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# Agri-Food Systems and Constitutional Disputes in Latin America: Hegemony and Production of Rationality in Chile's Constitutional Processes

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***Abstract***

*Since the late 1990s, various Latin American countries have held constitutional processes as mechanisms for channeling social conflicts, in which food systems and rural territories stood out as relevant topics. In Chile, the neoliberal agrarian policy of largely uncontrolled agricultural intensification that used to receive broad-based international praise is facing increasing criticism due to its negative impact on the stability of ecosystems and society. This growing dissatisfaction led food systems and agrarian policy to become a focal point of debate in the Chilean constitutional process starting in 2020. In this context, our research seeks to analyze the actors and positions taken on food systems and rural territories in this process, as well as their underlying power structures, which resulted in the constitutional proposal's rejection in a plebiscite held in 2022. To this end, we review the Constitutional Convention debates and four political campaigns for the plebiscite. We assume that the reasons for the constitutional proposal's rejection are not to be primarily found in the constitutional commission debate on agri-food systems. Rather, they are a consequence of communication strategies mobilizing values and meaning among many inhabitants of rural territories by targeting their identity. By connecting the theory of agri-food geographies and critical rural studies, we consider that these strategies relate to the emergence of new right-wing populisms opposed to political proposals seeking solutions to the current socio-ecological crisis.*

**Keywords** agri-food systems, constitutional disputes, Chile, hegemony, rationality

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## 1. Introduction: Learning From Failure

In October 2019, Chile experienced the largest and most intense demonstrations since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1989, protesting against neoliberalism and its impact on different aspects of life, such as education, health, transportation, pension funds, privatized water, and extractivism. One of their consequences was the start of a process to draft a new constitution, with the promise of making profound changes to improve life in the country (Panez, 2022).[1] It resulted in an initial constitutional proposal that various political groups described as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world (The New York Times, 2022).

Almost three years later, on September 4, 2022, the plebiscite on the proposed new constitution was held, which was rejected by 62% of the vote. Hence, this opportunity for a profound socio-ecological transformation failed. Mainstream thought commonly tells people to learn from successful experiences. In this case, we propose learning from failure, taking the example of the Chilean agri-food debate in the constitutional process and in society. Particularly, we want to find out how the agribusiness rationality operates and builds hegemony to win the debate against progressive actors and movements.

This research focuses on one of the most conflictive topics in the new constitution: food systems and agriculture. Chile's neoliberal agrarian policy has been commonly framed as an exemplary model of efficient food production and economic growth (Kay, 2002). However, in recent years it has increasingly been viewed more critically, since largely uncontrolled agricultural intensification is known to have negative impacts on the stability of (agro)ecosystems and human health, among others. Consequently, the topic of food systems and agrarian policy became a cornerstone of the constitutional debate held in the country after the popular revolt of October 2019 (Panez, 2022). This led representatives of social movements opposed to the neoliberal agrarian policy to take part in the subsequent constitutional debate (Contreras, 2024). In this context, this research analyzes the different actors and positions taken on food systems and rural territories in the first part of the constitutional process in Chile starting in 2020, which resulted in the constitutional proposal's rejection in a plebiscite in 2022. This work sheds light on the proposal's content and debate strategies to gain an understanding of the underlying power structures. To this end, the Constitutional Convention debates and presentations by different actors (agro-export unions, organizations of the peasant route, etc.) were reviewed. In particular, the minutes of 68 sessions of the Constitutional Convention's Environment, Rights of Nature, Natural Commons, and Economic Model Commission were examined using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software.

In addition, we analyze four communication campaigns for the 4 September 2022 plebiscite (two campaigns for the "I Approve" option and two campaigns for the "I Reject" option).

As preliminary steps prior to presenting the results of our analysis, Section 2 outlines a brief history of conflicts over food systems and agriculture in Chile and the recent Latin American context regarding constitutional changes and disputes over agri-food systems. Section 3 describes the main theoretical concepts that will allow us to analyze visions and narratives on agri-food systems in the Constitutional Convention. These theoretical concepts are derived by bringing post-structuralist theories on neoliberalization as *production of rationality* and Gramsci's Marxist contributions on *hegemony* into dialogue. Section 4 contains the main background information on the transformations that Chile's rural territories have undergone in the last 50 years, which created the scenario of conflict that led to the popular uprising in 2019 and the subsequent constitutional process.

## 2. A Brief History of Conflicts Over Food Systems and Agriculture in Chile

To understand the importance of agri-food systems in Chile, it is crucial to engage in a brief review of the country's rural history and the different milestones that have marked it, as well as to situate the constitutional process within the general context of constitutional changes and territorial and political conflicts in Latin America of the recent decades.

Firstly, it is worth recalling that in Chile, the *hacienda* system was in force for over 300 years, from the 16th century to the 1960s. Haciendas were large latifundia, in many cases covering thousands of hectares belonging to large landowners. These lands were used for various agricultural activities such as wheat, corn, and grape farming, in addition to raising cattle to supply the domestic market and export wheat as of

the mid-19th century (Olea-Peñaloza & Baeza-Rivas, 2022; Panez, 2022). Work in the haciendas was carried out by a workforce composed of indigenous people (mainly Mapuche and Pehuenche), mestizos, and laborers. They were forced to work long hours, received low salaries, and were subjected to a system of servitude that kept them bound to the land. The hacienda system, therefore, also influenced Chile's social structure, as it created a marked inequality between large landowners and the rural population. Hacienda owners, along with the representatives of the colonial authority, comprised a dominant elite while the indigenous and mestizo population was relegated to a state of subordination and marginalization (Bengoa, 2015). This model of land ownership was established during the 19th century as a pillar of the construction of the Chilean state. The overlapping of the hacienda and state prompted Bengoa (2015) to speak of the formation of a *Landlord State*. In the hacienda-state, the identity of the *nation* was promoted together with the myth of the *Chilean nation's* cultural homogeneity from the perspective of the Central Valley. In this myth of Chilean inhabitants' cultural homogeneity, indigenous peoples are constituted as the *other*, denied and rendered inferior in the construction of the *national*. This laid the foundation for the internal colonialism that persists to this day (González-Casanova, 2006).

In the 20th century, Chile underwent major political and social changes that had a significant impact on rural history. The Eduardo Frei Montalva government (1964–1970) implemented the Agrarian Reform, which aimed to change the land ownership structure and promoted a more equitable rural development. The abolition of tenant farming in this period was one of the most fundamental milestones in the Chilean social structure and a point of no return for the country's agrarian history. The expropriation of about 3.5 million hectares of land (Salazar, 2000) and their subsequent redistribution to peasant communities transformed Chile's agricultural system fundamentally. While some historians stress that the reform put the focus on social justice and the democratization of land (Grez, 1995; Pinto, 2005), others point to the political perspective and the prevailing fear of social conflict and instability at the time (Garcés et al., 2000; Salazar, 2000), or highlight the pressure exerted by peasant organizations to get the reform implemented (Valdivia, 2008). We can also find scholars who relate the reform to capitalist modernization (Robles, 2020), where it stands out as part of a broader process of economic modernization in Chile that sought to transform the agrarian structure to promote a more capitalist and market-oriented agriculture.

In 1973, however, the coup d'état ended with the dismantling of many peasant organizations and the reversal of the progress made through the agrarian reform, which was a harsh setback for peasants and the agrarian movement in the region. During the civic-military dictatorship in Chile, relations in rural areas underwent a fundamental transformation through capitalist modernization. Though the agrarian reform and peasant organization had gained momentum toward the late 1960s, the coup in 1973 abruptly interrupted the agrarian transformation process. Politically, the dictatorial regime repressed peasant attempts to resist the power of large landowners, suffocating and eliminating this bold movement. Economically, the restructuring of land ownership during the agrarian reform provided the perfect platform for modernizing Chilean agriculture, fully integrating it with the demands of the international market. Thus, an agrarian counter-reform began, where a third of the land that had been expropriated was returned to its former owners, another third was auctioned off or sold to businesspeople, and the remaining third was assigned to peasants not affiliated with leftist union organizations or political parties, thus beginning the process of land mercantilism.

At the same time, private ownership of water was consolidated, recognizing it as an economic good independent of the land and tradable on the market (according to the 1981 Water Code). Food prices were deregulated by reducing customs barriers to imports. In addition, various regulations were implemented to promote exports of primary goods as economic engines, such as Legal Decree No. 701 on forestry development and the 1983 Mining Code.

These legislative transformations were supported by the Political Constitution of 1980, which prioritizes the right to private property over common natural goods, weakens labor laws, furthers precarious labor in rural areas and restricts political participation by subaltern groups. These changes consolidated agro-exports as one of the pillars of Chile's primary goods export model. Specifically, fruit exports (apples, grapes, cherries, avocados, etc.) have become a profitable business that has taken advantage of the comparative advantages of the globalized agricultural market, in addition to the country's climate conditions and its counter-seasonal

relationship with central capitalist countries. The state intervened with subsidies for the construction of irrigation works, primarily benefiting companies related to the agro-export sector (Panez et al., 2020). As a result, the area dedicated to fruit production increased significantly, from 89,488 hectares in 1975 to 315,375 hectares in 2016, a 252% increase. While these figures indicate a substantial increase in fruit production in the country, it also caused setbacks in local peasant and rural economic dynamics.

This trend, which began with the dictatorship's counter-reform, the arrival of the green revolution, and the legislative anchoring of neoliberal measures, not only remained intact despite the arrival of democracy in 1990, but the neoliberal model was deepened further. The new political parties of democracy dedicated themselves to making minor legislative corrections but maintained the essence of world-market orientation (Murray, 2006). In addition, free trade agreements were signed, and technical assistance and access to credit was facilitated for small farmers to modernize and internationalize the agrarian system.

Since 2010, the extractivist model has faced growing criticism, especially when local communities in rural territories began to highlight not just the precariousness of the rural environment but also the environmental deterioration and loss of biodiversity in ecosystems. These concerns intensified, especially after revealing that this model imposed significant barriers to maintaining food sovereignty and the very existence of life in rural territories. One of the most crucial points in this process came with the protests that began on 18 October 2019 and ended in propositions for a constitutional reform.

### 2.1 Agrarian Disputes and Constitutional Change in Latin America

Chile, however, is not the first country in Latin America to address changes in the agri-food system through a new constitution. During the pink tide that began in 1998 (Vergara-Camus & Kay, 2017), there were three significant cases in terms of constitutional proposals and agri-food systems: Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

In Ecuador, food sovereignty was proposed in the constitutional process of 2007 as a strategic national objective, seeking a transition of the food system through the redistribution of resources, supporting the conservation of natural heritage, and different food identities. This was part of rural territories' right to *Buen Vivir* (live well) and directly linked to recognizing the rights of nature (Acosta, 2009). However, during the implementation, the state used food sovereignty to consolidate its power and ended up simplifying and concealing the visions of food sovereignty held by peasant and indigenous movements (Giunta, 2018; McKay et al., 2014; Tilzey, 2019).

In Bolivia, the new Constitution of 2007 incorporated the state's obligation to guarantee and recognize food security and sovereignty as fundamental rights. This implied recognizing the rights of mother earth and indigenous communities. However, expectations regarding the transformation of deep socio-ecological inequalities were not met. Specifically, the safeguards for indigenous peoples' communitarian and autonomous forms of land sovereignty were insufficient and showed the incapacity of the state to counteract the predominant interests of large landowners (McKay et al., 2014). In addition, the neo-extractivist logic underlying the agro-food system, with the state playing a central role, erodes the community-based lifestyles of certain subaltern groups (Tilzey, 2019).

Lastly, in Venezuela, the proposed constitutional reform of 2009 obliges the state to promote sustainable agriculture and guarantee food security through the development and prioritization of domestic agricultural production. In this sense, the Venezuelan Constitution is less radical by adhering to the concept of food security and not food sovereignty. However, it explicitly states that the latifundia regime is contrary to social interests, and that small farmers have the right to their own land. Nevertheless, the agrarian reform program faced several difficulties and was implemented only partially (Vergara-Camus & Kay, 2017). Venezuela's dependence on oil and especially the political crisis following Hugo Chavez's death in March 2013, exposed the impossibility of food security and deepened extractivist policies in rural territories (see also Terán, 2015).

These cases show a complex tension between proposed imaginaries and entrenched structural reality. In light of this critical balance, with the aim of changing the neoliberal regulatory framework, the political groups participating in the constitutional process in Chile aimed to address two main challenges (Massai & Miranda, 2021): 1) How to achieve regulatory changes that went beyond mere rhetoric or well-intended statements and would effectively overcome neolib-

eralism and extractivism in Chile; and 2) how to progress toward a more consistent and transformational articulation of proposals like the rights of nature, food sovereignty, water justice, and plurinationality?

During the first constitutional process (2020–2022) in Chile, about half of the convention members elected (Massai & Miranda, 2021) supported the water and agrarian justice perspective of food and agriculture systems, preventing the neoliberal viewpoint from gaining predominance in the final constitutional proposal. However, this predominance was not universal, and the constitutional proposal sought to reconcile positions on several of the issues mentioned in the previous section. An example of this is the inclusion of the principle of food security in the final text of the proposed Constitution, as a partial concession to the hegemonic actors of the agri-food system (Contreras, 2024). In Chile's first constitutional process, there was a tendency to polarize the debate around the concepts of food security and food sovereignty. The concept of food security was mainly raised by actors on the political right-wing and associations of large agricultural companies, who used it to emphasize the importance of food availability and access, without questioning current production methods. In contrast, social movements and left-wing parties related to the perspective of water and agricultural justice used food sovereignty as a key concept, highlighting the importance of small-scale production and the recognition of peasant and indigenous peoples' livelihoods and their rights to decide how and what to produce, in connection with the territory. Despite the polarization of the debate, both concepts were included in the final text.

Table 1 shows a summary of the main contents of the constitutional proposal related to agri-food systems.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

To analyze the different actors and positions on agri-food systems in the first part of the constitutional process in Chile, it is important to discuss the dimensions of the neoliberization of agriculture and its influence on agri-food systems. While this phenomenon is not limited to Chile and can be seen in Latin America and globally, we believe that there are relevant particular-

*Table 1 Main Contents of the Constitutional Proposal on Agri-Food Systems*

| Theme | Content |
|---|---|
| Rurality (Article 241) | The State promotes the comprehensive development of rural territories and recognizes rurality as a territorial expression where the forms of life and production are developed around people and communities' direct relationship with the land, water, and the sea. |
| Food sovereignty and security (Article 54) | It is the duty of the State to ensure food sovereignty and security. For this, it will promote the production, distribution, and consumption of food that guarantees the right to healthy and adequate food, fair trade, and environmentally responsible food systems. |
| Ecology and food production | The State promotes ecologically sustainable agricultural production. |
| Right to food (Article 56) | Every person has the right to adequate, healthy, sufficient, nutritionally complete, and culturally relevant food. This right includes the guarantee of special food for those who require it for health reasons. |
| Water Statute (Article 140) | Water is essential for life and the exercise of human rights and the rights of nature. The State must protect the waters, in all their states and phases, and the water cycle. (Article 134) Among these (common) goods, water in all its states … cannot be possessed … . The State may grant administrative authorizations for the use of natural common goods that cannot be possessed, temporarily and in accordance with the law … . These authorizations, whether individual or collective, do not generate property rights. |
| Rights of Nature (Article 103) | Nature has the right to be respected and protected, to regenerate, maintain, and restore its functions and dynamic balances, which include natural cycles, ecosystems, and biodiversity. |
| Women and agricultural work (Article 46) | In rural and agricultural areas, the State guarantees fair and decent conditions for seasonal work, safeguarding the exercise of labor rights and social security … . All forms of job insecurity are prohibited, as well as forced, humiliating, or denigrating labor. |

*Note.* Source: Authors' compilation.

ities in this country as a case study in the radical implementation of neoliberalism. In a previous study (Panez et al., 2020), we emphasized that the neoliberalization of agriculture has three main contemporary dimensions in Chile. The first, what Harvey (1982/2013) calls spatial fix, involves strategies requiring significant transformations of space to benefit economically and continue the accumulation of wealth. For example, the infrastructure megaprojects implemented by the last two administrations (Piñera 2018–2022 and Boric 2022–2026) involve different irrigation projects and water management works. The strengthening of the predominant agricultural framework requires a special focus on logistics infrastructure, which is essential to facilitate the movement of goods and support the business model.

A second crucial dimension in this context is the dynamic of deregulation followed by re-regulation of processes, ranging from legislation that promotes agro-exports to privatization initiatives, affecting access to goods essential for sustaining life. This process includes food price deregulation policies and free trade agreements, of which Chile has 30 (including with the USA, EU, China, UK, Canada, and Japan). The re-regulation phase comes into play through state intervention, aimed at establishing a legal and regulatory framework that promotes the agribusiness model's expansion, thus consolidating control over food production in the hands of a few actors.

The third dimension of agriculture's neoliberalization in Chile concerns the production of rationality, which argues that agribusiness is associated with the establishment of neoliberalism as a rationality that is not only a destroyer of rules, institutions, and rights but "is also a producer of certain types of social relations, of certain ways of living, of certain subjectivities" (Laval & Dardot, 2009/2013, p. 14, quote translated by the author). It is crucial that this last dimension be further developed and expanded as one of the key theoretical tenets of this article.

### 3.1 Rationality and Hegemony: Critical Dialogue Between Post-Structuralism and Gramscian Marxism to Understand Agri-Food Systems Disputes

What are the implications of conceiving of agriculture as production of rationality? Here, our reference is the concept of governmentality developed by Foucault (2004/2006). In his reflections during his courses at the Collège de France (1977–1978), Foucault (2004/2006) conducts a historical analysis of forms of government and develops the concept of governmentality to synthesize contemporary forms that are becoming more diffuse and complex for the government of human beings, no longer centered on coercion and explicit violence but rather on shaping, guiding, and structuring the possible actions of the population: a form of governing more focused on the behavior management (Foucault, 2004/2006). Authors such as Laval and Dardot (2009/2013) have deepened Foucault's reflection to argue that neoliberal rationality configures individuals as *entrepreneurs of themselves.* Thus, their productive practices and everyday decisions are shaped by market criteria. This rationality leads to a radicalization of the individualization principle of economic liberalism. From a post-structuralist perspective, this entails a deployment of dominant power not toward subjects but rather from the subjects themselves (Laval & Dardot, 2009/2013).

Regarding agri-food systems in particular, the rationality of agribusiness also has to do with molding the subjectivities of those related to its activities in rural territories, establishing the idea that there is only one viable form of agriculture, which relates to a certain form of "progress" and "development." Here we are not talking about actors from private corporations, the political class, or the owners of mass media that promote this discourse. Instead, we are talking about the impact of this rationality on peasants, rural communities, and rural inhabitants in general, especially the subaltern classes/groups in the rural territories affected by the socio-ecological impacts of agribusiness. In this case, the aim is to transform their way of understanding the world so that they can naturalize this way of farming and producing food.

In the case of agribusiness in Chile, one can see how public policies have contributed to the installation of agribusiness narratives in the political agenda regarding the importance of the activity and the need for optimal conditions (water, regulatory benefits, and infrastructure subsidies, among others). In this regard, since the Chilean agricultural export boom of the 1990s, agribusinesses, mainly food exporters' associations in direct complicity with state entities, have built the narrative of consolidating Chile as an agri-food power. We also find the narratives that have been built to legitimize the privatization of water and land in the country since Pinochet's civil-military dic-

tatorship underlying the marketing slogan of "Chile: Food Power."

On this point, we believe that debates on neoliberalism as rationality must be enriched and further developed with an analysis of the relationship between power and classes, as put forth in the Gramscian concept of hegemony and the importance of ideology in the construction of hegemony. Under the premise of the importance of building consensus in capitalist societies of Western Europe, Gramsci proposed that the idea of ideology is the key tool of hegemony in the construction of this common sense. Unlike the concept of ideology as a *false consciousness*, as Marx and Engels described it in *The German Ideology,* ideology from the Gramscian perspective is understood as concepts of the world within different social classes to address situations related to everyday life (Gramsci, 1948–1951/2022). Thus, various ideologies are present, which are mediated by relationships of domination. The dominant ideology is conveyed via public (the government, judicial system, police forces, etc.) hegemony to describe the processes of designing and redesigning consensus on the part of the state (political society) and civil society entities engaged in action in the cultural sphere to establish a common sense that legitimizes the predominance of the political-economic project at the service of the dominant classes (Coutinho, 1992; Gramsci, 1948–1951/2022) and private (communication media, churches, families, etc.) apparatuses of hegemony, which make its acceptance as a universal truth possible. From this perspective, various researchers have used Gramsci's theory of hegemony to understand peasant communities' legitimization of institutional orders that do not serve their interests but rather those of the dominant actors in the agri-food system (Brown, 2020; Jakobsen, 2018; Karriem, 2009). In particular, scholars such as Brown (2020) and Karriem (2009) have engaged in a critical analysis of how the unified narrative of "farmers'" interests has rendered invisible the class differences between peasants, medium-sized producers, large agriculture enterprises, and food distribution companies, among other actors.

There are important differences between the concepts of rationality and hegemony, especially in their conceptions of power and the analysis of the ways in which that power is deployed. While the notion of rationality comes from post-structuralism and the debate on hegemony and ideology from Gramscian Marxism, complementary aspects are possible that we consider valuable. The conceptualization of rationality and the studies undertaken based on the concept manage to subtly explore subjectivation mechanisms under neoliberalism (Contreras, 2024; Laval & Dardot, 2009/2013). On the other hand, the theorization of hegemony is mainly anchored in the analysis of social classes, an aspect that enriches contemporary analysis of transformations in agri-food systems (Brown, 2020; Karriem, 2009).

This discussion is linked to the growing academic output on the advance of the extreme right and the debate of the *new right* or global *right-wing populisms* and their particular expression in rural territories (Van der Ploeg, 2020; Scoones et al., 2018; Mamonova et al., 2020). Taking Gramsci's contributions, as a starting point one can argue that the rise of right-wing populism is a reaction to a global crisis of hegemony of the dominant classes. Neoliberal globalization has faced growing difficulties to offer effective solutions to the inequalities, problems, and displeasure generated by its own advance. This crisis of hegemony has had particular repercussions for rural sectors, where neoliberal policies have furthered an increase in the precarity of small farmers and rural workers. This rising precariousness has been accompanied by uncertainty and a feeling of abandonment in the face of neoliberal globalization (Bello, 2019; Mamonova et al., 2020). In addition, globalization's narrative of multiculturalism contrasts with the feeling of a "loss of (cultural) identity" rooted in the idea of nation, one of the central pillars of which is, in part, the rural population.

In this context, right-wing populism emerges as an alternative for channeling popular discontent and forging a new consensus with narratives that promise to restore order and national values. There are varied expressions of this, with their respective nuances, such as the populism behind Donald Trump in the United States, the AfD in Germany, or Javier Milei's ultra-liberalism regarding the place of economic protectionism for managing the national economy. However, as Bello (2019) argues, this process of *counterrevolution* has found one of its main anchors for building new hegemonies in rural sectors.

However, this connection between agribusiness rationality, hegemony, and the new right-wing in rural territories appears to be insufficiently developed in the interdisciplinary field of agri-food geographies. This is an important research gap that our work on the experience in Chile seeks to address.

This symbolic aspect of the production of rationality, consensus-building, and common sense is key to our analysis of the disputes over the agri-food systems in the constitutional process in Chile. For this reason, our main research questions are: How did the production of agribusiness rationality operate in the constitutional process? How did it seek to build hegemony and consensus within the agri-food debate in Chile?

## 4. Methodological Framework

In order to answer our research questions, we analyzed the constitutional debate and its surrounding campaign with the following mixed methodological framework.

Firstly, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the debate during the Constitutional Conventions Commission on Environment, Rights of Nature, Natural Commons and Economic (Convención Constitucional, 2022). To identify stakeholder groups and their positions, we performed a content analysis of the minutes of 68 sessions (Convención Constitucional, 2022) using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software and a deductive-inductive coding approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Initially, deductive categories were derived from the current agri-food system discourse based on the authors' knowledge and the first proposal of a new constitution (see the first column of Table 2). Hence, those categories are marked by the contextuality of the authors' pre-knowledge from prior studies (Panez, 2022; Panez et al., 2020; Roose, 2020) as well as the situationality of the research agenda and the material (Kelle & Kluge, 2010). Subsequently, we introduced additional inductive sub-categories based on insights gained from the protocols (see second column of Table 2). The coding was double-checked by a second coder to ensure inter-subjectivity, emphasizing the stability, replicability, and accuracy of the coding process (Gläser-Zikuda et al., 2020).

Secondly, we analyzed four communication campaigns (two "I reject," two "I approve"). We selected the campaigns according to two criteria: 1) campaigns developed by stakeholders who have played a leading role in the constitutional debate (in- or outside the Constitutional Convention) and 2) campaigns that have achieved significant dissemination in social media (measured by the number of followers on social networks such as Facebook and Instagram). In the case of the I reject option, there was just one campaign by a stakeholder who participated in the constitutional debate (*Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* [SNA, National Society of Agriculture ]). Thus, the second campaign chosen as an example for an I reject campaign was not a leading actor in the constitutional debate, but it was a campaign that had significant repercussions in social media.

*Table 1 Categories (Deductive) and Sub-Categories (Inductive) Used in the Research*

| Categories (deductive) | Sub-categories (inductive) |
|---|---|
| Water | Water justice |
| | Water de-privatization |
| | Technical infrastructure |
| Seeds | Ownership |
| | Identity |
| Agroindustry | Environmental threats |
| | Environmental benefits |
| | Identity |
| Food security | Connection to right to water |
| | Connection to indigenous rights |
| | Connection to ownership |
| Food sovereignty | Benefits |
| | Risks |
| Climate crisis / climate change | Systemic views |
| | Market-based solution |

*Note.* Source: Authors' compilation.

## 5. Actors and Positions on Food Systems and Rural Territories in the Constitutional Convention

This section contains our main analysis of the debates on the food system during the constitutional process in Chile from 2020 to 2022. First, the findings from the convention commission are presented. It then compares the discussion to the outcome of the constitutional proposal and reflects on the extent to which diverse perspectives have been respectively addressed or emphasized (Chapter 5.1). Lastly, we present a press and campaign review that sheds light on the contrast between the internal discourse within the commission and discourse aimed towards voters (Chapter 5.2).

The commission consisted of two coordinators and 17 members, who were elected in a public vote on May

15 and 16, 2021. Additionally, more than 150 organizations, institutions and industry members made presentations to the commission (see Convención Constituciona, 2022). Among the members and presenters, our analysis identified three main actor groups: foundations and NGOs that place the right to food at the center of the debate and call for rethinking cattle farming and agroindustry, advocating recognition of water's importance as a human right and at the ecosystemic level (e.g., Heinrich Böll Foundation, Observatorio Plurinacional de Salares Andinos [OPSAL, Plurinational Observatory of Andean Salt Flats]). In a second group, we find representatives of small- and medium-sized farmers' organizations. They mainly emphasize the importance of peasant family farming. These include the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC-Chile, Council of Peasant Organizations Chile), articulated in federations of workers and peasants such as Confederación de Federaciones de Sindicatos Campesinos y Trabajadores del Agro de Chile (CONAGRO, Confederation of Federations of Peasant Unions and Agricultural Workers of Chile) and La Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas (ANAMURI, National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women). The third group mainly advocate a position in favor of the current predominant agriculture model, stressing the importance of preserving tradition, an aspect that was amplified during the convention debates, actively promoting an intensive agro-export system. It consists of economists and large-scale farmers' organizations, such as the Asociación Nacional de Productores de Semillas (ANPROS, National Association of Seed Producers), the Sociedad Agrícola y Ganadera de Osorno (Agricultural and Livestock Farming Association of Osorno), the Federación de Productores de Frutas de Chile (FEDEFRUTA, Chilean Federation of Fruit Producers), and the SNA.[1]

There were diverse perspectives on agri-food systems and rural territory within the Convention and actors' narratives. The most prominent discourses fall roughly into two categories. First, we find a critical attitude towards the current agri-food system, emphasizing the concept of food sovereignty as a central category of this discourse. Secondly, we observe a "business as usual" vision of the current agri-food system, where the concept of food security is highlighted as a central focus. The advocates of this perspective include some of the actors mentioned above, such as ANPROS, the SNA, and the FEDEFRUTA. Initial attempts to add further sub-categories to include more perspectives could not be upheld by the given data set as the debate revealed itself to be quite dichotomous overall.

In Table 3, we systematize the fundamental topics addressed in the Convention based on an analysis of the protocols in relation to agri-food systems and rural territories.

*Table 3 Positions on Fundamental Topics in the Convention Regarding Agri-Food Systems and Rural Territories*

| Examples of water and agrarian justice perspective… | Examples of Business-as-usual—neoliberal agriculture perspective… |
|---|---|
| **…on water** | |
| Demanding **water justice** (e.g., Godoy y Vilches, Session 49, p. 25–26; Zárate Session 49, p. 29, Abarca, Session 49, p. 26)<br>Demanding **de-privatization** of water or even nationalization of water (e.g., Rodríguez, Session 13, p. 5) | Demanding **investments** in technical infrastructure (e.g., Toloza, Session 49, p. 27; Fontaine, Session 49, p. 28) |
| **… on seeds** | |
| Demanding protection to **secure indigenous and peasant peoples' identity** (e.g., Alvarado, Session 43, p. 9) and **food sovereignty** (e.g., Vilches, Session 50, p. 21) | Demanding **private ownership** of seeds and genetic modifications to assure **food security** (e.g., Sepúlveda, Toloza, Alvarez, Session 50, p. 22; Vega, Session 63, p. 117)<br>Demanding **freedom to produce** with any seeds (e.g., Fontaine, Session 43, p. 9) |
| **… on agro-industry** | |
| Claiming agro-industry to be a source of various problems concerning **environment** and **indigenous/peasant people's rights** (e.g., Albarca, Session 11, p. 3; Alvarado, Session 11, p. 5; Godoy, Session 39, p. 11, Munoz, Session 21, p. 6; Cáceres [NGO *Tejiiendo Ecologías*], Session 21, p. 5; Saavedra [*Wanaku Akunkawa*], Session 16, p. 6) | Claiming agro-industry to be **already on its way to sustainability** (e.g., *Cooperation Lechero*, Session 13, p. 8, Polloni (San Fernando Farmers' Association), Session 20, p. 6)<br>Highlighting the importance of **strengthening small and medium enterprises** (e.g., *Multigremial Nacional de Emprendedores*, Session 2, p. 5) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **... on food security** | |
| **Refusing the concept of food security as it lacks the right to water** and **indigenous rights** (e.g., Gallardo, Session 39, p. 13; Zárate, Session 50, p. 23, Alvarado, Session 50, p. 21)<br>Claiming food security as **complementary to food sovereignty** (e.g., Martin, Session 50, p. 23) | **Claiming that production and import of international food is more efficient** (less resources used, more nutritive through imports and variety; e.g., Fontaine, Session 63, p. 117; Sepúlveda, Session 39, p. 13)<br>Demanding **clear ownership** rules (e.g., Alvaro García, Agrícola El Parque, Session 21, p. 6) |
| **... on food sovereignty** | |
| **Claiming that food sovereignty ensures right to water and territory; ensures health** (e.g., Olivares, Session 50, p. 23)<br>Demanding **bio-centric food production** (e.g., Zárate, Session 35, p. 11; Sepúlveda (*Plataforma Chile Mejor sin TCL*), Soldano (*Fundación Consitutyente X1 del Valle del Huasco*), Session 27, p. 2)<br>**Claiming that food sovereignty combats climate crisis** (e.g., Olivares, Vilches, Alvarado, Abarca, Session 35, p. 11–14)<br>Claiming that food sovereignty **protects peasant and indigenous systems and identity** (e.g., Vilches, Session 18, p. 4; Farías Session 8, p. 5–6; Gonzalez (SOCLA Chile), Session 32, p. 3; Reyes and Monecinos (ANAMURI), Session 21, p. 5; Godoy, Gallardo, Session 40, p. 6–7; Olivares, Gallardo, Session 63, p. 116–118; Nunez (*Organization La Minga*), Session 21, p. 4)<br>**Stating that food sovereignty is threatened by mining exploitation/industrial agriculture** (e.g., Morales [OPSAL], Session 21, p. 3) | **Demanding a complement between sovereignty and food security needed** (e.g., Toloza, Session 39, p. 12, Session 35, p. 13)<br>**Claiming food sovereignty to put food security at risk (e.g., by threatening exchange between countries/free trade and the trade agreements that facilitate it**), e.g., Fontaine, Session 35, p. 13, Fontaine Session 50, p. 22; Vega and Álvarez, Session 63, p. 116–117)<br>**Claiming that food sovereignty by itself leads to "primary agriculture," eliminates the freedom to produce; increases prices and discriminates**; (Fontaine, Session 63, p. 118) |
| **...on climate crisis/climate change** | |
| Claiming that **climate crisis is caused by the current system**: extractivism; agricultural industry, mining, etc. and promoting **agro-ecology, protection of rivers' ecological flow and, in gener**al, **the transition to overcoming the extractivist model** (e.g., Olivares, Vilches, Alvarado, Abarca, Session 35, p. 11–14) | Claiming that climate change can be cured by the current system: e.g., through **investments** and **market competition** (FEDEFRUTA, Session 28, p. 7; Sepúlveda, Session 39, p. 9) |
| **...on cross-cutting concepts** | |
| **Supporting right of nature and peoples' identity (especially small farmers and indigenous people**; e.g., Alvarado, Session 35, p. 14; Alvarado, Session 43, p. 9; Vilches, Session 50, p. 21; Caceres [NGO *Tejiendo Ecologias*], Session 21, p. 5; Morales [OPSAL], Session 21, p. 3)<br>**Supporting the concept of *Buen Vivir*** (e.g., Guerra and Valle [Magallanes Social Coordinating Board] Session 12, p. 6)<br>**Aiming to overcome neoliberalism** (e.g., Session 30, p. 5, Session 32, p. 4; Salinas, Session 36, p. 56; Vilches, Session 36, p. 8; Olivares, Session 59, p. 9) | **Supporting neoliberal concepts of fr**ee market, investments, competition and ownership (see above and Fontaine, Session 10, p. 6; Colchagua Farmers' Association, Session 20, p. 6) |

*Note.* Source: Authors' compilation.
Abbreviations used in the table: SOCLA (Sociedad Científica Latinoamericana de Agroecología) Chile, ANAMURI (Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas), OPSAL Observatorio Plurinacional de Salares Andinos, FEDEFRUTA (Federación de Productores de Frutas de Chile).

Regarding the topic of water, on the one hand, there is a demand for water justice through the de-privatization of water in Chile and even some positions that advocate the nationalization of water as a common natural good. On the other hand, from the perspective of the main actors in agriculture today, there is a demand focused on the mobilization of investments in technical infrastructure and procedures for the efficient use of water in agriculture.

On the issue of seeds, the position of "water and agrarian justice" takes a somewhat radical approach, alluding to the protection and safeguarding of seeds, convinced of the need to not only preserve seed diversity but also to protect indigenous people and defend food sovereignty. In this way, seeds are positioned as a crucial element of protection within this discussion. An example of this perspective can be found in this excerpt: "The Creole peasant seed contains a biocultural heritage that consists of people's handling of the seeds" (Convention member Vilches, Session 50, p. 21).[1]

The neoliberal perspective of agricultural actors argues that seeds are not state property, but owned by each individual, as stated by a Constitutional Convention member: "Genetic heritage never belonged to the state, it has been the work of many people" (Convention member Alvarez, politician, Group 3). The idea that seeds do not belong to the state but rather to individuals supports the idea of private property according to this perspective. The argument is that genetic modifications are essential to guarantee food security, and it is suggested that excessive protection of seeds could deprive people of their right to produce. Regarding agribusiness, the perspective of water and agrarian justice underscores the socio-environmental impact of agribusiness and its consequences, in particular for the rights of indigenous and peasant communities. This approach tends to challenge the conventional idea of food security by stressing that it cannot be fully achieved without the recognition and respect of fundamental rights. Among these rights, it stresses the importance of access to water as an essential component for communities' sustainability and well-being. It also emphasizes the need to recognize and safeguard the specific rights of indigenous communities, acknowledging their crucial role in the preservation of biodiversity and in building a partnership with the territory (Melin et al., 2019).

The agricultural actors of the current production system emphasize the importance of food security. Advocates of this perspective believe in the need for food imports and stress the importance of establishing clear rules on ownership to stimulate rural economic activity. From this perspective, one cannot address food sovereignty because it could simplify the agricultural approach too much by focusing on production to supply the domestic market, increasing production risks and causing price hikes. They argue that there is a danger of exclusion by neglecting food security and limiting it exclusively to food sovereignty. This vision is summarized in the following quote by a Constitutional Convention member:

> [Food sovereignty] discriminates against Chileans and separates them among those who are entitled to define food and those who are not. Only a small group will be able to define food, not all consumers as is the case today. It creates a seed monopoly, which will cause price increases. This is not democratization; in the end, this is nationalization. (Convention member Fontaine, economist, Session 35, p. 13)

At the same time, the perspective of water and agricultural justice suggests that the concept of food sovereignty must be of key importance to build just and sustainable agri-food systems. This perspective holds that food sovereignty is a guarantee of basic things such as access to water and territory, arguing that the intensification of the current agricultural system poses a major challenge in the face of the climate crisis and that the protection of seeds is also a vital mechanism to preserve the coexistence of territories. This approach highlights the importance of small-scale production and the vulnerability of indigenous peoples' livelihoods to specific threats, such as mining exploitation and agribusiness. Therefore, this approach is presented as an invitation to rethink and redefine agricultural practices in the context of contemporary challenges.

As far as climate change is concerned, both perspectives address the issue (some from the idea of "climate change" and others from the notion of "climate crisis") and explore possible solutions. On the one hand, the perspective of water and agrarian justice stresses that the climate crisis is intrinsically linked to the constant and excessive extractivism of agribusiness, mining and energy systems. On the other hand, the vision of current agricultural actors proposes solu-

tions that focus on adjusting the system, including increased investments and the promotion of competition in the market, with the aim of optimizing agricultural practices for consumers' needs.

The different perspectives' emphases can be seen to diverge constantly across the board, even though both focus on food and its production. At one extreme, increased investment and encouraging market competition are advocated as means to improve agricultural practices. This perspective, led by mainstream agricultural actors, predominantly aligns with the neoliberal concept of agriculture, advocating principles such as free markets, investments, competition, and ownership. In contrast, the second perspective places strong emphasis on territorial sovereignty, closely related to nature and ancestral communities; that is, both peasants and indigenous peoples. This approach incorporates the notion of the rights of nature and highlights the preservation of peoples' identity, especially indigenous peoples, as well as the promotion of peasant agriculture. This vision is based on an understanding of territorial linkages that consider the interconnection between the land, livelihoods, and the subsistence of local communities.

Despite the broad hegemony of the neoliberal agriculture perspective in the media and state policy over the last 40 years, it was a minority position in the Constitutional Convention. This was largely due to the contestation of the neoliberal model that emerged from the social uprising, which influenced the composition of delegates to the first constitutional process (2020–2022), where 77 of the 154 members of the Constitutional Convention (50%) were from political pacts promising radical changes to the neoliberal system (Massai & Miranda, 2021). This gave the organizations of the CLOC-Chile and socio-environmental movements for the defense of water and territory greater influence over the Constitutional Convention's proposals.

### 5.1 Communication Strategies for the Constitutional Plebiscite

As we pointed out at the beginning, this research is not limited to examining the disputes between different actors in relation to agri-food systems and rural territories, as presented in the proposals within the framework of the Chilean Constitutional Convention. We are also interested in expanding and contrasting the narratives used by analyzing the communicational strategies employed by each actor group. To do so, our next step consisted of analyzing the main communication campaigns that were developed on social media (Facebook and YouTube) for and against the constitutional proposal in the plebiscite on September 4, 2022. We focused on the campaigns that directly addressed the issue of agri-food systems and rural territories for the plebiscite, specifically two campaigns for the I Approve option and two campaigns for the I Reject option.

In the case of the I Approve campaign, we identified two communication efforts related to agri-food systems and rural territories. First, the "Approve for Water" campaign managed to bring together more than 90 socio-environmental organizations. Among others, it included the participation of organizations with national visibility, such as the Movimiento de Defensa por el acceso al Agua, la Tierra y la Protección del Medioambiente (MODATIMA, Movement for the Defence of Water, Land and the Environment), the Movimiento por el Agua y los Territorios (MAT, Movement for Water and Territories), the Free Glaciers Movement, and Fridays for Future. A similar campaign was launched by organizations closer to the peasant world. Here we cite the case of CLOC-Chile and, within this group, particularly the work carried out by ANAMURI. This group has the largest membership and public presence within CLOC-Chile. ANAMURI made public statements and participated in electoral advertisements mentioning the importance of this Constitution for the peasant world and especially for rural women. The consequences of the agro-export model for peasant communities were decried, and food sovereignty was put forth as a political demand, stressing small-scale agriculture, indigenous peoples, and the importance of rural women. It highlighted that the constitutional proposal acknowledged rural women's work, defined land as a social good, and the de-privatized water and seeds as the people's property.

In the case of the victorious I Reject campaign, we see that the large-scale farmers' organizations that were part of the Constitutional Convention debate did not wage a direct campaign for the I Reject option. Though they expressed their position against the constitutional proposal publicly in interviews and statements, most organizations did not develop a specific campaign to promote the I Reject option. Only the *Con los pies en la tierra* (With our feet on the ground) campaign by the SNA critically comments on

different articles of the constitutional proposal in the voices of medium and small farmers, as well as agricultural workers. This campaign spoke of significant "concerns" about the content of the constitutional text but did not openly call for an I Reject vote. The greatest concern expressed during the campaign was about the change in water use rights. The new constitution proposed that water rights should no longer be of a proprietary nature and should become state-administered entitlements, under the declaration of water as a non-possessable common good. This de-privatization of water was seen as a threat to the stability of agriculture and the forms of labor that depend on it, as can be seen in the following accounts from the campaign:

> I have been working in agriculture, packing, harvesting, and doing everything related to the countryside for more than 15 years. If the ecological function is introduced as a limit to property, which will bring new obligations to the owners or will allow expropriation for environmental reasons, how will it affect the work in agriculture? With our feet on the ground, let's contribute to everyone's development. (Female agricultural worker in "With our feet on the ground" campaign, 2022)

> I am 33 years old … I have been working as a seasonal worker for over 14 years. It is important to regulate the use of water, but by losing water rights, will my job and that of my family, of all agricultural workers, be safe? Let's take care of the water, but with our feet on the ground. (Agricultural worker in "With our feet on the ground" campaign, 2022)

Aside from this campaign by the SNA, decentralized campaigns were organized by so-called citizen organizations. However, there is no clarity as to the origin of the organizations or the people behind the constitutional campaigns that talked about rural territories and openly called for an I Reject vote. As noted in the methodology section, the I reject option was not produced by a leading actor in the constitutional debate, but it was a campaign that resonated strongly on social media and was called *Soy del campo* (I am from the countryside). The campaign was based on slogans such as: "Chile defends your traditions," "Because they left us out, I Reject," "I am also Chilean," and "I am from the countryside and multicultural." These slogans can be interpreted as key elements in the search to connect with ontological components of the life of subaltern class and groups in rural territories. They mainly aimed at precarious rural communities of people recognized as "Chileans" not belonging to an indigenous group with a strong attachment to religious and nationalist traditions and who viewed the proposals, languages, and practices of environmental activists, indigenous organizations defending "plurinationality" and progressive urban sectors with suspicion. By stressing "I am also Chilean" and "They left me out," elements of belonging and the question of what defines the very being of those who live in the countryside are highlighted. In this way, it is suggested that the definition of "who I am" is linked to the idea of nation for those who live in rural territories. It is worth clarifying here that they recognize only one nation in the country, the notion of the Chilean nation as a homogenous whole.

A key element of campaigns like Soy del Campo was to point directly to the idea of Chile as "one nation." The use of Chilean flags in demonstrations for the I Reject option in rural territories was very important as a symbol of the defense of the homeland. Frequently, slogans such as "Chile: One Nation" were seen, a direct (and opposed) reference to the declaration of Chile as a Plurinational State in the constitutional proposal, with the coexistence of different nations, mainly associated with indigenous peoples. The different activities were mainly carried out in regions with a high percentage of rural population, many of which later had a high vote for the I Reject option, such as the regions of Maule, Ñuble, Biobío and Araucanía. Different decentralized communication strategies were implemented in intermediate cities and regional capitals, specifically in areas characterized by a historical predominance of right-wing political parties, some directly related to landowners. This historical predominance of electoral support for right-wing parties, together with the influence of large-scale farmers' organizations, motivated the implementation of specific communication approaches related to the nationalist values that are strong components for building citizenry in these rural areas.

These strategies not only sought to maintain but to strengthen existing connections and promote effective communication in a context marked by the economic importance of these spaces. The idea of Chile as a nation characterized strongly by its colonial tradition and related practices and forms of discrimination is linked to the strategy of consolidation of the hacienda in the rural space of Chile's Central Valley. The

proposal of plurinationality contained in the constitutional text upset the very colonial foundations of the state and rural inhabitants' strong bonds with that state, in the context of the historical importance of the Landlord State in Chile, mentioned in Section 2. This continues to render demands for greater acknowledgment of the country's indigenous peoples invisible.

Thus, we can see that the strategy adopted by the I Approve campaign integrated the key concepts contained in the constitutional proposal. These same elements were the subject of intense debate among the various political positions in the Constitutional Convention, especially regarding agri-food systems and rural territories. By contrast, the I Reject campaign avoids the concepts and proposals like food security, private ownership, and freedom to produce that these political sectors presented to the Constitutional Convention.

Rather than focusing on the topics discussed in the Constitutional Convention, the strategy adopted in the I Reject campaign seeks to develop a particularly delicate point rooted in certain territorial sectors, one related to the construction of identity and personal connections, notions of national belonging and nation, and of the passing on of traditions. The campaign intends to raise concerns about the preservation of these fundamental elements, suggesting that they are at risk from the constitutional proposal.

By closely studying the communication strategy of the I Reject campaign and considering the concept of Landlord State and the persistence of its legacy inherited from the colonial roots of the Chilean state, it is easy to understand and even anticipate the fears associated with proposals such as food sovereignty, water as a common good, or the recognition of peasant and indigenous communities. These ways of life have been silenced and repressed for over 500 years. Therefore, the option of autonomy, management, or the transformation of the "modern/colonial Chilean state" implies detaching or perhaps "disinheriting" the domestication and subalternation deeply rooted in the rural territories. In this sense, the I Approve campaign could be interpreted as an attempted rebellion against the Landlord State.

## 6. Conclusions

The main problems with the constitutional change experienced during the pink tide in Latin America involved the (non-)applicability of the new regulatory vision on food systems and rurality. Chile's inability to achieve effective regulatory changes has to do with the time of political volatility in Latin America, such as popular revolts and changes between progressive and far-right governments. In this volatility, we believe that the debate on common sense and the production of rationality is of paramount importance.

Returning to the core questions of our theoretical framework on neoliberalism, rationality, and hegemony—How did the production of agribusiness rationality operate in the constitutional process? How did it seek to build hegemony and consensus within the agri-food debate in Chile?—we conclude that agribusiness actors' victory with the proposed constitution's rejection was not rooted in a successful defense of the dominant form of agriculture. Rather, it was based on an effective mobilization of values shared by many inhabitants of rural areas, especially values such as a single nation, private property, rural tradition, family, etc. Many actors holding these values felt threatened by the proposals for stronger indigenous rights and a plurinational society. This leads us to conclude that the theoretical debate on the production of rationality should not only aim to understand the subjective formation of neoliberalism in agriculture, but also the relationship between the hegemonic and the common sense. This demands that future research develop and expand the understanding of the relationship between agribusiness rationality, hegemony, and the new right-wing in rural territories of Latin America.

Thus, the battle of narratives was not just about agri-food systems but addressed visions of the world more generally. In other words, it is not enough to have solid arguments, rather they must be convincing for the different worldviews that exist in countries. Emancipatory proposals must not just highlight the negative consequences of the existing neoliberal agri-food system or agroecological and water justice alternatives. For emancipatory movements, it is necessary to build a new common sense on broader social issues such as the foundations of nation and state and different forms of property, which need to be in tune with the needs of most subaltern classes/groups and the narratives that have meaning to them. This is related to what Rosol et al. call understanding the "situation of soci-

ety as a whole" (2022, p. 11, quote translated by the author), where the fate of movements for alternative agri-food systems "will depend on whether they can obtain support from outside their own membership to address pressing social issues that are much wider than food" (Rosol et al., 2022, p. 11). This failure relates to a "vanguard problem" of movements for water and agrarian justice in the Convention. Recognizing the complex nature of concepts like *rights of nature*, *plurinationality,* or *water is essential for all life,* these eco-centric and indigenous views, relational ontology, and *more-than-human* approaches failed to resonate with most of the population. They failed because they were principles that did not manage to connect with a significantly broader universe that was more intimately rooted in the everyday common sense of subaltern majorities. This helps to understand the failure of the September 2022 plebiscite. Related to this, we believe that future research is needed that expands the analysis of the potential and limitations of the political demands of movements for food and water justice to reach the majority of subaltern groups in Latin America. This aspect has not yet been developed with sufficient depth on the continent.

Regarding the reassertion of hegemony in a time of crisis and the loss of legitimacy of the neoliberal vision of agri-food systems, it was not just due to the effective construction of narratives that managed to mobilize values, but also the power exerted through the communication media and social networks. The battle for hegemony not only has a symbolic component but is materially sustained in the capacity to monopolize civil society entities that are culturally active (Coutinho, 1992; Gramsci, 1948–1951/2022).
Furthermore, despite the agribusiness sector's plebiscite victory and the silencing of the critical debate on neoliberal agricultural policies in the second attempt to draft a new constitution in late 2023, this time mostly written by right-wing politicians, it failed to propose effective solutions to the negative impacts of its activity. In general, there is no strong overt public defence of agribusiness and most of the sector's narrative is a distraction, a "smokescreen" hiding its true interests. What is the main issue behind the narrative strategies? As Van der Ploeg puts it:

> [Corporate agriculture] essentially fights for the reproduction of the very order that contributes substantially to these multiple crises. As international comparison shows, this new form of right-wing rural populism reflects the degree to which corporate agriculture has internalised the logic of capital: it needs continuous expansion, both for material and symbolic reasons. (Van der Ploeg, 2020, p. 1)

This is not openly defended, but rather the smokescreen of protecting the nation and tradition is used to continue with the goal of expansion. Herein lies a possible fragility: the weakness to defend "real agribusiness."

Though food sovereignty and water justice movements did not convince most voters, the constitutional process was an extraordinarily creative moment. It created a space for political deliberation between different types of movements that usually tend to fragment. In the Convention, they had the need to engage in dialogue for the constitutional challenge. It was a dialogue between movements that have *being the change we wish to see in the world* (prefigurative politics) at their core and those which emphasize *changing the rules of the game* (strategic approaches), according to the distinction of food movements that Rosol et al. (2022) make. We believe that the importance of creating proposals and not repeating prefabricated formulas is a key task that remains unresolved. Creating proposals that manage to be radical, but that at the same time are in tune with the everyday life of subaltern majorities in rural areas, is crucial in this context. Thus, we believe that critical academia can contribute significantly to making spaces for collective reflection possible, where the lessons learned through the criticism and self-criticism of these experiences can be the foundations for the drafting of movements' political proposals. As we noted at the beginning, learning from defeat can be a fertile path for conceiving new political courses.

## Endnotes

[1] This constitutional process started with several limitations because its main features were designed in the "Agreement for Social Peace and the New Constitution," signed by the majority of conventional political parties on 15 November 2019. Thus, though the call for a new constitution was a result of the social struggle, it was also a concession by the political class to deactivate the protests and institutionalize the demands of the 2019 revolt.

[2] A list of the classification of the commissions' members can be found in this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ulp9q0YJ2mygwBd2fNUTtPjwmvppFrzh/

view?usp=sharing A full list of the presenters to the commission can be found here: https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/convencionales_constituyentes/index.html

[3] All direct quotes have been translated by the authors.

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