a focus of interest in resource extractivism during convergent world crises. On the one side, fleeing the countryside as the main accommodative strategy of the growing masses of purged “inefficient” producers is increasingly curtailed. The agrarian frontier is legally closed as of 1990, and trespassers into the Mayan Biosphere Reserve are criminalized more and more—not only as “eco-terrorists” but also as “narco-collaborators”. Guatemala City keeps on “accommodating” desperate newcomers in its sprouting network of violence-ridden and job-poor slums. The national security imperative following the attacks of September 11 2001 in the US, and the ensuing economic recession that began in 2008 there, is expressed through the tightening of border policing.⁴⁷³ Those policies result in the yearly expulsion of tens of thousands of unauthorized (Guatemalan) migrants living in the US (Johnson and Woodhouse 2018, 6). On the other side, a generational change in dominant and subordinate classes reshapes productive relations in the flex cane and palm complexes and the politics behind them. The rise of the YASTEXES⁴⁷⁴ as the executive avant-garde of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie brings about important changes in the ways that flex cane and palm companies do business, resonating in the policy structure integral to the agro-extractive capitalist project. Whereas neoliberal governance and trickle-down policy dogmas continue to inform the policy structure, the former finds renewed applicability in the World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative”, and the latter folds its original neo-classical laissez-faire into neo-institutional subsidiarity.

Thus, the historical distinctiveness of the productive relations behind the agro-extractive capitalist project is rooted in five dynamics. First,

⁴⁷³ Beyond complicating entry, border militarization has dramatically heightened migrant vulnerability by helping to consolidate human smuggling with drug trafficking and cartels (Slack and Whiteford 2011); spurred collusion between cartels and Mexican state actors (Evans 2014); and enabled migrant kidnapping, disappearances, extortion, assaults, and sexual violence’ (Johnson and Woodhouse 2018, 5)

⁴⁷⁴ Young although smartly-trained executives.

there are changes concerning whose labor is exploited, how and to what extent. Since mechanization of cane and palm farming tends to be costly, unfeasible, or both, flex agribusinesses depend on the extension and intensification of the working day to hike labor productivity. At the same time, the increase in the absolute and relative rates of exploitation of plantation labor relies on flex and piecemeal work, and this is a key historical trait of purge agro-capitalism in 1986-2005, as I have just argued. However, this labor regime becomes the rule rather than the exception for the cane and palm plantations of 2006-2014. This results in a distinctive spin on labor relations during this period, where wages increase in general and labor conditions improve for some. But this fix in the plantation labor regime is shouldered by workers, who endure harder and longer working days, as well as more casual and shorter employment periods throughout the year. Furthermore, strenuous plantation work, together with the transfer of waste and pollutants generated in cane and palm commodity production, create new and worsen former health and safety issues in the workplace and beyond.

Additionally, the plantation labor regime fix necessitates a feminization of family farming, and worsening terms for the family members who assist family male adult wage-earners in plantation labor for free. The former is a relatively new phenomenon for most (Q'eqchi') lowlander families, and results in women having to extend already overloaded workdays. The latter is not a strange dynamic, but under generalized piecemeal wage systems in cane and palm plantations, unpaid family labor becomes essential rather than helpful for many men to be able to achieve the equivalent of legal minimum wages. These dynamics, together with: i) the need to keep subsidizing wage-labor with farming to make ends meet (i.e. functional dualist semi-proletarianization); ii) pressure for farming intensification amid growing challenges for swidden cultivation, and; iii) appropriation (and depletion) of environmental goods by flex agribusinesses in exchange for pollutants and waste, all result in a profusion of self-exploitation in family labor.

Second, whereas coffee planters lacked more labor than they did land, agro-extractivists enjoy a superabundance of cheap labor and suffer from a limited and contentious supply of land. This, and the fact that individualization, concentration and reconcentration of landed property in 2006-2014 are stronger than ever, make agro-extractive capitalist land relations distinctive in six ways:

- i) The agro-extractive capitalist project puts an end to centuries of “latifundio” rule in the countryside, or to the large tracts of land hoarded through extra-economic means and kept idle or underproductive by the landlord class. What could not be achieved through fiat or warfare between 1871 and throughout the 20th century has become possible through market compulsion following the 2000-2004 coffee crisis and the rise of flex cane and palm complexes from 2005 onward. But the withering away of mercantilist landlords is not the same as land democratization. Quite the opposite. Former landlord latifundia are reconcentrated in even larger, and now intensively farmed, cane and palm plantations in the hands of a bunch of agro-extractivist bourgeois;
- ii) The withering away of mercantilist landlords comes together with the burgeoning of the rentier fraction of the landlord class. Land leases to flex cane and palm companies allow rentier landlords to realize their land’s ground-rent in money form;
- iii) As part of the broader tendency to gradually rely on other than strictly property-based forms of controlling cane and palm commodity chains, some agro-extractivist bourgeois show a “de-landlordization” tendency. Increasing political limitations to grab more land for cane and palm make flex agribusinesses explore other forms of controlling land for cane and palm cultivation than just freehold-based. These include long-term land leases from rentier landlords, and outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements with dependent agrarian bourgeois and landed petty capitalist farmers;
- iv) In case of the latter, whereas forced dispossession remains, flex cane and palm companies seize control over petty landowner’s land through contract-farming arrangements (in the case of palm), and

more generally through perfectly legal, voluntary-yet-unwillful land deals;

- v) Change of idle or unproductive hacienda and ranch land into intensive cane and palm plantations does away with the option to access land on a leasehold basis for subordinate agrarian classes to farm, and;
- vi) The increase of communal title deeds among petty land owners underpins a tendency towards the (re)communalization of land ownership among subordinate class villagers. But communal (or collective) land titling is certainly no silver bullet against land dispossession.

Third, flex agribusinesses' knowledge and technology fix heightens land and labor productivity, and enhances "multiple-ness" and "flexible-ness" in cane and palm commodity production, while increasing the resilience of monocrop plantations to climate and environmental disruptions. To this end flex agribusinesses rely, on one side, on previous and more recent mechanisms of patenting knowledge and sharing R+I+D costs through their cartelized trade organizations. On the other side, they depend on foreign talent and expertise. Furthermore, there is a synergistic relationship between flex agribusinesses' knowledge and technology and their ecological fixes. Whereas the former acts as a precondition for the latter, green economy revenues generated through the latter (i.e. payments for environmental services) help fund the further development of technology. Conversely, swidden cultivators find themselves trapped in the knowledge rift between traditional and more familiar extensive farming practices, and recent and stranger intensive ones. In trying to bridge this knowledge rift either through the LEIA/agro-ecological path or the HEIA/agro-synthetic path, the social metabolism of subordinate class cultivators increases to different degrees depending on the intensification path.

Fourth, the main forms of appropriating and using different portions of the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production contribute to, and take from, the "financialization 3.0 wave" of the

Guatemalan economy. A range of public and private transnational financiers that is wider than ever provides flex cane and palm companies with investment loans. Additionally, in the finance-friendly (inter)national policy structure of the early 21st century, different agro-commodity value portions are increasingly securitized to facilitate their use as a funding tool hedged against inflation and market price variability. For instance, flex agribusinesses negotiate payments for environmental services in futures markets rather than in spot markets. Similarly, their transnationalization includes the offshoring of the special purpose vehicle firms used in land securitization operations in tax havens.

Fifth, de-commoditization among subordinate agrarian classes contributes to accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes. For most classic liberal, critical and institutionalist accounts alike, change in the state of the forces of production is explained in a linear way, where the only possible trajectories are forward (i.e. development), backward (i.e. under-development) or standing still (i.e. stagnation). From this perspective, somehow expressed in Ricardo's 'law of the tendency of the profit rate to fall' (1891 [1821]), Lenin's reflections on dialectics (1965 [1914]), and especially Polanyi's theory of the counter-movement (1968 [1944]), forces of production either develop into capitalist relations by means of commoditization, or hold-back from them through de-commoditization. Advancement of capitalist productive relations is, therefore, an outcome of the balance of forces along the continuum of struggle between opposites, pushing for and against commoditization of labor-power, land, money(-capital), knowledge and external nature. Paradoxically, however, de-commoditization of labor-power, land and knowledge among subordinate agrarian classes in 2006-2014 results not only in the expected dynamic of repeasantization (i.e. rolling back of capitalist relations) but also in the unexpected outcome of heightened (semi-)proletarianization. The latter suggests that de-commoditization of the forces of production might serve simple as well as expanded reproduction. I have explained that labor exchanges among village cultivators allow them to continue farming at the same time they seize

job opportunities in cane and palm plantations, and thereby for functional dualist relations to thrive. And as it was already the case prior to the 2006-2014 period, functional dualism rests on the shoulders of non-commoditized productive and reproductive labor of women, children and elders. Similarly, land de-commoditization through ownership (re)communalization and free land leases, as well as the dissemination of farming knowledge through “campesino a campesino” exchanges, make up the conditions of possibility for family and petty capitalist farming as much as for functional dualist semi-proletarianization.

10.3. On agro-extractive capitalist productive relations

I turn now to explore why, how and to what extent the agro-extractive capitalist project is simultaneously capitalist *and* extractivist. Put simply, and following my discussion on the criteria for “capitalisticness” and “extractiveness” in chapters 1 and 2, the productive relations behind the agro-extractive capitalist project are capitalist in *nature* and extractivist in *character*. And these elements intersect behind a form of production that has been highly contentious since its very outset.

10.3.1. The agro-extractive capitalist project: Capitalist in nature

It may seem redundant to claim that the dominant form of production in early 21st-century agriculture is “capitalist”. However, the extent and ways in which this is so are generally theoretically assumed rather than empirically discussed. I have argued that de-commoditization in one economic realm might facilitate the opposite trend in another realm and, more generally, that the commoditization of the forces of production is a necessary but insufficient condition for the capitalist mode of production. It is also fundamental that commoditized forces of production are organized into (agro)commodity production through capitalist relations. Following my primary class identification criteria centered on the nature of labor relations as capitalist or otherwise, I have concluded that labor in cane and palm plantations is organized through capitalist relations, its debt-peonage remnants apart. In other

words, value in flex cane and palm commodity production is generated through the exploitation of mostly free labor.

I have also shown how employment in flex cane and palm plantations grows in absolute terms during the 2006-2014 period. Nonetheless, and first, this happens more slowly than the pace at which capital accumulation grows. For labor productivity in Guatemalan flex cane and palm complexes breaks world-records only following: i) a labor regime fix which swaps better salaries, and to a lesser extent working conditions, for harder, longer and more casual working-days, and; ii) a knowledge fix that enhances land yields in corporate cane and palm plantations, as well as “multiple-ness” and “flexible-ness” in the transformation of cane and palm into different commodities. Second, employment numbers in cane and palm plantations swell at the same time that flex agribusiness’ expansion undermines the very conditions of possibility for other forms of (self-)employment in agriculture, regardless of whether they are targeted at simple or expanded reproduction. Rather than through the macro-economic conditions posed by the “Dutch Disease” and “Natural Resource Curse” theses (Auty 1993),⁴⁷⁵ this phenomenon is best explained through the consideration of flex cane and palm companies’ expansion as ‘creative destruction’.⁴⁷⁶ This means that the rise of flex cane and palm complexes erodes use and/or exchange value, as well as employment generation, in agriculture. Put simply, the agro-extractive capitalist project atrophies capitalism from below in the countryside.

Furthermore, and first, the bulk of the wealth generated in cane and palm commodity production does not remain in the localities where flex agribusinesses operate. It is appropriated by a small group of Guatemalan, and to a lesser extent foreign bourgeois, absentee owners of flex cane and palm companies and financial capital (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2008, 72, Dürr 2016b, 8). Second, I have argued that flex

⁴⁷⁵ Discussing the effects of national currency appreciation following increased exports of raw materials and commodities on the competitiveness of other domestic exports.

⁴⁷⁶ Marx and Engels (1969 [1848]), Schumpeter (1942).

agribusinesses drain rather than contribute to the national budget. Hence, flex agribusinesses' extractivist accumulation model does little to improve national development in Guatemala.

I have explained the modern fraction of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie (including many cattle ranchers) enters into a process of decomposition in 2006-2014. Similarly, the family farmer class stagnates, and the petty capitalist farmer class dries up.⁴⁷⁷ Flex cane and palm companies' substitution of extensive forms of cattle ranching, family and petty capitalist farming works through direct and indirect means. On the one hand, flex cane and palm companies constrain or eliminate the abilities of many dominant and subordinate class cultivators, fishers and ranchers to produce by grabbing control over large tracts of farmland, restructuring the agricultural labor regime, hoarding money-capital, depleting environmental goods and transferring the bads. On the other hand, a new "purge of the inefficient" unfolds. Unlike the one that took place in 1986-2005 that undermined dominant class coffee growers, and dominant and subordinate class grain producers, through plummeting prices for their produce, this new purge involves dominant class cattle ranchers and subordinate class swidden cultivators compelled to "intensify or die". Some cattle ranchers indeed have the means to intensify, while others opt to sell or lease their ranches, and still a few others shift into the cane or palm outgrowing business.

Similarly, increasing challenges for swidden cultivation are behind the substitution of traditional farming systems, based on the communal government of village land under a farmland-fallows-forest land use rationale, for one firmly positioned in the all-in-one fixed individual plot logic of the land good governance policy dogma. Most subordinate class

⁴⁷⁷ As Dürr argues on the basis of empirical material collected all over Guatemala, including in the northern lowlands in which I participated, 'smallholder agriculture has the *same potential to stimulate output and GDP growth* through its production linkages as large-scale agriculture [but it] has a *higher potential to stimulate job growth* through its production linkages. [Additionally] as the informal sector dominates smallholder value chains there seems to be a great potential in these sectors to generate income and jobs for the poor. The informal sectors consist mainly of *micro and small enterprises which generate much more employment than the medium and big industries*' (2016b, 8, 9 emphasis added).

cultivators looking to intensify their farming practices face a knowledge rift that they are at pains to either bridge through the high external-input agriculture/agro-synthetic path or the low external-input agriculture/agro-ecological path. Departing from Boserup's thesis (1965), productivity losses associated with fallow reduction in the nutrient-poor karstic soils of the northern lowlands are not compensated by that which is added to total output from increasing harvest frequency. Besides just doing "more" (i.e. expanding the area under cultivation and multi-cropping), my findings suggest that the most promising efforts in the way of farming intensification, or at least to keep declining yields at bay, require doing things "differently" (i.e. LEIA/agro-ecological soil conservation and farming practices). Nonetheless, in addition to appropriate knowledge and technology, agro-ecological transitions demand time and supplementary labor, which not everyone can afford.

Therefore, in the the largely job-scarce Guatemalan context of the early 21st century, heightened labor productivity in flex cane and palm commodity production, and the challenges that arise from the job-poor creative destruction associated with flex agribusinesses' expansion, are behind the burgeoning of rural surplus population. Furthermore, neoliberal purge agro-capitalism pushed many (Q'eqchi') lowlanders into the *latent* section of surplus population, or that struggling to reproduce itself through farming and always ready to provide the cheapest labor within a potentially expanded labor-force (Marx 1887 [1867], 444). The agro-extractive capitalist project from 2005 onward, however, downgrades many subordinate class villagers from the latent to the *stagnant* section of surplus population 'with extremely irregular employment [and] characterised by maximum of working-time, and minimum of wages' (ibid). Hence, the agro-extractive capitalist project is fundamentally capitalist in that it not only abides by the "absolute

general law of capitalist accumulation”, but also pushes that law to the limits.⁴⁷⁸

10.3.2. *The agro-extractive capitalist project: Extractivist in character*

In pushing the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation to its limits, the agro-extractive capitalist project hinges on productive relations of *extractivist character*. Following my “extractiveness” criteria, there are three reasons for this: First, flex cane and palm commodity production is underpinned by the extraction and appropriation of more and more diverse surplus value portions and state revenues. Exceptions notwithstanding, flex cane and palm companies are in a position to hoard ground-rent from farmland, interest from investments (e.g. in real estate or financial assets), royalties from intellectual property rights, and payments for ecosystem services from environmental goods and bads—and it is one they routinely take advantage of. They additionally enjoy tax exemptions, preferential funding through public moneys (national and international), and state subsidies for the reproduction of their general, and to a lesser extent personal, conditions of production (e.g. energy and transport mega-projects and social grants, respectively). As a result, the agro-extractivists can either limit or do away with external claims over the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production (e.g. ground-rent from landlords, interests from financiers or taxes from the state), and reap super-profits in return. Furthermore, appropriated cane and palm commodity value portions and state revenues are increasingly financialized (i.e. rendered fictitious capital through asset-backed loans, derivatives and securitization), and hence realized in money form to fund accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes.

⁴⁷⁸ As elaborated by Marx, ‘the greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army [...] But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labour army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labour. The more extensive, finally, the Lazarus layers of the working class, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation’ (1887 [1867], 444-445 emphasis added).

Second, flex cane and palm commodity production involves the appropriation of productive and reproductive labor of the plantation workers' families for free, as well as the stockpiling of natural goods and disposal of waste and pollutants at zero cost. On the one hand, heightened labor productivity in cane and palm plantations is underpinned by unpaid productive labor of children and women assisting wage-earning adult men. Additionally, it depends on the productive (i.e. in petty commodity production) and reproductive (i.e. care and domestic work) labor of women, children and elders in plantation workers' households.⁴⁷⁹ On the other hand, multiple environmental resources and services are grabbed and used for free during land clearing (e.g. timber), cane and palm cultivation (e.g. nutrients) and transformation into the commodity form (e.g. freshwater). Moreover, the brunt of waste and pollutants generated throughout the process of cane and palm commodity production—from land clearing to cultivation, to transformation—is transferred gratuitously and with impunity to the population in the production areas and beyond.

Third, hyper-intensive flex cane and palm commodity production damages labor's health and vitality, and exhausts external nature's energy and materials, in ways that compromise this production from the cost side (O'Connor 1991, 108). More generally, it undermines 'the viability of the social and "natural" environment as a means of life' (O'Connor 1988, 34). At one end of the spectrum, despite, or rather because of the plantation labor regime fix, hyper-intensive cultivation of cane and palm undermines the reproduction of the personal conditions of production in the flex cane and palm complexes. Risky and strenuous work in cane and palm plantations can have a serious, and sometimes fatal, effect on

⁴⁷⁹ It is in this way the agro-extractive capitalist project relates to exploitation and self-exploitation of family labor in plantation workers' households. Interestingly, for Shivji this is 'a form of primitive accumulation of capital in all its essentials [...] Surplus for capital cut into necessary consumption of the producer, man and woman, who live[d] sub-human lives while exerting super-human labour' (2017, 8). As Marx explains, 'the labour required to produce horses and machines is an accurately known quantity, while that required to maintain the women [and children and elders] of the surplus population is below all calculation' (1887 [1867], 267).

the health of workers. This especially applies to those within the ranks of latent and stagnant surplus populations, as they are subject to more precarious working conditions. Furthermore, environmental cost-shifting relations negatively impact the health and safety of plantation workers, their families and others living near the plantations and transformation plants. At the other end of the spectrum, and again despite or rather because of flex agribusinesses' "acclimatization" efforts, the high social metabolism of cane and palm commodity production shapes the weather (e.g. rain and rainfall), and impinges upon the abilities of the plantation agroecosystem to renew its cornucopia of energy and materials (e.g. soil fertility). In addition to triggering a new set of environmental cost-shifting relations, this adversely affects the reproduction of the natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production.

Indeed, I have argued that the flex cane and palm complexes have taken steps to partially address these (self-generated) challenges to the reproduction of their own personal and natural conditions of production. This includes various levels of engagement by the corporations within the flex crop complexes. For example, some companies formally hire plantation workers, and thus grant them access to public health services and social benefits, or introduce soil conservation and other "climate-smart" farming practices. To this end, they partially depend on the super-profits reaped in the context of the convergent crises conjuncture. But they still also largely rely on public moneys, unpaid family labor, and gratuitous environmental goods and services.

Therefore, my purpose here is not to argue about a *sui generis* "agro-extractivism", but rather about a form of agrarian capitalism that is extractivist in character. And this nuance is critical for an in-depth investigation of both productive relations and politics behind resource extractivism under convergent world crises in the early 21st century.

10.3.3. The agro-extractive capitalist project: Contentious since the very beginning

Flex cane and palm cartels are in a privileged position to reap enormous profits from the convergent crises. But this is neither automatic nor uncontested. The agro-ecological, social and policy structures as well as the productive relations behind the agro-extractive capitalist project shape and express a new politics of racialized class domination which I term *authoritarian corporate populism*, or *authoritarian corpopulism* in short. I explore this phenomenon in detail in the following chapter. However, it is important to point out here that the agro-extractive capitalist project is not yet fully consolidated, and so is the class hegemony of the agro-extractivists.

The agro-extractive capitalist project is crossed by cooperative and contradictory productive relations, which inform and mirror ideological and political contention between, across and within fragmented (agrarian) classes. There are winners and losers amid the burgeoning of flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. And so there are feelings of excitement and unrest among those involved in the agro-extractive capitalist project, either willingly or forcibly, to a larger or a lesser extent, and in different and fluid ways. It is difficult to measure those in favor of and against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and estimations differ greatly according to the source. Leaders of national partisan social justice movements claim villagers are at the verge of rebellion against flex cane and palm companies.⁴⁸⁰ But GREPALMA's President suggests to 'go and ask the people who actually live in these communities if they're better off than they were 10 or 15 years ago. They will *all* tell you they appreciate their jobs compared to *when there was nothing*' (interview by Luxner 2014, emphasis added). Thus, I "went and asked" female and male subordinate class villagers about their opinion in 2010, and then again in 2014. Curiously enough, table 38 shows that whereas in 2010 67% of women claim flex agribusinesses' expansion adversely affects the wellbeing of their families, 59% of men argue nothing changed. By 2014, however, the share of women who believe that the wellbeing of their

⁴⁸⁰ In IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations, August 2014

families increases to 91%, whereas 54% of men are now of the same opinion and only 42% argue that nothing changed.

Table 38 Perspectives of subordinate class men and women villagers on changes in their family’s well-being following flex cane and palm companies’ expansion. 2010 and 2014.

	Women		Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)*	Men		Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)*
	2010	2014		2010	2014	
Better	5%	5%	<i>,764</i>	3%	5%	<i>,181</i>
Worse	67%	91%	<i>,000</i>	38%	54%	<i>,001</i>
Same	28%	5%	<i>,000</i>	59%	42%	<i>,001</i>

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences over time at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

That being said, we must take care not to assume that everyone who consents to and/or benefits from the agro-extractive capitalist project is able or willing to mobilize in its defense, or vice-versa, that all those who dissent and/or are adversely affected are ready to actively contest the agro-extractive capitalist project. Hence, in the in-depth investigation of the politics of agro-environmental change during early 21st-century convergent world crises in Guatemala, it is key to analyze who, why and how makes of her or his consent to the agro-extractive capitalist project a practice of contention to support it, and of her or his unrest a ‘practice of contestation’ (Li 2007, 11). In the latter case it is also important to further inquire who, why and how contests the agro-extractive capitalist project in order to stop it and advance an alternative life project, and who contests the agro-extractive capitalist project to tame it and adapt to it in more advantageous (or less burdensome) ways. This allows for the empirical identification of three main competing political standpoints among fragmented (agrarian) classes vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project. First, there is a “supportive” stance that includes all those committed to defending and promoting the agro-

extractive capitalist project in various ways, and for different reasons. Second, there is a “challenging” standpoint subscribed to by those who struggle against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and for an alternative and transformative project. And third, there is an “accommodative” positioning that includes all those who comply and cope with the agro-extractive capitalist project, regardless of whether or not they dissent from it, and if they partially contest it in order to better accommodate themselves to it.

As we will see in Part III of this work, supportive, challenging and accommodative responses to the agro-extractive capitalist project occur from below, from the sides, from above and even from the margins of the Guatemalan social formation: i) “from below” meaning from fragmented subordinate agrarian classes, their organizations and allies; ii) “from the sides” meaning from other fragmented dominant classes than the agro-extractivist bourgeois, their organizations and allies; iii) “from above” meaning from state actors operating at various geographical scales, if the relative autonomy of the state allows them to be actually “above” the mighty agro-extractivist bourgeoisie, and: iv) “from the margins” meaning from those who find a cover for illicit livelihoods in the flex cane and palm complexes, or revert to criminal entrepreneurship to make ends meet more generally. Furthermore, the constituencies, political agendas and ways of struggling particular to each of these three competing political standpoints are prone to change over time following fixes in productive relations, the opening and closure of political opportunities shaping the political subjectivity of contenders, and the very dynamics of contention.

Thus, I take contingency and messiness as rules rather than exceptions in the analysis of the politics behind the agro-extractive capitalist project. To this purpose, a “multi-dynamic politics” perspective is very helpful. In short, I use this fourth and last component of my methodological strategy to examine fluid and generative political dynamics between, across and within fragmented (agrarian) classes, their organizations and allies in supportive, challenging and accommodative political stances vis-

à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project. To do so, I dedicate the subsequent three chapters discussing the who, why and how political questions for supporters, challengers and accommodators of the agro-extractive capitalist project.

PART III Multi-dynamic politics of agro-environmental change in Guatemala under converging global crises

Chapter 11 Supporters of the agro-extractive capitalist project

11.1. Introduction

This chapter explores who becomes a political subject in support of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and the reasons why and ways in which they do so. I am specifically concerned here with the political subjects who actively promote the agro-extractive capitalist project, and defend its features in the contentious politics of agro-environmental change. Supporters within the state and society organize at multiple geographical scales, and come from both dominant and subordinate fragmented classes. Not surprisingly, the dominant class supporter par excellence is the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie integral to flex cane and palm complexes. And in particular, the “young although smartly-trained executives” (YASTEXES) in strategic executive positions within these corporate complexes. Other committed dominant class supporters include most rentier landlords and outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois. Despite usually staying off the radar of agro-extractive capitalist project challengers, there are also supporters among subordinate agrarian classes. These include some petty capitalist farmers in contract-farming arrangements, and most of the labor-force under proper and durable employment arrangements. Additionally, some members of the stagnant surplus population working as thugs for hire for flex cane and palm companies remain loyal to their employers. Supporters most often participate in the contentious politics of agro-environmental change collectively through their trade and political organizations, but also to some extent do so individually. Together with those within the oligarchic-bourgeoisie’s constellation, the agro-extractive capitalist project additionally receives support from peasant

organizations and NGOs. Moreover, there are scores of powerful state actors supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project within Guatemala and from abroad.

In their efforts to position agro-extractive capitalism as the hegemonic life project in the countryside, the supporters' agenda has reached an impressive level of political sophistication. In brief, the agro-extractive capitalist project stands for a new politics of racialized class domination, which I call authoritarian corporate populism, or *authoritarian corpopulism* in short. Supporters mold their agenda in a way that makes it possible to keep an eye on the policy structure and the reproduction of their general conditions of production. They do so while focusing on the ideological-political debate regarding agro-extractive capitalism's "goods and evils", as well as the reproduction of the personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. Key to this evolving political agenda is the recasting of flex cane and palm commodity production from just another accumulation project into an extraordinary *response-able* phenomenon capable of tackling vital threats for humanity and the planet. Supporters present the flex cane and palm complexes as productively efficient and environmentally sound means of feeding the world, generating green energy and cooling down the planet, while simultaneously creating jobs and spearheading economic growth. To ensure everyone, and especially consumers, gets that message the YASTEXES embark on a "pro-social branding" campaign to upgrade the flex cane and palm complexes from basic sustainable branding through corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity chain response-ability.

In order to turn the agro-extractive capitalist project into a response-able phenomenon and sell it as such through pro-social branding, supporters' authoritarian corpopulist agenda involves two strategic shifts. The first one is, the "multistakeholderization" of flex cane and palm commodity chains. Contributing to and resulting from changes in the governance policy dogma under the World Economic Forum's "Global Redesign Initiative", the YASTEXES switch their corporate

governance approach from shareholder- to stakeholder-centered, while ensuring that shareholders remain at the core. And the second step is replacing the “bullets and beans” of authoritarian-paternalistic military regimes, once used to counter the “communist threat” during Cold War times. Instead, authoritarian corporatism relies on persuasion, and selective violence cloaked in the rule of law, to counter critique and opposition to the agro-extractive capitalist project. Thus, as agro-extractive capitalism’s political backbone, authoritarian corporatism seeks to reproduce the racialized class hegemony of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie through political concessions. But in addition to these policy concessions (e.g. public grants) that mirror populist political regimes elsewhere, authoritarian corporatism in Guatemala involves concessions in productive relations (i.e. the labor, land and ecological fixes by flex cane and palm companies discussed earlier).

Supporters carry out their political agenda through a repertoire of contention containing four core strategies, namely the “Trojan horse”, “discursive flexibility”, “staying alive” and “iron fist in velvet glove” strategies. The “Trojan horse” strategy has a two-sided aim: building flex cane and palm companies’ legitimacy at the grassroots and co-opting the initiatives organized by challengers and accommodators. On the one side, the agro-extractivists use “corporate coyotes” to broker land for cane and palm plantations and coerce villagers to consent to such land deals. On the other side, agro-extractivists ally with some leaders of labor unions, peasant and indigenous organizations and NGOs who can claim a civil society “stake” in multi-stakeholder governance institutions and processes at different geographical scales. Once “in” the community, corporate coyotes come out of the Trojan horse to divide and rule. They are pretty aware of the fact that villagers are much more than the naïve Q’eqchi’ peasants many corporate, state and social actors think they are. And so coyotes work through class, gender, generational, religious or other cleavages among villagers to erode or reframe community consensus on good living. Correspondingly social organizations supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project co-opt

multi-stakeholder governance platforms at the local, regional, and national scales.

Nonetheless, supporters need to mobilize the new consensus they achieve in all the spaces mentioned above. First, the new consensus needs to be mobilized within and across fragmented subordinate class villagers, so they willingly engage in land, labor or contract-farming deals with flex agribusinesses, or at least do not bother. And second, they need to ingrain its relevance among policy- and opinion-making actors in state and society, at multiple geographical scales. To this end, supporters assemble a “discursive flexibility” strategy. This entails strategically switching between plausible narratives to construe the most meaningful representation and meaning of cane, palm or any of these crops’ multiple commodities and uses, according to whom they are of potential value, and when and where. By informing ideological-political standpoints, the discursive flexibility strategy helps through mobilizing funds, legitimizing favorable policies and crafting workers’ and consumers’ consent. This means that discursive flexibility reinforces the high material multiple-ness and flexible-ness of flex cane and palm complexes. Discursive flexibility contains two main tactics: “selective representation” and “strategic choice of use-discourse”. The former involves casting and recasting cane and palm as different “things” that best suit the circumstances at hand. Among the typical representations of cane and palm are those as “crops”, “plants” and “commodities”. The latter works through the “conflation” of multiple cane and palm use-discourses, and “dissociation” from other use-discourses.

However, the YASTEXES realize the actual changes achieved through discursive means need to be reinforced and expanded if accumulation is to be sustained and hegemony achieved. In other words, the YASTEXES come to see material concessions as a means to pursue and reproduce their hegemony, rather than as a sign of weakness. Additionally, they understand they need to differentiate themselves from ill-reputed business peers elsewhere (e.g. in Brazil or Indonesia). To do this, flex cane and palm companies in Guatemala implement a series of

labor, land, financial, knowledge and ecological fixes from 2009, and especially 2012, on. Fixes to productive relations in flex cane and palm commodity production are the drivers and outcomes of the “staying alive” strategy supporters deploy in order to keep ‘underproduction crises’ (O’Connor 1988) at bay, and to increase the agro-extractive capitalist project’s social legitimation by “practicing what they preach”. By doing so, the YASTEXES pursue the response-ability of the flex cane and palm complexes “by decree” and “by market compulsion”. The former tactic mobilizes statutory means of contention through policies favorable to the interests of the flex complexes. The latter relies on codes of conduct and performance certification schemes, often developed through multi-stakeholder platforms.

Finally, the “iron fist in velvet glove” strategy is employed to deter and punish anyone who contests the rise of flex cane and palm complexes, especially by violating or threatening oligarchic-bourgeois’ quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise. This authoritarian and violent strategy mainly targets transformative challengers. But the iron fist in velvet glove strikes at anyone who dares to contest the agro-extractive capitalist project whether this be a state, corporate or social actor, national or foreigner. And to accomplish this, it relies on “rule of law” and “jungle law” tactics. The former entails the mobilization of the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state in defense of the agro-extractive capitalist project. The latter tactic borrows its name from the general Guatemalan context in the early 21st century where it is not the fittest, but the strongest, that prevails. It involves the use of illegal violence in organized but covert forms to eliminate selected challengers, and even accommodators. To this end, it is men who are part of the stagnant section of the rural surplus population that are usually hired as “barefoot thugs”.

However, despite a unity among supporters that appears to be set in stone, ideological and material tensions exist across them, stemming from at least five non-antagonistic contradictions. The first involves domestic financiers and agro-extractivist bourgeois owners of flex cane

and palm companies whose oligarchic family business groups do not include financial companies. The second concerns agro-extractivists and rentier landlords, outgrowers and contract-farmers. The third involves flex cane and palm companies and large cane and palm outgrowers, on the one side, and modern dependent agrarian bourgeois, on the other. Among the latter are rubber planters, banana and rice growers, and especially cattle ranchers negatively impacted by heightened pressure over land, water and other environmental goods, as well as ecological cost-shifting relations, associated with flex cane and palm commodity production. The fourth is made up of parochial agrarian upper classes and absentee owners of flex cane and palm companies. Despite long standing class antagonism between conservative seigniorial landlords and liberal agrarian bourgeois, they all see their local “patron” status under threat when flex crop companies show up in “their” towns. The fifth concerns gender and generational cleavages among old guard agro-extractivist men and YASTEXE-type of amenable response-ability gatekeeper women in multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms.

Furthermore, two broad sets of tension-ridden, non-antagonistic contradictions can be discerned within the very ranks of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie—one of material and the other of ideological nature. The former is rooted in the law of competition. Even though they collaborate on different matters through their trade and political organizations (ASAZGUA and GREPALMA), flex cane and palm companies compete with each other in domestic markets for consumer goods, labor, money-capital and above all land. The other set of contentious contradictions within the agro-extractivists concern the differences between older cane and palm tycoons forged at the heat of Cold War’ Bullets and Beans Agro-capitalism under military dictatorships, and the YASTEXES who come of age during neoliberal globalization and Guatemala’s transition to bourgeois democracy. In short, whereas both share the authoritarian corporalist agenda, YASTEXE agro-extractivists are more “corporalists” and their elders more “authoritarian”. Hence, the YASTEXES follow a political

rationale, which prioritizes material concessions in the production process in the short-term as the path towards enhanced competitiveness, profitability, and class hegemony in the mid- and long-terms.

11.2. Cast of characters

Supporters within the state and society organize at multiple geographical scales, and are representative of both dominant and subordinate fragmented (agrarian) classes. Obviously, the dominant class supporter par excellence is the agro-extractivist fraction of the (trans)national agro-industrial bourgeoisie, of which the owners of flex cane and palm companies are part. This is a very compact and tight-knit group made up of white creole men—and to a lesser extent, women—quintessential of the Guatemalan oligarchy. I have detailed that oligarchs change class but not face, even when they age. This means that the older among the agro-extractivist bourgeois are the ultimate authority, but younger YASTEXES hold strategic executive positions in the flex complexes. As expected, other committed dominant class supporters include most rentier landlords and outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois. In general, rentier landlords and outgrower bourgeois make cooperative business relations of mutualistic character out of their antagonistic and non-antagonistic class relations with agro-extractivist bourgeois. Visible figures among them are men in their fifties and older, ladinos or members of lower ranking parochial creole families.

Certainly, the level of support among fragmented subordinate classes for the agro-extractive capitalist project is not massive,⁴⁸¹ but it is higher than what many challengers would like to admit. Usually off the radar in scholarly works as well, there are indeed some subordinate agrarian class political subjects who promote flex agribusinesses at the grassroots, and taking the side of flex complexes when conflict erupts. Either willingly or out of sheer necessity, this group that mostly consists of men of various ages and ethnicities also looks for a mutualistic (win-win)

⁴⁸¹ Recall the generalized grassroots dissent with flex cane and palm companies in table 38 in chapter 10.

cooperative relation in their antagonistic class relation with agro-extractivist bourgeois. The main constituents in this grouping are a handful of petty capitalist farmers in contract-farming arrangements, and most of the labor-force under proper and durable employment arrangements. These are fundamentally white- and blue-collar employees in processing plants, plantation foremen and the cluster of plantation workers under formal contracts that receive labor benefits. Additionally, some members of the stagnant surplus population working as thugs for hire for flex cane and palm companies also remain loyal to their employers.

Supporters most often engage in contentious politics of agro-environmental change collectively through their trade and political organizations, but a handful of them do so individually. As previously indicated, these include the Guatemalan “Sugar Producers Association” (ASAZGUA) and the “Palm Growers Guild” (GREPALMA), both are members of the “Chamber of Agriculture” (“CAMAGRO”) and the powerful “Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers” (CACIF). Flex cane and palm companies also have a say in the “Renewable Fuels Association” (ACR), the oligarchic-bourgeoisie’s think tank “Foundation for the Development of Guatemala” (FUNDESA), the libertarian Francisco Marroquin University (UFM)⁴⁸² and CentraRSE (the “World Business Council for Sustainable Development” in Guatemala). Furthermore, the spectrum of social actors supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project stretches beyond those formally within the ranks of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. These include the “Guatemalan Social Organizations’ Movement” (MOSGUA), the “National Peasant Union” (UNAC), private Guatemalan universities (other than the UFM) and mass media outlets (though these are often part of oligarchic family business groups). Additionally, supporters find tactical allies among accommodators, such

⁴⁸² This private university is the training center and core think tank of the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeoisie. Every three years, the UFM grants the “Rober Nozick Award for Academic Excellence”. On the libertarian ideology among the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeoisie in the early 21st Century see Velásquez (2013).

as the transnational NGOs behind corporate performance certification platforms. Their allies even include former key challengers-turned-accommodators like the “National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination” (CONIC).

The agro-extractive capitalist project also gathers many adherents among state actors. With the exception of those on the left, all political parties are linked in some way—including through funding—to the Guatemalan oligarchy.⁴⁸³ This allows oligarchs to influence the Government and the Congress which, although neither overwhelming nor uncontested, is strategic for the hegemonic pretensions of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie. In addition to appointing the “Presidential Commissioner for Competitiveness”, ‘CACIF has strong veto rights regarding the appointment of the Ministers of Economy, Finance, Energy and Mines and Transport and Infrastructure’.⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, I put forth how CACIF has “a stake” in all multi-stakeholder governance platforms (e.g. FONTIERRAS), including those in which no other private social actor has a seat (e.g. the Monetary Council of Guatemala’s Central Bank). Also, CACIF maintains good terms with the Judiciary through its cohort of corporate lawyers’ offices and political sinecures for retired judges,⁴⁸⁵ and has long-standing bonds with the military. Finally, and especially on the heels of the twist in the agro-extractive capitalist project’s political agenda during this period, International Financial Institutions like the World Bank, IDB and CABEI can be counted within the ranks of the supporters.

11.3. Political agenda and contention frame

Shaping and articulating broader efforts by the oligarchic-bourgeoisie to reproduce its dominant class position in the cultural and political realms, supporters push for the agro-extractive capitalist project to become the hegemonic life project in the countryside. They present it as a life

⁴⁸³ Herrarte (2012), Palencia Prado (2014)

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Executive Director of the Guatemalan Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives (CONGCOOP), lawyer and newspaper columnist, June 2010

⁴⁸⁵ Idem to footnote 4.

project capable of linking individual interests to a ‘*national-popular*’ interest that *also serves* the long-term interests of the capitalist class and its allies in the power bloc’ (Jessop 2011, 42 emphasis added). To push for this reality, the agro-extractivists and allies rework their political agenda in a highly sophisticated way. In brief, the agro-extractive capitalist project stands for a new politics of racialized class domination, which I call authoritarian corporate populism, or *authoritarian corpopulism* in short.

The agenda of agro-extractive capitalist project supporters initially zeros in on building a favorable policy structure. As examined in chapter 4, this entails overhauling governance, trickle-down, flex-labor, land good governance, financialization, and knowledge enclosure policy dogmas, as well as revamping the more recent green economy policy creed, to match shifting national and international contexts. Additionally, supporters milk the national budget through public-private-partnerships to reproduce the general conditions of production required by rising flex crop complexes (i.e. energy and transport infrastructure development mega-projects). Social legitimation is sought through the modernization and progress narrative that has been commonplace since late 19th century coffee-led agro-extractive mercantilism. Nonetheless, grassroots unrest sparks heightened mobilization against flex cane and palm companies’ expansion as early as 2008-2009. Amid high profile convergent global crises during those years, negative responses at the grassroots catches the eye of national and foreign journalists, (trans)national social justice organizations, scholars, inter-governmental development agencies and the (trans)national NGO community. Following the early global airing of grievances, supporters refine their political agenda. As the GREPALMA President explains, ‘our big mistake was we were very quiet’.⁴⁸⁶

Thus, from 2009 onward supporters gradually recast their agenda so they keep watch over the policy structure and the reproduction of their general conditions of production, while focusing on the ideological-

⁴⁸⁶ (interview by Luxner 2014)

political debate over agro-extractive capitalism’s “goods and evils”, and the reproduction of the personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. Initially, this new focus privileges state—and even more so, social—actors in flex agribusinesses’ expansion zones. Then, it broadens to include transnational state and social actors with the power to enable or constrain the political conditions for the flex cane and palm complexes to thrive. Key to this evolving political agenda in support of the agro-extractive capitalist project is the recasting of flex cane and palm commodity production from just another accumulation project into an extraordinary *response-able* phenomenon capable of tackling vital threats for humanity and the planet. In other words, cane and palm are not just the latest booming cash crops that promise to end rural “backwardness”. Rather, they are promoted as productively efficient and environmentally sound means of feeding the world, generating green energy and cooling the planet, while sponsoring employment and stimulating economic growth in Guatemala.⁴⁸⁷ I now briefly expand upon these claims.

First, cane and palm are depicted as champions for global food security. Food security is a highly sensitive issue that supporters must deal with, especially when flex cane and palm companies are widely blamed for land grabbing to substitute food for fuel crops. In countering this critique, supporters use narratives that are mutually reinforcing. One epitomizes cane and palm as “food”—not fuel. To disseminate this narrative, supporters cherry-pick ‘spectacular figures’ (Li 2014b) from global reports like those published by the World Bank and the FAO to construct neo-Malthusian arguments on the need to increase food production in order to feed an ever-expanding world population. For instance, in an interview with a major Guatemalan newspaper, GREPALMA’s President uses FAO data to argue that ‘150 million tons more of edible oil need to be produced to feed the world by 2050’ (ACAN-EFE 2013). He personally adds, ‘large-scale agro-industrial

⁴⁸⁷ The discussion that follows on legitimating discourses for cane and palm builds on work by the author published during the PhD process in Hunsberger and Alonso-Fradejas (2016).

projects are the answer to food insecurity in Guatemala and the world, and this is something multi-stakeholder efforts to feed the world should keep in mind' (ibid). The other counter-narrative presents cane and palm as the most efficient among all sugar and oilseed crops. This is a key message delivered by the Executive Director of the International Sugar Organization, himself a Guatemalan.⁴⁸⁸ It is also a critical argument upon which GREPALMA's President leans to promote its business complex. He claims that 'to produce the extra 150 million tons of edible oil to feed the world by 2050, it is necessary to plant 333 million hectares with soy or 217 million hectares with rapeseed, but only 36.5 million hectares with palm; *palm is more oil on less land*'.⁴⁸⁹

Second, supporters argue that cane is a sustainable crop because it only has to be replanted every two or three farming seasons rather than yearly.⁴⁹⁰ When there is a need to underscore its abilities to fight climate change, palm is represented as a "tree" through narratives such as 'the life environment created by a *palm forest* is very positive for climate change mitigation'.⁴⁹¹ Likewise, cane and palm are portrayed to be more than just the next biofuels feedstocks. They are the "most efficient" feedstocks according to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) (Horta Nogueira 2004), and the Inter American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) (Reyes et al. 2010).

Third and finally, supporters argue flex cane and palm commodity production is a launching pad for rural employment and national economic growth. ASAZGUA welcomes visitors to its website by saying 'cane agro-industry is one of the main sources of foreign currency and employment in Guatemala. It is key for the development of fifty townships and more than a million people, and thus for the progress of Guatemala' (2016, own translation). GREPALMA makes a similar

⁴⁸⁸ (interview by Bollman 2014)

⁴⁸⁹ In I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, October 2013, emphasis added.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer, and security manager of Polochic Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008.

⁴⁹¹ Colombian FEDEPALMA's President in I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, October 2013.

argument on its homepage: ‘everyday, in everything you do, palm oil is with you creating thousands of jobs in Guatemala’ (2016c). In his inaugural address to the I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, GREPALMA’s President claims ‘that supporting the palm eco-industry means contributing to the real development, prosperity and wellbeing of rural families’ (October 2013). A former Minister of Economy and now GREPALMA’s advisor takes a similar tone while defending flex palm companies in Sayaxché zone with the press. He argues, ‘if the palm companies weren’t here, these people wouldn’t have any work [...] Most of the adults have not gone to school, and the type of soil here is not suitable for growing other crops’ (in Luxner 2014, emphasis added).

Therefore, in animating, legitimizing and mobilizing support for the flex cane and palm complexes, the agro-extractive capitalist project is framed as an extraordinarily response-able phenomenon to feed the world, generate green energy and cool the planet, while boosting employment and economic growth. And to make sure everyone, and especially consumers, gets the message, the YASTEXES embark on a “pro-social branding” campaign from 2009, and especially 2012, on. Pro-social brands ‘are *more politically disruptive and inspiring* than basic sustainable brands. Instead of focusing on what a brand has done internally to drive a better world, pro-social brands look outward to take a stand on key moral issues’ (Sachs 2015, emphasis added). In their efforts to make the agro-extractive capitalist project look like a response-able phenomenon and sell it through pro-social branding, supporters develop an authoritarian corporalist agenda that involves ‘certain strategic shifts in [...] political and ideological relationships between the ruling bloc, the state and the dominated classes’ (Hall 1985, 119 in Scoones et al. 2017). Supporters’ authoritarian corporalist agenda involves two interlinked and strategic shifts. The first one is the “multistakeholderization” of flex cane and palm commodity chains. Contributing to and resulting from changes in the “governance” policy dogma under the World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative”, the YASTEXES switch their corporate governance approach from shareholder- to stakeholder-centered, while ensuring that shareholders remain at the center. And the

second step is swapping out the “bullets and beans” of authoritarian-paternalistic military regimes, once used to counter the “communist threat” during Cold War times. Instead, authoritarian corporatism relies on persuasion, and selective violence cloaked in the rule of law,⁴⁹² to counter critique and opposition to the agro-extractive capitalist project.

Therefore, as agro-extractive capitalism’s political backbone, authoritarian corporatism leans on pro-social branding and the state’s ‘strategic selectivity’ (Poulantzas 1978, 32) to pursue and reproduce the racialized class hegemony of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie. This is mostly done through political concessions, especially those made to the under-privileged. But in addition to policy concessions (e.g. public grants) that are used as tools in populist political regimes elsewhere, authoritarian corporatism in Guatemala involves concessions in productive relations (i.e. the labor, land and ecological fixes by flex cane and palm companies discussed in Part II). Indeed, as Friedmann explains, ‘what was formerly resisted except by a handful of pioneering capitals—sustainability—is now embraced rhetorically *and also selectively in practice*’ (2016, 675 emphasis added).

11.4. Repertoire of contention

Supporters rely on four main contention strategies, namely the “Trojan horse”, “discursive flexibility”, “staying alive” and “iron fist in velvet glove” strategies. These are underpinned by a series of tactics advanced together with multiple state and social actors through various means and forms of contention. Altogether they stand for the repertoire of contention informing the *politics between* supporters and challengers, and *between* supporters and accommodators. I discuss these strategies in

⁴⁹² As Li explains, ‘more authoritarian forms of government are often reserved for sections of a population deemed especially deficient and unable to exercise the responsibility of freedom’ (2005, 387).

detail shortly, including their tactics, means and forms of contention, after summarizing them in table 39.⁴⁹³

Table 39 Supporters' repertoire of contention in the northern lowlands during 2006-2014

Strategies	Tactics	Means	Forms
Trojan horse	Divide and rule	Discursive and advocative	Organized and covert
			Organized and overt
Discursive flexibility	Selective representation of cane and palm	Discursive	Organized and overt
	Strategic choice of cane's and palm's use-discourse	Two discursive mechanisms: 1) conflation of multiple use-discourses; 2) dissociation from some use-discourses	Organized and overt
Staying alive	Response-ability by decree	Statutory regulation	Organized and overt
	Response-ability by market compulsion	Discursive and voluntary self-regulation	Organized and overt
Iron fist in velvet glove	Rule of law	Advocative, judiciary, and violent	Organized and overt
	Jungle law	Violent	Organized and covert

Source: Author elaboration

11.4.1. Trojan horse strategy

This contention strategy has a two-fold purpose, to build flex cane and palm companies' legitimacy at the grassroots, and to co-opt initiatives by organized challengers and accommodators. On the one side, the agro-extractivists use "corporate coyotes" to broker land for cane and palm plantations and villagers' consent to the agro-extractive capitalist project. As advanced in the land relations chapter, corporate coyotes originate from fragmented dominant and subordinate classes alike, and enjoy local economic, political and/or symbolic authority. On the other side, agro-extractivists ally with leaders of labor unions, peasant and indigenous organizations and NGOs who can claim a civil society "stake" in multi-

⁴⁹³ The discussion that follows builds on published material during the PhD process, especially in Alonso-Fradejas (2015).

stakeholder governance institutions and processes at different geographical scales.

Furthermore, some of these organizations also act as corporate coyotes in flex cane and palm companies' expansion areas. But they do so in organized and overt forms, whereas individual coyotes play this role in structured but covert forms. Nonetheless, both share the political abilities necessary to encroach into key village institutions and debates around directions of agro-environmental change from which flex cane and palm companies are banned, or invited as the corporate actors they are. In other words, they leverage on other identity markers—other than as supporters—to legitimize their involvement in village politics. This is the reason for which I call this contention strategy as the Trojan horse.

11.4.1.1. Divide and rule tactic

Once “in”, corporate coyotes come out of the Trojan horse to divide and rule in the community. They indeed understand that ‘institutions do not embody intrinsic legitimacy; their legitimacy must be actively established’ (Sikor and Lund 2009, 7). And so coyotes encroach upon village property, educational or religious institutions to steer the common knowledge and ideas of prosperity and welfare towards agro-extractive capitalist project-friendly stances. They are very much aware—more than many challengers and accommodators—of the fact that villages are made up of much more than blank slates of naïve Q’eqchi’ peasants. To this end, corporate coyotes work through class, gender, generational, religious or other cleavages among villagers to erode or reframe community consensus on a shared life project. As soberly expressed by a Q’eqchi’ man in his late fifties during a group interview, ‘we are going through a serious problem these days. Our mind and our thoughts are being dominated. This is the result of the way of thinking of the “big rich” spread in our communities through their coyotes only to fool us and take the land from our hands again’.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ In a Sayaxché Tierra Blanca district village, July 2010.

Similarly, social organizations supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project are strategically deployed in multi-stakeholder governance platforms at the local, regional, and national scales. These are actually often promoted by accommodators within the state to try to deter supporters from treating agrarian, labor and environmental conflicts through judiciary and/or violent means.⁴⁹⁵ There are two iconic cases of such “conflict transformation” multi-stakeholder platforms fully or partly co-opted by social organizations supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project. First, is the case of the “Turcios Lima Foundation” (FTL) in the Polochic sub-region of the northern lowlands. A charismatic ladino man in his late sixties who enjoys a good reputation among Polochic villagers directs FTL. Formerly, he was the FAR guerrilla Commander-in-Chief, and then an advisor to FONTIERRAS’ General Manager during 2005-2008. Aware of these facts, the companies involved in natural resource-based accumulation projects in the Polochic sub-region lean on their former enemy in order to broker land and villagers’ consent, and to legitimize their corporations as development actors in the eyes of the national and international communities. In Polochic, FTL’s Director arrives in corporate helicopters to visit villages and haciendas where the companies covet land. He offers FONTIERRAS’ support in cases where villagers or hacienda-tenants agree to withdraw their land purchase bids and/or resettle elsewhere, promises employment and progress, and publicly scolds anyone daring to challenge him or the companies.⁴⁹⁶

In seeking legitimation beyond Polochic’s regional borders, the “Guatemalan Nickel Company” (subsidiary of Canadian mining giant Skye Resources), “MayaNickel” (subsidiary of British-Australian mining and oil giant BHP Billiton), “Baleu” rubber company, “Maderas El Alto” into industrial tree plantations, “Chabil Utzaj” flex cane company, “NaturAceites” flex palm company and FTL are all behind the

⁴⁹⁵ Interviews with Operations Director of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA) in April 2006, SAA’s Polochic Head in June 2009, and SAA’s Chisec Head in July 2011.

⁴⁹⁶ Participant observation in one such meeting in a Polochic Highland zone village, November 2006

“Polochic Foundation for the Promotion of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development”—and are backed with the blessing of the Vice-President of Guatemala.⁴⁹⁷

The second case is the national negotiations on comprehensive rural development that have been taking place since 2002. Originally, these negotiations involved two parts. On the one side, government officials initially took an accommodative stance through purge agro-capitalism, and later do the same via agro-extractive capitalism. On the other side, there are the peasant, indigenous peoples’, women’s, conservation, environmental justice, human rights and research organizations, universities and Catholic Pastoral part of the “Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development” (ADRI). This alliance of challengers drafts a Comprehensive Rural Development Law between 2002 and 2005, which becomes a focal point during the “National Dialogue for Comprehensive Rural Development and Agrarian, Environmental and Labor Conflict Settlement”, convened by President Colom in 2008. This time, nonetheless, supporters part of the “Social Organizations’ Movement of Guatemala” (MOSGUA), the “National Peasant Union” (UNAC), and former challenger-turned-accommodator “National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination” (CONIC), claim a seat at the negotiation table. Dragging on for years, the rural development negotiations that were already complex, time- and energy-consuming become even more so with the disruption caused by the latecomers. In fact, their intervention tilts negotiation outcomes in 2009 towards an accommodative—rather than challenging—standpoint, a political interference that is discussed in detail in chapter 13.

Building a favorable consensus on the agro-extractive capitalist project, however, is only part of the work of its supporters, as there is then a need to ‘mobilize’ the new consensus (Tarrow 1998, 175). This consensus is first necessitated within and across fragmented subordinate class villagers, so that they willingly engage in land, labor or contract-

⁴⁹⁷ Participant observation in the constitution ceremony at the National Palace, August 2007.

farming deals with flex agribusinesses, or at least do not hinder corporate activities. And second, mobilization occurs among policy- and opinion-making actors in state and society, at multiple geographical scales. Thus, the Trojan horse contributes to and benefits from the discursive flexibility strategy.

11.4.2. Discursive flexibility strategy

Supporters frame the agro-extractive capitalist project as an extraordinary response-able phenomenon providing solutions for economic, food, energy and environmental/climatic crises. But these ‘flex policy narratives’ (Borras et al. 2016) are not simply bundled together in a way that everyone can use at any possible occasion. Rather, flex narratives on the response-ability of flex cane and palm complexes are cherry-picked. Supporters strategically switch between plausible narratives to be able to construe the most meaningful representation and significance of cane, palm or any of the crops’ multiple commodities and uses—according to whom they address, when and where. In other words, flex policy narratives are used in a ‘discursive flexibility’ fashion (Hunsberger and Alonso-Fradejas 2016). The YASTEXES play a leading role in creating and using forms of discursive flexibility to upgrade the flex cane and palm complexes, ranging from basic sustainable branding through corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity chain response-ability. To this end, they rely on discursive means, deployed in organized and interchangeably overt and covert forms, through two main tactics, “selective representation” and “strategic choice of use-discourse”.⁴⁹⁸

11.4.2.1. Selective representation tactic

Selective representation involves casting and recasting cane and palm as different “things” to best suit the circumstances at hand. Usual representations of cane and palm include those as “crops”, “plants” and

⁴⁹⁸ The discussion on discursive flexibility tactics builds on work by the author published in Hunsberger and Alonso-Fradejas (2016).

“commodities”. They are represented as crops to support the discourse presenting them as world food security champions and/or in lauding their abilities to boost employment and growth. Indeed, cane and palm’s representation as food crops helps to counter the “food-for-fuel” critique in Guatemala. The YASTEXES stress that ethanol is produced using molasses, that is, a by-product of sugar production. They also push the point that palm oil is not used to produce bio-diesel in Guatemala.⁴⁹⁹ Denying time and again that cane and palm expansion leads to food crops’ substitution, supporters maintain the argument that cane and palm are superior among all crops to offer the carbohydrates and oily fat needed by a growing world population, while at the same time protecting land and generating employment and revenues. Alternatively, cane and palm can be represented as “plants”, and in extension, plantations as carbon sinks and biodiversity-friendly agro-ecosystems. This is the case when the aim is to home in on flex cane and palm complexes’ abilities to generate green energy and fight climate change. Finally, cane and palm can also be represented as “commodities” with multiple uses. This is advantageous in attracting financiers and/or eluding competing representations of cane and palm that constrain their circulation as commodities. The latter is especially the case in transnational negotiations on trade, investment, intellectual property rights or public procurement, in which cane and palm’s representation as industrial commodities helps bypass restrictions in the areas of agricultural produce and biodiversity.

11.4.2.2. Strategic choice of use-discourse tactic

Strategic choice works through two discursive mechanisms, namely “conflation” of multiple cane and palm use-discourses, and “dissociation” from some use-discourses. Conflation involves the simultaneous use of two, or all three, types of cane and palm representations and legitimating the discourses previously discussed. This is the case, for instance, when flex cane companies are promoted

⁴⁹⁹ Interviews with Biofuels Coordinator of the Ministry of Energy and Mines, May 2008, and Executive Secretary of the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association (ACR), February 2010.

for producing ‘food *and* electricity’ (interview with ASAZGUA's Executive Director by Luxner 2013),⁵⁰⁰ or flex palm companies for ‘creating employment, generating green energy, and capturing CO2 in POME anaerobic decomposition lagoons’.⁵⁰¹ Thus, the conflation mechanism is driven to its maximum expression when flex cane and palm commodity production is presented as an extraordinary, multi-purpose response-able phenomenon.

Dissociation from cane’s and palm’s use-discourses works through two mechanisms. The first one involves strategically choosing one or two out of the three competing representations and use-discourses according to the circumstances at hand. The discarded competing representation(s) and use-discourse(s) is/are simply ignored or outright denied. Whereas the second mechanisms is especially useful to outwit critique, even though it is more unusual than the first. A good example is the argument for a new biofuels law. While supporters of the 1985 law on biofuels stressed the benefits of ethanol and petrol blends over the fuel imports’ bill, in 2006-2014 this language is buried under one that pinpoints biofuels’ contributions to employment and climate change mitigation.⁵⁰² Strategic dissociation reaches its full expression when the material flexibility of cane and palm is consciously denied. For instance, in his response to the food for fuel substitution critique, a former Minister of Economy and now GREPALMA’s advisor argues ‘these groups lie all the time. For example, they say we’re producing biodiesel. That’s not true. Not a single drop of palm oil is used for biodiesel in Guatemala’ (interview by Luxner 2014). Taking strategic dissociation a step further, GREPALMA claims that ‘the ultimate goal of the Guatemalan flex palm complex is to strengthen the edible oil industry and thus *food sovereignty*’ (April 2012, 4 emphasis added).

Furthermore, “conflation” and “dissociation” as mechanisms of strategic choice for cane and palm’s use-discourse are not mutually

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with ASAZGUA’ Executive Director by Luxner (2013)

⁵⁰¹ Interview with GREPALMA’s Executive Secretary, April 2009

⁵⁰² Interview with Biofuels Coordinator of the Ministry of Energy and Mines, May 2008

exclusive. The same actor can deliberately lean on one or the other mechanism to best fit the circumstances. For example, at the I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, GREPALMA conflates all three representations of palm as crop, tree and commodity to portray the flex palm complex as an extraordinary response-able phenomenon (October 2013). But when addressing outraged villagers, GREPALMA cleverly chooses to neglect palm's representations as tree and commodity, and focus on its representation as a development crop. In a similar vein, the same actor can change between conflation and dissociation mechanisms when political opportunities open up and close off. We have seen that the supporters' political agenda initially hides cane and palm's representations as plants and commodities behind that as crops, to later conflate two or all three representations following the rise of the green economy policy dogma.

Finally, it should be noted that discursive flexibility does not work only at the level of "ideas". By informing ideological-political standpoints, it also helps in mobilizing funds, legitimizing favorable policies and manufacturing workers' and consumers' consent. In other words, the discursive flexibility strategy reinforces the high material multiple-ness and flexible-ness of the flex cane and palm complexes.

11.4.3. Staying alive strategy

The YASTEXES recognize that the actual changes achieved through discursive means need to be reinforced and expanded if accumulation is to be sustained and hegemony achieved. This realization comes in response to heightened ecological, economic and ideological distribution conflict (further detailed in chapter 12), and the very limits intensive and large-scale production of cane and palm commodities impose on the reproduction of the personal and natural conditions of production for flex agribusinesses. In other words, the YASTEXES come to see material concessions as a means to reproduce the 'unstable equilibrium of compromises between the dominant classes and the dominated' (Poulantzas 1978, 31) rather than as a sign of weakness. As the

YASTEXE CEO of the Guatemalan flex cane company “Magdalena” argues, ‘we are *required* to incorporate important elements like bioterrorism or social and environmental sustainability issues into the productive process. We face a much more demanding market, and we have had to transform our company to address these new demands’ (interview in Jaramillo 2016). Additionally, YASTEXES in Guatemala realize they need to differentiate themselves from their business peers elsewhere of ill repute (e.g. in Brazil or Indonesia).⁵⁰³ To this end, Guatemalan flex cane and palm companies implement a series of labor, land, financial, knowledge and ecological fixes from 2009 and especially 2012 on.⁵⁰⁴ I have expanded on how these fixes help flex agribusinesses increase labor and land productivity, expand plantations, access new funds, reduce production costs, and help reproduce personal and natural conditions of production. For flex agribusiness, fixes on productive relations also serve a similar function to a pressure relief valve, since such fixes address social and environmental impacts of production.

Thus, supporters rely on the “staying alive” strategy to keep ‘underproduction crises’ (O’Connor 1988) at bay, and to increase the agro-extractive capitalist project’s social legitimation by “practicing what they preach”. In doing so, the YASTEXES draw in a wide range of state and social actors at multiple geographical scales to help them upgrade flex cane and palm complexes—from basic sustainable branding by corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity

⁵⁰³ Interview with CEO of “Magdalena” Guatemalan flex cane company (in Jaramillo 2016), and plenary addresses by Presidents of the Guatemalan, Colombian and Ecuadorean palm growers’ guilds (GREPALMA, FEDEPALMA and ANCUPA) at the I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, October 2013. Nonetheless, the perspective of Latin American palm businesses on their South East Asian peers does not go unchecked by the latter. The Malaysia-based “Asia Palm Oil Magazine” dedicates 2 pages in its July-September 2014 issue to argue ‘the pursuit of palm oil profits by agribusinesses in Guatemala is fueling a food crisis’ (Asia Palm Oil Magazine 2014, 22). It also flags out the labour and human rights problems in Guatemala’s flex palm complex including ‘forced labour, child labour, health and safety risks, poor housing, community displacement and wage exploitation’ (ibid, 23).

⁵⁰⁴ Additionally, CACIF adopts its ‘Institutional Policy on Human Rights’ in 2014, and makes sure the news spreads like wildfire in Spanish and English. This is welcomed by the OHCHR in Guatemala, which nonetheless argues ‘challenges remain with regard to transparency and policies to prevent and address possible negative impacts of business activities on human rights, especially on indigenous peoples’ rights’ (UN Human Rights Council 2015, 17).

chain response-ability. Flex agribusinesses' response-ability is pursued through using two tactics, namely "by decree compulsion" and "by market compulsion". The former mobilizes statutory means of contention, while the latter relies on voluntary, private regulatory ones. In both cases, a group of accommodators plays a central role, that of the "response-ability gatekeepers". These are state and social actors that seize flex agribusinesses' interest in fixing productive relations as an opportunity to hold them accountable on ethical, environmental and social terms.

As detailed in chapter 13, accommodators are further divided according to their character (i.e. lawful or criminal), and also consistent with their accommodative stream (i.e. amenable or reluctant). At least in principle, response-ability gatekeepers are lawful accommodators divided along the amenable and reluctant accommodative streams. Response-ability gatekeepers in a reluctant accommodative stance do not necessarily view flex cane and palm commodity production as desirable in environmental or social terms. But they capitulate to the power of flex cane and palm complexes. They hold them accountable—often publicly—for their most environmentally and socially disruptive practices in order to push them in the direction of less harmful ones. Conversely, amenable response-ability gatekeepers believe that, when done properly, flex cane and palm commodity production can be ecologically and socially sound. They strive to raise flex cane and palm companies' awareness of the benefits offered by ethically and environmentally sound practices, and then work with the corporations to move in such directions. I return to reluctant response-ability gatekeepers in chapter 13, focusing here on the role played by amenable response-ability gatekeepers in advancing the staying alive strategy through statutory and private voluntary means.

11.4.3.1. Response-ability by decree tactic

A series of (trans)national state actors, with supportive and amenable accommodative standpoints to the agro-extractive capitalist project, is the driving force behind the response-ability by decree tactic. Regarding

the role of (trans)national state actors in the amenable accommodative stream, I have described the oligarchic-bourgeois-friendly national structure in the realms of land, labor, environment, trade, investment, property, finance, and fiscal and monetary policies. Among these, three are central to flex cane and palm companies' pro-social branding response-ability. First, national development plans behind the reproduction of the general conditions of flex commodity production adhere to the green economy policy dogma (PRONACOM 2005, PRONACOM 2012). As a result, public support for green finance and bio-economy projects (i.e. biofuels, bio-materials and bio-energy) becomes a national development priority. Second, the land good governance policy dogma is upgraded to fit the context of escalating flex cane and palm complexes. This means, on the one hand, underfunding FONTIERRAS' land purchase program and funding its land lease program—reflecting a priority shift in land policy, from freehold to leasehold forms of land access.⁵⁰⁵ On the other hand, “emergency funds” are allocated to purchase land when there is a need to expedite the resolution of conflicts that disrupt flex cane and palm commodity production.⁵⁰⁶ Third, the public-private small-scale palm contract-farming program (PROPALMA) is pumped with national food security funds, and framed as a ‘pro-poor policy to stop land-grabbing’.⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, I have advanced that PROPALMA helps turning over more land into palm production in the context of fierce competition for land and growing unrest from grassroots communities with flex palm companies' land control-grabs.

The main contribution to flex cane and palm companies' response-ability by amenable accommodators located within the state involves the social grants and multi-stakeholder governance initiatives described in chapter 4. I have pointed out that various efforts by flex cane and palm companies to reproduce the personal conditions of production of

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with indigenous peoples' “sector” representative in FONTIERRAS' Executive Board, July 2013

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Head of Research of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA), January 2007

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with PROPALMA Director, September 2009

plantation workers are secondary to those to reproduce the natural conditions of cane and palm commodity production. Mirroring the capitalist state's role in the 'reproduction-management of labour-power' (Poulantzas 1978, 185), public conditional cash transfers from 2008 on are a timely survival subsidy for the latent, and especially the stagnant, sections of the population surplus to meet the accumulations needs of the agro-extractive capitalist project. But unlike elsewhere (e.g. Bolivia and Ecuador), where social grants are funded through tax revenues and natural resource extraction rents—and thus perform as a wealth redistribution mechanism—in Guatemala they are funded through public debt. This favors especially domestic, but also foreign, financiers in control of public debt bonds, in addition to socializing debt rather than wealth. As a result, (trans)national financiers not only profit but also increase their political leverage over Guatemalan powers within the state.

11.4.3.2. Response-ability by market compulsion tactic

Although public international financial institutions also contribute to it in key ways, this tactic is spearheaded by large international conservation and development NGOs acting as amenable response-ability gatekeepers of private nature. These rely on market-led, voluntary self-regulation mechanisms to enhance the response-ability of flex cane and palm complexes. These include codes of conduct and performance certification schemes of their own (i.e. the Rainforest Alliance Seal), or developed through multi-stakeholder platforms such as the “Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials” (RSB), “Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil” (RSPO) and “Better Sugarcane Initiative” (BONSUCRO). BONSUCRO claims to ‘believe in the power of sugarcane. In fact, we believe it could play a valuable role in *solving many of the 21st century’s problems*’ (2016b emphasis added). The US Vice-President of RSPO co-founder World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) argues that ‘when done right, oil palm can be carbon positive, and improve biodiversity and

livelihoods'.⁵⁰⁸ And the RSB claims to offer 'trusted, credible tools and solutions for sustainability and biomaterials certification that *mitigate business risk, fuel the bioeconomy*, and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals that enable the *protection of ecosystems and the promotion of food security*' (2017 emphasis added). Performance certification schemes feed into and take advantage of flex agribusinesses' pro-social branding efforts to "acclimatize" and "populisticize" cane and palm commodity production. For instance, in its 'Programme for Certification of the Palm Oil Industry in Guatemala', Dutch NGO Solidaridad includes

[P]roduction and environmental support activities, to be implemented by WWF; decent work and operational support activities, to be implemented by CentraRSE [World Business Council for Sustainable Development in Guatemala], and national interpretation for small producing countries (SPC), to be implemented by Proforest Initiative (PFI)' (Solidaridad. 2014).

In fact, certification by amenable response-ability gatekeepers becomes a *sine qua non* condition for flex cane and palm corporations supplying transnational consumer goods manufacturers when subject to social scrutiny. Together with sugar producers, BONSUCRO includes the largest transnational manufacturers and distributors of sugar-based consumer goods (BONSUCRO. 2016). Similarly, most transnational companies that manufacture, transport and distribute consumer goods, including palm oil or any of its fractions, have also committed to 100% RSPO-certified palm oil from 2015 on.⁵⁰⁹ Furthermore, initially informal and voluntary certification schemes gain statutory recognition as major state powers abide by them. Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway,

⁵⁰⁸ In 4th Latin American Conference of the RSPO in Honduras, August 2013

⁵⁰⁹ GREPALMA's President in I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers, October 2013. However, transnational giants Unilever, AHOLD and Nutreco question the effect of commodity certification schemes if only "Western" companies call on suppliers to certify, while large importers in China and India do not (in Certification and beyond: solutions for responsible agro-commodity governance, workshop organized by the 'Ecosystem Alliance', October 2014, The Netherlands). This might explain why the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation 'wants to enter into partnerships with major palm oil consumers like China and India, with the aim of working together to improve environmental and social conditions in the palm oil sector' (Government of the Netherlands. 2015).

Denmark, Belgium, France, UK, Sweden and the Netherlands committed to 100% RSPO certified palm oil by 2015 (RSPO. 2017). Holding the keys to the main entry point of palm oil imports to Europe—the Rotterdam port—the Netherlands seeks to expand its commitment to the whole European Union by 2020, and then ultimately worldwide (Government of the Netherlands. 2015).

Additionally, public international financial institutions in an amenable accommodative stance also contribute to enhancing pro-social branding response-ability of flex cane and palm complexes via corporate codes of conduct. Two of these necessitate attention here because of their relation with the global land resource rush under convergent world crises. The first one is the 2010 “Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respect Rights, Livelihoods and Resources” put forward by the World Bank in collaboration with FAO, IFAD and UNCTAD. The amenable accommodative stance underpinning its principles can be easily distilled from their rationale. This is especially evident in its statement that ‘even when investments seem to hold promise of raising productivity and welfare and are consistent with existing strategies for economic development and poverty reduction, it is important to also ensure that they respect the rights of existing users of land, water and other resources, that they protect and improve livelihoods at the household and community level, and that they do no harm to the environment’ (World Bank 2010, 1). The second one is the “Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard” initiated by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 2008, and upgraded in 2009 to meet ‘the sustainability criteria of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB⁵¹⁰)’ (IDB. 2016). The scorecard is described by its architects as a ‘tool to better anticipate the impacts of potential biofuel projects on sensitive issues such as indigenous rights, carbon emissions from land use change, and food security’ (IDB. 2016). According to one of the officials who developed it, ‘the Scorecard is helpful for both investors on biofuel

⁵¹⁰ Former name for the Roundtable on Sustainable Bio-materials.

projects, and civil society organization trying to hold them accountable'.⁵¹¹

11.4.4. The iron fist in velvet glove strategy

Supporters' efforts to inculcate villagers with a "culture of progress" are secured—and in some cases advanced altogether—through a "culture of fear". This means that rather than to "fill the gaps" left by ideological domination mechanisms, violence, or the threat thereof, underpins the consent-seeking strategies of supporters from the very beginning. Such is the aim of the fourth and final core strategy of the contention repertoire in support of the agro-extractive capitalist project, namely the "iron fist in velvet glove". This strategy is unleashed to deter and punish anyone who contests the rise of flex cane and palm complexes, especially those who do so by violating or threatening the oligarchic-bourgeois' assumed quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise. The openness of the YASTEXES to public grants and productive relations' fixes to soften the blow on people and the environment is one thing. Yet it is another—very different—thing to make concessions regarding the supremacy of the rights to property and freedom of enterprise over any other political right, let alone over customary, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. This authoritarian and violent strategy mainly targets transformative challengers, especially the "communist" and/or 'insurrectionary Indian' (Hale 2004) among them. But the iron fist in velvet glove strikes hard at anyone who dares to contest the agro-extractive capitalist project—and the hegemony of the oligarchic bourgeoisie more generally—be it a state, corporate or social actor, national or foreign. To do so, it relies on "rule of law" and "jungle law" tactics.

11.4.4.1. Rule of law tactic

Considering 'law [as] an integral part of the repressive order and of the organization of violence' (Poulantzas 1978, 77), this tactic entails the

⁵¹¹ Interview, December 2008

mobilization of the state's ideological and repressive apparatuses in the defense of the agro-extractive capitalist project. Since this translates into making "national interests" the interests of the agro-extractivists, it is key for supporters to build and reproduce a favorable balance of forces within the state. This had already been formulated during neoliberal globalization in 1986-2005, as laid out in the chapter 3. To renovate this favorable balance of forces within the state in 2006-2014 to meet the specific challenges of the agro-extractive capitalist project, flex cane and palm companies mobilize their trade and political organizations. ASAZGUA and GREPALMA join forces within the Chamber of Agriculture (CAMAGRO). From there, this alliance works in the authoritative political organization controlled by the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeoisie, the "Coordinating Committee of Financial, Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Chambers" (CACIF).

Rule of law serves the iron fist in velvet glove strategy through advocacy, judiciary and violent means of contention, and is deployed either simultaneously or sequentially. A notorious example of rule of law advocacy is the fast-track approval by the Guatemalan Congress in February 2013 of eight new laws on investment protection and labor flexibility promoted by the CACIF. This takes place at the same time that Congress freezes, once again, the discussion of the Comprehensive Rural Development Law. Other relevant cases of rule of law advocacy include CACIF's efforts to: i) shape the 2005-2015 and 2012-2021 "National Competitiveness Agendas" (PRONACOM 2005, PRONACOM 2012); ii) secure privileges in the negotiation of the Association Agreement with the European Union, ratified by the Guatemalan Congress in June 2013, and; iii) pre-empt any serious redistributive measure in the series of farming, rural development and land policies approved from 2009, and especially from 2012 on, to productively support subordinate agrarian classes. The case of the 2014 land policy is quite telling. When questioned about the reasons for the major differences between the initial and final drafts of the land policy, one of the Sub-Secretaries of Agrarian Affairs explains: 'it is not exactly what we aimed at, right? But as the saying goes, where a captain rules, a

sailor has no sway!⁵¹² Supporters also lobby town mayors in areas of cane and palm expansion—although at times they do so in ways that bear a stronger resemblance to bribery than advocacy. In 2013, a group of flex palm companies invites all the mayors from the South Petén and the Northern Transversal Strip sub-regions to learn about the benefits of flex palm commodity production for their townships during a week-trip to an all-inclusive luxury resort in Cancun.⁵¹³

If advocacy fails, is not timely carried out, or the situation calls for an exemplary response, judiciary litigation ensues. To this end, CACIF works with a cohort of well-trained (and even better paid) lawyers, most often part of law firms within the network of oligarchic-bourgeois families' business groups.⁵¹⁴ Three rule of law sort of judiciary processes help to illustrate the use of this means of contention by supporters. First, after ruling against the government's plans to dictate how community consultations should be conducted in 2011, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court rules in 2013 against the binding character of 61 community consultations on mining and development mega-projects carried out between 2005 and 2012. As officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights explain in this regard, 'although the Constitution acknowledges constitutional hierarchy to international human rights treaties, including ILO convention 169 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Constitutional Court rules against their pre-eminence over domestic law'.⁵¹⁵ Second, CACIF's lawyers are involved in the arbitration panel to which the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) brings Guatemala in November 2014 for violations of labor rights under the labor chapter of the free trade agreement between the two countries (DR-CAFTA). Of the 16 companies the US Government faults for the systematic violation of labor rights, 4 are flex palm

⁵¹² In small group conversation following the land policy consultation with peasant organizations convened by the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs and the FAO, March 2014

⁵¹³ Interview with Raxruha mayor, July 2013

⁵¹⁴ Interview with Congress member and founder of the Mayan Lawyers Association, July 2013

⁵¹⁵ Interview in March 2013

companies (Véliz 2015). And third, in January 2013, the municipality of Raxruha (bordering Chisec and Fray zones) imposes extraction fees on flex palm companies to ‘cover a small part of the costs of restoring, only partly, what the palm companies destroy and pollute’.⁵¹⁶ Unexpectedly, one month later the mayor receives a court notification stating the Agricultural Chamber (CAMAGRO) is suing the municipality for illegal taxing. The facts that neither the flex palm companies in Raxruha nor CAMAGRO inform him beforehand—and especially considering the negative ruling by the Constitutional Court in May 2014—outrage Raxruha’s mayor along with the other 56 auxiliary village mayors. As a result, they switch from a reluctant accommodative positioning to a full-fledged challenging stance, and declare flex palm companies “*persona non grata*” in Raxruha.⁵¹⁷

And when advocacy and litigation take too long, or do not render the expected outcomes, supporters mobilize state violence to advance their interests as rule of law. Violence is exactly what Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane company demands from the state in 2011 in order to evict 769 Q’eqchi’ families from the cane fields they were occupying since 2010. The occupation had been organized as a form of protest against the way in which the company hoarded land in the area, and is further discussed in chapter 12. As the original company owner argues on camera during our coverage of the mass evictions: ‘we bring employment and wealth; how are they [evicted families] going to progress with those tiny corn plants [“maicitos”]? And who else do you think would be willing to invest US\$ 50 million in this petty valley [“vallecito de pipiripau”]? We are here to enforce rule of law in the name of real development’ (author interview in Revenga 2011). Some 1.500 police and military troops are involved in the violent evictions that result in a Q’eqchi’ man killed, dozens injured, and houses, harvests and crops burned to ashes. As the owner’s son and CEO of Chabil Utzaj explains while our camera is rolling, ‘we must burn down their cultures and shacks, otherwise they

⁵¹⁶ Interview with Raxruha mayor, August 2013. The extraction fees include US\$ 1,25 per ton of palm fresh fruit, US\$ 0,03 per cultivated palm, and US\$ 0,03 per liter of palm oil produced.

⁵¹⁷ Participation in the assembly of Raxruha’s municipal and community authorities, May 2014

will be back tomorrow morning!’ (ibid). It is always striking to witness firsthand how the oligarchic-bourgeoisie exerts its power over the state. Chabil Utzaj’s owner happens to receive a phone call during my filmed interview. Mr. Carlos Menocal, the Minister of Interior, is at the other end of the line—personally checking in with the CEO to get an update on how the evictions are progressing. Chabil Utzaj’s owner duly excuses himself and starts walking away from the camera to talk to the Minister. Nonetheless, his words are clearly recorded: ‘Hey Carlitos! [...] no, no, no, I told you already! You must proceed with the arrest warrants!’ (ibid).

The call for rule of law violence by Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj flex cane company resembles GREPALMA’s demand of the President of the Republic during the labor conflict that sparks in 2011 in Sayaxché palm plantations. In addition to respecting ‘rule of law’ and deploying ‘combined police and military forces’, GREPALMA pushes the Guatemalan President to ‘carry out civil and military intelligentsia work to take *definitive measures* against the protest organizers and their funders’ (GREPALMA 2012 emphasis added). I examine this in more detail in chapter 13. Indeed, rule of law violence unfolds through direct repression as well as through the criminalization of protest and protestors. Disruptive collective action is crushed using the Anti-terrorist Bill as justification. Land occupations, in particular, are treated as criminal offenses of ‘aggravated usurpation’.⁵¹⁸ As a result, ‘a multitude of labor and peasant organizers are put in jail for defending human rights’.⁵¹⁹

In order to map protest and identify disruptive forces, oligarchic-bourgeois think tanks and universities support state intelligentsia—just as they did during the armed conflict. Two good examples of this collaboration are the two reports leaked online and authored by Miguel Castillo Girón, a faculty member of the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations of Francisco Marroquín University (EPRI-UFM).

⁵¹⁸ Interviews with Operations Director of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, April 2006, and Head Lawyer of the Legal Team of the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC), July 2011.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with OHCHR officials, March 2013

2013). In 2010, he writes a report for the National Association of Power Generators entitled: ‘Analysis of actors mobilizing against power generation projects and strategies to confront them’ (Castillo Girón 2010). In 2012, he pens another report, this time ‘for the President of the Republic and government authorities on security, justice and power generation’, entitled: ‘Organizations promoting social conflict in Guatemala. Networks of domestic and international organizations putting rule of law at risk and discouraging private investment’ (Castillo Girón 2012). The actors identified in these reports are largely social justice movement organizations and their national and foreign allies.⁵²⁰ Their epistemological premises and narratives are common currency among Guatemalan libertarian ideologues, usually linked to Francisco Marroquin University (UFM).⁵²¹

Furthermore, the government uses the 1965 counter-insurgent ‘Decree 7 on Preventive States of Emergency’ to deploy the army where there is a protest against flex cane and palm companies.⁵²² Renewed light is shed on yet another open secret in Guatemala in 2006-2014: the close links between the oligarchic-bourgeoisie and the military. For instance, on May 10, 2013, a Guatemalan court convicts General Ríos Montt of genocide and crimes against humanity. Two days later, CACIF demands nullification of the court’s verdict. ASAZGUA’s President and Board member of CACIF claims that Ríos Montt was sentenced ‘due to international pressure’, and thus the sentence should be nullified since ‘there was no genocide in Guatemala, and our demand is not against the trial but for respect to the *due process*’ (Todanoticia 2013)(Todanoticia

⁵²⁰ Including ‘human rights, alternative media and research organizations, Catholic Pastorals, national and international development NGOS, the Norwegian and Dutch development cooperation agencies, etc.’ (Castillo Girón 2012, 11).

⁵²¹ One of the most viral among them is Mr. Raul Minondo Ayau, nephew of UFM’s founder and first rector, owner of a private security firm, political analyst, and newspaper columnist. In one of his famous journalistic columns, he brands Mayan social justice activists as ‘criminal, terrorist pseudo-leaders’ (Minondo Ayau 2013), and international development cooperation agencies funding indigenous peoples’ organizations as ‘malevolent priests and foreign terrorists’ (ibid.).

⁵²² Or against mining, timber and oil companies, or power and infrastructure development mega-projects

2013 emphasis added). Similarly, GREPALMA's President, also President of CACIF's at the time, calls on the Constitutional Court to 'effectively guarantee the rule of law' (ibid). And 8 days later, the Constitutional Court buckles under the pressure and nullifies the sentence against General Ríos Montt. Furthermore, in 2012 and with funding from 'the big businessmen in the country' (FaT's President in Gamazo 2013), the extreme-right "Foundation against Terrorism" (FaT) emerges in response to the wave of trials against army officials accused of genocide. According to FaT's President,⁵²³ these trials are a new 'offensive by the Marxists in the guise of human rights defenders' (ibid). Hence, FaT publicly accuses all challengers and their allies, including international funding agencies, of being "terrorists" (FaT 2014).

In his 2017 best-seller, Guatemalan army Colonel Rubio Castañeda blames his institution for being a pawn of the oligarchy. He offers a list of the military garrisons deployed to protect oil companies in Petén, the cement quarrel in San Juan Sacatepéquez, mining companies in the western highlands, flex palm companies in the northern lowlands and flex cane companies along the southern coast⁵²⁴. He also reveals that the Canadian mining company behind the controversial Marlin Mine in San Marcos and Huehuetenango departments pays each army official US\$ 9,5 and each soldier US\$ 5 per day to protect its mining operations (2017, 264). Similarly, the owner of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company explains he had to pay petrol, food and lodging for the some 1.500 army and police forces involved in the forced evictions.⁵²⁵

11.4.4.2. Jungle law tactic

Despite their large numbers, it is not only military and police forces that evict Q'eqchi' families from Polochic's Valley cane fields. The security chief of Chabil Utzaj flex cane company is in command of some 50 men

⁵²³ Son of Ríos Montt's Minister of Interior, who was hijacked in 1982 by the armed faction of the labor party (PGT).

⁵²⁴ For which protection a whole brigade (i.e. including several garrisons) is deployed

⁵²⁵ Interview with the original owner and the CEO of Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, March 2011, in *Revenge* (2011).

tasked with burning down the crops, harvests and houses of the evicted families. The police officer in charge allows them to participate in the eviction ‘under the condition they do not carry any fire guns’.⁵²⁶ So instead, this time they are equipped with iron batons. Whereas police and military troops are brought in from other regions to avoid any potential bonding with the families to be evicted, the “private security taskforce” is recruited from nearby villages. Among the taskforce are Q’eqchi’ men—just as landless and jobless as those they are evicting—who cover their faces and make sure to avoid our camera. Bosses apart,⁵²⁷ most of these “barefoot thugs”—some of whom will agree to a murder for only US\$ 15⁵²⁸—are usually men pushed to the margins of the agro-extractive capitalist project by constrained farming abilities and lack of employment.⁵²⁹ In other words, they come from the latent and stagnant sections of population deemed surplus to the accumulation needs of the agro-extractive capitalist project. I come back to them in chapter 13, but it is important to point out here that barefoot thugs are the cannon fodder of the jungle law tactic of the iron fist in velvet glove strategy. This tactic is branded after the generalized context in 2006-2014 Guatemala, where it is not the fittest but the strongest that prevails. Jungle law involves the use of illegal violence in organized but covert forms to eliminate selected challengers, and even some accommodators. It is only when the aim is to intimidate (e.g. to force a land sale), or deal with large groups of disruptive challengers (e.g. forced evictions), that jungle law violence is overt.

⁵²⁶ Interview during the evictions in March 2011

⁵²⁷ Including some foreign “experts”, as flagged-out in the land relations chapter regarding the similarities between the threats used to force land sales to palm companies in Guatemala and Colombia.

⁵²⁸ Interview with bodyguard and former member of the Guatemalan army special forces - Kaibiles-, November 2011

⁵²⁹ Interviews with Head of legal Affairs of “Defensoria Q’eqchi’” (April 2008); members of the Interinstitutional Roundtable of Agrarian Coordination of Izabal department (June 2009), women sex-workers in Sayaxché, (June 2011), bodyguard and former member of the Guatemalan army special forces (November 2011), Seven young Q’eqchi’ men from a Sayaxché village (June 2013) and High school Director, Community Development Council President, and petty capitalist farmer from an Ixcán village (July 2013).

I have noted earlier that the Catholic Pastoral counts the number of people killed for refusing to sell land and/or organizing in defense of territory by the dozen—in Petén alone and only between 2004 and 2009. At the national scale, the International Trade Union Confederation reports the killing of at least 53 trade unionists between 2007 and 2013 (ITUC 2013, 7), and positions Guatemala as ‘the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionists’ (ITUC 2013, 20). The Inter-American Human Rights Commission reveals that in 2014 alone, 814 attacks⁵³⁰ ‘have been directed at human rights defenders who work the main problems affecting the country’s human rights, such as those dedicated to defending the rights of indigenous peoples, territory, land and environment’ (IACHR 2015, 18). Jungle law violence leads some challengers, especially the younger ones, to call for an “eye for an eye” response. But vivid memories of scorched-earth genocidal violence of the 1980s deter calls to go “back to the arms” in struggles for social justice that have thus far been random. Rather, responses to violence generally entail pleas to state and social organizations working on the protection of human rights defenders to look after threatened or vulnerable challengers.⁵³¹ Nonetheless, there have been instances of spontaneous violent retaliation, especially in the form of community mob lynchings.⁵³² One notorious case is that two barefoot thugs being lynched to death by a mob for their alleged participation in the violent raid of a land occupation camp in the Polochic Valley.⁵³³

11.5. Politics across supporters

Supporters, and especially those coming from a dominant class background and converging within CACIF, stick to the “unity in

⁵³⁰ ‘Includ[ing] murder, threats, arbitrary detentions, persecution and surveillance’ (IACHR 2015, 18).

⁵³¹ Like the Ombudsman Office, the NGO Protection Unit for Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA), Peace Brigades International (PBI), and Protection International and the Project of International Accompaniment in *Guatemala (ACOGUATE)*.

⁵³² The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reports 297 people died and 1,043 were injured in mob lynchings in Guatemala during 2008-2015 (IACHR 2015, 69).

⁵³³ Interview with Panzós mayor, Polochic zone, May 2010

diversity” maxim for political representation. The following excerpt of Krznaric’s interview with a bourgeois-oligarch member of CACIF’s Board is telling

‘Once we went to speak with the President [of Guatemala], and the President was there, and all his ministers, on the other side of the table. And when I wanted to say something I didn’t ask the President for permission to speak...I asked [CACIF’s President] Víctor Suarez – ‘President Víctor?...you should take note of this detail [...] it says a lot, it says a hell of a lot!...*it explains why...in very few countries [...] the business sector has the decision-making weight that it does in Guatemala [...]* I have various explanations...one of them is...this *order and discipline, these small rituals that give the impression of a granite-like unity*, even though when we leave the meetings we’re fighting about ‘Why did you say this?’ or ‘Why did you propose that?’ *But when we are speaking to people we have a single voice, we’re a single body*’ (Krznaric 2003, 88 emphasis added).

Following these lines, cracks in the granitic façade of the Guatemalan oligarchy projects are evident. CACIF choice of the “Better without Divisions” slogan for its “X National Businessmen Conference (ENADE)” in September 2013 is not a random one. For it is there that CACIF seeks to address divisions in society at large, as well as those occurring across fragmented dominant classes, amid in the context of increasing agrarian, environmental and labor conflicts.⁵³⁴ Some of these divisions are the consequence of long-standing antipathies among oligarchic families or between individual members thereof.⁵³⁵ My interest here, however, is located in the cleavages of ideological and material nature across supporters of both dominant and subordinate classes. Generally speaking, rather than from the antagonistic contradictions between dominant and subordinate classes, or between indigenous and non-indigenous people, tensions across supporters stem from non-antagonistic material and ideational contradictions. The former concern the distribution of agro-commodity value portions (i.e. wage, ground-

⁵³⁴ Participant observation at the ENADE 2013

⁵³⁵ See, inter alia, Krznaric (2003), Solis and Solano (2006) and Casaús Arzú (2007)

rent, interest, intellectual property rights' royalties and payments for environmental services). The latter involve gender, generational and ethnic cleavages, as well as competing ideological-political perspectives. For instance, there are differences across bourgeois-oligarchs who embrace liberalism in the economic realm but conservatism in the moral and political ones, and those who fully embrace the liberal doctrine. And yet there are cleavages across those who ascribe to utilitarian, social or libertarian streams of liberalism.

Cleavages notwithstanding, none of these streams question the fundamental pillars of a broadly liberal ideology behind the agro-extractive capitalist project, namely the sacrosanct rights to individual private property and freedom of enterprise. Hence, despite discussing them briefly in this current discussion and once again when exploring the politics within supporters, the full-fledged investigation of ideational-political cleavages across fragmented dominant classes stands at the margins of my research interests.⁵³⁶ I now turn my discussion to five key non-antagonistic contradictions behind the tensions among supporters in 2006-2014.

11.5.1. Across agro-extractivists and national financiers

High interest loans from domestic financiers compromise the rate of profit for flex cane and palm companies, especially for those whose oligarchic family business group does not include financial companies.

11.5.2. Across agro-extractivists and rentier landlords, outgrowers and contract-farmers

Land leases, outgrowing and contract-farming arrangements with flex cane and palm companies can compromise the abilities of rentier landlords, outgrower dependent agrarian bourgeois and Petty Capitalist Contract-farmers to maintain their access to land, even when such

⁵³⁶ See Velásquez (2013) for an informed analysis.

arrangements do not involve any change in land property. On the one hand, although rentier landlords do not face production risks, natural disasters and social conflict can adversely affect the continuity of the leasing arrangement. On the other hand, many dominant class outgrowers and subordinate class contract-farmers are at pains to stay in business, due to their inability to capitalize on the economies of scale of intensive, large-scale monoculture farming. Additionally, the “disinvestment costs” of uprooting old crops (especially palm) and recovering soil’s fertility fall entirely on their shoulders. Furthermore, these material contradictions are underpinned by political distrust among these supporters. For instance, the 450-hectare palm outgrower from the Fray zone claims that GREPALMA does not represent his interests, but only those of big palm companies.⁵³⁷ Others feel flex cane and palm companies are not supportive enough when conflicts erupt. This is the case of another outgrower from Fray in his land conflict with villagers. He feels let down by the palm company to which he supplies his crops, a case that I revisit in the following chapter. It is sufficient to point out here that company representatives simply argue, ‘the problem is between the community and the outgrower and we have nothing to do with it’.⁵³⁸

11.5.3. Across large cane and palm producers and modern dependent agrarian bourgeois

These politics involve flex cane and palm companies and large cane and palm outgrowers, on the one side, and modern dependent agrarian bourgeois, on the other. The latter include rubber planters, banana and rice growers, and especially cattle ranchers, negatively affected by heightened pressure over land, water and other environmental goods, as well as by ecological cost-shifting relations, associated with flex cane and palm commodity production. I have explained that a good deal of the new area under cane and palm plantations between 2000 and 2010 was

⁵³⁷ Interview in December 2013

⁵³⁸ In meeting with representatives from PALIXCÁN flex palm company and the National Council of Protected Areas, July 2009

formerly grazing land. This means flex cane and palm companies push cattle “up north”, from the southern coast to the northern lowlands, and even into the Mayan Biosphere Reserve beyond the agrarian frontier.⁵³⁹ According to a cattle sector analyst and former Minister of Agriculture, ranches are larger in the north than in the south of Guatemala, but in addition to the costs of moving the herds, northern soils are of poorer quality and require more fertilizers in order for pasture to grow (in Siglo21 2011, 16). I have also listened to the complaints of cattle ranchers: their herd falls ill after drinking from water bodies flowing through cane and palm plantations, and cows hardly put on weight because of the stress they endure from the multitudes of flies attracted to superfluous cane and palm biomass left to rot in the fields for manure. Indeed, it is President of Raxruha Cattle Breeders Association—not an environmental or animal rights activist—who argues that ‘palm devours soil nutrients and dries the land due to its large water demand, and this adversely affects animal and plant life’.⁵⁴⁰

Furthermore, ranchers and other modern dependent agrarian bourgeois are adversely impacted by the labor regime fix in corporate cane and palm plantations. According to Panzós’ mayor in the Polochic valley zone, ‘when Chabil Utzaj announced cane cutters could make up to US\$ 10 a day, all other landlords complained that “these people” had never seen so much money before’.⁵⁴¹ Similarly, a well-established cattle rancher from Fray laments that he has to pay higher wages following the wage increase in palm plantations that was implemented in late 2012.⁵⁴² To make matters worse, ranchers and other dominant class subjects are particularly upset over the nuisance and costs imposed by gates and road tolls installed by flex cane and palm companies.

⁵³⁹ Interview with the Technical Director of the National Council of Protected Areas in Petén, October 2011.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview in October 2013

⁵⁴¹ Interview in March 2008

⁵⁴² Interview in October 2013

11.5.4. Across absentee agro-extractivists and parochial dominant classes

Perhaps less committed to the “unity through diversity” principle for political representation among Guatemalan dominant classes, the Costa Rican agricultural manager of PALIXCÁN flex palm company does not hesitate to criticize the latifundia. He claims ‘there is a lot of *unused* land in Guatemala, and palms generate income and jobs’ (in Luxner 2014). This mirrors a non-antagonistic yet contentious contradiction between parochial agrarian upper classes and absentee owners of flex cane and palm companies. Or seen from a different perspective, among parochial, *ladino* and lower-ranking creole upper classes into banana, rice, coffee, cattle or rubber, and the “*crème de la crème*” of the agrarian oligarchic-bourgeoisie embodied in the absentee owners of flex cane and palm companies. Despite long standing class antagonism between conservative seigniorial landlords and liberal agrarian bourgeois, both see their local “patron” status threatened by the arrival of flex cane and palm companies into “their” towns. As the well-established cattle rancher from Fray argues, ‘already the “*choleros*”⁵⁴³ [managers and engineers] show off, let alone the “*meros meros*” [the very owners]! They walk around as if the town belongs to them now’.⁵⁴⁴

11.5.5. Across agro-extractivists and amenable response-ability gatekeepers

This ideational-material non-antagonistic but contentious contradiction stems from the fact that agro-extractivist bourgeois owners of flex cane and palm companies—usually men of advanced age—were brought up to be held accountable to the family patriarch and nobody else. This is a source of tension among them and often female, YASTEXE-types of amenable response-ability gatekeepers in multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms. For instance, during the workshop on the progress of RSPO certification of Guatemalan flex palm companies in February 2014, the two spokeswomen from the NGO Proforest seem to

⁵⁴³ This is a derogatory term used in some Central American countries to refer to domestic service workers.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview in October 2013

choose their words very carefully. In an informal chat after the workshop, one of them complains that the certification process ‘is going to turn my hair grey!’ Among other reasons for this, she explains that older, male company owners and managers often confront her with the argument that ‘this is how we have *always done it* and it works for us, our customers and suppliers and our workers’.

11.6. Politics within supporters

If the politics across supporters generally abiding by the “unity through diversity” maxim for political representation are difficult to grasp, pinpointing those within core supporters abiding even more strongly by this principle are nearly impossible. Nonetheless, two broad sets of tension-ridden non-antagonistic contradictions can be discerned within the ranks of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie—one of material and the other of ideological nature.

11.6.1. Material politics

These are rooted in the law of competition. I have argued that competition across and within flex cane and palm complexes is tamed through their cartelized trade and political organizations. ASAZGUA and GREPALMA divide export quotas among members, share technical knowledge and R+I+D costs, and trap financiers in discursive flexibility webs. More generally, ASAZGUA and GREPALMA are key to the reproduction of the natural and personal conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production through “staying alive” fixes to productive relations.

Even so, flex cane and palm companies compete with one another in domestic markets for consumer goods (e.g. different sugar or cooking oil brands), labor, money-capital and above all land. Flex palm companies burgeon in the northern lowlands because of the constrained availability and soaring land prices the southern coast cane-haven. But this “de facto” geographical division—the southern coast for cane and the northern lowlands for palm—does not preclude tensions

during the land rush in 2006-2014. For instance, the arrival of Chabil Utzaj flex cane company in the Polochic foils the plans of the Polochic-based Naturaceites flex palm company to expand in that area.⁵⁴⁵ And shrinking availability and exorbitant land prices along the southern coast are important reasons for Guatemalan flex cane companies to expand beyond the regional and even national boundaries.⁵⁴⁶

Heightened land competition explains the flex agribusinesses' fix to use mechanisms other than those that are freehold property-based for land that is to be transformed into cane and palm cultivation. The rationale behind one such alternative mechanism, the government's small-scale palm contract-farming program (PROPALMA), illustrates just how stiff competition for land can be within the flex palm complex. Directly appointed from his position as an engineer in a flex palm company supplied by contract-farmers, PROPALMA's Director claims that the program aims at 'stopping peasant dispossession by large palm companies'.⁵⁴⁷ Accordingly, during the inauguration of PROPALMA in Ixcán zone in March 2010, he claims, 'the enemies of PROPALMA are the Catholic Social Pastoral, the environmentalists, and the large palm companies because they do not want oil palm to become a poor people's crop'.

These kinds of practices are unheard of within the cane complex, though in reality it works under very different political conditions than its palm equivalent. Whereas palm complexes struggle to expand and consolidate in the northern lowlands in 2006-2014, the "Cane Barons" of ASAZGUA imposed the "Sugar Pax" in the southern coast through blood-soaked force during the 1980s. Nonetheless, not all Cane Barons share the same power. The original owner of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company complains that his company is ASAZGUA's 'Ugly

⁵⁴⁵ And informs its decision to expand in Fray and Ixcán zones in the Northern Transversal Strip (interview with NaturAceites Polochic Head Industrial Engineer, March 2008)

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with senior manager of Madre Tierra flex cane agribusiness, January 2014

⁵⁴⁷ Interview in September 2009

Duckling'.⁵⁴⁸ When questioned about how other fellow flex cane company owners see his move into the northern lowlands, he mumbles that ASAZGUA never showed much sympathy for his pioneer project (ibid). Indeed, ASAZGUA's relative silence during the lengthy and bloody Polochic conflict speaks volumes about this internal tension.

11.6.2. Generational politics

These concern the differences between older cane and palm tycoons forged at the heat of Cold War' Bullets and Beans Agro-capitalism under military dictatorships. Such politics also implicate the YASTEXES who grew up under neoliberal globalization and Guatemala's transition to bourgeois democracy. In a 2012 interview by journalist Rodríguez Pellecer, 37 year-old Head of New Businesses at Guatemalan transnational flex cane giant Pantaleon Sugar Holdings⁵⁴⁹ explains

'My generation is the first one after the Cold War and the polarization legacy of the internal armed conflict; we had the privilege and the opportunity to study abroad, to expand our horizons, to know about similar cases elsewhere [...] I feel now there is some openness to see beyond that historical legacy, and to sit and talk with people from different sectors; and I see this within the business sector and gradually in other sectors too. [The need] to see beyond one's side benefits [and] to comply with the environment, workers, communities and so on' (interview by Rodríguez Pellecer 2012).

Himself an influential Guatemalan YASTAC⁵⁵⁰—founding editor of alternative online media Plaza Pública—Rodríguez Pellecer describes his interviewee as 'the different (but similar) businessman' (2012). Of course, older and younger agro-extractivists agree on the agro-extractive capitalist project's fundamental pillars regarding the absoluteness and

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, February 2008

⁵⁴⁹ As well as President of the "Private *Competitiveness Council*", board member of *Guatemalan private sector's think tank* "Foundation for the Development of Guatemala" (FUNDESA), *President of two votes reception committees of the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE)*, and *alumnus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University* (Rodríguez Pellecer 2012).

⁵⁵⁰ Young although smartly-trained activist.

supremacy of the rights to private property and freedom of enterprise. Rather, their differences lie in the various “business cultures”, and especially with regard to how best reproduce their class hegemony. In short, whereas both share an authoritarian corpopulist agenda, YASTEEXE agro-extractivists are more “corpopulist” and their elders more “authoritarian”. Old guard agro-extractivists are often the kind of economically liberal, and ideologically and politically conservative, type of bourgeois oligarchs mentioned earlier. This means that they see force—through rule of law or jungle law—as the necessary and legitimate means of defending class privileges and ethnic supremacy. Conversely, YASTEEXE agro-extractivists are the “truly liberal” type of bourgeois-oligarch, and tend to lean towards libertarianism. Rather than an outright rejection of force, this means they see the use of violence, or the threat thereof, as a means of amplifying persuasion-based strategies of power reproduction. Hence, to avoid losing face (i.e. trust by financiers, stock-markets and consumers) in current global markets, the YASTEEXES prioritize rule of law over jungle law to advance the iron fist in velvet glove strategy. Furthermore, they are ardent campaigners for property rights as human rights,⁵⁵¹ and the ones who came up with framing cane and palm commodity production as an extraordinary response-able phenomenon to address world hunger and climate change.

In fact, the YASTEEXES are the master-minds behind consent-seeking discursive flexibility and staying alive strategies to upgrade flex cane and palm complexes from basic sustainable branding through corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity chain response-ability. As I continue to stress, this entails more than sheer marketing demagogy. These strategies result in actual changes in productive relations that soften the blow on rural dwellers and external nature, even if in ways that do not compromise the fundamental ideological pillars of the agro-extractive capitalist project or the agribusinesses’ rate of profit, and only to the extent required to comply

⁵⁵¹ Rothbard (1982), Thomson Reuters Foundation and Omidyar Network (2016)

with the performance standards negotiated with response-ability gatekeepers. Thus, the YASTEXES follow a political rationale that prioritizes material concessions in the production process in the short-term as the path towards enhanced competitiveness, and profitability and class hegemony in the mid- and long-term. Despite gradually consenting to these “new ways”, especially following heightened conflict from 2009 on, YASTEXE business and political culture clashes with the short-term profit maximization-oriented, and authoritarian-paternalistic ruling style of the old guard agro-extractivist bourgeois.

Chapter 12 Challengers of the agro-extractive capitalist project

12.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses who becomes a political subject challenging the agro-extractive capitalist project, and why and how they do so. By challenging political subjects I mean those who use their dissent and/or unrest as a practice of contestation against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and struggle for an alternative transformative project. Certainly, not all fragmented subordinate agrarian class subjects dissent from the agro-extractive capitalist project, let alone make a practice of contestation out of their dissent when it does occur. And there are also dominant agrarian class subjects who feel anything but enthusiastic about flex cane and palm companies' expansion. But the bulk of challengers come from subordinate agrarian classes. But rather than from a particularly adversely affected, capable or visionary subordinate class/fraction, gender or generation, challengers traverse the spectrum of all fragmented agrarian classes. Spanning across challengers' state and social allies, the "young although smartly-trained activists' (YASTACS) stand out for their fresh contributions and profound commitment to social justice struggles.

Following heightened expansion of flex cane and palm companies—and opportunities to build alliances at the grassroots in response—the challengers' political agenda gravitates towards the strengthening of villagers' abilities to gain, regain, maintain and control access to land and other natural resources. Struggles against land dispossession now include the strengthening of livelihoods, especially through farming intensification, environmental, health and labor grievances, as well as the reaffirmation of local sovereignties. In other words, challengers gradually move from contesting flex cane and palm companies' expansion, to struggling against agro-extractive capitalism and promoting a transformative life project. This framing process results in challengers' contention being articulated as "defense of territory" (DoT),

and advanced through “convergence” and “land sovereignty” (Borras and Franco 2012) contention strategies.

The convergence strategy, in turn, utilizes two tactics, the “intersectionalization of grievances”, and the “interweaving of struggles and forms of struggling” in defense of territory. Regarding the former tactic, the intersectionalization of class interests and ethnic identity markers is quite straightforward for lowlander Q’eqchi’ cultivators. For the intersectionalization of proletarian, feminist and youth identity markers and interests in DoT struggles, a more proactive approach is required through the active involvement of (Q’eqchi’) ideologues, community organizers and allies. Regarding the latter tactic, struggles around land as means of production, soil and territory, conditions of (re)production through farming and employment, distribution of environmental goods and bads, and for the recognition and rights of subaltern ethnicities, genders and generations are inter-woven into the fabric of the defense of territory banner. The further “indigenization” of partisan peasant organizations in 2006-2014 brings not only claims for recognition and self-determination into the agrarian justice movement, but also gives it an environmental justice perspective.

The land sovereignty strategy clashes frontally with the absoluteness and supremacy of quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise that are defended forcefully by the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. To this end, it leans on two main tactics that are named here according to their purpose, to “gain and regain” and to “maintain and control” land access. The limits to leasehold land access mechanisms, and the challenges to (re)gain and expand access to freehold land property, inform everyday and partisan forms of struggle to gain and regain land access for repeasantization. Everyday forms of struggle include “moral economy” sales to fellows, and free land leases by petty land owners to landless and land-scarce subordinate class fellows. Partisan forms of struggle to (re)gain land access can vary among those striving towards regaining, and those striving towards gaining, access. The former straddle land sovereignty strategy’s two core tactics of gaining and regaining, and

maintaining and controlling land access. The latter include struggles by hacienda-tenants to claim ownership over estate land as in-kind payment for decades of unrealized wages and labor benefits, and especially land occupations.

The tactic to maintain and control land access is a response to land sales by subordinate classes to non-fellow village outsiders. Hence, its purpose is twofold, to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones, and to tackle the root causes driving unwillful land deals. On the one hand, struggles to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones can take on everyday and partisan forms. Everyday forms include a string of arsons in cane and palm plantations, and everyday struggles by women to stop their male partners from selling off the family land plot. Partisan struggles are defensive and offensive. Defensive struggles revolve around initiatives to strengthen community systems of land resource governance. Offensive struggles involve the resignification of the communal form of land ownership. Nonetheless, to render positive political outcomes, (re)communalization in formalistic-legal terms must be underpinned by changes in land governance practices at the grassroots. On the other hand, struggles to tackle the main reasons behind unwillful land deals focus on strengthening community livelihoods, especially through sustainable farming intensification. Higher yields in the karstic soils of the northern lowlands follow the cultivator's ability to dedicate the amount of labor that low external input/agroecological farming intensification demands in the tropics. Aware of this, and lacking state support, subordinate class cultivators look for alternatives through everyday and partisan forms. The former include increasing the drudgery of family labor, as well as exchanging labor among fellow village cultivators. The latter involve alliance building, especially with YASTAC agronomists. These alliances result in "campesino a campesino" knowledge exchanges, and the organization of municipal "peasant markets". While these initiatives resemble struggles for food sovereignty by partisan peasant organizations from 1986-2005, efforts towards food sovereignty in DoT struggles are reified

as a means towards achieving land sovereignty, rather than the other way round.

Nonetheless, convergence and alliance building efforts between, across and within multi-subordinate class challengers at the grassroots, and (trans)national state and social actors, are not free of tension. First, there are cleavages *across* fragmented subordinate class challengers in the countryside. The transformative life project envisaged by challengers revolves around a family farming life in autonomous rural communities. While this resonates with many (Q'eqchi') lowlanders, not everyone is able and/or willing to commit to such an idyllic project. Second, there are key fractures *across* national peasant, indigenous people, women and youth social justice movements. On one side, there are cleavages between the peasant and the indigenous peoples movements, which result in Q'eqchi' lowlanders' struggles for community self-determination being too "indigenist" for some peasant organizations, while their efforts toward food sovereignty and land reform are too "peasantist" for some PanMayanist organizations. On the other side, there are tensions that stem from the peasant and indigenous people movements' insufficient and/or inappropriate attention to women's struggles for recognition, respect and promotion of their (re)productive and political rights and roles. Third, there are competing political subjectivities *within* fragmented classes of proletarians, family farmers and petty capitalist farmers. And fourth, there are non-antagonist yet troublesome contradictions *within* the national partisan peasant movement. These are directly or indirectly tied to the governance policy dogma, clashing perspectives on the movement's political agenda, and the fall of the peace progressive donors' complex.

In sum, the political economy, ecology and sociology of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and its authoritarian corporalist political agenda, drive challengers to develop a political roadmap in which convergence of grievances, struggles and forms of struggling are its major mile markers. But if the indigenous-peasant community is the key political instrument for grassroots convergence in DoT struggles, it has

yet to be seen whether and how national partisan peasant organizations converge to scale up DoT struggles at the grassroots.

12.2. Cast of characters

Challengers basically originate from fragmented subordinate classes. I have indicated that there are also critical voices among fragmented dominant classes—yet when the time comes, they side with their agro-extractivist dominant class fellows. Hence, agro-extractivists capitalist project critics from dominant class are considered here as “reluctant accommodators”, and detailed in the next chapter. I also pointed out that the fact challengers stem from fragmented subordinate classes is certainly not to say that *all* proletarians, family farmers and petty capitalist farmers are unhappy about flex cane and palm companies’ expansion; let alone is it an indication that all those who are unsatisfied make a practice of contestation of their dissent. I have detailed that there are subordinate class supporters, and will later explore those within this class who seek to accommodate themselves to the agro-extractivists capitalist project in the best possible way.

Therefore, the old yet historically-contingent questions of why and which “peasants” revolt (or not) remain relevant in early 21st-century Guatemala.⁵⁵² Is it about the withering away of interclass reciprocity mechanisms, coupled with intolerable claims by dominant classes threatening subsistence minimums? (Scott 1976, Thompson 1971, and to some extent Moore Jr. 1966); is it a response to deepened commoditization of the productive forces? (Polanyi 1968 [1944]); does it concern the subjective experience of heightened exploitation? (Paige 1975); is it related to increasingly adverse ‘incorporation terms and conditions’ (Du Toit 2004, 1003) into flex cane and palm companies’ labor regime? Does it have to do with the broader directions of change in productive relations? (Wolf 1969, Moore Jr. 1966); is it an outcome of heightened ethnic, gender and/or generational cleavages? (Escobar 2008, Hartsock 1983, Spivak 1988, Calhoun 1994); is it motivated by the

⁵⁵² (see Kurtz 2000 for an informed review of questions and theories)

leadership and representational influx from avant-garde national partisan movements? (Marx 1977 [1852], Lenin 1965 [1921]); or is it sparked by the opening of political opportunities and the seizing of cultural and organizational resources for collective action? (McAdam et al. 2004). For sure, all of these issues inform—at least to some extent—the responses of fragmented subordinate agrarian classes to the rise of flex cane and palm complexes in 2006-2014. Nonetheless, figuring out who becomes an active challenger, and why they do so, are not straightforward processes. Haunted by a ‘safety first’ principle (Scott 1976, 38), some feel wary about the “bad old times”. As argued by a 77-year-old Q’eqchi’ man from a village in the Polochic highland zone who is a former hacienda-tenant

‘Sometimes I wonder if we have progressed at all. As colonos [hacienda-tenants] the patron forced us to work for nothing. Yet, we had a patch of land to grow our maize. If anything went wrong with the harvest, he would never let us starve. He looked after us because he needed us. Now we are free labor, they say. Free to starve, I say! The rich people do not need us any longer, and so do not care anymore’ about us (interview, February 2007).

However, the aim of the challengers is not to restore old moral economy-based interclass bondages. Rather, they strive for a transformative project in which little—if any—room is left for dominant agrarian classes, as I discuss shortly. Certainly, challengers face a context in which mercantilist landlords wither away, although their legacy of patriarchy and racism is passed to younger generation agro-extractivist bourgeois—the YASTEXES—in “same same but different” ways. But who challenges the agro-extractive capitalist project and why they do so needs to be examined against the backdrop of the fast and deep restructuring of the forces of production in agriculture that have occurred since 1986, and especially during early 21st-century convergent crises. The genealogy chapter described the exclusion and/or unfavorable terms of exchange for subordinate agrarian classes in food, labor, land, knowledge, agro-inputs and credit markets, as well as the

end of state support for their forms of farming and food provisioning during neoliberal purge agro-capitalism from 1986-2005. Additionally, I have argued in Part II how the “staying alive” fixes to productive relations by flex cane and palm companies somewhat soften the blow on agrarian subordinate classes.

Put simply, the labor regime fix adversely affects the load and conditions of (re)productive work for workers and their families, as well as the health and safety of plantation workers, their families and rural dwellers more broadly. This is why despite the growing numbers of plantation workers, many explain that ‘we work for the companies, but did not surrender to them’.⁵⁵³ Most petty capitalist palm contract-farmers are squeezed with debt, but faced with high disinvestment costs if choosing to quit. Shrinking land availability and soaring prices following flex cane and palm companies’ land control-grab mechanisms undermine the land access abilities of fragmented subordinate classes. The high interest rates to which flex agribusinesses’ financial fix contribute adversely affect access to credit for simple reproduction (e.g. through farming). Additionally, land securitization and the deepened commoditization and financialization of environmental goods constrain the abilities of subordinate classes to benefit from land and environmental resources and services. Flex cane and palm companies’ knowledge fix increases their social metabolism, and with it the transference of waste and pollutants to rural dwellers and (agro)ecosystems. And “climate-smart” practices in flex cane and palm commodity production also bring about negative outcomes in ecological relations of resource access and cost-shifting for the under-privileged.

Following these lines, rather than representing a particularly adversely affected, capable or visionary subordinate class/fraction—as in Paige’s revolutionary rural proletariat or Wolf’s rebellious middle peasantry—challengers represent a spectrum of *all* fragmented agrarian classes. Hence, challengers make a political issue out of their antagonistic class

⁵⁵³ Group interview with palm plantation workers in Fray, May 2009

contradiction with the agro-extractivist bourgeois, and/or the foregoing environmental and ideological grievances. Grassroots challengers are not alone. They forge alliances with a myriad of (trans)national state and social actors. State allies come in from different sectors—food, agriculture, land, environment human rights, etc.—branches—executive, legislative, judiciary and the Ombudsman Office—and geographical scales—municipal, departmental, national and international. Social allies mostly include peasant, indigenous people, youth and women’s partisan organizations of (trans)national scope, and their allies—engaged journalists and alternative media, scholar-activists, human rights, environmental justice, agroecology or popular education organizations, (trans)national NGOs, activists artists, as well as liberation theologians and Catholic pastorals. Among all of the foregoing state and social allies, and located across their ranks, the group of ‘young although smartly-trained activists’ (YASTACS) stands out for their fresh contributions and gratuitous commitment to the cause. Nonetheless, alliance building efforts between, across and within multi-subordinate class challengers at the grassroots and (trans)national state and social actors, are not free of tensions.

12.3. Political agenda and frame of contention

As a vector and an expression of the sophistication of the political agenda in support of the agro-extractive capitalist project, the challengers’ agenda also upgrades with precise political sophistication in 2006-2014. During the initial phase of flex cane and palm companies’ expansion (roughly from 2004-2008), challengers’ political agenda focuses on the opposition to the soaring number of land deals with non-fellow village outsiders. Already at this early stage, there are many villagers worried about the social and environmental transformations associated with flex cane and palm companies’ expansion. But hopes are still riding high in regard to the employment and economic development promises made by supporters of the agro-extractive capitalist project. By 2008, though, such promises start to more closely resemble a pipe dream. In August 2008, and following growing unrest at the grassroots,

an alliance of community, peasant, research, human rights and alternative media organizations, together with the Catholic pastoral and allied NGOs, calls for the “I National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities”. In this pioneering meeting—later to be followed by others⁵⁵⁴—representatives from 87 villages in especially the northern lowlands region, but also in the southern coast region, come together with a series of social organizations critical of intensifying flex cane and palm complexes. They have the two-fold aim of exchanging information on the pace, mechanisms and implications of the expansion of flex cane and palm companies, and scaling-up their localized responses to flex agribusinesses’ expansion. This meeting offers many insights on how to challenge the agro-extractive capitalist project. Four such insights lay the foundation for a review of the initial agenda in opposition to land deals with non-fellow village outsiders. First, whereas opposition to these land deals is still paramount, those who already lost access to land are counted in the thousands. Second, together with access to farmland, flex cane and palm companies’ expansion adversely affects access to water, forest and environmental resources and services more generally. Third, struggles against land deals need to broaden their scope to address not only forceful deals, but also voluntary-yet-unwillful land sales by petty land owners. Fourth, by the time of the meeting, in August 2008, thousands of villagers are already incorporated into the plantation labor regime of the flex agribusinesses.

As a result of this meeting, the challengers’ political agenda gravitates towards the strengthening of villagers’ abilities to gain, regain, maintain and control access to land and other natural resources (hereafter land resources). Struggles against land dispossession now include livelihood strengthening—especially through farming intensification—environmental, health and labor grievances, as well as the reaffirmation

⁵⁵⁴ As part of the organizing committee I was an observant participant in this meeting, the three more that followed (in July and November 2009, and August 2010), as well as in the two regional meetings for the northern lowlands (in November 2013 and June 2014), and the two more which focused on the Polochic sub-region (in August and September 2009). See Annex I for a complete list.

of local sovereignties. In other words, challengers gradually move from contesting flex can and palm companies' expansion, to struggling against agro-extractive capitalism and promoting a transformative life project. And this framing process leads to an upgrade of the original "stop land sales" contention frame into one of "defense of territory". The use of the concept of "territory" in contentious politics—and particularly in indigenous people's struggles for recognition and the right to have rights—is nothing new.⁵⁵⁵ But it is during the cycle of contention around heightened resource extractivism in the early 21st-century convergent crises conjuncture that a discourse on territory spreads like wildfire to be embraced by larger (i.e. other than PanMayanist organic intellectuals), and broader (i.e. other than Mayan peoples) collectivities. There are two key reasons for this. First, defense of territory (hereafter DoT) is a comprehensive master-frame of contention. Territory is farmland, river, soil, forest, seeds, wildlife, community, language, body, and a common history. And it is all of this at once. DoT resonates with struggles against land resource dispossession, farming intensification and hyper-exploitation of women's (re)productive labor. In doing so, it mobilizes an eclectic assemblage of claims and grievances that speaks to radical agrarian populist, de-colonial, post-extractivist, environmentalist, feminist and Marxist critiques and alternatives alike. Hence, DoT is a sympathetic contention frame for fragmented subordinate class challengers at the grassroots. Second, in calling for the "defense" of the life territory, the DoT frame serves a transformative political agenda in two ways. On the one hand, it opens grounds to address old cleavages between dominant and subordinate classes, as well as across genders and generations within the latter to a lesser extent. On the other hand, DoT endows with meaning a transformative project in the early 21st century through its claims regarding collective rights, agrarian justice, respect for

⁵⁵⁵ The right of native peoples to territory was enshrined in the 1989 International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169, and further developed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. And the Guatemalan PanMayanist movement employs the notion of "territory" as socially-constructed space in which human and external nature co-constitute each other at least since the 1980 Iximché Declaration, as I discussed in the genealogy.

Mother Earth, political self-determination and yet again, although less strongly, to gender and generational equity.

An archetypical gender- and generation-sensitive indigenous-peasantry becomes the key political subject, and a quintessential (rural) community the main political instrument, in the challengers' political agenda within the DoT frame. The reasons informing the prioritization of a family labor-based class identity and the rural community as both ideal transformation vehicles and pillars of an alternative life project need to be understood in this period's context. It is one in which dreams of a capitalist alternative capable of providing the rural masses with stable urban employment and a living wage are gone.⁵⁵⁶ On the one hand, the rise of a gender and generation-sensitive indigenous-peasantry as DoT's core political subject is underpinned by at least five highly sensitive compromises among challengers. I return to these when discussing the contention repertoire, and the politics across and within challengers. Here, it suffices to briefly outline them. The first political compromise plays out across and within diverse subordinate classes and their gender, ethnic and generational divisions. The second one involves different factions of the partisan peasant movement, and is two-sided. On one side, it entails a compromise among the different peasant organizations stemming from Leninist, Maoist and Trotskyite revolutionary movements. On the other side, it involves a middle ground between the former type of partisan peasant organizations, and those originating from Catholic Action that are guided partly by Christian-democrat and partly by liberation theology principles. The third compromise concerns that among "insurrectionary" and "sanctioned" expressions of the PanMayanist movement. The fourth is between the partisan peasant

⁵⁵⁶ Edelman's reflections on the vibrancy of peasant ("campesino") economic aspirations and political subjectivities among different subordinate classes in Costa Rica at the turn of the 21st Century speak strongly to my research context and subjects: 'the lack or instability of waged employment keeps alive and strengthens campesino aspirations. Campesino migrants, and the working class and informal sector descendants of campesino parents or grandparents with insecure and perpetually subordinate position in the urban labor market, are less likely to develop a proletarian consciousness than to crave the self-sufficiency and autonomy which they imagine, rightly or wrongly, they or their ancestors once enjoyed' (1999, 207).

movement and the PanMayanist movement. And the fifth political compromise has to do with the peasant and PanMayanist movements—generally haunted by a hegemonic masculinity that confers male dominant roles over females and other gender identities (Carrigan et al. 1985)—and a women’s movement along multiple feminist and non-feminist lines that has been gaining steam since the 1990s.

On the other hand, rather than mass political parties or national partisan social justice movements—steered by an avant-garde of Marxist or PanMayanist organic intellectuals as in previous times—the core political instrument in DoT struggles throughout 2006-2014 is the community. The “retreat” to the community in the early 21st century to advance a transformative political project reflects two key disappointments with bourgeois democracy from 1986 onward. First, there is the general disappointment with electoral politics. A good example comes from the 2011 general elections. After several failed attempts, and half-way through the campaign period, political forces from both Marxist and PanMayanist camps finally agree to constitute a “Broad Front” (Frente Amplio).⁵⁵⁷ They then back Maya-K’iche peasant activist and 1992 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú as presidential candidate. Yet, the coalition comes too late, and the magic of Mexico-based Ms. Menchú seems to work better abroad than in the Guatemalan hinterlands—for the Broad Front only receives some 3,3⁰% of the total votes. Second, there is a disappointment with the governance policy dogma. I have explained that during peace negotiations, and following the 1996 peace agreements, national partisan organizations devote attention and resources to lobbying and advocacy efforts with state actors. However, time- and resource-consuming involvement in multi-stakeholder negotiations, advocacy processes, and governance institutions—like FONTIERRAS’ Executive Board from 1998, the negotiations on comprehensive rural development from 2002, or the

⁵⁵⁷ Including the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity- Ample Left Movement (URNG-MAIZ), New Nation Alternative (ANN), Winaq, and New Republic Movement (MNR) political parties

anti-DR-CAFTA campaign from 2002-2005—render meager outcomes for the under-privileged.

Therefore, the reterritorialization of emancipatory rural struggles is at the top of the challenger's political agenda. The "Council of Q'eqchi' Communities in Resistance" is formed in the Polochic sub-region in late 2009. Similarly, a "Coordination of Palm Affected Communities" thrives in the South Petén and Northern Transversal Strip sub-regions from 2013 on. This does not mean that alliances with national and transnational state and social actors are irrelevant, or that they are not pursued at all. Quite the contrary, these remain key to DoT's contention repertoire, as I will argue shortly. The reterritorialization of DoT struggles reflects the realization by challengers that concessions from agro-extractive bourgeois owners of flex cane and palm companies are only achieved through constant agitation, organization and mobilization from below. And this is something not only grassroots challengers realize. Gradually, national partisan peasant, indigenous people, youth, and women's movement organizations and allies acknowledge the impetus and legitimation of grassroots struggles in defense of territory, and the need for them to branch out rather than reach inside. An anecdote from the August 2008 "I National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities" is telling here. A charismatic national partisan peasant movement leader, himself a Maya-K'iche, is facilitating a sensitive plenary discussion on strategies to stop the expansion of flex agribusinesses. Following an incendiary speech calling for revolt against the ultimate expression of capitalist domination in the countryside, he asks participants for inputs. Silence fills the meeting hall. After a pregnant pause, another charismatic leader but from a local Q'eqchi' youth organization that is part of the organizing committee approaches his more experienced national peer. He thanks him for his input, and lowers his voice to tell him not everyone there was a guerrilla supporter, and that these are things nobody here speaks about publicly, let alone with strangers and in Spanish. Then the younger leader takes over facilitation, switches to the Q'eqchi' language, and a vivid discussion ensues among participants. I fear that this is the end for what had been

our intention to link national partisan movement organizations with those at the local grassroots. But to my surprise, the national peasant leader feels positively impressed by the level of analysis, commitment, and organization of Maya-Q'eqchi' participants, as well as by their local organizations.

This anecdote mirrors the more general process through which national partisan social justice movements converge in struggles in defense of territory in 2006-2014. And this is neatly captured in the formal and substantive differences between two national peasant congresses held precisely in 2006 and in 2014. Formal-yet-telling differences include the number of participants and their gender balance, the way they describe themselves, the conveners, and the very name of the congress. In 2006, 578 members of indigenous people and peasant organizations (46% women) gather in the “III National Peasant Congress” (Peasant Congress 2006). The conveners include the “National Coordination of Peasant Organizations” (CNOC), the “Rural Women Alliance” (AMR), and the “Commission on Land-Related Rights of the Indigenous Peoples” (CNP-Tierra).⁵⁵⁸ Conversely, in the 2014 Congress, 756 participants are present (51,5% women) from

‘Kaqchikel, Tzutuhil, Mam, Ixil, Kiché, Q’anjob’al, Akateco, Q’eqchi’, Chuj, Tectiteco, Sipakapense, Poq’omchí, Uspanteco, Chortí, Achí, Pocomam, Xinka, Garífuna and ladino peoples, members of more than 180 *peasant, indigenous people, traditional authorities, women, feminist, youth, childhood, and non-governmental organizations, convene ourselves* to the “IV National Congress of *Peoples, Communities, and Organizations*” (Peoples, Communities, and Organizations Congress 2014, emphasis added).

Additionally, the political agendas that are brought forth from these congresses show substantive differences. In short, whereas the 2006 Congress develops a “peasant-indigenous” agenda, the 2014 Congress articulates an “indigenous-peasant” one. The former already uses the

⁵⁵⁸ Author’s participation in the organizing committee.

DoT frame, stating, ‘we are building a movement to struggle for and defend life, *territory*, dignity, and peoples’ sovereignty’ (Peasant Congress 2006). Nonetheless, inspired by ‘socialist and anti-imperialist’ principles, seizing state power is at the heart of the agenda enunciated at the 2006 Congress. And the struggles for ‘comprehensive agrarian reform and food sovereignty’ are a priority (ibid). At the 2014 Congress, however, the bottom-up transformation of Guatemala along *Buen Vivir* lines takes center-stage (Peoples, Communities, and Organizations Congress 2014). Comprehensive agrarian reform remains, but food sovereignty as such is not listed. Revealing the result of the series of compromises between, across and within challengers pointed out earlier, the agenda orchestrated at the 2014 Congress highlights ‘resistance, defense, struggle, recuperation, and maintenance of territories; build-up of social and popular power; support for a peoples’ economy; reconstitution of peoples, and; individual and collective disassembling and unlearning for de-colonization, de-patriarchialization, and de-commoditization of the mind and the self’ (ibid).

There is a call to revitalize the spirit of unity and rebellion of the 1980 Iximché Declaration, but seizing state-power is no longer mentioned outright in the Congress’ resolutions. Changing the nature of the state remains central to the political agenda of peasant, indigenous peoples and women’s movements.⁵⁵⁹ But the ways in which this is envisioned in the 2014 Congress resonate more with the agenda of the 2007 “III Continental Summit of Indigenous Nations and Pueblos of Abya Yala” in Iximché, Guatemala,⁵⁶⁰ than with that of the 2006 Guatemalan Peasant Congress. Calling for a move “from resistance to power”, the 2007 Summit proposes to change the nature of the state through constitutional assemblies towards pluri-national, post-neoliberal states (e.g. the Bolivian and Ecuadorian experiences), and the exercise of

⁵⁵⁹ Interviews with member of Congress and founder of the Mayan Lawyers Association, Guatemala’s Women Sector National Board member and CCDA General Secretary in July 2013, November 2011 and November 2013, respectively.

⁵⁶⁰ In which all major Guatemalan (indigenous)peasant organizations participate.

power from below through self-determination, even without state recognition (Declaration of Iximché 2007).

12.4. Repertoire of contention

Defense of territory involves defensive and oppositional—as well as offensive and propositional—struggles. In the northern lowlands during 2006-2014, challengers’ DoT struggles rely on two main strategies: “convergence” and “land sovereignty” (Borras and Franco 2012). These are underpinned by a series of tactics simultaneously advanced by multiple state and social actors through various means and forms of contention. Altogether, they make up for the repertoire of contention informing the *politics between* challengers and supporters, and *between* challengers and accommodators. I discuss these strategies in detail shortly, including their tactics, means and forms of contention, after summarizing them in table 40.⁵⁶¹

Table 40 Repertoire of contention in defense of territory in the northern lowlands in 2006-2014

Strategies	Tactics	Means	Forms
Convergence	Intersectionalization of grievances	Discursive	Everyday Organized and overt (partisan)
	Interweaving of struggles and forms of struggling	Discursive	Organized and overt (partisan)
Land sovereignty	Gain and regain land access	Discursive, solidary, advocative, disruptive, and public & private regulatory	Everyday Organized and overt (partisan)
	Maintain and control land access	Discursive, solidary, advocative, disruptive, and public & private regulatory	Everyday Defensive and offensive; organized and overt (partisan)

Source: Author’s own elaboration

⁵⁶¹ The discussion that follows builds on published material during the PhD process, especially in Alonso-Fradejas (2015).

12.4.1. Convergence strategy

The questions of “unity” of fragmented subordinate classes, and “articulation” of their struggles for social justice, have been part of emancipatory political agendas in Guatemala for quite some time. Chapter 3 explained that they were core to Marxist and PanMayanist agendas alike, in the context of mapping genealogy. Efforts towards “unity” and “articulation” of fragmented classes and struggles by challengers in 2006-2014 are carried out through a “convergence strategy”.⁵⁶² The rationale behind this strategy is pretty straightforward: if material, ecological and ideological grievances converge, so should struggles for (re)distribution and recognition. Hence, “convergence” as DoT strategy deals with the questions of “unity” and “articulation” through means other than the prioritization of one sort of grievances over others (as in Marxist or PanMayanist struggles during the armed conflict), or the “layering” of multiple on top of one other (as with the Civil Society Assembly during peace negotiations). Rather, convergence as DoT strategy involves the intersectionalization of grievances, and the interweaving of struggles and forms of struggling. This means that convergence as a political strategy in defense of territory involves two tactics.

First, it requires an understanding of political subjects in DoT struggles as the bearers of heterogeneous identities and interests (e.g. the young, Q’eqchi’, family farmer, woman), and thereby as the subjects of multiple grievances. Second, it necessitates the weaving together of agrarian, environmental and labor struggles—and intertwining them with those for recognition and the right to have rights by indigenous peoples, women and youth. Hence, convergence as DoT strategy aims to bring together the multiple justifications (frames) and ways of struggling (repertoires) of different challengers into one comprehensive struggle against a general source of particular problems, and for a common transformative project.

⁵⁶² For a discussion on convergence as a transnational contention strategy see Tramel (2018 forthcoming).

12.4.1.1. Intersectionalization of grievances tactic

Clashing head on with the divisive “Trojan horse” strategy by supporters, this tactic is grounded in discursive means advanced through everyday and partisan forms of contention. In the northern lowlands, class interests and ethnic identity characteristics fit hand in glove . Following a racialized class hierarchy, dominant class subjects are either creoles or ladinos, and subordinate class subjects are overwhelmingly indigenous peoples. Indeed, lowlander Maya-Q’eqchies’ are widely seen as stereotypical “indigenous-peasants”. I specified that they actually call themselves the *R’al Ch’och* (Children of the Earth), although Q’eqchi’ is their language and the term through which they are commonly known. Key to the *R’al Ch’och* ethnic identity are the interests of an ideal autonomous peasantry, which were colonized by the Spanish by the cross rather than by the sword, and managed to avoid colonial “encomiendas” (labor drafts) until coffee-led agro-extractive mercantilism in independent Guatemala from the 1870s on. For instance, as the *Aj K’ij* (traditional spiritual authority, guide and counselor) in the ceremony that followed the seizure of a cane field in the Polochic Valley explains: ‘We are not cane. We are, our bodies are, maize; white maize for our teeth, yellow for our skin, black for our hair, and red resembling of our blood’ (filmed in *Revenga* 2012). And when evicted later on, a Q’eqchi’ woman moans and explains that after all the labor, care and expectations put into their crops, the burning of their harvest ‘hurts as if it were my own children burning’ (ibid). Furthermore, the intersection of peasant interests and Mayan identity traits is also crossed by an “eco-consciousness” by many subordinate class Maya-Q’eqchi’ lowlanders, which resembles Martínez-Alier’s ‘environmentalism of the poor’ (2002).

A more proactive approach is required, however, for the intersectionalization in DoT struggles of proletarian, women’s and youth identity markers and interests. Efforts towards their mobilization in DoT struggles are usually undertaken by (Q’eqchi’) ideologues, community organizers and allies through discursive means, and in a

proactive fashion. Broadly speaking, workers' agitation, organization and mobilization are supported by partisan peasant movement organizations, and to a much lesser extent, by urban trade unions. Women's agitation and mobilization is pretty much a self-led process, organized through women's community groups and organizations, with support from mixed peasant organizations, NGOs, and especially militant women's organizations of (trans)national scope. And youth agitation, organization and mobilization in DoT struggles is carried out by grassroots youth organizations, with support from Catholic Pastorals, national partisan (indigenous) youth movement organizations (e.g. MOJOMAYAS and H.I.J.O.S), and "Red Tz'ikin", a network of independent, young community-based activist filmmakers and barefoot journalists. In the intersectionalization of youth and women identities and interests within DoT struggles, the YASTACS are paramount.

12.4.1.2. Interweaving of struggles and forms of struggling

The second tactic behind the convergence strategy also uses discursive means, only those that are advanced through more partisan forms of contention. It clashes with the discursive flexibility strategy of the supporters by weaving together material, ecological and ideological struggles and forms of struggling. In other words, struggles around land as means of production, soil and territory, conditions of (re)production through farming and employment, distribution of environmental goods and bads, and recognition and rights of subaltern ethnicities, genders and generations converge under the banner of defense of territory. It is not by chance the nine day march from Polochic Valley to Guatemala City in 2012 is named the "Indigenous, Peasant, Popular, and Women's March in Defense of Mother Earth, Against Evictions, and for Comprehensive Rural Development". And it is no coincidence that the final declaration of the 2014 "IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations" states 'the defense of the multiple territories: body, land, historical memory, and the promotion of a comprehensive agrarian reform are *interwoven* today like never before in

the history of Guatemala' (Peoples, Communities, and Organizations Congress 2014, emphasis added).

The genealogy chapter explained how the process of “indigenization” of partisan peasant movement organizations kick-started during the peace negotiations in 1992, with the constitution of the “National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination” (CONIC), marking the the 5th Centenary of the Spanish invasion of the Americas. But it is in 2006-2014 that this process brings recognition and self-determination claims, as well as an “eco-consciousness”, more strongly into the agrarian justice movement. The greening of the peasant movement helps in building and/or strengthening alliances with the few but active Guatemalan environmental justice NGOs, and thus folds environmental justice claims into the fabric of DoT struggles. As a result, either genuinely or out of sheer ‘malcontent environmentalism’ (Arsel et al. 2015),⁵⁶³ former revolutionary partisans see in the environmental justice struggle a way of heeling DoT that resonate with urban dwellers concerned about the ecological disruption of (agro)extractivist projects. Among them, a group of government officials part of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) stands out. This is a group of progressive YASTAC environmentalists in key technical and managerial positions. Especially active in CONAP’s branch in Petén—and responsible for overseeing multiple protected areas including the Mayan Biosphere Reserve—they broaden CONAP’s traditionally narrow conservationist approach to include an environmental justice perspective, ‘following the overwhelming facts’.⁵⁶⁴ During a meeting on agrarian dynamics in Petén in August 2013, CONAP’s representative directly claims that ‘palm and teak plantations are key threats to biodiversity’. And in the “2008-2012 Master Plan for Southwest Petén Protected Areas”, including Sayaxché zone, CONAP argues corporate palm plantations have encroached into

⁵⁶³ Professed by political activist subject to ‘long-lasting dissatisfaction with the broader processes underlying the development trajectory of the country, and resentment brought by their exclusion from shaping these processes’ (Arsel et al. 2015, 375), who embrace environmental justice as a means of ‘translating and transmitting widely shared political, economic and environmental concerns to broader audiences’ (ibid, 372).

⁵⁶⁴ Interview with CONAP Petén’s Technical Director, October 2011

protected areas, and their expansion is also pushing dispossessed farmers beyond the legal agrarian frontier (CONAP et al. 2008). Holding flex cane and palm companies accountable for environmental disruption is constrained by the fact that “Environmental Impact Assessments” (EIAs) are mandatory for transformation plants, but not for plantations. According to CONAP Petén’s Technical Director, ‘this rests on the wrong assumption that cane and palm plantations do not change the use of agricultural land, when the fact is that land is completely cleared, including fallows and forest pockets in swidden farming’.⁵⁶⁵ In 2008, the Departmental Development Council (CODEDE) of Alta Verapaz requests the National Forest Institute (INAB) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MARN) to assess the land use changes associated with palm plantations’ expansion. In the end, neither these government agencies nor the palm companies comply.⁵⁶⁶

12.4.2. Land sovereignty strategy

The other core strategy in DoT struggles is an expression of convergence at work in itself. Land access and control in DoT struggles aims to (re)assert access rights over land and natural resources by “communities” of “gender- and generation-sensitive indigenous peasants”. It is sought through different approaches to ownership, including communal and individual forms of private property on freehold and leasehold bases. But rather than taken as an absolute right to use and dispose of the given resource, private property rights are subject to internal limits through consuetudinary or conventional community land government norms and associated enforcing authorities. This way of regulating private (communal or individual) land resource property rights shapes and expresses the simultaneous understanding of land and external nature as means of production, soil and territory by Q’eqchi’ lowlander swidden cultivators (i.e. DoT’s “indigenous peasantry”). And the foregoing ends and means resemble Borras and Franco’s notion of “land sovereignty”, or ‘the right of

⁵⁶⁵ Interview, October 2011

⁵⁶⁶ Interview with Head of Polochic branch of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, June 2009

working peoples to have effective access to, use of, and control over land and the benefits of its use and occupation, where land is understood as resource, territory, and landscape. Simply put, land sovereignty is the realisation of the working peoples' human right to land' (Borras and Franco 2012, 6 emphasis in original). The land sovereignty strategy is echoed in the final declaration of the 2014 "IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations" when calling for

‘the need for new forms of harmonic coexistence to finish with private property-based relations of domination [while] promoting an Economy for Life through support for collective property; Nature’s recovery from pollution; role of indigenous peoples in promoting and maintaining the balance among people, Nature, and cosmos; recognition of women’s contributions to the reproduction of life; the necessary redistribution of care and reproductive tasks between men and women in households and communities; agro-ecological production, recovery of native seeds, the planting and use of medicinal plants, and the recognition of the role of diverse community authorities like midwives, spiritual guides, and the role of elders’ (Peoples, Communities, and Organizations Congress 2014).

Hence, the land sovereignty strategy in DoT struggles collides forcefully with the absoluteness and supremacy of quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise defended at all costs by the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. To this end, it employs two main tactics labeled according to their purpose, to “gain and regain” and to “maintain and control” land access. While substantively different, both tactics involve struggles underpinned by ‘radical solidarity’ (Moore Jr. 1966) across fragmented subordinate agrarian classes struggling for land sovereignty.

12.4.2.1. Gain and regain land access

I have explored how the conversion of haciendas and ranches into intensive cane and palm plantations constrains the abilities of the landless and land-scarce from across subordinate classes to lease land for seasonal farming. More generally, land ownership (re)concentration in

the grip of flex cane and palm companies overlaps with skewed land structures and conservation enclosures to drive up land prices. This adversely affects the abilities to gain, regain, and expand freehold or leasehold land access through the market. Such applies to all fragmented agrarian classes, including the agro-extractivists themselves. But as I explained, agrarian subordinate classes are impacted the worst, even when positioned at the seller's end of land deals. The limits to leasehold land access mechanisms, and the challenges to (re)gain and expand access to freehold land property are behind everyday and partisan forms of struggle—through discursive, disruptive, and public and private regulatory means—to gain and regain land access for repeasantization. Everyday forms basically include “moral economy” sales to fellows, through which they (re)gain land freehold ownership, and free land leases by petty land owners to landless and land-scarce subordinate class fellows, through which they (re)gain leasehold land access rights. But I also pointed out that free land leases serve both repeasantization and functional dualist (semi)proletarianization. Thus, free land leases are part of the contention repertoire of challengers and accommodators alike.

Partisan forms of struggle to (re)gain land access are subject to variation among those looking to regain, and those seeking to gain access. Those differences can be subtle but are worth highlighting to avoid conflating subordinate class struggles to gain land access with those in which they have access rights, but do not control them. The latter straddles land sovereignty strategy's two core tactics—gaining and regaining, and maintaining and controlling—of land access. Two examples shed light on struggles to regain land control. The first implicates a community in the Fray zone where land ownership was endorsed by the state in 1981, years before FONTIERRAS' land formalization process kicked off in 1998. A well-established cattle rancher seized 20 hectares of community land in the late 1990s, and villagers continually complained to FONTIERRAS about the instance for years to come. FONTIERRAS' officials reassured them time and again that the land was titled in their name, so there was no need to worry. In 2008, the cattle rancher signs and outgrowing contract with a palm company, and plants the contested

20 hectares with palm. Discouraged by government inaction, the community decides to occupy the plantation, chop off the palm branches, and plant maize among the palms.⁵⁶⁷ The second example involves a flex palm company and a Maya-Q'eqchi' village in Raxruha municipality (bordering Chisec and Fray zones). In June 2012, the village council files a petition with FONTIERRAS arguing that 2,5 hectares of village land had been seized by the company to set up a palm nursery. Additionally, villagers claim that the creek where they access freshwater is highly polluted with agrochemicals after flowing through the contested land. In the face of FONTIERRAS' silence, the villagers decide to block the national road running alongside the palm nursery in November 2012. They allow travelers to bypass the roadblock only after travelers have helped carrying baby palms from the nursery into the middle of the road. The company is forced to withdraw from the 2,5 hectares of village land. But in December 2013, the company's private security harasses villagers while they are fetching water from the creek that now draws the line between the company's plantations and their village.⁵⁶⁸

Regarding subordinate class struggles to gain land access, most common forms of struggling are inherited from previous contention cycles. They include struggles by hacienda-tenants to claim ownership over hacienda land as in-kind payment for decades of unrealized wages and labor benefits, and especially land occupations. One of the most notorious cases of land occupation is the one I have been referring to throughout this research occurring in the Polochic Valley zone. Outbid by the Chabil Utzaj flex cane company in 2005—and thereby dispossessed through perfectly legal means from the land they were attached to as Hacienda-Tenants, or previously leased for seasonal farming—hacienda-tenants, landless and land-scarce Maya-Q'eqchi' women and men join forces in 2009 through the “Council of Q'eqchi' Communities in Resistance”. In 2010, the Chabil Utzaj flex cane company goes bankrupt.

⁵⁶⁷ Group interview with grassroots representatives from different Fray villages, December 2009

⁵⁶⁸ Meeting of Chisec Community Development Councils with flex palm companies' representatives on environmental and public health impacts of palm farming, December 2013.

As a result, Banco Industrial—the Guatemalan private bank managing the US\$ 26 million loan from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) to Chabil Utzaj—auctions 37 estates encompassing more than 5 thousand hectares, to foreclosure mortgage credits. With support from the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC), and a few national human rights, alternative development, and research organizations, the Council of Q’eqchi’ Communities in Resistance organizes the occupation of 14 of those estates to pressure the state to purchase and redistribute them to hacienda-tenants and land-poor villagers.⁵⁶⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, the 769 occupant families are violently evicted in March 2011, just three months before the Nicaraguan Pellas Group takes over the flex cane company from Guatemalan Widdman family, and rebrands it as “SER Chabil Utzaj”. Following the violent evictions that were broadcast online and on national TV through our on-site documentary film (*Revenge* 2011), the conflict gains media attention, attracts new actors, and changes its character in the process. In the aftermath of the evictions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)⁵⁷⁰ and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights reprimand the Guatemalan government (IACHR 2011). International development cooperation actors and funds arrive in the Polochic en masse, which up until that moment had been relatively absent. As is often the case, this reshapes localized conflicts in unexpected ways. Such is true of Oxfam’s partnership with the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) in the Polochic land conflict. Through CUC, Oxfam supports the evicted families with food aid and advocates for their resettlement—including through the collection of 107 thousand signatures on an international petition to the Guatemalan state (Oxfam Intermon. 2016). Good intentions notwithstanding, Oxfam’s intervention gradually tames the political agenda of CUC and the Council of Q’eqchi’ Communities in Resistance, weakens the original national alliance behind the land

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Head Lawyer of CUC’s Legal Team, July 2011

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with OHCHR’s National Representative, in June 2011, and OHCHR (2013)

struggle in the Polochic Valley,⁵⁷¹ pushes the peasant movement organization into a less visible role in transnational advocacy efforts,⁵⁷² and ultimately turns a challenging DoT struggle into an accommodative effort to resettle evicted families.

In an effort to refocus political attention back to the land conflict, the Council of Q'eqchi' Communities in Resistance and CUC, together with a growing number of national and international allies, organize the “Indigenous, Peasant, Popular, and Women’s March in defense of Mother Earth, Against Evictions, and for Comprehensive Rural Development” in March 2012, marking the one year commemorations of the violent evictions. This 9-day march, traversing and 212 kilometers from the Polochic Valley to Guatemala City, resonates far beyond the Polochic case. Some 15 thousand people walk into the capital on 27 March 2012, and hand petitions to the President and the Congress regarding the resettlement of evicted families and the many detrimental complexities associated with heightened (agro)extractivism. President Pérez Molina agrees on those advocating higher control over private security groups and the resettlement of evicted families.⁵⁷³ Resettlement negotiations drag on, and it is only in October 2013 that the government agrees to grant 3,5 hectares of land to each evicted family. In December 2013, 30 families are awarded individual land title deeds, and an additional 110 families receive them in August 2014. Besides these land

⁵⁷¹ See also Mingorría (2017, 18).

⁵⁷² In so doing, Oxfam ends up “*saludando con sombrero ajeno*” (greeting with someone else’s hat), as the saying goes in Guatemala, and claims a role it never played. This is something many in the national alliance to support the Polochic land struggle suspected, but became crystal clear to this researcher during a “Workshop on Land-grabbing and Human Rights” convened in January 2015 by Amnesty International in Amsterdam. There, an Oxfam International official presents Oxfam’s work on land-grabbing using information, arguments, and audio-visual materials prepared before and during the Polochic evictions by the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR) in collaboration with Caracol Producciones activist film-producers. The initial excitement of this researcher about the wider circulation of empirical material which took painstaking efforts to gather turned into disappointment following the realization that not a single reference (written or spoken) was ever made to the information sources by the Oxfam official.

⁵⁷³ In his own words, ‘others claims like cancelling the debt of hundreds of peasant groups with FONTIERRAS, a moratorium on development mega-projects led by private investors, and the withdrawal of military garrisons were signed with many reservations’ (Prensa Libre 2012).

ownership rights being issued for free, the resettlement of Polochic's evicted families follows the usual FONTIERRAS model, which is granting individual land ownership in isolated estates, with poor quality soils, and devoid of basic living infrastructure (e.g. running water, electricity, school, roads, and so forth). As of December 2014, less than 20% of the evicted families have been resettled. The slow pace and poor conditions of the resettlement lead some within the Council of Q'eqchi' Communities in Resistance to look for an alternative solution, and to occupy cane fields once again in 2013. After being harassed by the company's security thugs, the group negotiates the purchase of a patch of land with SER Chabil Utzaj.⁵⁷⁴ By the end of 2014 the The Pellas Group withdraws from SER Chabil Utzaj, and the cane fields are once again under control of the banks.

12.4.2.2. Maintain and control land access

This land sovereignty tactic is a response to land sales by subordinate classes to non-fellow outsiders (i.e. land brokers, cattle ranchers and flex palm companies). Its purpose is twofold, to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones, and to tackle the main reasons behind unwillful land deals.

- Struggles to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones

These struggles can take everyday and partisan forms. Everyday forms include, on the one hand, arsons in cane and palm plantations. I explained how, according to villagers in Sayaxché, flex palm companies secretly set fire to palm plantations, blame villagers for it, and proceed to sue them as a means of forcing land sales. Nonetheless, in 2007 and again in 2008, cane and palm plantations in the Polochic Valley “accidentally” catch fire while swidden cultivators burn their fields in preparation for planting. Nobody ever pleaded guilty for the fires, but many suggest they hope the companies received the message they are

⁵⁷⁴ Group interview with representatives from the occupant families, September 2013

not welcome in the area.⁵⁷⁵ Yet as per usual practice, the cultivators leasing the land on which the fires spread are obliged to pay for the burned palms and canes. As the workers lacked other means, the flex agribusinesses accepted their free labor as in-kind payment.⁵⁷⁶ On the other hand, everyday resistance occurs through routine struggles of many women to stop their male partners from selling the family plot of land.⁵⁷⁷ In one case, a Q'eqchi' woman from an Ixcán village buries the family land title deed in a hole in the ground as a desperate attempt at circumventing the land deal her partner was negotiating with a coyote.⁵⁷⁸

There are also partisan forms of struggling to preempt forced land sales and to harness willful land deals. Chapter 6 on land relations explained how paternalistic forms of collective ownership—sponsored by military regimes during agrarian colonization, and more recently by individual freehold land ownership prescribed through land good governance policies—fail to strengthen the abilities of fragmented subordinate classes to maintain and control land access amid expanding flex complexes. In the general context of widespread individual land ownership—whether formal or informal—the need for alternatives sparks a series of organized, defensive and offensive struggles. Defensive organized alternatives revolve around initiatives to strengthen community systems of land resource government,⁵⁷⁹ including: i) the refusal of the right of way through village land to trucks, machinery and workers from flex cane and palm companies;⁵⁸⁰ ii) counter-ruling statutory freehold land property through community arrangements. For example, an act approved through communal assembly in Sayaxché

⁵⁷⁵ Group interview Polochic Valley zone village, April 2008

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Head of Polochic branch of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, June 2009

⁵⁷⁷ Group interviews with board members of Adelina Caal Maquin Women Association in Fray, October 2009, and the Ruk'ux Ulew national coordination of women's movements for Land, August 2011

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Executive Secretary of the "Ixcán Women Organizations Network" (ROMI), February 2010

⁵⁷⁹ See Haar (2005, 497) for an account of similar practices by Tojolab'al ejido communities in nearby Chiapas, Mexico.

⁵⁸⁰ Often in retaliation to similar practices by these companies, as I discussed in the land relations chapter (group interviews with villagers from Fray, December 2009, and with villagers from Ixcán's District V and the Catholic Pastoral, June 2011).

village where petty land owners have their land individually-titled explains: ‘In villages where palm companies settle people’s freedom is not respected...they privatize all that is indigenous people’s patrimony [...] so we agree none of us is to deal land with them’ (Sayaxché village act 2007). Additionally, I advanced there are cases in which land deals are banned with those who sold their land to a non-fellow village outsider without a community-sanctioned reason, or without first offering it to fellow villagers. Similar practices include banning village residence to anyone known to have willfully sold his/her land to a company, rancher or coyote, and expelling any resident who does not abide by these rules from the village, and iii) (Maya-Q’eqchi’) women joining forces to break through gender hierarchies in community government bodies to challenge anyone who agrees to land deals with non-fellow village outsiders.⁵⁸¹

Offensive organized struggles to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones spin around the resignification of the communal form of land ownership, and there are two main reasons for this. On one side, I discussed how individual freehold land property does away with traditional swidden farming systems based on the farmland-fallows-forest land use logic that is used to govern land. On the other side, many lowlanders are disappointed with individual freehold land property because it paved the way for the perfectly legal land control-grabs by flex cane and palm companies. Hence, facing land dispossession (or risk thereof), and great challenges to intensify their farms, many lowlander cultivators turn to the communal form of land ownership to increase their abilities to control and maintain their land access, as I detailed in chapter 6. There are three interrelated reasons why the communal form is privileged over other legal forms of group land ownership (i.e. “collective agrarian patrimonies” or “cooperatives”). First, collective land titling “from above” has not stopped land control-grabs by palm companies. Second, there is a need for group land ownership to speak to

⁵⁸¹ As a result, women are a usual target of the supporters’ “iron fist in velvet glove” strategy. In addition to arrest warrants, organized (Q’eqchi’) women in DoT struggles are subject to threats, (sexual) harassment, and killings.

the simultaneous understanding of land as a means of production, soil and territory. In other words, the land (re)communalization drive in 2006-2014 resonates with the material, ecological and ideological needs and aspirations of challengers at the grassroots. And third, the state sanction of communal land ownership opens a political opportunity for the recognition of rural communities as bearers of collective rights. Hence, ‘a government agency, a palm company, or a conservation NGO needs to deal not with individuals but *with a collective rights subject* that is, the *indigenous people community*, via its particular institutions of government’.⁵⁸² As an influential Q’eqchi’ ideologue explains, the goal of (re)communalization is ‘to move from practices of cultural resistance to the full exercise of collective rights in the territory’.⁵⁸³ This clashes with, and threatens, the right to property as an individual and absolute right, and thus the oligarchic-bourgeoisie contests it using whatever means possible. A supporter herself, the National Property Registrar argues

‘if this is so, then land owners are not going to feel safe any more about their [property] records because there might be many who come and claim: “my ancestors lived here”. Just think for a second about that word they use: “my ancestors lived here”. But if we all have Mayan ancestors then we can all claim Tikal or Kaminal Juyu [iconic ancient Mayan cities]’ (interview by Gamazo 2013b).

This line of argument is a response to the wave of village registrations as “indigenous community” in municipalities across the northern lowlands from 2012 forward. Nonetheless, realizing that law neither self-interprets nor self-implements (Franco 2008), Q’eqchi’ ideologues and grassroots organizations argue that forcing the state’s arm to recognize communities as subjects of collective rights is a relatively simple task of “juridical juggling”.⁵⁸⁴ The real challenge lies in whether or not actual

⁵⁸² SANK’s Director in workshop on the re-communalization experience of SANK Q’eqchi’ youth organization, June 2013

⁵⁸³ That is, “from resistance to power”, as the slogan of the 2007 Indigenous Peoples’ Summit in Guatemala goes. Interview with Maya-Q’eqchi’ member of Congress and founder of the Mayan Lawyers Association, July 2013

⁵⁸⁴ In workshop on the re-communalization experience of SANK Q’eqchi’ youth organization, June 2013

“indigenous-peasants” subscribe the notion of a communal right to land and territory. Registration of the village as “indigenous community” in the municipality, and of village land as “communal property” in the National Property Registry, are not antidotes against land control-grabs. To render positive political outcomes, these legal maneuvers need to be underpinned by changes in land government practices at the grassroots. A pioneering and successful such experience is that supported by Q’eqchi’ youth organization SANK and allies. In 2012, FONTIERRAS grants its first “communal title deed” to 14 villages from the Sierra Chinaja area in Chisec. These are villages in which SANK had previously worked for years in matters such as community-led cadastral identification of village lands, and strengthening of community land government systems.⁵⁸⁵ Thus, formal changes from above ensue only after land government practices were already changed from below. Table 41 shows the significant increase in communal assemblies and traditional authorities as community “decision-makers”, mirroring the land (re)communalization drive.

⁵⁸⁵ SANK and allies support the (re)emergence of traditional community land authorities, namely the “Li/Yi Wua Ch’och” (woman/ma), meaning “Land Care-taker and Guardian”. They are responsible for assigning yearly land use rights among families, overseeing fallow and forest areas, and mediating in land conflicts. Traditional authorities lost relevance with heightened land commoditization, and were often displaced by “land regularization committees” (Yi Wua Ch’och during the public act of declaration of 9 villages from Sesuchaj district, Chisec zone, as “Indigenous Communities”, July 2013).

Table 41 Community decision-makers across research zones in the northern lowlands. 2010 and 2014.

Community decision-maker	Year		Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)*
	2010	2014	
Communal assembly	46%	57%	<i>,012</i>
Community Development Council	51%	34%	,215
Traditional authorities	2%	8%	<i>,003</i>
Others	1%	1%	,579

* Figures in italic and shadowed account for statistically significant differences over time at the 5% level.

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

Technical-juridical support for the (re)communalization towards land sovereignty by organizations like SANK in a challenging stance vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project, renders land ownership formalization a political process to make the state recognize diverse and “messy” land government practices. In this process, the work of the Mayan Lawyers Association, and other committed activist-lawyers within indigenous-peasant movement organizations, is key. Particularly, they play a key role in strategic litigation processes supported by the UN OHCHR in Guatemala through its “Strategic Litigation Technical Support Team” (EATLE).⁵⁸⁶ Following communities’ lead, OHCHR-EATLE, the Mayan Lawyers Association, partisan social justice movement organizations, and allies provide support for politico-juridical advocacy and mobilization. Of particular relevance is the involvement of the YASTACS through juridical and other forms of research, documentation (i.e. filming and recording)⁵⁸⁷ and social communication

⁵⁸⁶ Interview with OHCHR officials, March 2013

⁵⁸⁷ Luciernaga, COMUNICARTE, and Caracol Producciones are key examples of activist film collectives which additionally train rural and urban youth on audiovisual skills for political activism

(e.g. community theatre, local radio, alternative online media,⁵⁸⁸ and increasingly social media⁵⁸⁹). In this way, then, strategic litigation processes also shape and express the convergence strategy.

- Struggles to tackle primary reasons driving unwillful land deals

These sorts of struggles pursue the second purpose of the tactic to maintain and control land access towards the land sovereignty strategy. They are premised on the realization by challengers that counter-ruling and/or (re)communalizing individual freehold land ownership are hardly effective measures to maintain and control land access if the reasons for which villagers sell their land are not addressed. I explained how land sales to non-fellow village outsiders are sales of unyielding land (e.g. exhausted or flooding soils) and especially distressed sales due to the inability to farm, urgent cash needs, and/or indebtedness. In other words, the main reasons for subordinate class villagers to sell their land to brokers, ranchers and palm companies involve insecure livelihoods. I argued that livelihood options in the northern lowlands revolve around agriculture. I also discussed that, generally speaking, Maya-Q'eqchi' lowlanders would rather pursue a farming livelihood on their own account, regardless of whether they are engaged in or seeking employment. The notion that everyone in the community has a “right to farm” informs the traditional yearly allocation of village farmland according to each family’s reproductive needs. But this system of governing village land relations is constrained by the spread of individual freehold land property wherein village land is divided into plots, ‘fixed’ in time and space. In addition to laying the groundwork for landlessness in the village, this also means that swidden farming practices have reached an end.

⁵⁸⁸ La Cuerda, El Observador, Prensa Comunitaria, Plaza Pública, and Centro de Medios Independientes (CMI) emerge or consolidate in 2006-2014 as alternative media outlets for engage and rigorous investigative journalists.

⁵⁸⁹ Social media tools, most notably FB, spread quickly in 2006-2014. Nonetheless, smart-phones with internet access are still the exception rather than the rule among agrarian subordinate classes by 2014, and thus social media activism is constrained by the need for a computer with sturdy internet connection.

Thus, farming intensification becomes a pressing need following the individualization of land's ownership. But even when recommonalization allows for swidden farming, there is still the need to ramp up farming practices to avoid a 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968) in the long run, and keep at bay 'simple reproduction squeezes'⁵⁹⁰ in the short term. I have spelled out how farming intensification faces many challenges, no matter whether it is sought after through high external input/synthetic agriculture or through low external input/agroecology. Nonetheless, higher yields in the karstic soils of the northern lowlands have less to do with a new green revolution miracle, than with the cultivator's ability to dedicate the amount of labor that low external input/agroecological farming intensification demands in the tropics. Gradually becoming aware of this, and lacking support from decimated government extension agencies, subordinate class cultivators look for alternatives through everyday and partisan forms. The former include increasing the drudgery of family labor, and exchanging labor among fellow village cultivators.⁵⁹¹ The latter involve alliance-building, especially with YASTAC agronomists. On the one hand, a series of grassroots organizations and allied Catholic Pastorals and (trans)national NGOs support agro-ecological transitions through training, and "campesino a campesino" knowledge exchanges. These initiatives are, nonetheless, very unevenly implemented across the northern lowlands in 2006-2014. Whereas they only gain steam in the Polochic following the March 2011 evictions, they had already gathered momentum in Ixcán, Sayaxché and Chisec by that time. On the other hand, there are joint-initiatives to improve terms of exchange, and to increase control over

⁵⁹⁰ Or the 'effects of commodity relations on the economy of peasant households that can be summarised in terms of increasing costs of production/decreasing returns to labour. The pressures which result in the 'squeeze' on simple reproduction include those arising from the exhaustion of both land and labour given the techniques of cultivation employed, from rural 'development' schemes which encourage or impose more expensive means of production (improved seeds, tools, more extensive use of fertilisers, insecticides, pesticides, etc.) with no assurance that there will be increased returns to labour commensurate with the costs incurred, and from deteriorating terms of exchange for peasant produced commodities' (Bernstein 1979, 427)

⁵⁹¹ Although as with free land leases, labor exchanges inform both struggles for repeasantization and functional dualist semi-proletarianization

local food chains. In this regard, the weekly “peasant markets” in Chisec and Raxruha—in which only direct producers are allowed to sell their farm produce, meals and handicrafts—stand out.⁵⁹² The Chisec peasant market involves some 190 families from 50 villages, and the one in Raxruha another 90 families from 25 villages (AVSF, et al. 2011). These peasant markets are promoted by local grassroots organizations with the consent of Chisec’s major, and the active support of Raxruha’s.⁵⁹³ Both campesino a campesino exchanges and the peasant markets resemble struggles for food sovereignty by partisan peasant movement organizations in 1986-2005. But in 2006-2014, efforts towards food sovereignty in DoT struggles are reified as means of strengthening the abilities to maintain and control land access within a land sovereignty strategy rather than the other way round. That is, food sovereignty is a means toward, and a pillar of, land sovereignty.

12.5. Politics across challengers

12.5.1. Across fragmented subordinate class challengers

The diversity of subordinate agrarian classes and fractions, further divided along socio-cultural attributes, is at once the main strength and the Achilles heel of DoT struggles. Again, the “indigenous-peasantry” proclaimed as DoT’s key political subject is neither a class “in itself”, nor “for itself”. Although they often go unchecked or underestimated by (trans)national partisan movement organizations and allies, there are material and ideological cleavages across fragmented subordinate class challengers that complicate both resistance and alternatives to the agro-extractive capitalist project. The transformative life project envisaged by challengers revolves around a family farming life in autonomous rural communities. While this resonates with many (Q’eqchi’) lowlanders, not everyone is able and/or willing to commit to this idyllic project. On the one hand, and first, there are those who depend on wage-work for a

⁵⁹² Though the Catholic Pastoral in Petén promotes similar initiatives.

⁵⁹³ I.e. the one sued by the Agricultural Guild -CAMAGRO- for trying to tax palm oil extraction, as discussed in the previous chapter.

living, regardless of whether or not they would prefer to pursue a farming livelihood, and whether they actually farm or not. In these cases, it is worth noting that if a particular class position as worker and owner of means of production has traditionally made the peasantry an unreliable ally in revolutionary struggles, the functional dualist relations in which most plantation workers are now involved makes them a similarly unreliable ally in DoT struggles.⁵⁹⁴ As I will later discuss in detail, even plantation workers longing for repeasantization might see themselves as needing to subscribe to a reluctant accommodative stance vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project in order to meet their family's immediate reproductive requirements. Additionally, Subordinate agrarian class challengers also distrust Petty Capitalist palm contract-farmers, who are blamed for helping flex palm companies encroach into village land.⁵⁹⁵ Second, especially mid and large petty land owners, and even some land aspiring villagers, are not always enthusiastic about land ownership (re)communalization.

On the other hand, and first, there are competing ideas over the meaning of *Buen Vivir* in “indigenous-peasant” communities. Many Q’eqchi’ and ladino women and men have no desire at all about for a farming livelihood and a “peasant” way of life. This stems from the challenges involved in farming under the agro-extractive capitalist project, but also from the will to pursue a non-agrarian livelihood, perhaps in the city. Broadly speaking, it is mostly young, Q’eqchi’ and ladino (near)landless men who tend to be lured by the life project offered by flex cane and palm companies, especially following their staying alive fixes for productive relations from late 2012 onward. But there are also many youngsters who would choose to farm for a living,

⁵⁹⁴ In workshop with community representatives from Polochic highland and valley zones and history and sociology students from Guatemala’s National University (USAC), April 2008; group interview with representatives from SANK Q’eqchi’ youth organization, AVSF France, Adelina Caal Maquin and Q’ana Tzuultaq’a women organizations, ASEDE NGO, and village representatives from Chisec, June 2011; and with Ixcán’s District V villagers and Catholic Pastoral, June 2011. In fact, several cases are known of community agreements stipulating not to work for flex cane or palm companies in Chisec and Polochic valley and highland zones.

⁵⁹⁵ I Meeting of Palm Affected Communities in the Northern Lowlands, November 2013

or find another type of employment. And yet there are those who changed their mind after realizing that ‘money goes as fast as it comes, and you must leave your skin in the plantation for a wage you cannot rely on to support your family; it is just not a good deal’.⁵⁹⁶ Second, despite the leading role women in general, and young women and also men in particular, play in DoT struggles, they still suffer from patriarchal discrimination and offenses. For instance, their voices are not always equally considered in village assemblies. Gender and generation cleavages in DoT struggles often become secondary when it comes to recording land ownership in title deeds (communal or otherwise). And since they remain in land occupation camps throughout the entire day, they face a higher risk of assault than adult men who spend the day looking for wage-work elsewhere.

A major way in which tensions across fragmented subordinate class challengers surface is through the frictions between villagers who sold their land to non-fellow outsiders, and those who did not. Table 42 shows a significant and substantive increase between 2010 and 2014 in the share of villagers who think relations between land sellers and non-sellers are going from bad to worse. Women—who generally show stronger opposition than men to these land deals, and are responsible for procuring firewood and water from shrinking forests and freshwater sources—feel these tensions more strongly. Nonetheless, the large gap between women and men in 2010 is almost gone by 2014.

⁵⁹⁶ Group interview with young Q’eqchi’ men from Sayaxché, June 2013

Table 42 Share of women and men who think there is a bad relation between village land sellers and non-sellers. 2010 and 2014

	2010	2014	Significance in level of differences over time. McNemar test (5% level)*
Women	40%	62%	<i>,011</i>
Men	23%	57%	<i>,000</i>

* Figures in italic and within shadowed cells account for statistically significant differences at the 5% level within a class between 2010 and 2014

Source: Author calculations from 2010 & 2014 panel household survey

12.5.2. Across national partisan social justice movements

I discussed how there are cracks across what has been perceived as a granite-like façade of supporters. Similarly, there are fractures within the architecture of the more structured and partisan challengers, namely national peasant, indigenous people, women and youth social justice movements.⁵⁹⁷ Key issues that unite them were brought up as part of the discussion on the convergence strategy. Here, I turn the focus to the issues that divide them. As could be expected, these often have to do with personal feuds among leaders. Nonetheless, I draw briefly on two key ideological-political divisions.

The first is a long-standing division that surfaced briefly in the discussion of the cast of characters in DoT struggles. It involves peasant and indigenous peoples' movement organizations in challenging standpoints. Bridging efforts like the peasant-indigenous/ indigenous-peasant reformulations notwithstanding, and generally speaking, the different DNAs of these two expressions of the social justice movement remain a source of tension. On the one hand, partisan peasant organizations in general, and those more closely linked with Marxist

⁵⁹⁷ I argued that despite the few committed environmental justice-oriented NGOs, struggles for environmental justice at the grassroots are not framed as such, and are led by social justice organizations in alliance with these partisan NGOs.

URNG guerrillas in particular, prioritize struggles for redistribution over those for recognition. Conversely, PanMayanist movement organizations consider class cleavages across the indigenous majority to be secondary to struggles against colonialism and racism. On the other hand, they differ on whether to engage with state powers, and if so, why and how. I discussed that both movements agree on the need to transform the nature of the state, and the compromise they reached on how to go about realizing it during the IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations. Nonetheless, whereas the negative experiences with DR-CAFTA and the comprehensive rural development law lead many peasant organizations in a challenging stance to lose faith in the possibilities of multi-stakeholder governance to achieve transformational policy reforms, most PanMayanist organizations continually demand statutory recognition of their own government systems, and/or for official positions in different state branches.

Therefore, Q'eqchi' lowlanders' struggles for community self-determination are too "indigenist" for some peasant organizations, while their efforts toward food and land sovereignty are too "peasantist" for some PanMayanist organizations. Although there is more than "peasants" challenging (or supporting or accommodating) the agro-extractive capitalist project, and there are other understandings of indigeneity in Guatemala than the one embraced by challengers,⁵⁹⁸ the indigenous-peasant political subject in DoT struggles is still haunted by essentialisms from both the class- and identity-politics camps. Partisan peasant movement cadres complain about 'how hard it is to organize people to struggle for land reform'.⁵⁹⁹ And some within indigenous peoples' organizations complain that national partisan peasant organizations disregard their distinctive claims, ways and pace of struggling as indigenous peoples.⁶⁰⁰ Certainly, the success of re-communalization struggles to maintain and control land access

⁵⁹⁸ See Hale (2004) and Bastos and Cumes (2007)

⁵⁹⁹ Interview with community organizer from CUC, October 2009

⁶⁰⁰ In workshop on the re-communalization experience of SANK Q'eqchi' youth organization June 2013

depends on the active involvement of the community to change land government practices. But some partisan peasant organizations rush village authorities to register land under communal ownership, and the village as indigenous community, without further work with the community as a whole.

The second division across national partisan social justice movements in a challenging standpoint is between the peasant and indigenous people movements, and a broadly cast women's movement. I saw how rural women increasingly organize themselves through women's rather than mixed organizations from the 1990s on. This is explained as a 'natural response' to the fact that neither peasant nor indigenous peoples movements give enough and/or proper attention to women's unique struggles for recognition, respect and promotion of their (re)productive roles and rights—to a living wage, land, fair division of reproductive labor, political representation etc.⁶⁰¹ In 2006-2014, seasoned women's leaders join forces with a growing number of YASTAC females to boost the abilities of the women's movement to push through entrenched gender roles and sexual divisions of property and labor in Guatemala, including those in social justice movements. Women's movement platforms like the "Rural Women Alliance", and the broader "Women Sector Political Alliance", become central in national convergence platforms such as the 2002 "Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development" (ADRI), the 2012 March from Polochic to Guatemala City, and the 2006 and 2014 IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations. The notion of "the body as territory" imprints respect for women's self-determination and claims in the challengers' political agenda.

⁶⁰¹ Group interview with Ruk'ux Ulew national coordination of women's movements for Land, August 2011

12.6. Politics within challengers

12.6.1. *Within fragmented subordinate class challengers*

The analysis on the politics across fragmented subordinate class challengers makes it clear that proletarians, family farmers and petty capitalist farmers are not all the same. This is something I have explored through material and socio-cultural divisions. But it is also the case—or the outcome of the foregoing divides, to varying extents—regarding competing political subjectivities within each of these three subordinate classes. First, there are proletarian challengers of different genders, generations and ethnic groups who aim for (re)peasantization, and thereby for a farming livelihood. And there are those who would rather be (self-)employed elsewhere, especially in a non-farm job. But there are also proletarians who consent to the labor regime in cane and palm plantations, and thus situate themselves in a supportive or accommodative stance. And within the latter, there are proletarians in amenable and reluctant accommodative standpoints, seeking for better terms of incorporation in plantation work.

Second, there are family farmer challengers of multiple genders, generations and ethnic groups who actively pursue a family farming livelihood, and those who “retreat” to family labor farms following the growing challenges for petty capitalist farming or finding a job. At the same time, there are family farmers who can still practice swidden farming, and those who are eager desperate to intensify their farms. For those wishing to intensify, there are some who follow the high external input agriculture/agro-synthetic path, and others who opt for the low external-input agriculture/agro-ecological path to farming intensification.

Third, fragmented petty capitalist farmer (PCF) class challengers include semi-proletarianized specialized and particularly multi-functional PCFs who are disguised proletarians, hiring farm labor to free up time to be able to work in cane and palm plantations. But also multi-functional and particularly specialized PCFs who are functional-dualist farmers,

working in plantations only to subsidize farm income. Additionally, there are PCF challengers who can still practice swidden farming, while others are forced to intensify their farms or go bankrupt. And within the latter grouping, there are once again those who follow the high external input agriculture/agro-synthetic path, and those who take the low external-input agriculture/agro-ecological path to farming intensification. Finally, there are PCFs involved in contract-farming with flex palm companies who take to amenable and reluctant accommodative stances.

12.6.2. Within the national partisan peasant movement

Social justice-oriented national indigenous peoples, women's and youth movements in DoT struggles in 2006-2014 are highly ideologically heterogeneous. There are indigenous peoples' organizations that strive for a seat in statutory multi-stakeholder governance processes, and others who disagree with such political ambitions. (see among others Ba Tiul 2010, Bastos and Brett 2010, and Sieder 2011 for a review) There are feminist and non-feminist women's organizations, and a long grey scale between the two factions. (see inter alia Berger 2006, Ascencio 2010, and Castillo Huertas 2015 for a review) And similarly, there are youth organizations inspired by Marxist, liberation theology and PanMayanist struggles and forms of struggling, those inspired by different urban subcultures, and many hybrids between and across these sets of principles. (see Kurtenbach 2014 for a review) Each of these three movements is worthy of a rigorous analysis of the politics within their constituencies in contemporary DoT struggles, which unfortunately is beyond my possibilities here.

My focus, therefore, is on the partisan national peasant movement due to its protagonist role in the politics of agro-environmental change in Guatemala during 2006-2014. I detailed how the strong national partisan peasant movement that re-emerged during peace negotiations and transition to bourgeois democracy in 1986-1996 fell into a downward spiral following heightened purge agro-capitalism during 1997-2005.

This was the case of the two competing national articulation platforms of the partisan peasant movement in 1986-2005. One is the “National Coordination of Peasant Organizations” (CNOOC) that was founded in 1992 as a network of militant peasant organizations rooted in different Marxist revolutionary movement factions. And the other is the “Agrarian Platform” (PA), formed in 2001 with support from progressive (trans)national Catholic and Protestant Church actors. During 2006-2014, CNOOC and PA manage to maintain their delicate partnership that began in 2002 through the “Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development” (ADRI).

But both platforms had already lost much of their former political weight following external pressure and internal contradictions. External pressures came from the state and the oligarchic-bourgeoisie, and included defamation and criminalization. As could be expected, the Guatemalan oligarchic-bourgeois and its allies were anything but happy with CNOOC and PA, since both groups pointed to the neoliberal agenda in 1986-2005 as the source of their contention and struggle.

Nonetheless, I am mostly concerned here with the internal, non-antagonistic yet troublesome contradictions within CNOOC and PA, which are of course vectors and expressions of the general political context in 2006-2014. Reasons for these contradictions within CNOOC’s and PA’s constituency are numerous, complex and forged at the heart of their histories of sensitive internal and external political compromises. Since a comprehensive review clearly goes beyond the aims and possibilities of this research, I briefly discuss three key reasons for such contradictions: the governance policy dogma, clashing perspectives on the movement’s political agenda, and the fall of the peace progressive donors’ complex.

First, and regarding CNOOC’s case, the year 2006 is a turning point. Among other things, this when FONTIERRAS’ land “beneficiaries” debt crisis bursts out. And it is in this context that long-standing representational tensions of the “peasant sector” FONTIERRAS’ Board of Directors (BoD) escalate. Under the leadership of the Committee for

Peasant Unity (CUC), CNOC calls upon its representatives that have been working in FONTIERRAS since 1998 to step down. But CNOC's representatives—one from the National Indigenous Peasant-Coordination (CONIC) and the other one linked to the Peasant Committee of the Highlands (CCDA)—refuse to do so. This sparks a conflict within CNOC that leads to first CONIC, and later on CUC on, to withdraw. Of course, the controversy about who sits on FONTIERRAS' BoD is underpinned by more profound discrepancies among these organizations. CCDA and CUC stem from competing factions of the revolutionary movement. And CONIC emerged as a split from CUC. The loss of two of its largest and more influential members resulted in CNOC's fall from its former political position as *the* national articulation platform of partisan peasant organizations. For its part, the Agrarian Platform (PA) suffered a fatal blow in the form of accusations of corruption. Following the devastating effects of declining world coffee prices in 2001-2004 on small-scale coffee growers, PA reached an agreement with the government in 2002 to support them. Precisely to avoid the misuse of the funds with the 2003 general elections looming, PA pressed for its member organizations to manage the US\$ 3,86 million state grant that was to be distributed among 12,485 families of small coffee growers (Plataforma Agraria. 2005). The government agreed to grant an additional 10% overhead to cover PA's administration costs, but the funds were never disbursed. According to a Rafael Landívar University and USAID study, PA grassroots organizations used 7% of the grant for administration purposes, and distributed the rest among their beneficiaries (Torres 2005). Nonetheless, the government files a lawsuit against three PA grassroots leaders for fraud in October 2005, and PA's credibility was badly affected in the aftermath.

Second, and regarding CNOC's case, there are clashing perspectives on the movement's political agenda between CNOC's "peasantist" and "indigenist" factions. With the bottom-up rise of struggles in "defense of territory" from 2006 on, some peasant organizations—especially CONIC, CUC and CCDA—publicly move towards an indigenous-

peasant stance, and away from multi-stakeholderism. But these are precisely the three organizations engaged in a controversy regarding CNOC's representation within FONTIERRAS. This controversy reaches a tipping point following CONIC's shift towards an amenable accommodative political standpoint after leaving CNOC. It all starts with a massive mobilization in support of FONTIERRAS' land leasing program in 2007, which butts heads with CNOC's core demand for redistributive and comprehensive agrarian reform. From that moment on—and all through genocide-suspect General Pérez Molina's 2012-2015 administration—active and overt support of the government for political concessions takes center-stage in CONIC's political agenda and contention repertoire. Obviously, this puts CONIC in a position that is initially at odds with, and later fully oppositional to, its former fellow partisan (indigenous-)peasant movement organizations. CONIC's radical change on the political spectrum also impacts the Agrarian Platform, of which CONIC is a founding-member. In fact, in addition to CONIC, another major and foundational member of PA, the Catholic "Episcopal Conference of Guatemala" (CEG), shifts towards a conservative political standpoint. The changing balance of forces within CEG from roughly 2010-2011 results in the dismissal of its former challenging stance, and hence in the end of its financial and political support to progressive Catholic Pastorals and partisan peasant movement organizations part of PA.⁶⁰²

Third, even beginning as early as 2002, but especially following the 2008 financial crisis, shrinking funds from progressive donors, particularly Dutch and Scandinavian, add fuel to the fire. CONIC defends its amenable accommodative stance as 'a pragmatic re-positioning amid constrained funding, and growing needs at the grassroots that cannot wait for the "triumph of the revolution"'.⁶⁰³ Indeed, Edelman explains

⁶⁰² Interview with former Coordinator of the Catholic Pastoral of Ixcán, July 2013. With support from a committed Bishop former Catholic Pastorals' employees organize in 2013 through "Tierra Nuestra Foundation", and from there join PA again. Nonetheless, official support from the Church remains lost.

⁶⁰³ Interview with CONIC Executive Board member, February 2014

that ‘movements often obtain concessions, if they do at all, by compromising their autonomy vis-à-vis the state’ (1999, 198). And as Fox further argues, ‘this loss of independence is usually referred to as co-optation [but] the problem with specifying co-optation lies in differentiating between a “sellout” and a relatively autonomous decision about the best package of concessions that could be won in the circumstances’ (1993, 28-9). For most observers, including within CONIC, this is an outright “sellout” rather than a calculated political decision.⁶⁰⁴ But it is not only CONIC, but all CNOOC and PA members, who are badly affected by the fall of the progressive donor complex that had supported their emancipatory struggles in 1986-2005. (on the role of these donors in agrarian politics more generally see Borras 2016) Whereas impacts of, and responses to, shrinking funds vary among peasant organizations, all of them see their resources and political autonomy as being tightly constrained.

On the one side, three major partisan peasant organizations members of CNOOC join the “International Land Coalition” (ILC).⁶⁰⁵ And by the end of 2014, the Agrarian Platform is also on its way to join the ILC ranks. The ILC has a very diverse constituency, including international governmental and financial institutions, universities, human rights and research organizations, (rural) development (trans)national NGOs, and grassroots as well national peasant, indigenous peoples, youth and women’s organizations of different ideological-political stances.⁶⁰⁶ (ILC. 2017, see also Edelman and Borras 2016) Whereas its Rome-based Secretariat steers the ILC towards an accommodative political standpoint vis-à-vis global directions of agro-environmental change under convergent global crises (Borras et al. 2013), the Guatemalan peasant organizations part of the ILC remain key challengers. These organizations would be a perfect fit for membership in the other main and competing transnational agrarian movement, “La Vía Campesina”

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with former member of CONIC’s National Board, October 2013

⁶⁰⁵ The Verapaz Union of Peasant Organisations (UVOC) and the Peasant Development Committee (CODECA) join in 2007, and CCDA in 2011

⁶⁰⁶ (ILC. 2017)

(LVC), of which CONIC was a founding member and remains active all through 2006-2014. But the foregoing politics within the national partisan peasant movement in Guatemala pre-empt these three peasant organizations to seek representation in transnational agrarian politics through LVC. As is often the case, the scale of contention matters, and what is politically unconceivable at the transnational scale, might be feasible and even desirable at the national or local scales. Despite their overt clashes with fellow ILC members (e.g. the World Bank in Guatemala), UVOC, CODECA and CCDA find in the ILC new funding avenues and even political leverage for their transformative struggles in defense of territory in Guatemala, struggles which they often carry out in close collaboration with Guatemalan LVC members.⁶⁰⁷ On the other side, I previously advanced how the most radical of Guatemala's LVC members, CUC, has had to navigate the compromises that result from receiving funding by an international NGO, Oxfam, which itself is an ILC member.

In sum, the weakening of CNOC and PA in 2006-2014 marks an end to the era of social justice struggles being carried out along sectorial lines (e.g. peasant, indigenous people, environmental, women and so on organizations and movements). The political economy, ecology and sociology of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and its authoritarian corporalist political agenda, drive challengers to develop a political action plan in which the convergence of grievances, struggles and forms of struggling are paramount. But if the indigenous-peasant "community" is enshrined as the key political instrument for grassroots convergence in DoT struggles, it has yet to be seen whether and how national partisan (indigenous-)peasant organizations converge to scale-up DoT struggles at the grassroots.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with CCDA General Secretary, November 2013

Chapter 13 Accommodators to the agro-extractive capitalist project

13.1. Introduction

The last stage in my exploration of the multi-dynamic politics of agro-environmental change in Guatemala from 2006-2014 brings agro-extractive capitalist project accommodators into the spotlight. They are those who struggle to tame the virulence of the agro-extractive capitalist project and/or to accommodate themselves to it in the best possible way. I pointed out in the previous chapter that accommodators are further divided according to their character (i.e. lawful or criminal) and will (i.e. amenable or reluctant). All of them stem from both dominant and subordinate fragmented classes, and share a pragmatic perspective on the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes as an inevitable phenomenon. Nonetheless, two competing political agendas branch out from this common core. One informs the “dog-eat-dog” struggles of criminal accommodators. The other is a driver of the lawful accommodators’ efforts towards “inclusive, ethical and sustainable development”. Major differences notwithstanding, both agendas help flex agribusinesses in their relentless efforts geared towards “staying alive”, but whereas this is an expected outcome for amenable accommodators (regardless of their lawful or criminal character), it is a rather unexpected outcome for reluctant accommodators.

In their efforts to turn the agro-extractive capitalist project into an inclusive, ethical and sustainable development project, lawful accommodators rely on “win-win private accountability” and “chicken bus assistant” strategies. Conversely, criminal accommodators depend on the “backdoor” strategy for their dog-eat-dog struggles. Flex cane and palm companies’ fixes to productive relations, following a pro-social branding campaign, are seized by state and social accommodators as a political opportunity to hold flex agribusinesses accountable. To do so, they function as response-ability gatekeepers. Longing for hegemony and sustained profitability, the agro-extractivists consent to being

accountable to those who hold the key to pro-social branding. As a result, this accountability system involves cooperative “win-win” relations between agro-extractivists and response-ability gatekeepers. Additionally, following governance policy dogma prescriptions, these market-led systems privatize corporate accountability. It is for this reason that I call this accommodative strategy “win-win private accountability”.

The tactics through which this strategy unfolds vary between amenable and reluctant response-ability gatekeepers. The former rely on codes of conduct and corporate performance certification schemes. Such voluntary accountability mechanisms play a key role in the supporters’ pro-social branding campaign to build the response-ability of the flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala. Hence, even if for different reasons, both supporters and amenable accommodators rely on the “response-ability by market compulsion” contention tactic that was discussed in chapter 11. For their part, reluctant response-ability gatekeepers serve as “watchdogs” for the flex cane and palm complexes. Two iconic cases of the watchdog tactic in action are examined in this chapter. The first involves the challenge The Coca Cola Company (TCCC), PepsiCo and Associated British Foods received from Oxfam through its “Behind the Brands” campaign. The second concerns the 2014 assessment of labor conditions in the Guatemalan flex palm complex conducted by international labor rights watchdog Verité.

For lawful accommodators, there are just two ways to go about the agro-extractive capitalist project. One is to improve the conditions of those who come on board, either amenably or reluctantly. The other is to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts that flex cane and palm commodity production brings about, even for those who are in no way involved in the flex cane and palm complexes. This is why I categorized the other core strategy of contention by lawful accommodators as “chicken bus assistant”. Assistants of chicken bus drivers in Guatemala skillfully cram passengers inside the bus so that more can travel in the least uncomfortable way possible—while still

keeping an eye on the left out (but not behind) passengers who sit on top of the bus or hang from the emergency hand rails by the front and rear doors. By extension, those trying to better accommodate themselves into the labor regime of flex cane and palm companies—as plantation workers and/or suppliers of cane/palm fruit—follow an “incorporation improvement” tactic. In the northern lowlands during 2006-2014, there is a lonely group of dependent agrarian bourgeois cane outgrowers who come together to negotiate supply conditions with the one and only flex cane company: Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj. Dominant class palm outgrowers are stronger in numbers, but negotiate on a one-to-one basis with flex palm companies. Petty Capitalist palm contract farmers, on the other hand, are unionized.

Plantation workers struggle to improve their terms of incorporation into flex agribusinesses’ labor regime through everyday and organized forms. Everyday forms involve: i) free land leases by landed to land-scarce subordinate class cultivators; ii) unpaid family labor to achieve (or increase) minimum wage-equivalent salaries in plantation work; iii) unpaid reproductive family labor to support wage earners, and; iv) foot-dragging to lessen exploitation. Organized forms involve plantation workers joining forces to improve their terms of incorporation in spontaneous and unionized (partisan) ways. Spontaneous ways involve a series of sudden group labor withdrawals in palm plantations, while unionized ways have to do with organized labor struggles. Despite the many obstacles for labor agitation, organization and mobilization that are inherent to the very logic of the plantation labor regime, palm plantation workers in Sayaxché lead a trailblazing struggle to improve wages and labor conditions. This partly explains the plantation labor regime fix from late 2012 going forward, and labor watchdog Verité’s 2014 assessment of labor conditions in Sayaxché palm plantations.

Those who do not incorporate into the flex agribusinesses’ labor regime, but do strive to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts resulting from flex cane and palm commodity production, follow a “collateral damage reduction” tactic. Dominant class reluctant

accommodators address their grievances related to flex cane and palm companies through private direct and indirect channels. Directly, they do so via their trade and political organizations, including those that also count flex cane and palm companies among their membership. Indirectly, they leverage their established grip over local power structures.

Subordinate class reluctant accommodators are hard to discern from challengers at the grassroots, and so is their contention repertoire. However, it is still possible to identify key organized political subjects that amplify their voices within the state and society. Those in society basically include the private reluctant response-ability gatekeepers driving the watchdog tactic towards win-win private accountability. In addition to transnational watchdogs, there are many national NGOs working to accommodate subordinate classes to the agro-extractive capitalist project, especially following the “land grab alarm” that was pulled in 2008 and continues to blare. Whereas this is helpful to access contention resources of different kinds, accommodation obviously tames the will to challenge and transform—intentionally or out of sheer institutional inertia. Subordinate class reluctant accommodators at the grassroots also benefit from accommodative policy reforms advanced by state actors in reluctant, and even amenable, accommodative stances. The latter of these especially include the “hope” group of state officials during Colom’s 2008-2011 administration. They are behind multi-stakeholder governance processes and state grants that were detailed in chapter 11. A major state reluctant accommodator, the “two door policy” group, comes from General Perez Molina’s 2012-2015 administration. This group simultaneously opens a “door” to rural development through policies supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and another door for policies designed to ameliorate its collateral damage on subordinate classes, including through farming, rural development and land policies.

Differences in form and intention notwithstanding, the repertoire of contention of both amenable and reluctant lawful accommodators

ultimately legitimizes the accumulation projects of the flex cane and palm complexes, and helps the agro-extractivists to achieve and reproduce their class hegemony. Nonetheless, not everyone who makes it through the agro-extractive capitalist project does so via the “front door”. There are many—arguably more than what both challengers and supporters are ready or willing to acknowledge—who make it through the “backdoor”. They are those who rely on illicit means of social reproduction, either as a result of the ways they incorporate into the agro-extractive capitalist project, or because they simply cannot fit in it. The former case indicates criminal incorporation into the flex agribusinesses’ labor regime—either as narco-outgrowers or as corporate thugs. Hence, the “backdoor” accommodation strategy makes use of what I call the “*narco-taco*” and “*enchi-mara*” tactics. These metaphors describe the blended group of men originally from areas where flex agribusinesses are present—from different generational and ethnic backgrounds, though generally part of the underclasses—involved in drug-cartels and criminal urban *mara* gangs. Moving closer to their core (i.e. narco-outgrowers), or further away from it (i.e. corporate and drug-cartel hitmen, and criminal *mara* gang members), but always under the lawful cover of the flex cane and palm complexes, these social groups generally face annihilation. They are the cannon fodder in narco-cartel wars and inter-*mara* gang violence, and subject to “social cleansing” through extra-judicial executions by state and vigilante forces.

Thus, various accommodators act in ways that do not necessarily appeal to other fellow accommodators. The violent, everyday conflict across lawful and criminal accommodators reaches far beyond agro-environmental politics. For this reason, I focus on the politics across accommodators organized along the amenable and reluctant streams. In addition to competition for funding and political visibility and weight, the main sources of tension branching out across these political subjects are rooted in their “same same but different” political agendas, frames and contention repertoires. One such tension concerns competing aims and ways of engaging with corporate performance certification multi-

stakeholder platforms. Another tension stems from contradicting views on the role of the state in agriculture.

For the same reasons stated with regard to the politics across accommodators, I explore the politics within organized amenable and reluctant accommodators. In the case of the former, large transnational NGOs serving as amenable response-ability gatekeepers do not always stay on good terms with subordinate agrarian class accommodators at the grassroots. This is particularly the case of the tension-ridden relationship between large transnational conservation NGOs part of multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms and (Q'eqchi') lowlander swidden cultivators. In the latter instance, tensions within state and social reluctant accommodators are common for those who are part of large international organizations—for compromises among different groups in competing political standpoints within the organization are not always easy to come by. Two iconic cases include, first, tensions within the FAO following its competing interpretations of the Tenure Guidelines (TGs) on land, fisheries and forests along accommodative, but also supportive and challenging, standpoints. Second, tensions exist within Oxfam due to its insider-outsider engagement in the RSPO.

13.2. Cast of characters

I advanced that one division within the accommodators' camp takes place according to their *character* (i.e. lawful or criminal) and *will* (i.e. amenable or reluctant). Lawful accommodators lean on legal reproduction and contention strategies to make it through the agro-extractive capitalist project and/or to soften its blow. Criminal accommodators revert to criminal entrepreneurship either to get the most out of the agro-extractive capitalist project or to survive it. Amenable accommodators believe that—when properly harnessed—the agro-extractive capitalist project can be socially and environmentally sound. Reluctant accommodators do not necessarily see flex cane and palm commodity production as socially or environmentally desirable,

but surrender to the overwhelming power of flex cane and palm complexes.

All the foregoing types of accommodators originate from both dominant and subordinate fragmented (agrarian) classes. But the exact fragmented class composition of the accommodative camp is hard to pin down. Its constituency is highly variable over time following changes in subjects' environmental, economic and ideological conditions, as well as the opening and closure of political opportunities, and thereby in political subjectivities. Nonetheless, and generally speaking, fragmented dominant class accommodators include the landlords and dependent agrarian bourgeois (including narco-outgrowers) who do not actively support the agro-extractive capitalist project. Dominant class accommodators are usually men in their forties and beyond, and they are most likely to be ladinos or creole. Additionally, there are a few-yet-influential members of the national oligarchic-bourgeoisie—most frequently city dwellers—who profess the 'cult of wilderness' (Martínez-Alier 2002), and thereby actively accommodate flex cane and palm commodity production to nature's conservancy.

While in non-antagonistic class relations with the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie, dominant class accommodators do not always amenablely accommodate the agro-extractive capitalist project. I discussed that many have economic, environmental and/or ideological grievances against flex cane and palm corporations. The way fragmented dominant class subjects become accommodators and continue to act as such greatly depends on their lawful or criminal character. Criminal dominant class accommodators play a key role, but keep a low political profile. To carry out their criminal entrepreneurial activities, they forge alliances with state and social actors through bribery and coercion. Lawful dominant class accommodators are more active in the politics of agro-environmental change. To this end, all of them (with the exception of palm outgrowers) come together, informally, as independent cane growers, cattle ranchers, coffee growers, and so forth. They especially do so through their trade and political organizations. Additionally, they join

forces within organizations in which they share membership with agro-extractivist bourgeois, particularly in the Agricultural Chamber (CAMAGRO). Moreover, they create political alliances with state actors at local (e.g. mayors), regional (e.g. governors), and to a lesser extent national (e.g. ministers, groups of government officials and members of congress) geographical scales—as well as with some (trans)national social actors (e.g. journalists, scholars, NGOs and philanthropists).

Subordinate class accommodators stem from across all subordinate classes and fractions, and their socio-cultural divides. As the high rates of dissent from the agro-extractive capitalist project depicted in table 38 in chapter 10 suggest, most fragmented subordinate agrarian class subjects embrace at least a reluctant accommodative position. Nonetheless, there are also those in supportive and amenable accommodative standpoints, especially petty capitalist farmers in contract-farming arrangements with palm companies, and plantation workers who do not strive towards (re)peasantization. Once again, the way fragmented subordinate class subjects choose to become accommodators and act on that stance depends to a large extent on their lawful or criminal character. Criminal subordinate class accommodators are more active than their dominant class peers in the politics of agro-environmental change, but far less so than their lawful subordinate class peers. To carry out their entrepreneurial activities, criminal subordinate class accommodators forge strategic alliances with state and social actors. To do so, they depend on “blood pacts”, as hitmen in narco-trafficking cartels and members of violent mara gangs. At the same time, they utilize coercion, with new recruits, informants and “couriers” in narco-cartels and violent mara gangs alike. Lawful subordinate class accommodators also ally themselves with state and social actors of different kinds, and at multiple geographical scales. Key social allies include those whom I have called “response-ability gatekeepers”. They are basically large international conservation and development NGOs that seize flex agribusinesses’ interest in fixing productive relations as an opportunity to hold them accountable on ethical, environmental and social terms. Private response-ability gatekeepers are also divided along

the amenable and reluctant accommodative streams. As with subordinate class challengers, state allies of lawful subordinate class accommodators include state actors in various sectors and branches, and at different geographical scales. Among them, those I call the “hope” and “two door policy” groups stand out in 2006-2014.

I call the “hope” group as such because it has its roots in the 2008-2011 government of the “National Unity of Hope” (UNE) political party, led by President Álvaro Colom. The hope group includes a mix of Marxist, Social and Christian Democrat militants who leverage their positions in NGOs and academia to take over key posts in Colom’s administration—ranging from Presidency to municipalities, and through Ministries. Adamantly adhering to a social liberal doctrine, the hope group helps the UNE party to win the elections through promises of social-welfare in order to tackle overwhelming violence. To turn this promise into reality, the hope group makes an all-out effort in the Congress to reform the Guatemalan regressive tax law. Crushed by the CACIF in Congress (Fuentes Knight 2011), the hope group turns to governmental conditional cash transfers funded by public debt as an alternative way to (partly) deliver its social welfare promises. And in this process, it loses its switches reluctant accommodative stance for an amenable one.

The “two door policy” group includes government officials with similar backgrounds and political aspirations as those who are part of the hope group, but in this case lean more towards a reluctant accommodative stance vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project. This groups emerges during General Pérez Molina’s 2012-2015 administration, and leverages on former positions in influential Guatemalan universities to take over government agencies responsible for land, food, agriculture and, more generally, rural development. From January 2014 going forward, the new FAO Country Representative reinforces this group. I brand it the two door policy group in a nod to its purpose. According to its key members, there are ‘two doors to rural development’: The first ‘was always there and so remains. It is the door for landlords and

agribusinesses. The second door was open during certain historical periods, and we want to re-open it in the current context. It is the door for the peasant economies'.⁶⁰⁸ Ideologically, the two door policy group examines with class-sensitive lenses, and works with neo-institutional tools. As its main ideologue explains, 'while no country in the world developed on the basis of a peasant economy, no one did it with our levels of rural inequality, exclusion and poverty. Addressing these problems in the countryside is a pre-condition for national development'.⁶⁰⁹ To this end, two door policy adherents believe that 'there are intersections and complementarities between the peasant economies and the agribusinesses'.⁶¹⁰ Hence, their policy prescriptions resonate with those written by influential World Bank neo-institutional economists in the realms of land (Deininger and Byerlee 2011) and agriculture (World Bank 2007). In fact, the two door policy group is inspired by the Brazilian model, in which the "Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Supply" (MAPA) serves the interests of agribusiness, and the "Ministry of Agrarian Development" (MDA) supports family farming.⁶¹¹

13.3. Political agenda and frame of contention

Following the lines of the preceding discussion, the accommodative standpoint vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project includes a less cohesive set of political subjects than the supportive and the challenging stances. All accommodators clearly share a pragmatic perspective on the rise of flex cane and palm complexes as an inevitable phenomenon. Nonetheless, two competing political agendas have their roots in this common ground, and mirror the divisions between lawful and criminal accommodators. One agenda pertains to the dominant and subordinate agrarian class subjects who revert to criminal entrepreneurship to get the

⁶⁰⁸ Interviews with Presidential Commissioner for Rural Development in June 2013, and Jan 2013-Feb 2015 Minister of Agriculture in July 2013

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Presidential Commissioner for Rural Development, June 2013

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Jan 2013-Feb 2015 Minister of Agriculture, July 2013

⁶¹¹ Interviews with Director of Agribusiness International Promotion (MAPA), and Director of Value Addition and Income Generation (MDA). Brasilia, June 2008.

most out of the agro-extractive capitalist project, or do so simply to survive it. While they do not necessarily frame their agency in a common or public way, this agenda is one that is indicative of “dog-eat-dog” struggles. The other accommodative political agenda is pushed forward by dominant and subordinate agrarian class subjects using licit reproduction and contention strategies to make it through the agro-extractive capitalist project, and/or soften its blow. All lawful accommodators—whether amenable or reluctant—openly frame their agency in the contentious politics of agro-environmental change as efforts towards “inclusive, ethical and sustainable development”. As the Director of Strategic Policy of the Guatemalan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) explains: ‘we are not going to allow the *savage extractivism* of colonial times to plunder our territories. We believe in a development model in which *extractive projects commit to the rule of law and the green economy principles*, and in which *all stakeholders behave responsibly* with the communities and the environment’.⁶¹²

Therefore, accommodative frames of contention reflect either residual or criminal entrepreneurial approaches to social reproduction. The former indicates that political struggles by lawful accommodators may at best shake agro-extractive capitalism’s foundational pillars of absoluteness and supremacy of the rights to property and freedom of enterprise—but certainly will not bring them down. The latter denotes that dog-eat-dog struggles by criminal accommodators ultimately result a “bad business” for all. Nonetheless, by depicting flex cane and palm complexes as potential drivers of sustainable development, necessary evils or useful covers for illicit businesses, both types of accommodative political agendas ultimately legitimize them. In turn, they are perfectly designed for the reproduction of the personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. In other words, both agendas help flex agribusinesses’ fundamental preoccupation with “staying alive”. This is one of the two reasons that accommodators’ grievances are the only ones entertained by supporters, either out of

⁶¹² In I National Congress on Racism and Discrimination, August 2013. Emphasis added.

sheer interest or fear.⁶¹³ I will return to this further on, but it is important to point out here that whereas legitimating and helping flex agribusinesses “Stay Alive” is an expected outcome for amenable accommodators (regardless of their lawful or criminal character), this is rather an unexpected outcome for reluctant accommodators.

Thus, the political agendas of lawful and criminal accommodators play out differently for the amenable and reluctant accommodative streams. Already vibrant elsewhere, the amenable accommodative stream gains momentum in Guatemala from 2012 on as result of the pro-social branding campaign pushed forward by flex cane and palm companies. Amenable accommodators consent to flex agribusinesses’ responsibility, thus following an “if you can’t beat them, join them and squeeze them” political rationale. For criminal amenable accommodators, it is important for flex cane and palm companies to thrive so they can keep offering a legal and profitable cover for illicit businesses. For lawful amenable accommodators, it is key to raise the awareness of flex agribusinesses on the benefits of more ethically and environmentally sound practices, and help them transition towards them. Hence, lawful amenable accommodators become the VIP guests of flex cane and palm companies in events like the November 2013 “I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers”, or the September 2014 “5th RSPO Latin American Conference”, and even in those which involve the broader oligarchic-bourgeois community, such as CACIF’s September 2013 “X National Businessmen Conference” (ENADE).

The reluctant accommodative stream also thrives in Guatemalan politics of agro-environmental change from 2012 on, and for reasons similar to those pertaining to the amenable stream. It is in the aftermath of the “staying alive” fixes by flex agribusinesses that despaired challengers at the grassroots—and some of their state and social allies—subscribe to the reluctant accommodative stance. Surrendering completely to flex

⁶¹³ The other reason being to split the oppositional ranks, as flagged in the discussion on the supporters’ agenda.

cane and palm complexes' inevitability, but only partially to their desirability, reluctant accommodators follow an "if you can't beat them, bother them or run away" political rationale. Lawful reluctant accommodators unleash licit reproduction and contention strategies in an attempt to tame the virulence of agro-extractive capitalist project and/or make it through. Criminal reluctant accommodators resort to illicit entrepreneurship to make the most out of their life under the agro-extractive capitalist project, or simply to survive it. Nonetheless, possibilities for agency are constrained in both cases due to the challenges the main accommodative strategy during purge agro-capitalism from 1986-2005, namely fleeing further into the agrarian frontier, to Guatemala City, or as unauthorized migrants to the US.

13.4. Repertoire of contention

In their efforts to turn the agro-extractive capitalist project into an inclusive, ethical and sustainable development project, lawful accommodators rely on "win-win private accountability" and "chicken bus assistant" strategies. Conversely, criminal accommodators use the "backdoor" strategy for their "dog-eat-dog" struggles. These contention strategies are underpinned by a series of tactics advanced in alliance with multiple state and social actors, and through various means and forms of contention. Hence, mirroring their different agendas, accommodators' tactics vary according to their character (lawful or criminal) and will (amenable or reluctant), as depicted in table 43. But altogether, they all make up the repertoire of contention informing the politics *between* accommodators and supporters, and *between* accommodators and challengers.

Table 43 Accommodators’ repertoire of contention in the northern lowlands in 2006-2014

Strategies	Tactics	Means	Forms
Win-win private accountability	Response-ability by market compulsion	Voluntary private self-regulation	Organized and overt
	Watchdog	Discursive and private self-regulation	Rightful
Chicken bus assistant	Incorporation improvement	Solidary, disruptive, and individual & collective bargaining	Everyday Organized and overt (spontaneous & partisan)
	Collateral damage reduction	Solidary, advocative, and statutory regulation	Everyday Rightful
Backdoor	<i>Narco-taco</i>	Violent, criminal-entrepreneurial	Organized and alternatively overt and covert
	<i>Enchi-mara</i>	Violent, criminal-entrepreneurial	Organized and alternatively overt and covert

Source: Author’s own elaboration

13.4.1. Win-win private accountability strategy

Flex cane and palm companies’ fixes to productive relations following a pro-social branding campaign, are seized by state and social (lawful) accommodators as a political opportunity to hold flex agribusinesses accountable for their actions. To do so, they act as response-ability gatekeepers—a role that comes with enhanced access to funds, and political weight and visibility. Longing for hegemony and sustained profitability, the agro-extractivists consent to being accountable to those who hold the key to pro-social branding. Put another way, the corporations succumb to certain demands put forth by those who have the means to sell accumulation projects as extraordinary phenomena providing solutions to pressing human and planetary problems. As a result, this accountability system involves cooperative “win-win” relations between agro-extractivists and response-ability gatekeepers. Additionally, following governance policy dogma prescriptions, these market-led systems of corporate accountability make of regulation

‘principally a privatized domain with civil society groups directly negotiating with and monitoring corporations’ (O’Laughlin 2008, 948). I thus call this accommodative strategy “win-win private accountability”.

I also advanced in chapter 11 how informal and voluntary (non-binding) certification schemes originally gain statutory recognition as state powers abide by them. For instance, while acknowledging that ‘more needs to be done directly to engage governments’, Oxfam argues that ‘cases of successful MSIs [multi-stakeholder initiatives] seem to indicate that if the MSI leads, the government will follow and endorse the MSI approach and/or certification’ (Holzman 2015, 36). For Oxfam, ‘MSIs are gaining legitimacy as a tool to address sustainability in the absence of effective government policies and regulation and are setting industry benchmarks for sustainability’ (ibid, 32). Such a perspective leads us to question whether “win-win private accountability” raises corporate performance standards up to (or beyond) statutory regulations, or rather fuels and legitimizes a “race to the bottom”. For instance, in a case generally portrayed as a successful multi-stakeholder performance certification platform (Holzman 2015), the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) response-ability gatekeepers consider the commitments made by flex palm companies to pay legal minimum wages, and protect “High Conservation Value” areas in palm plantations to be an achievement.⁶¹⁴ Commonalities notwithstanding, the split between amenable and reluctant response-ability gatekeepers has implications on the particular tactics through which the “win-win private accountability” strategy unfolds.

13.4.1.1. Response-ability by market compulsion

Amenable response-ability gatekeepers advance the win-win private accountability strategy through codes of conduct and corporate performance certification schemes. These are voluntary mechanisms of self-regulation put forward by especially private (i.e. large international

⁶¹⁴ Proforest, Solidaridad and WWF in workshop on the progress of the RSPO certification process of the Guatemalan flex palm complex, February 2014.

conservation and development NGOs), but also public (e.g. IDB's Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard), response-ability gatekeepers. To this end, they most often work often through multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. RSB, RSPO, BONSUCRO etc.), but sometimes also individually (e.g. the Rainforest Alliance Seal). These corporate accountability mechanisms play a key role in the supporters' pro-social branding campaign to build the response-ability of the flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala. This means that, even if for different reasons, both supporters and amenable accommodators rely on the response-ability by market compulsion contention tactic. Chapter 11 discussed the ways in which this tactic works, and the politics it opens up for agro-extractivists and amenable response-ability gatekeepers. I therefore limit myself here to identifying two major caveats behind voluntary mechanisms of corporate accountability, and the way they are used in Guatemala to harness flex cane and palm complexes' response-ability. The first one has to do with the fact that an exception can be made for every performance standard that flex agribusinesses fail to meet.⁶¹⁵ The second caveat concerns public international financial institutions, which either circumvent or re-interpret their own social and environmental safeguards in order to fund flex agribusiness accumulation projects. This is the case of the US\$ 26 million grant issued by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company. The grant was approved on the basis of an environmental impact assessment prepared by the flex cane company itself, rather than by an authorized third party.⁶¹⁶ Another case is the 2009 mezzanine loan by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and LACFIN Holdings to fund flex cane companies in Guatemala, and elsewhere in Latin America (see chapter 7), without the IDB using its own "Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard" as a measure of accountability.

⁶¹⁵ In workshops on the progress of RSPO certification of Guatemalan flex palm companies, February 2014, and on Certification and beyond: solutions for responsible agro-commodity governance, in The Hague, October 2014.

⁶¹⁶ Interviews with Head Lawyer of CUC's Legal Team, July 2011, and OHCHR officials in Guatemala, March 2013

13.4.1.2. Watchdog

As a means to advance the win-win private accountability strategy, reluctant response-ability gatekeepers “watchdog” flex cane and palm complexes. Reluctant response-ability gatekeepers basically include large transnational NGOs and their counterparts. Since they are sometimes also part of corporate certification multi-stakeholder performance platforms, their watchdogging might result in flex cane and palm companies seeking redemption in certification too. Reluctant response-ability gatekeepers can also take an outsider role to “name and shame” flex cane and palm companies for their most environmentally and/or socially disruptive practices, rather than simply limiting their agency to “response-ability consulting” in multi-stakeholder certification platforms. In their appeals for the rule of law in favor of the underprivileged without necessarily questioning the deep root causes of injustices, they resemble the rightful resisters described by O’Brien (1996). There are two iconic cases of the watchdog tactic in Guatemala during 2006-2014, one involving the flex cane complex, and the other the flex palm complex.

The first case concerns the challenge The Coca Cola Company (TCCC), PepsiCo and Associated British Foods received from Oxfam’s “Behind the Brands” campaign.⁶¹⁷ In 2013, Oxfam publishes a report entitled ‘Sugar Rush: Land rights and the supply chains of the biggest food and beverage companies’ (Thorpe 2013). As a result, TCCC, first, and then PepsiCo, publicize their corporate “land policies” in which both commit to ‘zero-tolerance to land grabs’ in their supply chains (TCCC 2013, PepsiCo 2014). Additionally, TCCC and PepsiCo subscribe the principle of “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” (FPIC), and more generally to the 2012 Committee on World Food Security’s “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and

⁶¹⁷ This campaign involves a scorecard to ‘assess the agricultural sourcing policies of the world’s 10 largest food and beverage companies [i.e. Nestle, PepsiCo, Unilever, Mondelez, Coca-Cola, Mars, Danone, Associated British Foods (ABF), General Mills, and Kellogg’s]’ (Oxfam International. 2015).

Forests in the Context of National Food Security” (hereafter TGs) (CFS-FAO 2012). Additionally, TCCC agrees to supply only from BONSUCRO or equivalent certified sugar by 2020 (TCCC 2013, 3). And in 2014 TCCC allies with ‘UL’s Responsible Sourcing group to conduct a study examining the incidence and impact of child labor, forced labor and land rights issues in Guatemala [...] to help improve TCCC’s commitments in the area of human rights and sustainable agriculture’ (TCCC 2015, 2). Oxfam International’s Executive Director assesses this achievement—and private corporate accountability more generally—as following: ‘no company is too big to listen to its customers. Together we can transform the food industry if consumers demand it’ (Oxfam International. 2014). Achievements notwithstanding, the PepsiCo Land Policy includes a highly controversial perspective on land resource “tenureship”. Buried under the progressive perspective that land tenure rights can be legitimate—regardless of whether or not they are sanctioned by state powers—is an argument used to advocate for the rights of corporations (“businesses”) to land resources:

‘A legitimate land tenure holder for purposes of this document is defined as a person, family, community, or *business with rights to the land or associated natural resources*, whether based on indigenous rights, custom, informality, or occupation, regardless of whether the right is currently protected by law or formally recorded’ (PepsiCo 2014, emphasis added).

The second case involves the 2014 assessment of labor conditions in the Guatemalan flex palm complex by international labor rights watchdog Verité. This assessment, which I referred to in chapter 5 on labor relations, reveals a series of ‘labor and human rights risks’ in the flex palm complex, including ‘land grabs and displacement, unethical recruitment and hiring practices, indicators of forced labor, wage and hour violations, child labor, violations of women’s rights, unacceptable living conditions, a lack of grievance mechanisms, and environmental damage’ (Verité 2014, 4). As Verité duly acknowledges, all of these issues have been raised in previous studies. But since these were

conducted by activist journalists and scholars, they were disregarded by flex cane and palm companies, and the researchers were discredited—and in some cases taken to court. This, together with the fact that Verité’s Southeast Asian section has been a RSPO member since 2013, might explain why flex palm companies in Guatemala consent to listening to Verité’s concerns during their RSPO certification process. In this case, the response to Verité comes from the YASTEXE Executive Director of GREPALMA, who explains that most of the issues raised by Verité have already been addressed, and the rest are in progress.⁶¹⁸

13.4.2. Chicken bus assistant strategy

For lawful accommodators, there are only two ways to go about the agro-extractive capitalist project. One is to improve the ‘terms of incorporation’ (Du Toit 2004) of those who come on board, either amenably or reluctantly. The other is to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts brought about by flex cane and palm commodity production, even for those who are in no way involved in the flex cane and palm complexes. This is why I metaphorically term the other core strategy of contention used by lawful accommodators as that of the “chicken bus assistant”. Assistants of “camioneta” drivers in Guatemala skillfully cram passengers inside the bus so that more can travel in the least uncomfortable way possible—while still keeping an eye on the left out (but not behind) passengers who sit on top of the bus or hang from the emergency hand rails by the front and rear doors. And this resembles the main tactics through which accommodators work.

13.4.2.1. Incorporation improvement

This is the tactic followed by those who try to accommodate themselves into the labor regime of flex cane and palm companies—the passengers crammed in the chicken bus. There are two forms of incorporation into this labor regime, as a plantation worker and/or as a supplier of

⁶¹⁸ In workshop on the progress of RSPO certification of the Guatemalan flex palm complex, February 2014

cane/palm fruit. Generally speaking, the latter takes an amenable accommodative stance vis-à-vis flex agribusinesses, although there are also some—especially among palm fruit suppliers—who regret doing so but believe that it is too late for them to withdraw, and so become reluctant accommodators. I also advanced that there are no subordinate class cane suppliers in Guatemala. In the northern lowlands during 2006-2014, there is simply a bunch of dependent agrarian bourgeois cane outgrowers who come together to negotiate supply conditions with the one and only flex cane company—Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj.⁶¹⁹ Cane outgrowers along the southern coast have been unionized for some time through the “Southern Cane Growers Union” (UCS). In fact, UCS is part of the Agricultural Chamber (CAMAGRO), of which flex cane companies also form part through ASAZGUA.

Conversely, dependent agrarian bourgeois palm outgrowers are not organized either in the southern coast or in the northern lowlands. They bargain with flex palm companies ‘in an every man for himself fashion’.⁶²⁰ Nonetheless, Petty Capitalist palm contract-farmers are organized through the “Farmers Association for the Comprehensive Development of the Northern Basin of the Chixoy River” (ADINC). Following the problems with the government’s PROPALMA program that were discussed earlier, most palm contract-farmers leave ADINC in 2013 and organize through the “Ixacán Union of Independent Palm Growers” (SIPI). It is through SIPI that palm contract-farmers strive to improve their terms of exchange with flex palm companies. In a December 2013 letter to PALIXCÁN, the contracting flex Palm Company, SIPI argues, ‘you promised palm would lift us out of poverty. But after 4 years of meager financial and technical support, and unfavorable conditions for our produce, palm is rather sending us into bankruptcy and landlessness’.⁶²¹ Following unsuccessful attempts to join forces with challengers, Petty Capitalist palm contract-farmers in a

⁶¹⁹ Interview with owner, head agronomic engineer, and security chief, February 2008

⁶²⁰ Interview with large palm outgrower from Fray zone, December 2013

⁶²¹ Read by a SIPI member during the II Meeting of Palm Affected Communities in the Northern Lowlands, June 2014

reluctant accommodative stance find an ally in response-ability gatekeepers harnessing flex palm companies' certification by the RSPO.⁶²²

Plantation workers struggle to improve their terms of incorporation into flex agribusinesses' labor regime through everyday and organized forms. Everyday forms involve: First, free land leases issued by landed to land-scarce subordinate class cultivators. For as we saw, in addition to allowing for re-peasantization through a land sovereignty strategy, free land leases allow for functional dualist semi-proletarianization. Second, unpaid family labor seeks to achieve (or increase) minimum wage-equivalent wages in plantation work. Third, unpaid reproductive family labor deployed to support wage-earners. Fourth, foot-dragging occurs in order to lessen exploitation. One example is burying whole sacks of fertilizers or pouring their contents into a puddle, and then reporting that they were applied to palms; another is only cleaning plantation drainages in the areas close to the road through which the supervisor engineers drive by.⁶²³

Plantation workers join forces with one another to improve their terms of incorporation in spontaneous and partisan (unionized) ways. The former primarily involves a series of sudden withdrawals of group labor in palm plantations. Reasons for this this range from conflicts with labor contractors regarding agreed and actual wages and labor conditions, to offences by foremen or supervisor engineers. Spontaneous group labor withdrawals are used as pressure points for improved wages and labor conditions, though they often result in the blacklisting of defaulting workers from future employment.⁶²⁴ The latter partisan labor struggles by plantation workers unfold in less than ideal conditions. Cane and

⁶²² Interview with small-scale palm contract-farmer and member of SIPI, July 2013

⁶²³ Interviews with machine operator dismissed by Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company, August 2009, and plantation worker dismissed by PALIXCÁN flex palm company, March 2010

⁶²⁴ Group interviews with Members of district level Community Development Councils from Chisec zone, August 2010, representatives from two villages in El Estor (Polochic valley zone), June 2010, and from different Tierra Blanca district villages from Sayaxché, July 2010.

palm plantation workers are not unionized.⁶²⁵ Whereas more direct action ensues when needed, there are five ways in which the plantation labor regime in flex cane and palm companies precludes the agitation, organization and mobilization of workers. First, wage advances by labor contractors compel workers to comply in order to pay off their debt. Second, increasing flexibilization results in workers being hired for shorter time spans, and alternatively deployment in multiple workplaces. Third, flex agribusinesses hire a large share of their labor-force from faraway places, and even from abroad (e.g. Nicaragua). This erects language and other cultural barriers among workers, and between them and the local population. Fourth, troublesome workers are blacklisted, a point that I previously flagged. Fifth and finally, along with their global peers—from Brazil to South Africa or Mozambique⁶²⁶—Guatemalan flex cane companies rely on mechanic cane harvesters to deter cutters from going on strike.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, palm plantation workers in Sayaxché lead a trailblazing struggle to improve wages and labor conditions. This partly explains the plantation labor regime fix from late 2012 on. In December 2011, plantation workers from four flex palm companies in Sayaxché file a claim against their employers with the Ministry of Labor and the Ombudsman Office. In it, they argue that flex palm companies force them to work extra hours for free, make them handle agro-chemicals without proper information and equipment, do not provide with written contracts, and pay wages below the legal minimum (Sayaxché palm plantation workers' claim 2011).⁶²⁷ In February 2012, Ministry of Labor officials visit the companies. Two corporations ban

⁶²⁵ Interviews with Head of the Centre for Labor Rights of the Apostolic Vicariate in Izabal Department, July 2009, and Head Lawyer of CUC's Legal Team, July 2011. Only the more regular staff in Palo Gordo flex palm company is part of a trade union, though the union claims 5 unionized workers are dismissed in 2011, and then 7 more members of the union's Executive Board in 2012, without due causes (Palo Gordo Trade Union 2012).

⁶²⁶ (McKay et al. 2016, O'Laughlin 2016)

⁶²⁷ Curiously enough, it seems this is something the YASTEXE CEO of Petén's Reforesting Company (REPSA)—the largest of the concerned flex palm companies—had anticipated. His law bachelor thesis is entitled 'Is it obligatory to pay the minimum wage in piecemeal contracts?' (Molina Botrán 2002). The conclusion of his analysis is that 'no, it is not' (ibid.).

them from their premises, and the other two let them in, but deny them access to the information they require. Furthermore, no company representative shows up at the two conciliatory meetings convened by the Ombudsman Office in March and April of that year. In May, some 12,000 workers and villagers block roads and access to the palm mills for six days in retaliation. Against this backdrop, the YASTEEXE CEO of flex palm company REPSA claims that ‘organizations are investing money and *paying* labor organizers to go to the villages and convince people of things that are not true’ (in Luxner 2014, emphasis added). He continues to argue, ‘these campesinos are not making semiconductors, so *people of this intellectual level* are easier to influence’ (ibid, emphasis added).

Workers’ mobilizations lead to a multi-stakeholder “conflict transformation” process mediated by the government and involving workers and one representative for all concerned companies.⁶²⁸ Negotiations drag on,⁶²⁹ and to workers’ surprise, a “Governance and Development Pact for Sayaxché” is celebrated in July 2014 at the National Palace in Guatemala City. Circumventing the multi-stakeholder negotiation process, this Pact involves the four flex palm companies, the Minister of Labor, the President of the Guatemalan Social Security Institute (IGSS), the mayor of Sayaxché, the Governor of Petén, and the President of the Republic, as well as 104 Sayaxché village representatives in the Pact’s annex (Sayaxché G&D Pact 2014). The Pact outlines seven concrete axes: ‘education, health, nutrition, infrastructure, water & sanitation, productivity, and tourism’ (ibid, 17). Thus, not only plantation workers and allies are excluded from the Pact, but the whole labor question that initially sparked the conflict is also left out. In response, palm plantation workers and their support organizations file a new claim with the Ministry of Labor against the same four flex palm

⁶²⁸ Who, by the way, is the former Minister of Economy and current GREPALMA advisor I talked about earlier.

⁶²⁹ In the meantime, a group of plantation workers meets with the Minister of Labor in June 2012. After listening to their grievances, the Minister scolds them and tells them they can only receive the minimum wage after negotiating it, and that they should be grateful to have a job (in Villatoro García 2016).

companies in October 2014. This time, however, a strange and unexpected bedfellow—the US Trade Representative (USTR)—quickly amplifies their claim. As discussed earlier, the USTR leverages on the labor chapter of the free trade agreement between the US and Guatemala (DR-CAFTA) to bring the Guatemalan state to an arbitration panel for labor rights violations in November 2014. Interestingly enough, the four flex palm companies included in the USTR’s claim are those involved in Sayaxché’s labor conflict (Véliz 2015).

13.4.2.2. Collateral damage reduction

While damaging people and the environment might not be the intention of the agro-extractivists, these are nonetheless outcomes of flex cane and palm commodity production. Hence, those who do not incorporate into the flex cane and palm companies’ labor regime follow the “collateral damage reduction” tactic. It is used to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts resulting from flex cane and palm commodity production—recall the left out (but not behind) chicken bus passengers. Different lawful, reluctant accommodators pursue this tactic in different ways. For explanatory purposes, I differentiate here between those part of dominant and subordinate classes, and even further within the latter between members of the latent and stagnant sections of surplus population. All of them, nonetheless, depend on everyday and rightful resistance forms of contention.

Dominant class reluctant accommodators include cattle ranchers, and to a lesser extent coffee, banana, mango, papaya and other traditional and non-traditional export crop producers. They address their grievances with flex cane and palm companies via private channels. The more direct channel is through their trade and political organizations, like the National Association of Coffee Growers (ANACAFE), the Guatemalan Association of Brahman Cattle Breeders (ASOBRAHMAN), or the Independent Banana Growers Association (APIB). All of these organizations are part of the Agricultural Chamber (CAMAGRO), of

which flex cane and palm companies are also connected to through ASAZGUA and GREPALMA, respectively. More indirectly, dominant class reluctant accommodators rely on their firm grip over local power structures. For instance, three different mayors from Panzós Township in the Polochic valley zone between 2004 and 2015 are linked to cattle ranching and/or export crop growing.⁶³⁰ Hence, they stand alongside traditional patrones when complaining about the pollution of freshwater sources from which the herd waters, the pest of flies derived from rotting palm rachises, or the fencing and tolling of roads.⁶³¹

Subordinate class reluctant accommodators are hard to differentiate from challengers at the grassroots, and so it is their contention repertoire. But it is still possible to identify key organized political subjects that ascribe to a reluctant accommodative stance within the state and society. Organized reluctant accommodators in society basically include the response-ability gatekeepers behind the watchdog tactic towards win-win private accountability. In other words, transnational NGOs which try to reduce the social and environmental damage of flex cane and palm commodity production by holding flex agribusinesses accountable from outside multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms—though some use an insider-outsider approach. But in addition to transnational watchdogs—like Oxfam and Verité—there are (literally) hundreds⁶³² of national NGOs working to accommodate subordinate classes to the agro-extractive capitalist project. Before the mid-2000s most of them were concentrated in the hilly, job-scarce, and genocidal violence-ridden western highlands (bordering Mexico), and the so-called “hunger-corridor” in Eastern Guatemala (bordering Honduras). Just few of them worked in the

⁶³⁰ This occurs as well in Chisec, Ixcán, Fray, and Sayaxché, albeit less systematically

⁶³¹ Interviews with Panzós mayor, March 2008 and May 2010; owner, head agronomic engineer, and security chief of Polochic’s Chabil Utzaj cane company, February 2008, CEO of PALIXCÁN flex Palm Company, February 2010, Head of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA) in Chisec, July 2011, well-established cattle rancher from Fray, October 2013, and Raxruha mayor, October 2013.

⁶³² The Guatemalan Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives reports 468 non-governmental organizations registered in the country during 2008 (CONGCOOP 2009)

northern lowlands, where subordinate classes were either bonded to haciendas, poor-yet-not-starving (swidden) cultivators, and/or the latent-yet-not-stagnant surplus population. With the land grab alarm going off to warn of ascent of flex agribusiness in the northern lowlands—especially from 2008 on—development cooperation funds swiftly arrive in the region and different NGOs follow suit. As is often the case elsewhere, this presents emancipatory rural struggles with a double-edged sword. Whereas it is helpful in accessing contention resources of different kinds, accommodation obviously tames the will to challenge and transform—intentionally or out of sheer institutional inertia. Even the most committed challengers can be steered towards less disruptive practices in partnerships with reluctant accommodators, as noted in my discussion of Oxfam’s role in the Polochic conflict.

Additionally, subordinate class reluctant accommodators at the grassroots benefit from accommodative policy reforms advanced by state actors in reluctant and even amenable accommodative stances. The latter’s role was discussed in the chapter on supporters. I argued there that multi-stakeholder governance processes and state grants are key to the supporters’ response-ability by decree tactic within the staying alive contention strategy. Particularly, governmental conditional cash transfer programs institutionalized from 2008 onward involve a timely survival subsidy for especially the stagnant, but also the latent, sections of the surplus population. Social grants are partly the outcome of the failed attempt by the “hope” group of government officials to reform the Guatemalan regressive tax system during President Colom’s 2008-2011 administration.⁶³³ Yet as a social policy mechanism detached from redistributive efforts, and funded through public debt, conditional cash transfers are more of a safety net for the outcast, and a bounty for domestic private financiers, than a means of (re)incorporating the

⁶³³ Curiously enough the 2008-2010 Minister of Finance and key figure behind the tax reform efforts of the “hope” group, Mr. Juan Alberto Fuentes Knight, is appointed as Chair of Oxfam International’s Board of Supervisors in 2015 (Oxfam International. 2015b). In February 2018, Mr. Fuentes Knight is arrested in Guatemala under charges of corruption together with ex-President Colom, and another 10 high level officials (Pocón 2018).

surplus population into the system from which they are expelled. Once in place, though, it is very unpopular for any government to withdraw these services. In fact, not only do conditional cash transfers remain under General Pérez Molina's 2012-2015 "iron fist" administration, but the "Social Cohesion Council" formerly in charge of their administration is upgraded into the "Ministry of Social Development".

It is precisely from within General Pérez Molina's administration that another major state reluctant accommodator emerges: the "two door policy" group. Formerly in the academia and lower ranking state positions, the leaders of this group take over the "Presidential Commission for Rural Development", the "Ministry of Food, Livestock and Agriculture", the "Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat", and the "Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs", with support from the FAO Representative from January 2014 on.⁶³⁴ It is from these influential positions that this group of government officials opens an initial "door" to rural development through policies supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project, including the "General Policy Framework for the Promotion of Private Investment in Rural Territories". But in doing so, they introduce reluctant accommodative "safeguards". For instance, the policy for the promotion of private investment in rural territories includes 'criteria for the promotion of sustainable rural development [including] environmental sustainability, social equity (i.e. safe, decent and quality employment; tax revenues, public expenditure and investment for comprehensive rural development; direct benefits for nearby villages, and; public shareholding), and respect for multiculturalism (i.e. free prior and informed consent)' (Government of Guatemala 2012, 6). At the same time, they open a second "door" for policies aimed at ameliorating agroextractive capitalism's collateral

⁶³⁴ Once again, a major exponent of the two door policy group, the Minister of Agriculture, is arrested in September 2016 under accusations of smuggling maize from Mexico (Prensa Libre 2016). This follows the arrest of President Pérez Molina in September 2015 under corruption charges (Prensa Libre 2015). Without denying the widespread corruption among state officials, the fact that it is basically officials who affect the interests of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie the one that are actually arrested suggests there is more than meets the eye behind these cases. Nonetheless, such discussion goes beyond our main research span.

damage on subordinate classes, including through farming, rural development and land policies.

Second “door” policies in the realms of farming and rural development involve a series of progressive policies orchestrated by both the “hope” and “two door policy” groups, and negotiated with social actors in supportive, challenging and accommodative standpoints through multi-stakeholder governance platforms. For instance, the 2009 “Comprehensive Rural Development Policy” PNDRI is an outcome of the “National Dialogue for Comprehensive Rural Development and Agrarian, Environmental, and Labor Conflict Settlement” convened by President Colom in 2008, and facilitated by the “hope” group. I explained how, in addition to the “Alliance for Comprehensive Rural Development” (ADRI) in a challenging standpoint, supportive social organizations part of the “Social Organizations’ Movement of Guatemala” (MOSGUA), and the “National Peasant Union” (UNAC), as well as former challenger-turned-amenable accommodator “National Indigenous-Peasant Coordination” (CONIC) are also part of the negotiation process. As a result, the transformative character of the PNDRI tones down, even if it still includes relevant progressive components, as discussed in chapter 4. This because regardless of the delicate political compromises which underpin the PNDRI,⁶³⁵ the policy is rejected by the Agricultural Chamber (CAMAGRO) and the CACIF which argue they were excluded from the negotiations. Considering that the hope group is fully devoted to reforming the tax system, the implementation of the “Comprehensive Rural Development Policy” (PNDRI) is not a political priority for accommodators within Colom’s 2008-2011 administration. But following the constitution of the two door policy group in the first year of General Pérez Molina’s 2012-2015 administration, the PNDRI is back in the policy arena, together with its “Activation and Adjustment Plan”, and the “Family Farming Program for the Strengthening of Peasant Economy” (PAFFEC), both passed in

⁶³⁵ Including across ADRI members, between ADRI and the Government, and between ADRI and MOSGUA and CNAC.

2012. These policies mirror the residual approach to inequality and poverty common to all types of accommodators, and informing trickle-down dogma policies of 2006-2014. Nonetheless, the translation of these policies into action is costly and time consuming—and so, little progress is achieved by the end of 2014.

Regarding land, second “door” policies include the 2009 “Specific Regulation for the Recognition and Declaration of Communal Lands” by the Cadastral Information Registry, FONTIERRAS’ land leasing program and communal land titling option from 2012 onward, and especially the 2014 “Land Policy” by the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA). In the latter case, the two door policy group allies itself with the FAO. This is paradigmatic, since the previous unspoken deal was that FAO does not engage with the politically charged land question in Guatemala.⁶³⁶ Reasons for this change include, first, the Guatemalan FAO office’s achievement of full diplomatic status in 2013, after having formerly been a branch of FAO’s office for Central America in Panama. Second, and especially, the appointment of a progressive national FAO Representative in January 2014, with a mandate to implement the ‘Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security’ (hereafter TGs). As a result, in 2014 Guatemala becomes the only country ‘that has integrated the Tenure Guidelines into a national land policy framework’ (FAO 2014c). Building on Franco et al. (2015), Brent et al. argue the TGs in Latin America

‘provide an important normative framework and tool for holding states accountable in situations where there is a need to (1) protect, (2) promote, or (3) restore resource tenure rights [...] This framing has an inherent bias in favor of subordinate agrarian classes and social justice, which reflects the spirit behind social movement participation in the negotiation of the TGs and indeed gives this instrument particular legitimacy among these groups’ (2017).

⁶³⁶ Interview with Vice-Representative of the FAO in Guatemala, May 2011.

However, the TGs are not always and necessarily read in this light. I explained how Coca Cola and PepsiCo commit to the TGs as a means of monitoring the land investment practices of their suppliers.⁶³⁷ Furthermore, there are also major state and social actors which use the TGs to argue that ‘property rights are human rights’ (Thomson Reuters Foundation, et al. 2016), a la Rothbard’s (1982). I come back to these competing interpretations of the TGs in Guatemala later on.⁶³⁸ It suffices to say here that, among all plausible interpretations of the TGs, the one which gains traction in Guatemala between 2012 and 2014 is that of the two door policy group, which reads them as a tool to reduce the collateral damages of the agro-extractive capitalist project.⁶³⁹

Differences in form and intention notwithstanding, the repertoire of contention of both amenable and reluctant accommodators ultimately legitimizes flex cane and palm complex accumulation projects, and helps the agro-extractivist to achieve and reproduce their class hegemony through ‘material measures which are of positive significance for the popular masses, even though these measures represent so many concessions imposed by the struggle of the subordinate classes’ (Poulantzas 1978, 31).

13.4.3. The backdoor strategy

As flagged in my analyses of social differentiation, productive relations, and the supporters’ contention repertoire, not everyone who makes it through the agro-extractive capitalist project does so through the “front door”. There are many—arguably more than what both challengers and supporters are ready or willing to acknowledge—who make it through the “backdoor”. They are those who rely on illicit means of social reproduction, either as a result of the ways they incorporate into the agro-extractive capitalist project, or because they simply cannot find a

⁶³⁷ And so do Cargill, Nestlé, and Unilever (FAO 2014b, Unilever 2014).

⁶³⁸ On the challenges of interpreting the TGs in Guatemala see Tramel and Caal Hub (2016), in Latin America Brent et al. (2017), and more generally Franco et al. (2015).

⁶³⁹ In land policy consultation with peasant organizations convened by the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, March 2014

place in it. The former case points to criminal incorporation into the flex agribusinesses' labor regime—as narco-outgrowers or corporate thugs. The latter case refers to the outcasts who end up working as hitmen in narco-trafficking cartels, or joining a criminal mara gang in Guatemala City. Therefore, the backdoor accommodation strategy includes what I call the “*narco-taco*” and “*enchi-mara*” tactics.

These metaphors are used to describe the blend of men—originally from areas where flex agribusinesses have become dominant, and from different generational and ethnic backgrounds, though generally part of the underclasses—involved in drug-cartels and criminal urban mara gangs. Moving closer to their core (i.e. narco-outgrowers), or farther away from it (i.e. corporate and drug-cartel hitmen, and criminal mara gang members), but always under the lawful cover of the flex cane and palm complexes, these social groups generally face annihilation. They are the cannon fodder in narco-cartel wars and inter-mara gang violence, and subject to social cleansing through extra-judicial executions by state and vigilante forces. Similarly, a taco or enchilada contains meat chunks or peppers, mixed with a variety of other fillings, which are initially concealed within the wrapped tortilla. But when one squeezes the tortilla before a bite, some of these fillings inevitably fall to the ground, and are disposed of without a thought.⁶⁴⁰

The *narco-taco* and *enchi-mara* tactics shape and reflect the skyrocketing violence of Guatemala in the early 21st century. The number of homicides increase from 3.230 in 2001, to 5.781 in 2007, and 5.924 in 2014, translating to an average of 16 violent deaths a day in a country with a 15,9 million population.⁶⁴¹ Not surprisingly, in his follow-up visit to Guatemala in 2009, UN Special Rapporteur on “Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions”, concludes ‘since August 2006, the security situation in Guatemala has deteriorated in nearly every category. Furthermore, many of the reforms under consideration at the time of

⁶⁴⁰ Furthermore, like the most dreadful drug-cartels and criminal mara gangs, these street food favorites in Guatemala are originally Mexican, and pretty common in California too.

⁶⁴¹ (Alston 2009, 6, UN Human Rights Council 2015, 5)

the Rapporteur's original mission [2006] have still not been implemented' (2009, 14).

13.4.3.1. *Narco-tacos*

This is the tactic followed by groups both “in” and “out” of the agro-extractive capitalist project. The former includes those who rely on criminal means of social reproduction as a result of their type of incorporation into flex cane and palm companies' labor regime as cane/palm suppliers or workers. I discussed earlier how the outgrower fraction of the dependent agrarian bourgeoisie class includes a series of narco-outgrowers, who find in cane and especially palm cultivation a better means for money laundering than cattle ranching, and in palm plantations spaces far more convenient than cattle ranches for air drug-trade operations. Hence, if not taking an actively supportive stance, narco-outgrowers position themselves in an amenable accommodative stance vis-à-vis the agro-extractive capitalist project. The latter group stems from across fragmented subordinate classes, and most often from the ranks of the stagnant section of surplus population. It includes the barefoot thugs who are paramount to supporters' jungle law tactic, and hitmen who use their military training to join narco-cartel armies.⁶⁴² As a Minister's bodyguard, and former member of the dreadful “Kaibiles” Guatemalan army Special Forces explains

‘It is not difficult for us, the offspring of poor peasants, to be lured by the [narco-]cartel. Money is easily three times more than as Kaibil, plus *guaro* [alcohol], cocaine, and *chicas* [women sex-workers] galore as fringe benefits...you live like a Patron! But not for long...Ha! And don't you dream of stepping out 'cause your very own “compadritos” will be the ones to cut your throat. All of us [Kaibilies] know this. But still some think they can “fool the Devil”, and others are so desperate for money they end up joining any ways’ (interview, November 2011).

⁶⁴² On narco-trafficking in Guatemala see, among others, reports by Plaza Pública (<https://www.plazapublica.com.gt>), *InSight Crime* (<http://www.insightcrime.org/guatemala-organized-crime-news>), the US Congressional Research Service (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/>), and Berthet and Lopez's (2011) for the World Bank.

Indeed, the foregoing testimony speaks to another open secret in Guatemala—the close links between the Guatemalan army and the drug-cartels.⁶⁴³ The testimony of the first Head of the UN “International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala” (CICIG)⁶⁴⁴—in office from 2008 until he steps down in June 2010 under life threats—it is also very insightful in this regard. He argues, ‘drug traffickers control 60 percent of [Guatemala] most of which are Mexican cartels who recruit members of the notorious Mara Salvatrucha gang, and bribe law enforcement and judiciary officials’ (El País 2011). In addition to what is published in the news, and gossiped about in small circles, regarding narco-cartel’s de facto territorial control, I can offer first-hand testimony of the various times when, during fieldwork in the northern lowlands, I was stopped at road checkpoints in the middle of the day by men with automatic weapons in outfits such as jeans, military boots, an Adidas (or Che Guevara) t-shirt, and a cowboy hat.

13.4.3.2. Enchi-*maras*

The enchi-*mara* tactic is followed by many of those who accommodate by fleeing flex agribusinesses’ operation areas, and especially for the younger ones. I detailed how conservation enclosures ban people from searching for farmland in the agrarian frontier. Chances are that migrants without authorization never make it to the US, or are repatriated from there under the economic and political conditions of the period. Even so, Q’eqchi’ lowlanders rarely migrate to the US. Nonetheless, more and more flee rural pauperism in an “El Dorado” job-search to Guatemala City.⁶⁴⁵ I explained that young women look for jobs in the City as domestic and care-workers only to find themselves trapped in precarious, abusive and hyper-exploitative labor conditions.

⁶⁴³ (and Rubio Castañeda 2017, see, among others, Panner et al. 2010, Smyth 2011)

⁶⁴⁴ ‘Established [in 2007] as an independent, international body designed to support the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP), the National Civil Police (PNC) and other State institutions in the investigation of crimes committed by members of illegal security forces and clandestine security structures and, in a more general sense, help to disband such groups’ (CICIG. 2017).

⁶⁴⁵ As during purge agro-capitalism in 1986-2005, there are other than economic reasons to migrate, including fleeing gender and generational conservatism in the family/village. But the latter usually intersect with the need to makes ends meet.

Some migrant young men earn a living—at least, for some time—offloading trucks in “La Terminal” market, as informal street and urban transport sellers, or as private security guards who put their lives at risk while dealing with racialized comments for 14 hours a day to make some US\$ 185 a month. Nonetheless, there are others—or the foregoing after they become redundant, or sick of jumping from one precarious belittling job to another, and their offspring born to urban pauperism—who are drawn into a “mara” gang in order to survive a strange and violent life in the cliff-side slum settlements of Guatemala City.

The mara gang phenomenon in Guatemala City has a long history associated with the mass displacement caused by the internal armed conflict. This was the case during late 1970s and early 1980s genocidal violence, and it was redoubled during the neoliberal rural economic purge from 1986-2005. But a US Congressional Research Service report finds that mara affiliation rises from 14 to 22 thousand members between 2007 and 2012 alone (Ribando Seelke 2016, 4). Unlike the *narcotacos*, not every mara gang is into criminal entrepreneurship. Like *narcotacos*, social reproduction through the *enchi-mara* tactic is a risky business. On the one hand, there are the deadly (inter) “mara wars”. On the other hand, maras are blamed for *all* social evils, even if they are indeed responsible for many. They are the “public enemy number one” for the wealthy and the poor alike, and subject to a witch-hunt. This involves mob lynching and extra-judiciary detentions and killings of mara members—but also of many simply suspected to be—by state and vigilante forces.⁶⁴⁶ On a typical front page (and second, third, fourth...) of the daily press outlets, marero killings are celebrated as a necessary evil by Guatemalans of different genders, ethnicities and classes, from

⁶⁴⁶ (Levenson 2013, Alston 2009, Ribando Seelke 2016, 2011, Taft-Morales 2014). In his 2009 follow-up report on Guatemala, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, explains ‘approximately 8-10 per cent of killings are carried out with the aim of “weeding out” suspected gang members and other criminals. While social cleansing is often carried out by organized criminal groups, often with the support of local authorities and private security agencies, investigations by the Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos [Ombudsman Office] and NGOs found continued involvement by police forces in at least some of these cases’ (2009, 7).

the City and the countryside. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions explains in this regard, ‘indeed, given the failings of the criminal justice system, turning to on-the-spot executions of suspected criminals appear to some as the only available option’ (2011, 474).

13.5. Politics across accommodators

The group of accommodators is extremely heterogeneous. As it can be distilled from the previous discussion on the repertoire of contention, different accommodators act in ways that do not necessarily appeal to other fellow accommodators. Indeed, despite bundling them together under this category for analytical purposes, political dynamics across accommodators resemble those between and across fragmented classes more generally. But the violent, everyday conflicts across lawful and criminal accommodators spread far beyond agro-environmental politics. Thus, I focus on the politics across accommodators organized along the amenable and reluctant streams. In addition to competition for funding and political visibility and weight, the main source of tension across these political subjects is rooted in their “same same but different” political agendas, frames and contention repertoires.

One such tension has to do with competing aims and ways of engaging with corporate performance certification multi-stakeholder platforms. For instance, Oxfam plays the role of a reluctant response-ability gatekeeper by watchdogging the Guatemalan flex palm complex from inside and outside the RSPO. As a result, amenable response-ability gatekeepers thrusting flex palm companies towards RSPO certification feel that ‘Oxfam’s Janus face’ is quite disturbing.⁶⁴⁷ Watchdogging of amenable watchdogs is something Verité does too. Despite being a RSPO member, Verité argues in its labor and human rights risk assessment of the Guatemalan flex palm complex that ‘while Corporate Social Responsibility certifications and monitoring of plantations tended

⁶⁴⁷ Informal chat with an amenable response-ability gatekeeper after the workshop on the progress of the RSPO certification process of the Guatemalan flex palm complex, February 2014.

to lessen the risk of more extreme forms of exploitation, they were not a guarantee against labor or human rights violations' (2014, 5). Another tension stems from competing views on the role of the state in agriculture. Generally speaking, organized amenable accommodators call upon the state to play a subsidiary role, by casting safety nets for the "outcompeted". Their reluctant peers ask the state to play a more active role in promoting ethical and sustainable market inclusion (e.g. some provisions within the 2009 PNDRI and the 2014 Land Policy).

13.6. Politics within accommodators

For the same reasons stated with regard to the politics across accommodators, I also explore the politics within organized amenable and reluctant accommodators in this context.

13.6.1. Within amenable accommodators

Large transnational NGOs functioning as amenable response-ability gatekeepers find in corporate performance certification a win-win mechanism of bringing together diverse accommodators working to harness flex cane and palm commodity production and move it in the direction of environmentally and socially friendly standards. But their relations with subordinate agrarian class accommodators at the grassroots are often far from affable. This is especially the case in the tension-ridden relationship between large transnational conservation NGOs in multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms and (Q'eqchi') lowlander swidden cultivators. The former tend to blame the latter for deforestation and encroachment in protected areas, and by extension subject them to legal prosecution.⁶⁴⁸ To this end, they endorse a racialized discourse that frames Q'eqchi' people as bad environmentalists (Ybarra 2012), and come closer to a supportive rather than an amenable accommodative stance vis-à-vis the agro-extractive

⁶⁴⁸ Interviews with Head of Polochic branch of Defensores de la Naturaleza (IUCN Guatemala), June 2009, Technical Director of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) in Petén, October 2011, and Director of the National Forest Institute in Petén, November 2011. See also Ybarra (2011) and Grandia (2012).

capitalist project. This is considered unfair by (Q'eqchi') swidden cultivators who see themselves as simultaneously despised and used by conservation NGOs to secure green funds through REDD+ and other facilities for payments for environmental services.⁶⁴⁹

13.6.2. Within reluctant accommodators

The fact that some subjects use violent criminal tactics of reluctant accommodation to the agro-extractive capitalist project is clearly a source of tensions and conflict, especially at the grassroots and in an everyday fashion. Nonetheless, I focus here on the tensions within organized state and social reluctant accommodators. These are common for those part of large international organizations, where compromises among different groups in competing political standpoints within the organization are often hard to come by. Two iconic cases involving public and private international organizations illustrate this point.

One is the case of the FAO. I pointed out that the FAO subscribes to both the World Bank's "Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respect Rights, Livelihoods and Resources" and the Committee on World Food Security's Tenure Guidelines (TGs). In the latter case, the FAO contributes to the political fungibility of the TGs by sponsoring three competing interpretations. The first one involves a guide for governments on how to accommodate fragmented subordinate agrarian classes to corporate investments, entitled "Safeguarding land tenure rights in the context of agricultural investment" (FAO 2015). The second one is a corporate investment supportive interpretation of the TGs, entitled "Responsible Governance of Tenure: A Technical Guide for Investors", focused 'on helping investors pursue their projects in ways that respect legitimate tenure rights and human rights' (FAO 2016b, iv). And the third one is the "People's Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries

⁶⁴⁹ Group interviews with representatives from two villages within the core zone of the Sierra de las Minas Protected Area in Polochic highland zone, June 2007, and from different Sayaxché villages in May 2010

and Forests”, prepared by the largest transnational platform of transformative rural social movements, the “International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty” (IPC). Written for and by challengers of corporate control over land resources, the People’s Manual offers an interpretation of the TGs for challengers ‘to use the Guidelines in their struggles, by highlighting the parts that offer answers to their needs in order to stop and repair social injustices related to territory, land, fisheries and forests’ (IPC 2016, 8).

The other is the case of Oxfam and the RSPO. Whereas Oxfam sits on the Executive Board of the RSPO through its Dutch chapter Oxfam Novib (Holzman 2015, 18), Oxfam’s Spanish and US chapters (Intermón and America) watchdog the Guatemalan flex palm complex from outside the RSPO. In doing so, they even support challengers with funds and in campaigning efforts (e.g. CUC), and publish their own critical assessments of flex palm companies’ performance (Guereña and Zepeda 2013). This apparent contradiction within the Oxfam “family” is something Oxfam Novib is aware of, and explains in the following terms: ‘affiliation with MSIs [multi-stakeholder initiatives] creates a certain degree of brand risk for Oxfam. This risk enhances the need for other Oxfam affiliates to engage their allies in an outsider approach to create scrutiny and accountability’ (Holzman 2015, 33).

Chapter 14 Conclusions

14.1. Introduction

This research has been concerned with the nature, character and trajectories of agro-environmental change, and the politics that enable and constrain them, under heightened resource extractivism during the convergent crises conjuncture of the early 21st century. After somewhat losing relevance during neoliberal globalization in the 1980s and 1990s, resource extractivism re-gains momentum in capital accumulation and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies worldwide not long after the turn of the millennium, albeit unevenly. But unlike in previous times, early 21st-century resource extractivism is justified as part of the solution to convergent climate/environmental, energy, food and financial/economic crises. Resource extractivism is framed as a vehicle of transition to socially and environmentally sound forms of (agro)commodity and energy production—championing the needs of humanity and Planet Earth. Crops and trees quickly become one such transformational vehicle—particularly the newer uses of their biomass as carbon sinks and sources of bio-energy and bio-materials—complementing their traditional uses as food, feed, fiber, cellulose and timber. At the same time, transnational financiers find a lucrative way out of the ‘over-accumulation crisis’ (Harvey 2003) in these flex crops and commodities complexes, simultaneously lowering food, feed, bio-materials and energy production costs and putting a barrier to ‘under-production crises’ (O’Connor 1988). As a result, flex crops and commodities complexes consolidate and upgrade in their former strongholds, and expand into unchartered territories. My research findings suggest that the restructuring of the agricultural relations of production behind the rise of flex crops and commodities complexes, as well as the political dynamics that constrain and enable them, underpin a distinct model of resource extractivism after the turn of the century.

This world historic dynamic is informed and plays out differently across time and space. My examination of this phenomenon in Guatemala

during 2006-2014 offers a series of insights which may resonate elsewhere. Most especially, burgeoning flex cane and palm complexes from 2005 onward fuel the rise of a distinct form of biomass extractivism that I call the *agro-extractive capitalist project*. I subsequently summarize my core research findings with regard to, first, the ways the green gold pandemic unleashed by expanding flex cane and palm complexes shapes and expresses the Guatemalan agro-ecological, social and policy structures. Second, I glimpse into the nature and character of the agro-extractive capitalist project. Third, I review the new politics of racialized class domination on which the agro-extractive capitalist project stands. Fourth and finally, I indicate the main political responses that the agro-extractive capitalist project receives.

14.2. The agro-extractive capitalist project through the looking glass: Agro-ecological, social and policy structures

Soaring demand for flex cane and palm commodities in the convergent crises conjuncture has quickly grown from a green gold fever to a pandemic in Guatemala. From 2006-2014, cane plantations expand two-fold, and palm eight-fold, from where they were at during 1982-2005—resulting in the small Central American country being thrust into the position of a leading world producer and exporter of multiple flex crop commodities. The green gold pandemic significantly reshapes the agro-ecological, social, and policy structures in Guatemala.

The outcomes of my GIS analysis show that new cane plantations substitute staple food crops and cattle pastures to a lesser but relevant extent, giving insight into the agro-ecological structure. Palm plantations extend over forest, staple food crops, pastures and scrublands. Most distinctively, land officially categorized as “scrubland” in the northern lowlands includes the fallows of (Q’eqchi’) swidden cultivators and underutilized latifundia land of the landlord class. Expansion of cane and palm plantations also triggers two important indirect land use changes. First, cattle ranchers who aim to remain in business after leasing or selling their land to flex agribusinesses search for new graze

lands in and beyond the Guatemalan agrarian frontier, and even in Nicaragua. Second, soaring cane and palm plantations constrain swidden cultivators' abilities to leave land fallow, and more generally subordinate class cultivators' chances to farm on leased hacienda land.

Two broad sets of insights emerge from the analysis of the features and differentiation tendencies in the rural social structure of the Guatemalan northern lowlands in 2006-2014. The first set includes two arguments regarding the state of the forces of production during the convergent crises conjuncture in Guatemala. One suggests that commoditization is more of a dialectical and circular dynamic than it is an immanent and linear process. Following heightened formal subsumption of land and labor into capitalist agriculture during 2006-2014, traditional mercantilist landlords wither away, and the proletarian class burgeons. This could be expected with regards to the perspective on commoditization as an immanent and linear process. But at the same time, family labor-based forms of production are shouldered by former proletarians and petty capitalist farmers, and the landlord class re-emerges in the guise of the rentier landlord fraction. Rentier landlords seizing the opportunity to render land's ground-rent into money form in the early 21st century might "look like" their 19th century ancestors. But they play by different rules, especially taking on less prominent roles in economic and political life. Similarly, those seeking refuge in simple reproduction under conditions that are less than ideal for employment- or petty capitalist production-based livelihoods in the early 21st century, have little to do with ideal type representations of a self-sufficient peasantry. Whereas family farmers in 2006-2014 maintain control over their labor-power, they are usually compelled to market a large share—or almost all—of their farm produce. This is done to earn the money required to pay for tools, agro-inputs, consumer goods, transport and health services, and often a rent for the land they till.

The other argument on the state of the forces of production during the convergent crises conjuncture is that de-commoditization of production forces might serve simple as well as expanded reproduction. Indeed, the

re-emergence of labor and knowledge exchanges, and free land leases among subordinate class village cultivators, allows for (re)peasantization. But at the same time, these de-commoditized productive relations among villagers create favorable conditions for them to seize job opportunities in the flex cane and palm complexes. Thus, and on one side, de-commoditization of labor, land and knowledge allows for the functional dualist semi-proletarianization of subordinate classes, and thereby to subsidize farming livelihoods with wages (or vice-versa).⁶⁵⁰ On the other side, the de-commoditization of production forces allows flex agribusinesses to pay out cheap wages, and pass the costs of reproducing the personal conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production on to the workers (and their families).

The second set of analytical insights that come to light from the analysis of the social structure includes those that surface at the intersection of socio-cultural and economic class features and differentiation tendencies. For fragmented dominant classes, these include: First, power changes class but not face. The ranks of the new agrarian class hegemon—namely, the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie—are filled with members of the traditional seigniorial and especially bourgeois white oligarchy. Second, class power remains structured along the racialized bloodline hierarchy that has been pervasive (at least) since colonial times. Third, class power does not change face but it ages. And thereby a new generation of agro-extractivists I have called the “young although smartly-trained executives” (YASTEXES), takes over key executive positions in the family business in 2006-2014. And fourth and finally, there is the rise of the “narco-outgrower”. Despite a dangerous one, it is an open secret that cane and especially palm cultivation outcompete cattle ranching in 2006-2014 as preferred cover for illicit money-

⁶⁵⁰ This depending on whether we want to look at this as a sign of a rising multi-functional peasant economy, or a as a process of precarious proletarianization. In any case, the vibrancy of functional-dualist semi-proletarianization is further supported by the fact that the farming proletarian and multi-functional petty capitalist farmer class fractions, or those for which farming is paramount but are not part of the family farmer class, are the most dynamic fractions within the proletarian and petty capitalist farmer classes in 2006-2014.

laundering, and palm plantations as far more convenient spaces than ranches for air drug-trade operations.

For subordinate agrarian classes, key insights from the intersection of class with HH size and composition attributes include: First, the tendencies for the family farmer class to keep incorporating middle-aged members, and for the petty capitalist farmer class to increase the number of members under the age of 25. The non-aging of farming classes reinforces the re-peasantization tendency. Second, in 2010 and in cases where the share of consumers over workers in the HH is larger, the relevance of wage-work in the HH reproductive strategy becomes higher—but such a relationship no longer holds in 2014. This mirrors the functional dualist semi-proletarianization tendency. And third, the larger the number of HH members between 14 and 70 years old—and especially of women—the higher the relevance of farming in the HH’s reproductive strategy (and vice-versa). This underpins both re-peasantization and functional dualist semi-proletarianization.

Finally, regarding the policy structure in 2006-2014, neoliberal “trickle-down” and “governance” policy dogmas outlined in the genealogy chapter continue to be general ideological compasses for state actors on the realms of economic development and government, respectively. But the former finds renewed inspiration in the World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative”, while the latter folds its original neo-classical laissez-faire into neo-institutional subsidiarity. Similarly, despite the relevant formal differences discussed in Parts II and III, the flex-labor, land good governance, financialization and knowledge enclosure policy dogmas of purge agro-capitalism from 1986-2005 keep informing labor, land, financial and knowledge and technology relations in 2006-2014. Conversely, the defensive green enclosure policy dogma finds a more accumulation-friendly rationale in the green economy model paradigm-turned-dogma. Formal differences notwithstanding, all these policy dogmas fall under the influence of neoliberal-yet-refined Global Redesign Initiative and neo-institutional model paradigms.

Multi-stakeholderism and subsidiarity impinge upon the Guatemalan state's contradictory tasks of facilitating accumulation (and defending it at all costs), and maintaining the highest possible degree of social legitimation. Thus, strategically selected policy discourses materialize in differentiated development policies advanced through the state's relative autonomy. On the one side, there are policies facilitating accumulation for dominant classes. Following the spread of the green gold pandemic in the Guatemalan policy structure, flex cane and palm complexes are to be promoted by all means and defended at all costs. Among other things, this amounts to using public funds to subsidize the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes, using the narrative that doing so will benefit the Guatemalan people, the hungry masses of the world and the planet. As a result, flex cane and palm companies hoard a series of 'institutional rents' (de Janvry 1981, 155) through direct financial subsidies, tax incentives and exemptions, and more indirect subsidies to the reproduction of the general, personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. On the other hand, there are three key "policy packages" facilitating market integration and safety nets for the under-privileged. First, is the 2009 "Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program" (PROPALMA). Second, from 2009 and especially 2012 onward there is a series of farming, rural development and land policies that target petty capitalist and family farmers as productive subjects for the first time in more than two decades. Third, two governmental conditional cash transfer programs starting in 2008 act as safety nets for the "inefficient and outcompeted".

14.3. The agro-extractive capitalist project: Capitalist in nature, extractivist in character

The historical distinctiveness of the agro-extractive capitalist project in 2006-2014 shapes and expresses a broader context in which two extra-economic factors stand out. On the one side, the main accommodative strategy of the growing masses of purged "inefficient" producers—that is, fleeing—is increasingly constrained. On the other side, the rise of the YASTEXES as the executive avant-garde of the oligarchic-bourgeoisie

brings important changes to the ways flex cane and palm companies do business, and to the policy structure behind the agro-extractive capitalist project. As a vector and an expression of these extra-economic factors, the historical distinctiveness of the agro-extractive capitalist productive relations stems from the following five dynamics. First, there are changes concerning whose, how and to what extent labor is exploited. Second, there are key differences on main land relations trajectories. Third, flex agribusinesses' knowledge and technology fix heightens land and labor productivity, and enhances "multiple-ness" and "flexible-ness" in cane and palm commodity production, while increasing the resilience of monocrop plantations to climate and environmental disruptions. Conversely, swidden cultivators are trapped in a knowledge rift between traditional and familiar extensive farming practices, and recent and stranger intensive ones. Fourth, main forms of appropriating and using different value portions of cane and palm commodities add to and take from the financialization 3.0 wave of the Guatemalan economy. Fifth, de-commoditization among subordinate agrarian classes contributes to accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes.

In short, I argue that agro-extractive capitalist relations are capitalist in nature and extractivist in character. Regarding the first claim, I argue that, debt-peonage remnants apart, value in flex cane and palm commodity production is generated through the exploitation of mostly free labor. But in the largely job-scarce context of Guatemala in the early 21st century, the expansion of cane and palm plantations which results in job losses rather than gains is behind the burgeoning of rural surplus population. Furthermore, the agro-extractive capitalist project downgrades many subordinate class villagers from the latent to the stagnant section of surplus population—or that on the edge of survival. Hence, the agro-extractive capitalist project is fundamentally capitalist in that it not only enlarges the "reserve army of labor", but also pushes the surplus population to the limits of subsistence.

Regarding the second claim, the agro-extractive capitalist project is extractivist in character for three main reasons. First, flex cane and palm

commodity production is underpinned by extraction and appropriation of increasingly diverse agro-commodity surplus value portions and state revenues. As a result, flex agribusinesses can either limit or do away with external claims over the surplus value generated in cane and palm commodity production (e.g. ground-rent from landlords, interests from financiers or taxes from the state), and reap super-profits in return. In addition, appropriated cane and palm commodity value portions and state revenues are increasingly financialized, and thus realized in money form to fund accumulation in the flex cane and palm complexes. Second, flex cane and palm commodity production involves the appropriation of productive and reproductive labor of the plantation workers' families for free, as well as the stockpiling of natural goods and disposal of waste and pollutants at zero cost. Third, hyper-intensive flex cane and palm commodity production damages workers' health and vitality, and exhausts external nature's energy and materials, in ways that compromise production from the cost side. And even more generally, it weakens 'the viability of the social and "natural" environment as a means of life' (O'Connor 1988, 34).

14.4. Authoritarian corporatism as agro-extractive capitalism's political side

In their efforts to position agro-extractive capitalism as the hegemonic life project in the countryside, the agenda of the agro-extractive capitalist project supporters has reached an impressive level of political sophistication. In brief, the agro-extractive capitalist project stands for a new politics of racialized class domination, which I call authoritarian corporate populism, or authoritarian corporatism in short. Supporters mold their agenda in a way that makes it possible to keep an eye on the policy structure and the reproduction of their general conditions of production. They do so while focusing on the ideological-political debate regarding agro-extractive capitalism's "goods and evils", as well as the reproduction of the personal and natural conditions of flex cane and palm commodity production. Key to this evolving political agenda is the recasting of flex cane and palm commodity production from just

another accumulation project to an extraordinary *response-able* phenomenon capable of tackling vital threats for humanity and the planet. Supporters present the flex cane and palm complexes as productively efficient and environmentally sound means of feeding the world, generating green energy and cooling down the planet, while simultaneously creating jobs and spearheading economic growth. To ensure that everyone gets this message the YASTEXES embark on a campaign to upgrade the image of flex cane and palm complexes. This involves switching from basic sustainable branding through corporate responsibility, to pro-social branding through commodity chain response-ability. To this end, the authoritarian corpopulist agenda involves two strategic shifts. The first one is the “multistakeholderization” of flex cane and palm commodity chains. Shaping and expressing changes in the “Governance” policy dogma under the World Economic Forum’s “Global Redesign Initiative”, the YASTEXES switch their corporate governance approach from shareholder- to stakeholder-centered, while ensuring that shareholders remain at the core. And the second step is swapping out the “bullets and beans” of authoritarian-paternalistic military regimes, once used to counter the communist threat during Cold War times. Instead, authoritarian corpopulism relies on persuasion, and selective violence cloaked in the rule of law, to counter critique and opposition to the agro-extractive capitalist project.

Thus, as agro-extractive capitalism’s political backbone, authoritarian corpopulism seeks to reproduce the racialized class hegemony of the white agro-extractivist bourgeoisie through political concessions. But in addition to these policy concessions (e.g. public grants) that mirror populist political regimes elsewhere, authoritarian corpopulism in Guatemala involves concessions in productive relations (i.e. the labor, land and ecological fixes by flex cane and palm companies discussed earlier).

Supporters carry out their political agenda through a repertoire of contention containing four core strategies, namely the “Trojan horse”,

“discursive flexibility”, “staying alive” and “iron fist in velvet glove” strategies. The “Trojan horse” strategy has a two-sided aim: building flex cane and palm companies’ legitimacy at the grassroots and co-opting the initiatives organized by challengers and accommodators. On the one side, the agro-extractivists use “corporate coyotes” to broker land for cane and palm plantations, and coerce villagers to consent to such land deals. On the other side, agro-extractivists ally with some leaders of labor unions, peasant and indigenous organizations and NGOs who can claim a civil society “stake” in multi-stakeholder governance institutions and processes at different geographical scales. Once “in” the community, corporate coyotes come out of the Trojan horse to divide and rule. Correspondingly, social organizations supportive of the agro-extractive capitalist project co-opt multi-stakeholder governance platforms at the local, regional, and national scales.

Nonetheless, supporters need to mobilize the new consensus they achieve in all the spaces mentioned above. First, the new consensus needs to be mobilized within and across fragmented subordinate class villagers, so they willingly engage in land, labor or contract-farming deals with flex agribusinesses, or at least do not bother. And second, they need to ingrain its relevance among policy- and opinion-making actors in state and society, and at multiple geographical scales. To this end, supporters assemble a discursive flexibility strategy. This entails strategically switching between plausible narratives to construe the most meaningful representation and meaning of cane, palm or any of these crops’ multiple commodities and uses, according to whom they are of potential value, and when and where. By informing ideological-political standpoints, the discursive flexibility strategy helps through mobilizing funds, legitimizing favorable policies and crafting workers’ and consumers’ consent. This means that discursive flexibility reinforces the high material multiple-ness and flexible-ness of flex cane and palm complexes. Discursive flexibility contains two main tactics: “selective representation” and “strategic choice of use-discourse”. The former involves casting and recasting cane and palm as different “things” that best suit the circumstances at hand. Among the typical representations

of cane and palm are those as “crops”, “plants” and “commodities”. The latter works through the “conflation” of multiple cane and palm use-discourses, and “dissociation” from other use-discourses.

However, the YASTEXES realize the actual changes achieved through discursive means need to be reinforced and expanded if accumulation is to be sustained and hegemony achieved. In other words, the YASTEXES come to see material concessions as a means to pursue and reproduce their hegemony, rather than as a sign of weakness. Additionally, they understand they need to differentiate themselves from ill-reputed business peers elsewhere (e.g. in Brazil or Indonesia). To do this, flex cane and palm companies in Guatemala implement a series of labor, land, financial, knowledge and ecological fixes from 2009, and especially 2012, on. Fixes to productive relations in flex cane and palm commodity production are the drivers and outcomes of the “staying alive” strategy which supporters deploy in order to keep ‘underproduction crises’ (O’Connor 1988) at bay, while simultaneously increasing the agro-extractive capitalist project’s social legitimation by practicing what they preach. By doing so, the YASTEXES pursue the response-ability of the flex cane and palm complexes “by decree” and “by market compulsion”. The former tactic mobilizes statutory means of contention through policies favorable to the interests of the flex crops and commodities complexes. The latter relies on codes of conduct and performance certification schemes, often developed through multi-stakeholder platforms.

Finally, the “iron fist in velvet glove” strategy is employed to deter and punish anyone who contests the rise of flex cane and palm complexes, especially by violating or threatening oligarchic-bourgeois’ quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise. This authoritarian and violent strategy mainly targets transformative challengers. But the iron fist in velvet glove strikes hard at anyone who dares to contest the agro-extractive capitalist project whether this be a state, corporate or social actor, national or foreigner. And to accomplish this, it relies on “rule of law” and “jungle law” tactics. The former entails the mobilization of the

ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state in defense of the agro-extractive capitalist project. This is premised on a favorable balance of forces within the state that allows the agro-extractivists to advance their interests for the common good. The jungle law tactic borrows its name from the general Guatemalan context in the early 21st century where it is not the fittest, but the strongest, that prevails. It involves the use of illegal violence in organized but covert forms to eliminate selected challengers, and even accommodators. To this end, it is men who are part of the stagnant section of the rural surplus population that are usually hired as “barefoot thugs”.

However, despite a unity among supporters that appears to be set in stone, ideological and material tensions exist across them, stemming from at least five non-antagonistic contradictions. The first involves domestic financiers and agro-extractivist bourgeois owners of flex cane and palm companies whose oligarchic family business groups do not include financial companies. The second concerns agro-extractivists and rentier landlords, outgrowers and contract-farmers. The third involves flex cane and palm companies and large cane and palm outgrowers, on the one side, and modern dependent agrarian bourgeois, on the other. Among the latter are rubber planters, banana and rice growers, and especially cattle ranchers negatively impacted by heightened pressure over land, water and other environmental goods, as well as ecological cost-shifting relations, associated with flex cane and palm commodity production. The fourth is made up of parochial agrarian upper classes and absentee owners of flex cane and palm companies. Despite long standing class antagonism between conservative seigniorial landlords and liberal agrarian bourgeois, they all see their local “patron” status under threat when flex crop companies show up in “their” towns. The fifth concerns gender and generational cleavages among old guard agro-extractivist men and YASTEXE-type of amenable response-ability gatekeeper women in multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms.

Furthermore, two broad sets of non-antagonistic yet tension-ridden contradictions can be discerned within the ranks of the agro-extractivist bourgeoisie—one of material and the other of ideological nature. The former is rooted in the law of competition. Even though they collaborate on different matters through their trade and political organizations, flex cane and palm companies compete with each other in domestic markets for consumer goods, labor, money-capital and above all land. The other set of contentious contradictions within the agro-extractivists concerns the differences between older cane and palm tycoons forged at the heat of Cold War’ bullets and beans agro-capitalism under military dictatorships, and the YASTEXES who come of age during neoliberal globalization and Guatemala’s transition to bourgeois democracy. In short, whereas both share the authoritarian corporalist agenda, YASTEXE agro-extractivists are more “corporalists” and their elders more “authoritarian”. Hence, the YASTEXES follow a political rationale which prioritizes material concessions in the production process in the short-term as the path towards enhanced competitiveness, profitability, and class hegemony in the mid- and long-terms.

14.5. Anything but a story foretold: Accommodators and challengers of the agro-extractive capitalist project

Resource extractivism and associated directions of agro-environmental change during convergent crises also triggers major responses by state and social actors that take both challenging and accommodative standpoints. In this context, I turn to summarize my research findings regarding the political agenda, frames and repertoires of contention informing the politics between supporters and challengers, supporters and accommodators, and challengers and accommodators. Additionally, I offer a snapshot of my main findings regarding the politics across and within challengers and accommodators.

14.5.1. Challenging the agro-extractive capitalist project

By challenging political subjects I mean those who use their dissent and/or unrest as a practice of contestation against the agro-extractive capitalist project, and struggle for an alternative transformative project. The bulk of challengers come from subordinate agrarian classes. But rather than from a particularly adversely affected, capable or visionary subordinate class/fraction, gender or generation, challengers traverse the spectrum of all fragmented agrarian classes. Spanning across challengers' state and social allies, the "young although smartly-trained activists" (YASTACS) stand out for their fresh contributions and profound commitment. Following heightened expansion of flex cane and palm companies—and opportunities to build alliances at the grassroots in response—the challengers' political agenda gravitates towards the strengthening of villagers' abilities to gain, regain, maintain and control access to land and other natural resources. Struggles against land dispossession now include the strengthening of livelihoods, especially through farming intensification, environmental, health and labor grievances, as well as the reaffirmation of local sovereignties. In other words, challengers gradually move from contesting flex cane and palm companies' expansion, to struggling against agro-extractive capitalism and promoting a transformative life project. This framing process results in the challengers' contention being articulated as "defense of territory" (DoT). An archetypical gender- and generation-sensitive indigenous-peasantry becomes the key political subject, and a quintessential (rural) community the main political instrument, in the challengers' political agenda within the DoT frame. Gradually, national partisan peasant, indigenous peoples, youth, and women's movement organizations and allies acknowledge the impetus and legitimation of grassroots struggles in defense of territory, and steer their political agendas to support them.

Challengers' DoT struggles rely on two main strategies: "convergence" and "land sovereignty". The convergence strategy, in turn, utilizes two tactics, the "intersectionalization of grievances", and the "interweaving of struggles and forms of struggling" in defense of territory. Regarding

the former tactic, the intersectionalization of class interests and ethnic identity markers is quite straightforward for lowlander Q'eqchi' cultivators. For the intersectionalization of proletarian, feminist and youth identity markers and interests in DoT struggles, a more proactive approach is required through the active involvement of (Q'eqchi') ideologues, community organizers and allies. Regarding the latter tactic, struggles around land as means of production, soil and territory, conditions of (re)production through farming and employment, distribution of environmental goods and bads, and for the recognition and rights of subaltern ethnicities, genders and generations are interwoven into the fabric of the defense of territory banner. The further "indigenization" of partisan peasant organizations in 2006-2014 brings not only claims for recognition and self-determination into the agrarian justice movement, but also gives it an environmental justice perspective.

The land sovereignty strategy clashes frontally with the absoluteness and supremacy of quintessential rights to property and freedom of enterprise that are defended forcefully by the oligarchic-bourgeoisie. To this end, it leans on two main tactics that are named here according to their purpose, that is to "gain and regain" and to "maintain and control" land access. The limits to leasehold land access mechanisms, and the challenges to (re)gain and expand access to freehold land property, inform everyday and partisan forms of struggle to gain and regain land access for repeasantization. Everyday forms of struggle include "moral economy" sales to fellows, and free land leases by petty land owners to landless and land-scarce subordinate class fellows. Partisan forms of struggle to (re)gain land access can vary among those striving towards regaining, and those striving towards gaining, access. The former straddle land sovereignty strategy's two core tactics of gaining and regaining, and maintaining and controlling land access. The latter include struggles by hacienda-tenants to claim ownership over estate land as in-kind payment for decades of unrealized wages and labor benefits, and especially land occupations.

The tactic to maintain and control land access is a response to land sales by subordinate classes to non-fellow village outsiders. Hence, its purpose is twofold, to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones, and to tackle the root causes driving unwillful land deals. On the one hand, struggles to preempt forced land sales and harness willful ones can take on everyday and partisan forms. Everyday forms include a string of arsons in cane and palm plantations, and everyday struggles by women to stop their male partners from selling off the family land plot. Partisan struggles are defensive and offensive. Defensive struggles revolve around initiatives to strengthen community systems of land resource governance. Offensive struggles involve the resignification of the communal form of land ownership. Nonetheless, to render positive political outcomes, (re)communalization in formalistic-legal terms must be underpinned by changes in land governance practices at the grassroots. On the other hand, struggles to tackle the main reasons behind unwillful land deals focus on strengthening community livelihoods, especially through sustainable farming intensification. Higher yields in the karstic soils of the northern lowlands follow the cultivator's ability to dedicate the amount of labor that low external input/agroecological farming intensification demands in the tropics. Aware of this, and lacking state support, subordinate class cultivators look for alternatives through everyday and partisan forms. The former include increasing the drudgery of family labor, as well as exchanging labor among fellow village cultivators. The latter involve alliance building, especially with YASTAC agronomists. These alliances result in "campesino a campesino" knowledge exchanges, and the organization of municipal "peasant markets". While these initiatives resemble struggles for food sovereignty by partisan peasant organizations from 1986-2005, efforts towards food sovereignty in DoT struggles are reified as a means towards achieving land sovereignty, rather than the other way round.

Nonetheless, convergence and alliance building efforts between, across and within multi-subordinate class challengers at the grassroots, and (trans)national state and social actors, are not free of tension. First, there

are cleavages *across* fragmented subordinate class challengers in the countryside. The transformative life project envisaged by challengers revolves around a family farming life in autonomous rural communities. While this resonates with many (Q'eqchi') lowlanders, not everyone is able and/or willing to commit to such an idyllic project. Second, there are key fractures *across* national peasant, indigenous people, women and youth social justice movements. On one side, there are cleavages between the peasant and the indigenous peoples movements, which result in Q'eqchi' lowlanders' struggles for community self-determination being too "indigenist" for some peasant organizations, while their efforts toward food and land sovereignty are too "peasantist" for some PanMayanist organizations. On the other side, there are tensions that stem from the peasant and indigenous people movements' insufficient and/or inappropriate attention to women's struggles for recognition, respect and promotion of their (re)productive and political rights and roles. Third, there are competing political subjectivities *within* fragmented classes of proletarians, family farmers and petty capitalist farmers. And fourth, there are non-antagonist yet troublesome contradictions *within* the national partisan peasant movement. These are directly or indirectly tied to the governance policy dogma, clashing perspectives on the movement's political agenda, and the fall of the peace progressive donors' complex.

In sum, the political economy, ecology and sociology of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and its authoritarian corporatist political agenda, drive challengers to develop a political roadmap in which convergence of grievances, struggles and forms of struggling are its major mile markers. But if the indigenous-peasant community is the key political instrument for grassroots convergence in DoT struggles, it has yet to be seen whether and how national partisan peasant organizations converge to scale up DoT struggles at the grassroots.

14.5.2. Accommodating to the agro-extractive capitalist project

Accommodators are those who struggle to tame the virulence of the agro-extractive capitalist project, and/or to accommodate themselves to it in the best possible way. They are further divided according to their character (i.e. lawful or criminal) and will (i.e. amenable or reluctant). All of them stem from both dominant and subordinate fragmented classes, and share a pragmatic perspective on the rise of the flex cane and palm complexes as an inevitable phenomenon. Nonetheless, two competing political agendas branch out from this common core. One informs the “dog-eat-dog” struggles of criminal accommodators. The other is a driver of the lawful accommodators’ efforts towards “inclusive, ethical and sustainable development”. The political agendas of lawful and criminal accommodators play out differently for the amenable and reluctant accommodative streams. Amenable Accommodators consent to flex agribusinesses’ response-ability, and thus follow an “if you can’t beat them, join them and squeeze them” political rationale. For criminal amenable accommodators, it is important for flex cane and palm companies to thrive so they can keep offering a legal and profitable cover for their illicit businesses. For lawful amenable accommodators it is vital to do awareness-raising work with flex agribusinesses on the benefits of more ethically and environmentally sound practices, and to help them transition in that direction. Completely surrendering to flex cane and palm complexes’ inevitability—but only partially to their desirability—reluctant accommodators follow an “if you can’t beat them, bother them or run away” political rationale. Lawful reluctant accommodators use licit reproduction and contention strategies as an attempt to tame the virulence of the agro-extractive capitalist project and/or simply survive it. Criminal reluctant accommodators revert to criminal entrepreneurship to make the most out of their life under the agro-extractive capitalist project, or just to endure it.

In their efforts to turn the agro-extractive capitalist project into an inclusive, ethical and sustainable development project, lawful accommodators rely on win-win private accountability and chicken bus

assistant strategies. Conversely, criminal accommodators depend on the “backdoor” strategy for their dog-eat-dog struggles. Flex cane and palm companies’ fixes to productive relations, following a pro-social branding campaign, are seized by state and social accommodators as a political opportunity to hold flex agribusinesses accountable. To do so, they function as response-ability gatekeepers. Longing for hegemony and sustained profitability, the agro-extractivists consent to being accountable to those who hold the key to pro-social branding. As a result, this accountability system involves cooperative “win-win” relations between agro-extractivists and response-ability gatekeepers. Additionally, following governance policy dogma prescriptions, these market-led systems privatize corporate accountability. It is for this reason that I call this accommodative strategy “win-win private accountability”. The tactics through which this strategy unfolds vary between amenable and reluctant response-ability gatekeepers. The former rely on codes of conduct and corporate performance certification schemes. Such voluntary accountability mechanisms play a key role in the supporters’ pro-social branding campaign to build the response-ability of the flex cane and palm complexes in Guatemala. Hence, even if for different reasons, both supporters and amenable accommodators rely on the response-ability by market compulsion contention tactic. For their part, reluctant response-ability gatekeepers serve as watchdogs for the flex cane and palm complexes.

For lawful accommodators, there are just two ways to go about the agro-extractive capitalist project. One is to improve the conditions of those who come on board, either amenable or reluctantly. The other is to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts that flex cane and palm commodity production brings about, even for those who are in no way involved in the flex cane and palm complexes. This is why I brand the other core strategy of contention by lawful accommodators as “chicken bus assistant”. By extension, those trying to better accommodate themselves into the labor regime of flex cane and palm companies—as plantation workers and/or suppliers of cane/palm fruit—follow an “incorporation improvement” tactic. In the northern

lowlands during 2006-2014, there is a lonely group of large cane outgrowers who come together to negotiate supply conditions with the one and only flex cane company: Polochic's Chabil Utzaj. Dominant class palm outgrowers are stronger in numbers, but negotiate on a one-to-one basis with flex palm companies. Petty capitalist palm contract farmers, on the other hand, are unionized. Plantation workers struggle to improve their terms of incorporation into the flex agribusinesses' labor regime through everyday and organized forms. Everyday forms involve: i) free land leases by landed to land-scarce subordinate class cultivators; ii) unpaid family labor to achieve (or increase) minimum wage-equivalent salaries in plantation work; iii) unpaid reproductive family labor to support wage earners, and; iv) foot-dragging to lessen exploitation. Organized forms involve plantation workers joining forces to improve their terms of incorporation in spontaneous and unionized (partisan) ways. Spontaneous ways involve a series of sudden group labor withdrawals in palm plantations, while unionized ways have to do with organized labor struggles.

Those who do not incorporate into the flex agribusinesses' labor regime, but do strive to mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts resulting from flex cane and palm commodity production, follow a "collateral damage reduction" tactic. Dominant class reluctant accommodators address their grievances related to flex cane and palm companies through private direct and indirect channels. Directly, they do so via their trade and political organizations, including those that also count flex cane and palm companies among their membership. Indirectly, they leverage their established grip over local power structures. Subordinate class reluctant accommodators are hard to discern from challengers at the grassroots, and so is their contention repertoire. However, it is still possible to identify key organized political subjects that amplify their voices within the state and society. Those in society basically include the private reluctant response-ability gatekeepers driving the watchdog tactic towards win-win private accountability. In addition to transnational watchdogs, there are many national NGOs working to accommodate subordinate classes to the

agro-extractive capitalist project, especially following the land grab alarm that was pulled in 2008 and continues to blare. Whereas this is helpful to access contention resources of different kinds, accommodation obviously tames the will to challenge and transform—intentionally or out of sheer institutional inertia. Subordinate class reluctant accommodators at the grassroots also benefit from accommodative policy reforms advanced by state actors in Reluctant and even amenable accommodative stances. The latter of these especially include the “hope” group of state officials during Colom’s 2008-2011 administration. A major state reluctant accommodator, the “two door policy” group, comes from General Pérez Molina’s 2012-2015 administration.

Differences in form and intention notwithstanding, the repertoire of contention of both amenable and reluctant lawful accommodators ultimately legitimizes the accumulation projects of the flex cane and palm complexes, and helps the agro-extractivists to achieve and reproduce their class hegemony. Nonetheless, not everyone who makes it through the agro-extractive capitalist project does so via the “front door”. There are many—arguably more than what both supporters and challengers are ready or willing to acknowledge—who make it through the “backdoor”. They are those who rely on illicit means of social reproduction, either as a result of the ways they incorporate into the agro-extractive capitalist project, or because they simply cannot fit in it. The former case indicates criminal incorporation into the flex agribusinesses’ labor regime—either as narco-outgrowers or as corporate thugs. Hence, the backdoor accommodation strategy makes use of what I call the “*narco-taco*” and “*enchi-mara*” tactics. These metaphors describe the blended group of men originally from areas where flex agribusinesses are present—from different generational and ethnic backgrounds, though generally part of the underclasses—involved in drug-cartels and criminal urban mara gangs.

Thus, various accommodators act in ways that do not necessarily appeal to other fellow accommodators. The violent, everyday conflict across

lawful and criminal accommodators reaches far beyond agro-environmental politics. For this reason, I focus on the politics across accommodators organized along the amenable and reluctant streams. In addition to competition for funding and political visibility and weight, the main sources of tension branching out *across* these political subjects are rooted in their “same same but different” political agendas, contention frames and repertoires. For the same reasons stated with regard to the politics across accommodators, I explore the politics within organized amenable and reluctant accommodators. In the case of the former, large transnational NGOs serving as amenable response-ability gatekeepers do not always stay on good terms with subordinate agrarian class accommodators at the grassroots. This is particularly the case of the tension-ridden relationship between large transnational conservation NGOs part of multi-stakeholder performance certification platforms and (Q’eqchi’) lowlander swidden cultivators. In the latter instance, tensions within reluctant accommodators are common for those who are part of state (e.g. FAO) and social (e.g. Oxfam) large international organizations—for compromises among different groups in competing political standpoints within the organization are not always easy to come by.

In sum, as Hobsbawn argues, ‘history is a useful warning against confusing fashion with progress’ (1997, 30). The agro-extractive capitalist project reshapes the political terrain of agro-environmental and capitalist transformations through alliances between corporates, the state and a Guatemalan white, oligarchic bourgeoisie permeating both of the foregoing. By legitimizing flex cane and palm commodity production through populist manoeuvres, and recurring to force when needed, dissent is suppressed and accommodations forged. The result is a new politics of racialized class domination which trajectory is still to be seen.

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Annexes

Annex 1 Interviews and meaningful events

15.1. Individual semi-structured interviews

- 1) President of the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA) in 1965-1969. Guatemala City, March 2006.
- 2) Senior official from the Planning Department (UPIE), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA). Guatemala city, March 2006
- 3) Operations Director of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA). Guatemala city, April 2006
- 4) Municipal Head of the Consejo de Agencias Cristianas de Desarrollo (CONCAD). Panzós, April 2006, January 2008, and June 2013.
- 5) Head of International Cooperation of the Roads Department, Ministry of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing (MICIVI). Guatemala City, November 2006
- 6) Head of Research of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA). Guatemala city, January 2007
- 7) Seventy-seven year old Q'eqchi' man. Village from Polochic Highland zone. February 2007.
- 8) Policy analyst from the Secretariat of Food Security and Nutrition, March 2007.
- 9) Executive Director of the Guatemalan Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives (CONGCOOP), lawyer and newspaper columnist, March 2007, June 2010, and November 2013.
- 10) Seventy-four year old Q'eqchi' man. Village from Polochic Highland zone. July 2007.
- 11) CONAVIGUA's founding member. Guatemala City, August 2007.
- 12) Official from the European Union Delegation to Guatemala. Guatemala City, November 2007
- 13) Plant Manager of AGROCARIBE flex palm agribusiness, Morales, February 2008
- 14) Head Engineer of NaturAceites Polochic Palm Oil mill. El Estor, March 2008
- 15) Panzós mayor, Polochic zone, March 2008
- 16) Head of the Municipal Planning Office in El Estor. March 2008.
- 17) Director of Defensoría Q'eqchi', El Estor, April 2008
- 18) Head of legal Affairs of Defensoría Q'eqchi', El Estor, April 2008
- 19) Spokesperson from the Multisector Land Coordination of Alta Verapaz (CM-TIERRAS). Cobán, April 2008.
- 20) Sierra de las Minas Protected Area Ranger from Defensores de la Naturaleza (IUCN Guatemala). Panzós, April 2008.
- 21) Head of Biofuels, Ministry of Energy and Mines. Guatemala City, May 2008
- 22) Director of Value Addition and Income Generation, Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA). Brasilia, Brazil, June 2008
- 23) Director of Agribusiness International Promotion, Ministry of Ministry of Agriculture Livestock, and Supply (MAPA). Brasilia, Brazil, June 2008
- 24) Executive board member of the Colombian "National Agrarian Council" -CNA- coordination of peasant organizations. Bogota, July 2008
- 25) Inter-American Development Bank official responsible for developing IDB' Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard. Guatemala City, December 2008.
- 26) GREPALMA Executive Director. Guatemala City, April 2009.
- 27) CNP-Tierras Secretary General. Guatemala City, April 2009.
- 28) Foreman of Naturacéites flex palm company' oil palm nursery in Fray, June 2009.

- 29) Head of INCIDE foundation. Fray, June 2009.
- 30) Head of the Guatemalan Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA) in Fray. June 2009.
- 31) Head Nurse of Panzós government clinic in Polochic valley zone, June 2009.
- 32) Head Physician of the Teleman government clinic in Polochic valley zone, June 2009.
- 33) Head of Polochic branch of Defensores de la Naturaleza (IUCN Guatemala). El Estor, June 2009.
- 34) Head of Polochic branch of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA), La Tinta, June 2009.
- 35) Head of the Centre for Labor Rights of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Catholic Church in Izabal Department. July 2009.
- 36) Machine operator dismissed by Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company. Panzós, August 2009.
- 37) Head of the Cadastral Information Registry (RIC) in Alta Verapaz. Cobán, August 2009
- 38) Head of FONTIERRAS (Land Fund) in Alta Verapaz. Cobán, August 2009.
- 39) Founder of the Mayan Lawyers Association. August 2009.
- 40) Head of the government's small-scale palm contract farmers' program (PROPALMA). Guatemala City, September 2009.
- 41) Director of Adelina Caal Maquín women's organization. Fray. October 2009.
- 42) Fray Bartolomé de las Casas mayor. October de 2009.
- 43) Municipal Councilman of Ixcán. October 2009.
- 44) FONTIERRAS official. Ixcán, October 2009.
- 45) PROPALMA official. Ixcán. October and December 2009.
- 46) Representative from the "Ixcán Women Organizations Network" (ROMI). October 2009.
- 47) Gerente Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Mujer Indígena (FUNDEMI TALITA KUMI). San Pedro Carchá. October 2009.
- 48) Community organizer from the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) in Panzós, October 2009
- 49) Representative of the Catholic Pastoral in south Petén, November 2009.
- 50) Executive Secretary of the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association Guatemala City, February 2010.
- 51) Executive Secretary of the "Ixcán Women Organizations Network" (ROMI), February 2010.
- 52) CEO of PALIXCÁN flex Palm Company, Ixcán, February 2010. Courtesy of Angelina Godoy and students from the Center for Human Rights, University of Washington.
- 53) Executive Secretary of the Guatemalan Renewable Fuels Association (ACR), Guatemala City, February 2010.
- 54) Panzós Municipal Cadastral Office representative. March 2010.
- 55) Plantation worker dismissed by PALIXCÁN flex palm company. Chisec, March 2010.
- 56) Police officer in-chief during Polochic evictions. Panzós, March 2011.
- 57) Panzós mayor, Polochic zone, May 2010 (2nd interview).
- 58) Professor of History of the Peasantry. Guatemala National University (USAC). Guatemala City, May 2010.
- 59) H.I.J.O.S board member. Guatemala City, June 2010.
- 60) Head of the Ministry of Labor Alta Verapaz. Cobán, October 2010.
- 61) Head of Sagrada Tierra association in Petén. Santa Elena, November 2010.
- 62) Head of FONTIERRAS (Land Fund) in Petén. Santa Elena, November 2010
- 63) Ex-Director of the Government's Foreign Investment Promotion Agency "Invest in Guatemala". Guatemala City, January 2011.
- 64) Ministry of Interior official. Panzós, April 2011.
- 65) Head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Guatemala. Guatemala City, June 2011.
- 66) Head of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA) in Chisec, July 2011

- 67) Agro-ecological family farmer. Chisec, July 2011.
- 68) Head Lawyer of the Committee for Peasant Unity -CUC- Legal Team, Guatemala City, July 2011
- 69) CUC Secretary General. Guatemala City, August 2011
- 70) Head of Chisec's Municipal Soil Tax Office. Chisec, August 2011.
- 71) Head of Sayaxché's Municipal Soil Tax Office. Sayaxché, August 2011.
- 72) Head of El Estor's Municipal Soil Tax Office. El Estor, August 2011.
- 73) Director and Sub-head of the FAO in Guatemala. Guatemala City, October 2011.
- 74) Head of the Geographic Information Laboratory of the Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA). Guatemala City, October 2011.
- 75) Norman Schwartz, author of the 1990 classic book *Forest Society*, and anthropologist with decades-long experience in Petén. Flores, October 2011.⁶⁵¹
- 76) Advisor to Petén's Vice-Minister of Food, Livestock and Agriculture. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 77) Head of the Livestock Directorate of Petén's Vice-Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Livestock. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 78) CONAP Petén Technical Director. Flores, October 2011.
- 79) Head of Lobby and Advocacy of Petén's Catholic Pastoral. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 80) Technical Director of the National Forest Institute (INAB) in Petén. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 81) Ex-President of Petén Cattle Ranchers Association. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 82) Green Millenium flex tree company representative. Santa Elena, October 2011.
- 83) Planning Director of CONAP Petén. Santa Elena, November 2011.
- 84) Head of the National Forest Institute (INAB) in Petén. Santa Elena, November 2011.
- 85) Minister's bodyguard and former member of the Guatemalan army special forces ("Kaibiles"). Guatemala City, November 2011.
- 86) Guatemala's Women Sector National Board member. Guatemala City, November 2011.
- 87) Head of Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières France (AVSF) in Chisec, November 2011.
- 88) Community cadaster coordinator in SANK grassroots Q'eqchi' youth organization. Chisec, December 2011.
- 89) Presidential Commissioner for Rural Development. Guatemala City, June 2013
- 90) Indigenous people sector representative in FONTIERRAS' Executive Committee. Guatemala City, July 2013.
- 91) Guatemalan Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Livestock in Jan 2013-Feb 2015. Guatemala City, July 2013.
- 92) Small-scale palm contract-farmer, member of the Ixcán Union of Independent Palm Growers" (SIPI). Ixcán, July 2013
- 93) High school Director, Community Development Council president, and petty capitalist farmer from an Ixcán village, July 2013.
- 94) Former Coordinator of Ixcán's Social Pastoral. Ixcán, July 2013.
- 95) Maya-Q'eqchi' member of the Guatemalan Congress and founder of the Mayan Lawyers Association. Guatemala City, July 2013.
- 96) Raxruha mayor. Raxruha, August 2013
- 97) Technical Director the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP). Santa Elena, August 2013
- 98) Secretary General, Colombian Federation of Oil palm Growers (FEDEPALMA). Bogota, September 2013.

⁶⁵¹ I am very grateful to Liza Grandia, Georg Grünberg and Byron Milian for their permission to use the interviews I held in Petén during October and November 2011 within a project under their coordination for this dissertation.

- 99) Head of the FAO in Guatemala. Guatemala City, September 2013.
- 100) President of the Raxruha Cattle Ranchers Association, October 2013.
- 101) Well-established cattle rancher. Fray, October 2013.
- 102) Raxruha mayor. October 2013 (2nd interview).
- 103) Former member of CONIC's National Board. Cobán, October 2013.
- 104) CCDA Secretary General. Guatemala City, November 2013.
- 105) Large palm outgrower in Fray, December 2013.
- 106) Human Resources Manager of Consorcio Azucarero Central (subsidiary of Guatemalan Madre Tierra flex cane company). Barahona, Dominican Republic, January 2014.
- 107) Labor contractor in Fray, February 2014.
- 108) Labor contractor in Sayaxché, February 2014.
- 109) CONIC Executive Board member. Guatemala City, February 2014
- 110) FAO official working on the 2013 National Agrarian Census (personal communication), February 2014.
- 111) Head of the Statistics Information Area. Guatemalan Banking Authority (personal communication), March 2017.

15.2. Group interviews

- 1) Three leaders of grassroots women organizations from three Polochic valley zone villages. Panzós, June 2007.
- 2) Two village representatives from two Polochic valley zone villages. Panzós, June 2007.
- 3) Two village representatives from within the core zone of the Sierra de las Minas protected area in Polochic highland zone. Panzós, June 2007.
- 4) Village Community Development Council members from Polochic valley zone. October 2007.
- 5) Community assembly in Polochic valley zone. Panzós, December 2007.
- 6) Community assembly in Polochic highland zone. Panzós, December 2007.
- 7) Owner, head agronomic engineer and security chief of Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company. Panzós, February 2008
- 8) Community assembly in Polochic valley zone. El Estor. February 2008.
- 9) Community assembly in Polochic highland zone. El Estor. March 2008.
- 10) Q'eqchi' women from Polochic highland and valley zone villages. Panzós, March 2008.
- 11) Representatives of villagers in land conflict with Polochic's Chabil Utzaj flex cane company. Panzós, March 2008.
- 12) Women sex-workers in Panzós, April 2008.
- 13) USAID officials in Guatemala. May 2008
- 14) Two researchers from the Guatemalan Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA). Barcenás, November 2008
- 15) Palm plantation workers in Fray, May 2009.
- 16) Coordination team of Petén's Catholic Pastoral. June 2009
- 17) Interinstitutional Roundtable of Agrarian Coordination of Izabal department. Río Dulce, June 2009.
- 18) Board Members of the Farmers Association for the Comprehensive Development of the Northern Basin of the Chixoy River (ADINC), Chisec, October 2009.
- 19) Workers in Ixcán's Municipal Planning Office. October 2009.
- 20) Four board members of Adelina Caal Maquin women's association. Fray, October 2009.
- 21) President and Executive Secretary of Mama Maquin women's organization. Fray, October 2009
- 22) Chisec's Municipal Development Council members. November 2009.
- 23) Community assembly in Ixcán village, December 2009.
- 24) SANK Q'eqchi youth organization team. Chisec, December 2009.

- 25) Board Members of Q'ana Tzuultaq'a Q'eqchi' women's association. Chisec, December 2009.
- 26) Representatives from different District V villages and the Catholic Pastoral in Ixcán, December 2009
- 27) Grassroots representatives from different villages in Fray. December 2009.
- 28) Representatives from different villages in Chisec. April 2010.
- 29) Representatives from different villages in Fray. April 2010.
- 30) Representatives from different villages in Sayaxché. May 2010.
- 31) Representatives from two villages in El Estor (Polo chic valley), June 2010.
- 32) Representatives from different Tierra Blanca district villages in Sayaxché. July 2010.
- 33) Members of district level Community Development Councils from Chisec. Chisec, August 2010
- 34) Community mayors of district V in Ixcán, October 2010.
- 35) Representatives from Polo chic land occupations. Various meetings between October 2010 and June 2011.
- 36) Head and team members of the Rural Territorial Development Unit of the General Planning Secretariat of the government of Guatemala. Guatemala city, February 2011.
- 37) Central American Bank of Economic Integration (CABEI) Operations Manager and lawyers. Guatemala City, March 2011.
- 38) Original owner and the CEO of Chabil Utzaj flex cane company. Panzós, March 2011
- 39) Women sex-workers in Sayaxché, June 2011
- 40) Representatives from the National Council of the Displaced in Guatemala (CONDEG), MAYAPAZ Foundation, Petén's Catholic Pastoral, Guatemalan Institute of Radio Education (IGER), and Sayaxché villages. Sayaxché, June 2011.
- 41) Representatives from different District V villages and the Catholic Pastoral in Ixcán, June 2011.
- 42) Representatives from SANK Q'eqchi' youth organization, AVSF France, Adelina Caal Maquin and Q'ana Tzuultaq'a women's organization, ASEDE grassroots organization, and representatives from Chisec village. Chisec, June 2011.
- 43) Ruk'ux Ulew national coordination of agrarian women's movements. Guatemala City, August 2011.
- 44) Two officials of Strategic Litigation Technical Support Team of The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Guatemala, March 2013.
- 45) Seven young Q'eqchi' men from a Sayaxché village, June 2013.
- 46) President and Secretary of the Farmers Association for the Comprehensive Development of the Northern Basin of the Chixoy River (ADINC), Chisec, July 2013.
- 47) Representatives of the group of families from Polo chic's "Council of Q'eqchi' Communities in Resistance" which occupied back the land after the March 2011 evictions. El Estor, September 2013.
- 48) Women sex-workers in Chisec, October 2013.
- 49) Women sex-workers in Fray, October 2013.

15.3. Participation in meaningful events

- 1) III National Peasant Congress. Guatemala City. December 2006
- 2) III Continental Summit of Indigenous Nations and Pueblos of Abya Yala". Iximché, Guatemala. March 2007
- 3) Constitution ceremony of the "Foundation for the Promotion of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development in the Polo chic Watershed". Guatemala City, August 2007.
- 4) Workshop with community representatives from Polo chic highland and valley zones and National University (USAC) history and sociology students. Panzós, April 2008
- 5) I National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities. Chisec, August 2008.

- 6) Americas' Dialogue on Agrofuels and Agribusinesses: Building Food and Energy Sovereign Alternatives. Convened by Alianza Social Continental (ASC), Red Mexicana de Accion contra el Libre Comercio (RMALC), Friends of the Earth, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), International Gender and Trade Network, FASE-Brazil, and Action Aid. Guatemala City, October 2008.
- 7) II National Seminar on Biofuels. Convened by the Mesoamerican Development Project (Inter-American Development Bank), German Technical Development Cooperation (GTZ), and the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MEM). Guatemala City, December 2008.
- 8) Various meetings of the Working Group on Agrofuels (CUC, FGT, ECAP, El Observador, Action Aid, and IDEAR). 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.
- 9) II National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities. La Tinta, July 2009
- 10) Meeting with representatives from PALIXCÁN flex palm company and the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) in Laguna Lachua National Park. Cobán, July 2009.
- 11) I Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Polochic Communities. Panzós, August 2009
- 12) II Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Polochic Communities. El Estor, September 2009
- 13) III National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities. El Chal, November 2009
- 14) Colloquium on the New Economic Model and the Northern Transversal Strip. Cobán, November 2009.
- 15) Small-scale Palm Contract-Farming Program (PROPALMA) inauguration. Ixcán, March 2010.
- 16) I Congress on Territory and Food Sovereignty in the Northern Transversal Strip. Chisec, June 2010.
- 17) II Congress of Grassroots Organizations of Petén. Dolores, Petén. July 2010.
- 18) IV National Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities. Purulha, August 2010.
- 19) Conference on Agrarian and Rural Dynamics in 21st Century Guatemala. Convened by Rafael Landívar University (IARNA), San Carlos University (IPNUSAC), Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies (IDEAR). Guatemala City, October 2011.
- 20) The "Popular, Peasant, Women and Indigenous March". A 9 days walk departing from Polochic Valley and arriving in Guatemala City on 27 March 2012.
- 21) Workshop on the re-communalization experience of SANK Q'eqchi' youth organization in Guatemala City, June 2013.
- 22) Public declaration of nine villages from Sesuchaj district, in Chisec, as "Indigenous Communities". July 2013.
- 23) Workshop on agrarian problems in Petén, convened by the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP). Santa Elena, August 2013.
- 24) 4th Latin American Conference of the RSPO. Honduras, August 2013
- 25) X National Businessmen Conference (ENADE) "Better without Divisions". Guatemala City, September 2013.
- 26) FAO Latin American Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. Bogota, Colombia. September 2013.
- 27) I Latin American Congress of Palm Growers. Antigua Guatemala, November 2013.
- 28) I Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities in the Northern Lowlands. Raxruha, November 2013.
- 29) Meeting of Chisec Community Development Councils with flex palm companies' representatives on the environmental and public health impacts of palm farming. Chisec, December 2013.
- 30) Workshop on the Guatemalan flex palm complex RSPO certification process. Guatemala City, February 2014.
- 31) Land policy consultation with peasant organizations convened by the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA) and the FAO. Guatemala City, March 2014.

- 32) Assembly of Raxruha's municipal and community authorities. Raxruha, May 2014.
- 33) II Meeting of Cane and Palm Affected Communities in the Northern Lowlands. Raxruha, June 2014
- 34) IV National Congress of Peoples, Communities, and Organizations. Guatemala City, August 2014.
- 35) V Latin American Conference of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Antigua Guatemala, September 2014.
- 36) Meeting on Certification and beyond: solutions for responsible agro-commodity governance. Convened by the "Ecosystem Alliance" (IUCN Netherlands, Wetlands International and Both Ends), The Hague, The Netherlands, October 2014.
- 37) Workshop on Land grabbing and Human Rights. Convened by Amnesty International, Amsterdam, Netherlands. January 2015.

Annex 2 Statistical design of the gender divided household survey stratified at village level

Total population divided by gender and urban/rural area in the research municipalities. 2010.

Municipality	Population	Women	Men	Urban	Rural
Panzós	44.770	22.177	22.593	16.005	28.765
El Estor	42.984	21.472	21.512	14.019	28.965
Ixcán	61.448	30.130	31.318	6.005	55.443
Sayaxché	55.578	27.057	28.521	7.322	48.256
Chisec	69.325	33.990	35.335	12.775	56.550
Fray Bartolomé de las Casas	44.538	22.181	22.357	5.947	38.591
Total	318.643	157.007	161.636	62.073	256.570

Source: Author's elaboration with information from the Guatemalan Institute of National Statistics 2010.

Estimated number of households per village (2010 total village population divided by the average five family member HHs).

Municipality (1 stratum)	Total households
Panzós	8.954
El Estor	8.597
Ixcán	12.290
Sayaxché	11.116
Chisec	13.865
Fray Bartolomé de las Casas	8.908
Total	63.729

There were no meaningful differences in sampling costs among different villages. Hence, cost factors disregarded, I calculated the household sample for each village as:

$$n_i = n \left(\frac{N_i \sqrt{p_i(1-p_i)}}{\sum_{k=1}^L N_k \sqrt{p_k(1-p_k)}} \right)$$

Considering previous research experience in the northern lowlands, I assumed a 25% probability of affirmative answers ($p=0.25$) to the following survey structuring question: *did cane and/or palm plantations expand in your village from 2005 onward?*

Thus, I calculated village HH samples at a 5% significance level in the following way:

$$n = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^L \frac{N_i^2 p_i(1-p_i)}{w_i}}{N^2 D + \sum_{i=1}^L N_i p_i(1-p_i)}$$

Municipality (1 stratum)	Total households	$N_i \sqrt{p_i(1-p_i)}$	$w_i = \left(\frac{N_i \sqrt{p_i(1-p_i)}}{\sum_{k=1}^L N_k \sqrt{p_k(1-p_k)}} \right)$	$\frac{N_i^2 p_i(1-p_i)}{w_i}$
Panzós	8.954	3.877	0,14	106.992.353
El Estor	8.597	3.723	0,13	102.724.130
Ixcán	12.290	5.322	0,19	146.849.813
Sayaxché	11.116	4.813	0,17	132.821.555
Chisec	13.865	6.004	0,22	165.674.445
Fray Bartolomé de las Casas	8.908	3.857	0,14	106.437.915
Total	63.729	27.595	1	761.500.211

$$\sum_{i=1}^L N_i \sqrt{p_i(1-p_i)} = 27,595$$

$$N^2 D = (63,729)^2 (0.0625) \cong 2,538,334$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^L \frac{N_i^2 p_i(1-p_i)}{w_i} = 761,500,211$$

$$n = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^L \frac{N_i^2 p_i (1 - p_i)}{w_i}}{N^2 D + \sum_{i=1}^L N_i p_i (1 - p_i)} = \frac{761,500,211}{2,538,334 + 27,595} = 297$$

The number randomly selected households in each village (n_i) was calculated as follows:

$$n_i = w_i * n$$

Municipality	Sample (n_i)
Panzós*	42
El Estor	40
Ixcán	57
Sayaxché	52
Chisec	65
Fray Bartolomé de las Casas	41
Total	297

* These were surveyed in the last trimester of 2009 by a joint team from the Guatemalan Institute of Agrarian and Rural Studies and the Environmental Science and Technology Institute of Barcelona's Autonomous University.

Ultimately, 294 women and 292 men (totaling 586 persons) were surveyed in 294 households or 3 less than theoretically expected. Additionally, I conducted again the survey in 20 random HHs spreading all over the surveyed municipalities and communities for the purpose of quality check.

